

## The Field Agent: The Agent Bennet Saga

**R. S. Twells**

FriesenPress

(302pp)

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*The Field Agent is a suspenseful thriller in which unusual teenagers are tasked with accomplishing improbable feats.*

In R. S. Twells's captivating young adult thriller *The Field Agent*, grief prompts a tech-savvy teenager to confront his limits.

Bennet and Collin, twin sixteen-year-olds, were recruited as research subjects by the Orphanage, a clandestine organization that solves problems that governments can't. Bennet is a brainy earpiece for Collin—until Collin is killed during a calamitous mission. Bennet is bereft, and he decides to leave his desk to become a field agent in order to keep Collin's memory alive. Though he risks losing his own identity in the process, he also grapples with his pain and learns to embrace his own individuality.

The Orphanage is constructed in fascinating terms, but Bennet's self-imposed goals give the book its true momentum. He is surrounded by youthful geniuses whose specialties include medicine, bomb-making, and assassinations. Bennet's inner conflicts are handled early on, and his friendships are outlined at the same time. He undertakes the coursework that spies need, and works to overcome his lack of dexterity and experience. His training sessions with Darcy, Collin's assassin girlfriend, make him more capable at combat and weaponry. She delivers advice in a natural manner, and their friendship is made realistic as it progresses from initial guardedness to affection.

Bennet's peers are also multifaceted; they, like him, are developed in gradual terms. Their heroic traits balance with their nebulous origins. The Orphanage is eerie about culling young people for talent; adults monitor the teenagers in the background of the book. But the young people themselves establish a warm camaraderie, like a family. Indeed, when a transfer student arrives to replace Collin, tension ensues, though their introduction also pushes Bennet to start healing from his loss.

The book's action and reflection scenes are paced in an even manner; Bennet is given ample ground to prove himself before his group heads to Canada for espionage maneuvers and improvisations against a familiar villain. But there are also dark scenes in the book, including one that involves torture. Its visceral descriptions of people being skinned and other forms of cruelty are abrupt reminders of the dangers that the students face. Some students' burdens and fears are revealed, raising provocative questions about the Orphanage's upper echelons and real intents.

*The Field Agent* is a suspenseful, mysterious thriller whose unusual and vulnerable teenage cast undertakes improbable feats.

KAREN RIGBY (July 14, 2021)

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