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Stranger

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This story hits the ground running from the first with the arrival in 1904 of a naked and bloody adolescent boy into Astor, an imaginary recently founded small Canadian town. He was initially thought to be a runaway chore boy from one of many lumber camps then around that were slowly changing the landscape. But the boy has no language and apparently no name. Taken in by teenage Emmy and her family against considerable local opposition, his tragic story gradually leaks out though never entirely.

Fast forward to 1994, when Megan, another teenager, is spending time in Astor with her relatives after the end of a traumatic love affair in Britain which resulted in an abortion. Her great grandmother, the same Emmy of 1904, is dying and so unable to answer the many questions Megan comes up with as she slowly untangles this past mystery. Emmy's story and her own are told in tandem, with the final outcome never clear until the last page. This is all very professionally done, with Keren David well in charge of her material as she flits from one time zone to another. Her descriptions of living in a newish turn of the century Canadian town are particularly interesting, given that comparatively little has been written about this particular time and place. So all in all a very good novel, only slightly marred by too many introspective examinations of feelings both ancient and modern. A little misery goes a long way; too much on the page risks bogging down even a narrative as admirably crafted and honest as this one.

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