



Why the Sparrow Cries

Hope Bolinger

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In Hope Bolinger's captivating time travel novel *Why the Sparrow Cries*, an American teenager meets a Palikarian from the Dark Ages, prompting a culture clash, a mystery, and ethical dilemmas.

Harper is troubled and wary when it comes to others. But on a summer visit to the British Museum, she's unfazed, even sympathetic, when a teenager (dubbed Homer) in a tunic appears inside of an exhibit. A *Doctor Who* fan, she's also excited to usher the boy to her Uncle Laran, an archaeologist who specializes in the Dark Ages. He discerns that the boy is a temple slave who's about fifteen years old. This raises doubt about whether it would be right to send him back to such harsh conditions—if they even knew how to begin with returning him through time.

Harper and Homer communicate through gestures before he's taught English. Harper feels protective toward impish Homer as she senses elements of danger around them—as with the reappearance of figures she saw at the museum and because of a rogue who follows the pair. People's need for belonging and care is emphasized, as are decisions about who gets to decide what's best for another person.

As Homer's language skills increase, so does the book's momentum. His rapport with Harper becomes a different kind of affectionate as their mutual trust builds, hinting at their budding romance. The question of what happened to Harper to cause her anxiety also generates intrigue. With twists that include an abduction and the revelation of the ancient festival ritual that sparked Homer's misadventure, the innovative, exciting romantic novel *Why the Sparrow Cries* enfleshes ancient history in a time traveler.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2024)

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