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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Another remarkable novel from Patrick Ness. This time, he takes inspiration from, and pays tribute to, the unlikely coupling of Virginia Woolf's **Mrs Dalloway** and Judy Blume's **Forever**. So it's a day in the life of Adam Thorn, a day of changes in which he comes to a different understanding of the relationships in his life. The name is significant. For this gay son of an evangelical preacher in a Washington State suburb might as well be the first man on earth as he struggles to make sense of his emotional and sexual life. And Thorn? Well, that's the painful hook on the stem of the red rose of romance, and there is blood drawn, both metaphorical and literal, in this momentous day. In part, this is a tale which addresses the clash of conservative and liberal social attitudes which is everywhere around us. But like Ness's previous novels, conflict is deeply embedded in his characters' lives and relationships, so that any attempt to reduce the novel to that kind of agenda is foolish. You might say, too, that more than any other novel for young adults that I have read, this is about the physical side of gay sex - so some of the **Forever** inspiration. But that too would be too simple. Ness is so good at conveying the waves of feeling, physical and emotional, now merged, now separate, in any relationship, that this is about how any of us have loved, both in and out of bed. I am not sure if we really need the story that runs alongside Adam's day, about the restless spirit of a girl murdered in a drug induced rage. But that too grips in its own way and Ness brings both strands to a kind of mutual conclusion, unlikely though that seems for much of the novel. You really need to read it.

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