



Far From Home: The sisters of Street Child

Books Reviewed:

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Berlie Doherty's [Street Child](#) [4] has been read and enjoyed by children since it was first published twenty years ago. In fact publisher HarperCollins have added it to their Modern Classics list and no wonder: the story of Jim Jarvis, the boy whose plight inspired Dr Barnardo to found his children's homes, speaks directly to children, putting them in Jim's shoes and making them wonder how they'd have coped in his situation. In **Far From Home** Doherty returns to the Jarvis family and imagines what might have happened to Jim's sisters Emily and Lizzie after their mother died and the family was split up. At first things seem quite hopeful for the girls. Their mother's friend Rosie is cook in a Big House and tries to find room for them there. But only those with money are safe and secure. The mistress doesn't want street children in her house and the girls are thrown out, Rosie too. The workhouse is their only option but at the last minute they're offered work - apprenticeships - in a mill up in the North. Tempted by reports of roast beef dinners, country air and jobs for life, the girls accept. Little of what they've been told turns out to be true: the work in the mill is long, hard and dangerous, the children are practically slaves.

In Berlie Doherty's writing every word counts. The horrors of the mill are vividly described but so is the countryside that surrounds it while the people who work there, children and adults alike, are memorable characters, from Mrs Cleggins, brown teeth clacking, to charismatic Robin, who plans terrible revenge on the factory. This is adventure story as well as historical novel, a book that will grip young readers, make them understand our past and give them an insight into the lives some children across the world are living today. It's a future classic.

Read our [Q&A interview with Berlie Doherty](#) [5].

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