

★ **Delicates**

Brenna Thummler

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Marjorie Glatt, the main character of the popular graphic novel *Sheets*, returns in Brenna Thummler's *Delicates*.

Marjorie lives a strange and secret life, attending school like a typical teenager, but also befriending the ghosts who congregate at her family's laundromat. In her attempts to keep those worlds separate, she begins to alienate her best ghost friend, Wendell.

Marjorie, who finds herself accepted among the popular kids at school, also keeps her distance from Eliza Duncan, an odd classmate who's into photography—photographing ghosts, in particular. But soon Marjorie reevaluates what it means, and what it costs, to be considered “cool.”

The word “delicate” is used both as a reference to laundry and in Eliza's description of the film-developing process, but it also corresponds to the fragility of Marjorie, Eliza, and other adolescents finding their place in the school hierarchy and in life. The writing is sensitive and nuanced throughout, as Marjorie grapples with her problems and the aftermath of her mother's death. Convincing adult characters have their own struggles, and even the story's primary bully is dimensional, as the book reveals her home life and the insecurities that drive her behavior.

The book's full-color art is a treat, from detailed renderings of cameras and bicycles, to the marvelous, wordless, page-sized images that establish settings or moods. Wood grains on doors, reflections in puddles and on polished tile floors, Eliza's different-colored socks, and telephone lines connected to old houses all contribute to the realism and the beauty of the book.

Delicates is a sophisticated, beautiful graphic novel that gets to the heart of being a teenager.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2021)

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