FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Foreword Review YOUNG ADULT FICTION

The House of One Thousand Eyes

Michelle Barker
Annick Press (Sep 11, 2018)
Hardcover $19.95 (354pp)
978-1-77321-071-1

In Michelle Barker's *The House of One Thousand Eyes*, it's 1983, and the German Democratic Republic is on lockdown. Orphaned when her parents died in a factory explosion, all seventeen-year-old Lena Altman has left are her aunt, uncle, and job cleaning Stasi headquarters.

There's no love lost between Lena and her aunt, but Lena adores her uncle. When he disappears, people act as if he'd never existed, but she can't stop looking for him. At work, secrets brush against her fingertips. Yet Lena doesn't know these things. Lena doesn't know anything. Because she's just a simple girl, and letting herself know what she's seen is a dangerous proposition.

In East Berlin, the more influence you wield, the safer you are, and knowledge can garner terrible punishments. Lena lives this dichotomy daily. In the privacy of her own head, what's strange and outlandish becomes a kind of make-believe, sometimes beautiful beyond belief and sometimes so traumatic that she walls it off behind a mental wall "so high she couldn't be sure she had seen anything" at all.

Lena's story is a slow burn. The "simple girl" disappears under the revelation of her life's complexity and trauma. Barker's controlled pacing and nuanced character development capture the distance and suspicion inherent in Lena's every relationship, from families to friends to her own sense of self. Although Lena is locked inside of herself, there's power and intensity to her story, and the threat of a breakthrough looms as her circumstances change.

Focused on the intimate, personal pain of communism's later days, *The House of One Thousand Eyes* graphically illustrates how a life that depends on a system's goodwill is always defined by survival.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November/December 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.