



Bone Gap

Written by Laura Ruby
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Laura Ruby’s chilling yet heart-warming young adult novel, *Bone Gap*, traverses time and space into myth and magical realism, exploring issues related to beauty, loss, perseverance, place, and connection. With expressive language, vivid imagery, and a moving plot told through multiple narrators, this narrative is a fast-paced, page-turning read. It begins with the appearance of Roza, a lovely but reclusive young woman who teenage Finn and his brother Sean find in their barn. With no place to go and too frightened to share her story, Roza accepts the invitation to stay with the brothers until she figures out what to do. The story unravels after Finn O’Sullivan witnesses Roza’s abduction from their home. He recalls the movements of a mysterious tall man as Roza is led to an ominous black SUV, yet he cannot recall any details about the man’s face. With no other witnesses to the incident, no one in town—not even his brother Sean, who loves him and Roza dearly—believe the truth in Finn’s story.

Although the townsfolk were smitten with Roza for her beauty and light, they feel that they didn’t really know her. She carried her past silently after mysteriously appearing in the O’Sullivan’s barn battered and bruised. She was foreign, from Poland, and different from the rest of the town. Because they didn’t know much about her, they don’t delve into questions regarding the mystery of her disappearance—perhaps she wanted to leave. However, Finn cannot shake the vision of the terrified and wide-eyed Roza as the black SUV drove out of sight and he resolves to find a way to bring her back. In the meantime, Roza is held captive, trapped in a castle by the mysterious man, whose “icy eyes on fire” make her fight for her “breath, as if that stare was incinerating all the oxygen in the room, as if she would be consumed along with it” (p. 26). Servants are at her beck and call to fulfill any worldly request she desires, while the man awaits, asking the constant question, “Are you in love with me yet?” (p. 23). Like Persephone, Demeter’s daughter in the Greek myth, Roza is a daughter of the earth who longs for the gentle hills of the Polish countryside of her childhood and the garden she cultivated on the O’Sullivan’s land. Paralleling the myth, plants wither in Roza’s absence. Unlike Persephone, however, her captor does not allow her to periodically return home. There is no escape for Roza, and when she wonders why this is her fate, she is given the answer: “You are the most beautiful” (p. 88).

On his journey to find Roza, Finn begins a relationship with “Petey” Willis, who tames bees and climbs out her window to join him on magical horse rides. Petey leads Finn to understand why it was that he couldn’t see the face of Roza’s abductor. Eventually, Finn learns to trust what he knows to be true in order to bring Roza back.

At a time when adolescents are questioning their identity and sense of belonging, this

novel speaks to the human need to connect with those who see you for who you truly are—past the appearances and assumptions that others may have. The text is for a mature audience, as it includes some violent and sexual content. This could make a nice pairing with books such as *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Stephen Chboskey, 2012), *The Art of Being Normal* (Lisa Williamson, 2016) and *We are Okay* (Nina LaCour, 2017), all of which address issues of identity and acceptance.

Bone Gap is the winner of the 2016 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature and was recognized as a National Book Award Finalist. Laura Ruby has written for audiences ranging from upper elementary children to adults. Her children's titles include the award-winning *Lily's Ghosts* (2011), *The Chaos King* (2007), and *The Wall and the Wing* (2006). Her other works of Young Adult fiction include *Bad Apple* (2009), *Play Me* (2008), and *Good Girls* (2008). She currently resides in Chicago with her husband and two cats, and is on the faculty of Hamline University's Master's in Writing for Children Program.

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