

Lonely Places

Kate Anderson

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A teenager confronts her haunted past to save her family in Kate Anderson's slow-burn psychological thriller *Lonely Places*.

Chase has yearned for stability ever since her family left their home when she was just a child. Since then, they've lived a nomadic life, never staying in one place for long. When her father takes a job as a fire lookout in a remote town, they settle into an old tower nestled among aspen trees.

While her family revels in nature, Chase can't shake the unsettling feeling that something sinister lurks in the forest. She soon learns the lookout's dark history: the bones of a missing girl were discovered years ago, tangled in the roots of the trees. Fearful for her mute little sister, Guthrie—who has been silent since her own harrowing disappearance in the woods the previous year—Chase's sense of dread deepens.

At its core, this is a story about confronting trauma and the lengths people will go to avoid it. Its characters exhibit quirks, defenses, and flaws: Chase shoulders too much responsibility, using it as a way to deflect from her own inner struggles; her family members deflecting in their own ways too.

The story's imagery is both visceral and striking, as is the colorful opening image of the woods against the sky. The forest itself is vivified with eerie descriptors throughout, as though there is a presence within the woods observing Chase and her family. And the pace is rhythmic, with the mystery of the forest and the family's history emerging in a gradual way.

Some questions are answered, but others remain, including in regard to the missing girl and the mysterious nature of the forest, in the atmospheric horror novel *Lonely Places*, in which a family faces their trauma.

LEAH WEBSTER (November / December 2024)

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