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Hold Back the Tide

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This novel has one of the most striking opening pages I have read in a long time. Set in 1800s Scotland in a small community overseen by a greedy mill owner this is a searing tale of long-buried secrets, fear and ignorance.

Alva is sure that her father murdered her mother although her body has never been found. He is the guardian of the loch and Alva has learned early on to keep out of her father's way and never to displease him. Now she has a chance to escape her claustrophobic life as she is the village scribe and has a job lined up in Thurso. But then everything starts to unravel. On her way home after a village dance Alva sees a strange tall white creature with no eyes standing near her front door and she hears terrible screams coming from the shed. Rescued by her father he forbids her to go out but while looking for a key to escape Alva finds mysterious logbooks hidden under a settle showing images of these strange creatures. So, they must be real, mustn't they?

It is Alva who realises there must be some connection between the falling levels of water in the Loch to feed the mill and the uncovering of caves that have not seen the light of day for centuries and the appearance of the terrifying creatures. No one believes her tales of these mysterious beings until villagers start disappearing and some are found torn to pieces. By then it is far too late.

Interwoven through this part murder mystery, part horror story is the heart-breaking love story between the ruggedly attractive Ren and the feisty Alva. This is a page-turning and genuinely spooky story. The setting is highly visual and there is plenty of food for thought too as the story has parallels with today's climate change crisis and what could be unleashed if we do not heed the warnings in time. It has a gorgeous cover too.

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