



★ **Moonrise**

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Joe's big brother Ed left one day in their Aunt Karen's car, and he never came home. He ended up in Texas, where he panicked over being pulled over without the car's registration, tried to drive away, and was convicted of killing an officer.

Ed was eighteen at the time of his arrest, and was sentenced to death. Ten years later, Joe has come to Wakeling, Texas, to support his brother as the date of his execution approaches. He loves his brother, he believes he is innocent, and he is scared and sad and alone.

Written entirely in verse, *Moonrise* is beautifully told and incredibly powerful. Each verse captures a moment in Joe's life—as he remembers the brother he loved and looked up to, as he struggles to accept the inevitability of Ed's death, and as he works to make the moments he is allowed to see Ed mean something. Though the people of Wakeling are generally kind to him, he is isolated in his suffering, struggling to get through an impossible situation.

The book examines important ethical questions about the death penalty. Ed's guilt is in question throughout the book, and the possibility that an innocent person will be executed hangs horrendously over the text. The situation proves painful for everyone involved, including the guards and the warden who have learned to like Ed; Ed's lawyer, who believes in both his client and the system; and Ed's family, who love him. All are highlighted as victims of a penal system that cannot and will not consider their suffering.

Deeply moving and thoughtful, *Moonrise* is a challenging, potent reminder that there is great injustice in the justice system and questions whether the death penalty is ever a fitting punishment.

CATHERINE THURESON (May/June 2018)

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