Two Can Keep a Secret

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medieval intrigue. As stated in the author's preface, both thoroughly developed female protagonists are models for young women—individuals of strength and power who may struggle with their choices but manage to maintain a sense of self. Both must sort their way through false and genuine relationships, navigating the alliances and betrayals of the deadly royal politics that threaten to destroy them. Using a compressed time line, but with historical details and personages true to the era of the final conflict of the French-Breton War, the author creates a believable backdrop for her invented tale.

VERDICT A first-purchase gem of historical fantasy for high school and public libraries that will delight fans and engage newcomers.—Nancy Menaldi-Scanlan, formerly at LaSalle Academy, Providence

Gr 9 Up—Scarlett and Jesse were best friends as children. Unbeknownst to them, they were each other's refuge from their turbulent and violent families. In their freshman year, Jesse abruptly ends their friendship and makes a spectacle of Scarlett. For the next three years they are enemies, so it is surprising when Jesse suddenly approaches her to rekindle their friendship. He is up-front with Scarlett about his intentions; he needs a relationship with her to ensure that he can keep the land he loves rather than having it sold off. Jesse's grandmother has died, leaving the fate of the farm in the hands of a three-person tribunal, who will vote on Jesse's ability to manage the land for a year. In return for Scarlett's vote, Jesse arranges for her to get a job, so she can pay to attend the University of Kentucky, a plan her father does not approve of. As Jesse and Scarlett become closer, they slowly begin to reveal the personal struggles they've experienced since childhood. Told in Scarlett and Jesse's alternating voices, the plot moves along at a compulsively readable pace. What makes this romance different from many others is that readers are equally, if not more invested in Scarlett and Jesse's individual transformations rather than the survival of their romantic relationship.

VERDICT This title belongs in most romance collections and should be featured for its portrayal of a balanced relationship in which both parties get to be the hero.—Lynn Rashid, Marriotts Ridge High School, Marriottsville, MD

Gr 8 Up—Twins Ellery and Ezza are traveling to Echo Ridge for the first time. Ellery, a passionate true-crime buff, knows all about the town's unpleasant history—their aunt disappeared there at age 17, and just five years ago, the high school homecoming queen was murdered. Not long after, the teens settle in and land jobs at Fright Farm, the Halloween theme park where the slain homecoming queen was found. Soon, threats against the homecoming court begin popping up anew, and then another girl goes missing from Echo Ridge. Ellery becomes a target, as well. The story is told in alternating chapters by Ellery and Malcolm, whose brother was implicated in the murder of the homecoming queen; however, neither Ellery, Malcolm, nor any of the work's supporting characters are fully fleshed out. The three separate mysteries in Echo Ridge can be overwhelming to keep track of at times. While the character building may be lacking, and the story line may occasionally confuse, the history of Echo Ridge does intertwine nicely with Ellery's own family history and moves the plot along. What little romance is included serves to further the plot. Every character will be a suspect at least once, and when the mystery finally unravels, readers may not grasp the full repercussions.
of the conclusion for a long time. **VERDICT** For readers who have outgrown “Fear Street” and are looking for a similar sort of tension, mystery, and murder.—Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University, SC


Gr 9 Up—Six months ago, two sudden deaths changed the course of 16-year-old Kennedy Jones’s life. To cope, she turns to her brother Elliot’s abandoned research station in their family’s old barn, where he used a satellite to scan for signs of extraterrestrial life. One county over, Nolan Chandler searches for his older brother Liam, whose disappearance remains unsolved after two years. Though his parents scout missing persons reports, Nolan has a sense that the explanation may be paranormal after picking up an unusual signal in Liam’s room with his EMF reader. When Kennedy posts on a technology forum about the strange signals she’s picking up with Elliot’s satellite, it draws Nolan and Kennedy together in their search for answers. Their individual journeys through grief are multifaceted and present despite the continuous action. Thea is a complex protagonist who has a clear and relatable motivation, making it much easier to buy into the secret society of women vigilantes. The female friendships far outweigh the rather quick-moving romance, easily the weakest part of the book. While there is a fair amount of violence, it’s present to serve the plot and themes rather than for shock value. **VERDICT** This timely page-turner has a strong hook and will not sit on shelves for long. Recommended for all libraries.—Elizabeth Saxton, Tiffin, OH


Gr 9 Up—Josh Baker is going through life feeling not quite understood. He has to go through ritual methods to complete everyday tasks and constantly doubts himself. He and his sister, Julia, are at a new school where Josh feels the pressure to perform well so his family doesn’t have to move again. His one solace is losing himself in drumming. Another new student arrives in his English class, Mage, who also shares his love of music, and they develop a bond. With the help of medication and the understanding of his family, friends, and teachers, Josh makes strides at controlling and living with his OCD. While the poetic style of writing might seem choppy, it represents Josh’s thoughts as he deals with his illness. Told in first person, the novel clearly creates a deep connection with the protagonists and readers. The secondary characters are not as well developed. **VERDICT** This is a quick read for large collections.—David Roberts, Salem Public Library, OH


Gr 9 Up—When a sudden plague swept through Fireli, one of the four kingdoms of Aethusa, it left death, evacuations, and a decade of quarantine in its wake. Ophelia (Fee) and Prince Xavi were the only children left behind, and their close friendship sustained them through years of grief and isolation. Now an apprentice healer, Fee chafes at the restrictions on her life and at the daily antidote she must take, while Xavi’s health is continuously precarious. When the quarantine lifts, both teens are eager for the new opportunities it brings: the chance to restore the kingdom of Fireli to its former glory and to reunite with Prince Rye, Xavi’s brother and Fee’s betrothed. But neither pursuit is without complications. This novel is bogged down by numerous over-the-top plot twists that include faked deaths, wrongful imprisonment, hidden identities, and forbidden romance, but weak characterization and forced dialogue take much of the excitement out of the drama. Overly stylized language and consistently abrupt scene endings create the feeling of an unfinished novel. **VERDICT** Not recommended. For magical fantasy during a plague, direct readers to Beth Revis’s *Give the Dark My Love*—Elizabeth Giles, Lubuto Library Partners, Zambia


Gr 10 Up—Hannah Gold knows that there has been a terrible misunderstanding. She spent an enjoyable several weeks at a college summer program in California, where she formed a tight friendship with her roommate, Agnes. Now she is being carefully monitored and denied basic privileges at a high security institution. While she goes through the events of the past few weeks in her head, she tries to make sense of the tragic accident that sent Agnes falling two stories to the concrete below their dorm window. Although Hannah had been secretly seeing Agnes’s boyfriend, Jonah, she knows that she would never have done anything to harm Agnes physically. Through conversations with her therapist, brief interactions with other inmates, and constant internal dialogue, Hannah analyzes her privileged childhood as an only child of wealthy parents in New York City, and wonders if she is not the person she always thought she was. Sheinmel creates an intensely likable unreliable narrator. Hannah’s voice is con-