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Ashes

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Alex is a teenage girl whose life has been blighted both by losing her parents, and by being diagnosed with a brain tumour. Unable to face any further invasive treatment she has taken off, with the ashes of her parents, to hike in the wilds of Michigan where she soon meets Jack, his stropky granddaughter Ellie and Ellie's dog Mina. Just as they start to get to know each other there is an overwhelming electromagnetic surge that destroys birds, animals and people. Slowly the horrible truth of the consequences of survival is revealed; some people are as they were before but with enhanced senses; others have become hunters and devourers of human flesh. Alex, Ellie and Mina set off together to try and find a place of safety but they are hunted and in great danger when they meet Tom, a young soldier who helps them to survive. They continue on their journey, fighting to stay alive until Tom is badly injured, Ellie is kidnapped and Alex finds herself safe in Rule, where the flesh-eaters are kept at bay. Rule turns out to be not quite what it seems and Alex doesn't know who to trust; she is torn between staying safe, but trapped, or escaping to look for Tom.

This book could have been just a formulaic horror story but the cleverly written narrative and Alex, whom the reader cannot help but root for, keep you turning the pages. All the characters are well rounded and while the story is about survival, it is also about adventure, friendship, loyalty and love. Bick is skilled at giving just enough detail in each chapter to make the reader want more, and the story set in this dystopian world is believable and totally thrilling. It ends at such a dramatic point in the narrative that I was disappointed to discover that I'm going to have to wait until this time next year to find out what happens to Alex next.

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