

So the Doves

Heidi James

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Heidi James's *So the Doves* triumphs with just the right blend of psychological suspense and lilting prose that practically dances off the page. Spanning over two decades, the slim but mighty novel tells the story of Marcus, a journalist who recently received accolades for exposing a huge scandal, and his childhood friend, Melanie, who went missing twenty-five years earlier.

The story is told in alternating time periods. In the present day, Marcus has been sent to his London-bordering hometown to cover a story that seems routine. When a body is uncovered at a construction site, his childhood memories resurface and threaten to ruin his career.

The story shifts back in time, showing Marcus as an awkward teenager who has to transfer schools after an incident with another boy. He meets Melanie and is instantly smitten; the two become fast friends and keep each other's secrets, but Melanie is hiding something that even Marcus can't fathom.

A clever structure enhances the story, with bits and pieces of the characters' pasts revealed at a gradual pace. When the timelines finally merge, the audience is able to put together the whole picture.

Intelligent and multilayered, this is a novel about the stories we tell others and the stories we tell ourselves, with underlying themes of friendship, memory, and loyalty. There are times when the prose is so thought-provoking that it will stop readers in their tracks, compelling second readings to enable a more thorough savoring of words. And while the ending isn't as neat as the rest of the book, it resolves most questions.

So the Doves can be devoured in one or two sittings or enjoyed in small increments; either way, it is a perceptive novel that tackles relevant issues with just the right allocation of grit and sentiment.

HILARY DANINHIRSCH (May/June 2019)

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