

A Single Stone

Meg McKinlay

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Searing and feminist, this dystopia reads with deceptive grace.

In a harsh island enclave where the mountain's mica is necessary for survival, Jena—a young, slight girl charged with leading expeditions into the ever-narrowing cracks between the rocks—is one of her village's most revered citizens.

Jena is careful to cultivate respect for the mountain, which sometimes claims the lives of those who come into it to harvest its flint; but out in the open air, she's also becoming more aware of some inconsistencies with the worldview that the village Mothers put forth. Memories from her earliest days reemerge; a damning vial reveals dark secrets; an intricately crafted blue bead tumbles into her life from the unknown beyond. Jena begins to wonder: are there other ways?

McKinlay's dystopia reads like the deceptive grace of its island landscape: on first glance, it is uniquely paradisaical, but sharp edges reveal themselves under shifting winds. The story's horrifying reveal is set up nicely, as are Jena's inroads to transformation—not only of her own aspirations, but quite possibly for the whole world that she knows.

Searing, affecting, and feminist, this title is certain to work its way into young readers' hearts, and to leave them questioning what lies beyond boundaries that are presented as absolute.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (February 2, 2017)

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