

Story Magic

Laurel Gale

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Family loyalty is put to the test in Laurel Gale's middle grade fantasy novel, *Story Magic*.

Kaya is twelve years old and lives with her only living family member, her older brother, Hob. Estranged from their relatives, the siblings struggle to make ends meet. Hob is an underpaid apprentice at the powerful Story Magicians Guild, and Kaya knits blankets to sell at the market. But no one is buying Kaya's blankets because times are tough. Crops have failed for several years, and rumor has it that the magical creatures known as the listeners have abandoned the Guild.

Kaya's life is turned upside down when the Guild arrests Hob for plotting against them. Fearing for the life of the person she loves the most, Kaya sets out to rescue her brother. The journey to the capital, where Hob is being held prisoner, is long, and on her way, Kaya is forced to overcome obstacles. Each encounter teaches her something new about the world. With her goal to rescue Hob within reach, Kaya is faced with a difficult decision that could change her relationship with her brother, and with the world, forever.

Kaya has a vibrant inner life and spells out her thought processes well, asking uncomfortable questions. Her introspection is a clever way of addressing the world around her; it also helps when it comes to getting to know other characters, and it contributes to the momentum of the story. Her trip to rescue Hob is an outward, as well as an inward, quest: though Kaya starts her adventure as dependent and naïve, by listening to her inner voice, she develops into an independent decision maker.

Story Magic is a coming-of-age adventure whose heroine may have to grow up fast, but does so on her own terms.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (November / December 2020)

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