



The Spy with the Red Balloon

Katherine Locke

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Filled with exciting history and wonder, *The Spy with the Red Balloon* centers on Ilse and Wolf, two Jewish, German-American youths living in 1943. They have a closely guarded secret: there is magic in their blood.

When the government finds the siblings, they are blackmailed into volunteering their services in the war effort. Wolf is sent into Germany to destroy Germany's nuclear labs. Ilse is sent to Tennessee with three other magic-users to manifest a nuclear bomb.

Blending historical fiction, action, suspense, and magical realism, the story is intricate and rich. It switches between Ilse and Wolf's perspectives, exploring a multitude of emotional and moral issues, including racism and LGBTQ equality.

Of the four people in Ilse's group, Stella, who is black, is treated differently from the rest, though she is the smartest member of the team. Ilse is surprised to find herself attracted to another teammate, Polly. The entire magical team is also forced to grapple with the ethics of using their intellectual and magical gifts in service of delivering a weapon of mass destruction.

Wolf's challenges are just as daunting. He is in love with his best friend, Max; when the two end up on the same mission, he is torn between protecting Max and completing the mission goals. He and his team face decisions of life and death when it comes to the Nazi soldiers they encounter in Germany, as well as with civilian workers at the sites they are supposed to bomb.

The Spy with the Red Balloon is an entertaining and thoughtful sequel.

CATHERINE THURESON (September/October 2018)

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