

The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly

Stephanie Oakes

Reviewed by: Amberley Heins

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The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly opens to a young woman named Minnow, standing over the body of a boy who has been beaten. Author, Stephanie Oakes, does not reveal to the reader what occurred, but within minutes the police have arrived. Before the chapter is over, Minnow has been convicted of assault and sent to a juvenile detention center for other girls. The reader is also left wondering about Minnow's past and how she came to be missing both of her hands in a crude amputation and patch up job.

The rest of the novel takes place within the detention center, and revolves around Minnow coming to terms with her new life and trying to acclimate to life outside of the cult she has lived within for over 10 years. Oakes keeps the reader in suspense of what occurred in Minnow's previous life by only revealing the facts through flashbacks, when Minnow can no longer keep the memories at bay, or through the interactions with an FBI agent who comes to speak with Minnow on several occasions. He is trying to uncover what happened at "the Community" Minnow used to live in. When police arrived in the beginning of the novel, the commune was burning to the ground and the "Prophet" or cult's leader was the only person dead at the scene.

Review:

This book was intriguing and suspenseful. While the mystery of trying to uncover Minnow's past kept me reading, I also appreciated reading about Minnow dealing with her violent past as well as learning to cope in a society that she is almost entirely unfamiliar with while also working with a severe handicap in that new world. Oakes acknowledges the complexity of Minnow's situation by including that while Minnow wants to be free, she is conflicted. Not only is there a comfort in returning to a new form of prison after being essentially a captive within the cult. The juvenile detention center almost provides the training wheels Minnow needs in order to be able to function in her new surroundings. This book reveals the character development Minnow goes through in the short time she spends at the center, and her goals and dreams from the beginning of the novel definitely begin to adjust and change as the bubble she has lived in her entire life pops under the weight of all of the new knowledge she gains.

I borrowed this book from my public library's ebook collection and would recommend this it for readers 14 and up.

Other Suggestions:

The Chosen One – Carol Lynch Williams

These Walls Around Us – Nova Ren Suma

Pretty Girl 13 – Liz Coley