

The Boy with the Butterfly Mind

Victoria Williamson

Floris Books (Nov 5, 2019)

Hardcover \$14.95 (264pp)

978-1-78250-600-3

Victoria Williamson's *The Boy with the Butterfly Mind* is a story about acceptance and empathy.

In Scotland, eleven-year-old Elin lives with her mother and her mother's boyfriend, Paul. She thinks that if she can just be perfect, her father will leave his new family and return home. In England, eleven-year-old Jamie, who has ADHD, is about to move with his mother and her boyfriend, Chris, to the United States. His behavioral problems, coupled with the fact that he does not get along with Chris, lead to his mother's decision to send him to his father in Scotland instead. He thinks that if he can find a way to control his behavior, he will be allowed back with his mother.

The story is told through Elin and Jamie's alternating viewpoints, which are captured in a masterful way, though they're very different people. As their stories unfold, it is revealed that Paul is Jamie's father. Jamie is determined to keep the peace, but struggles to stay out of trouble; Elin sees Jamie as a further barrier to her happiness and is determined to get rid of him, even if she must lie and cheat to do it.

Still, Elin and Jamie ultimately want the same thing: to be loved and appreciated by their families. Their clashing is severe, but they come to recognize in each other the pain and insecurity that they both feel. Financial strains, blended family issues, problems with the other kids at school, and fighting between parents drive the story and its tension.

The Boy with the Butterfly Mind is an excellent story for any young reader who has ever felt that they are the cause of their family's problems.

CATHERINE THURESON (November / December 2019)

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