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Bugs



Synopsis

They call me Bugs. As in Bunny. Yeah I know.' Meet Bugs: smart, sarcastic, sixteen and stuck in a small town without a driver's license. Bugs has been best mates with Jez forever, they've always been Jez and Bugs, Bugs and Jez. That is until Stone Cold, the new girl, arrives in town. Year 12 was already going to be a challenge without adding spoilt, bitchy Stone Cold to the mix. Why would anyone want to be mates with her? But things are never as they seem on the surface - not the picture perfect postcard views of Taupo, not the drama queen antics of Stone Cold, not the quiet brooding of Jez. Not even Bugs. Now as the future closes in, each will struggle with expectation; either trying to live up to them, or trying to live them down.

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Customer Reviews

Bugs â “ Whiti HereakaYoung Adult NZ, FictionI think Bugs may well be one of the most believable, angry, perverse, defensive and clever adolescent characters I have read. Sheâ™d be bloody hard to have around, but youâ™d have to admire how staunch she is, not that sheâ™d care. And donâ™t bother trying to pull the wool over her eyes. Sheâ™s already decided what she thinks of you, and most likely youâ™re not going to get a Christmas card any time soon.Bugs, and her mate

Jez, live in picture perfect Taupā. But, as Bugs points out, itâ€™s not really perfect:â€ˆIâ€™m walking home from work. Mum likes to make out like Iâ€™ve earned her trust back, but I reckon itâ€™s because sheâ€™s working late and Uncle canâ€™t be arsed. So I get to walk home unsupervised â€ˆ“ big whoop â€ˆ“ like Iâ€™m some seven-year-old. But itâ€™s the only chunk of freedom Iâ€™ve been allowed these holidays, so Iâ€™ll take it. And itâ€™s kind of nice to wander home; itâ€™s warm in the afternoon but not too hot yet. Itâ€™s that funny time in spring when the world seems confused: daffodils and snap frosts, lambs born too early dying in the cold. That time when you can sit at the lakefront in just a t-shirt and look at the mountains still frozen with snow and think itâ€™s like a postcard â€ˆ“ but then the mountains remind you that theyâ€™re real: the wind changes and their cold breath chills you.â€ˆAnd a lot of this is what the book is about â€ˆ“ the conflict of expectation and reality, rich and poor, poor and poorer, youth and age, surface and depth, good and bad, absolute and relative, what-I-see and what-you-see.

This is the story of Bugs, a smart, 16 year old girl from a small, tourist town in New Zealand who thinks she's got it all figured out. And she does, in many ways. Her Mum works double shifts as a cleaner at a fancy hotel, a life she'd never had had if she hadn't got pregnant with Bugs. So Bugs knows about mistakes, because she is one. Bugs has school counsellors telling her that, as a Maori, she basically has to defy statistics in order to achieve in life. So she's knows about opportunities in life, because she has to make them for herself. Bugs' best friend, Jez, is routinely neglected by his mother and abused by his step-father, so she knows about hardship and disadvantage because her best mate doesn't stand a chance. The new girl in town is a prissy, melodramatic, spoilt, loudmouth, with no appreciation for the wealth that falls in her lap. So Bugs knows all about privilege and birthright, because she watches people like Stone Cold take it for granted every single day. It is as though Bugs' life is just another dystopian novel, and she already knows the script inside out. Or does she? You could probably draw quite a few parallels between Hereaka's novel and Ted Dawe's "Into the River" which won the supreme NZ Post Book Award last year. Both are YA adult novels featuring Maori protagonists during their final years of education. Both are set predominantly at school, with teachers as key characters. Both involve vulnerable youth at a point of crisis or crossroads, and both speak to the persistence of racist attitudes that prevail within the education system in New Zealand. (Both books also feature the "C" word!!!) But where Into the River really fell down for me was in the authenticity of the voice.

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