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All the Invisible Things

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

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4

Helvetica Lake, known as Vetty, is aged 16. Her sister Arial is nine years younger. Three years before Collins's narrative begins, the sisters lost their mother to cancer. During these three years Helvetica, Arial and their bereaved father have lodged in Somerset with their aunt Wendy and the aunt's gay partner Fran, while their father is mourning his loss.

Eventually their father decides that it is time for the family to return to London. Vetty welcomes this decision. She will renew her friendship with Peregrine, known as Pez, a boy with whom she has been friends since they were both ten. Collins now sets out to describe the renewal of this friendship and the problems Vetty and Pez face as they grow up, including a discussion of burgeoning sexual awareness.

The book begins with a structural difficulty. In the early pages Collins takes trouble to introduce and develop a cast of characters whom the reader expects to play a significant part in the unfolding narrative. But with the move back to London these characters disappear almost for good. They certainly take a back seat in the structure of the book.

The major strength of this book is its detailed consideration of a topic hardly ever broached in literature for this age group - namely an addiction to online pornography. Such addiction and the way it erodes the character of the victim are described in painful detail. Collins's text explores not only the way in which the addiction takes hold, but also the reasons why such a preoccupation exists.

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