



The Bone Sparrow

By Zana Fraillon

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"Indispensable."-Booklist (starred review)

CARNEGIE MEDAL 2017 FINALIST

Subhi is a refugee. He was born in an Australian permanent detention center after his mother and sister fled the violence of a distant homeland, and the center is the only world he knows. But every night, the faraway whales sing to him, the birds tell him their stories, and the magical Night Sea from his mother's stories brings him gifts. As Subhi grows, his imagination threatens to burst beyond the limits of the fences that contain him. Until one night, it seems to do just that.

Subhi sees a scruffy girl on the other side of the wire mesh, a girl named Jimmie, who appears with a notebook written by the mother she lost. Unable to read it herself, Jimmie asks Subhi to unravel her family's love songs and tragedies that are penned there.

Subhi and Jimmie might both find comfort-and maybe even freedom-as their tales unfold. But not until each has been braver than ever before and made choices that could change everything.

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The Bone Sparrow By Zana Fraillon Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 5 Up—Subhi knows only life in the Australian refugee detention center where he was born, and lately, things are getting worse. His mother is increasingly lethargic, older sister Queeny is bossy and angry, and his best friend Eli has been transferred to the single men's compound. The Jackets (guards) are unfriendly, except for Harvey, who occasionally brings presents and diversions. It's at this low point that Subhi meets Jimmie, a local child who finds her way into the camp. Jimmie's mother has died, and between her father's grief and his erratic work schedule, she is alone for long periods. Jimmie can't read, so she asks Subhi to read aloud her mother's notebooks, which contain stories from her mother's past. The unrelenting conditions of the camp result in a tragic situation that impacts both children. Fraillon creates a complex narrative, weaving tales from Subhi, Jimmie, and the notebooks. The characters and situations are portrayed realistically—once Eli has gone, Subhi cannot withstand the bullying of some of the older boys and is pressured into an act of animal cruelty. Kind guard Harvey is also shown to be unable to deal with peer pressure. While the book is fictional, the author based it on research and reports of life in Australian detention centers, where conditions are grim. Readers will come away with a raised awareness of life in such centers, but why these facilities exist is not discussed. Students may be inspired to do their own research on organizations working to better the lives of refugees. VERDICT A thought-provoking and affecting selection that highlights a current situation in many countries. Hand to readers who appreciated Linda Sue Park's *A Long Walk to Water*.—Michelle Anderson, Tauranga City Libraries, New Zealand

Review

"A special book."? *Morris Gleitzman, author of Once*

* "Fraillon crafts a harrowing vision of life in the detention center, yet Subhi finds solace in sensitively portrayed friendships with a rebellious older boy, a compassionate guard, and an intrepid girl named Jimmie. While addressing themes of loss, desperation, and injustice in an all-too-relevant setting, Fraillon's resonant novel underscores the healing power of story."? *Publishers Weekly (starred review)*

"Outstanding... This is an important, heartbreaking book with frequent, unexpected humor that everyone...should read."? *The Guardian*

* "The pivoting story line, with chapters alternating among Subhi, Jimmie, and sparkling slivers of family lore, allows Fraillon to explore the many faces of otherness, bravery, and solidarity. But Subhi's narrative, whether he's squabbling with a rubber duck or searching the stars, remains the standout of the three: wide-eyed, heartfelt, and infectiously imaginative... This tale is breathtaking and indispensable. As Subhi might say, 'there is a fierce' inside of it."? *Booklist (starred review)*

"Thought-provoking and affecting... Hand to readers who appreciated Linda Sue Park's *A Long Walk to Water*."? *School Library Journal*

"An author worth watching."? *Kirkus Reviews*

"Fraillon's story is stark and urgent; her afterword tells more about the "all-too-true reality" that inspired the book."? *The Horn Book*

"Zana Fraillon's powerful and poetic tale of friendship in the face of injustice will fly away with your

heart."?Katherine Marsh, Edgar Award-winning author of *The Night Tourist*

"*The Bone Sparrow* is a book you'll feel in your chest long after you finish. It's about stories that ache to be told, and the transformational power of sharing them. Though Subhi's journey is confined by fences, he finds magic and great injustice, tragedy and courage-and ultimately, wings."?Kirsten Hubbard, author of *Watch the Sky and Race the Night*

Accolades

Carnegie Medal 2017 Finalist
Winner of the 2017 Amnesty CILIP Honor
Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2016 Finalist
A 2017 Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year
A 2017 CCBC Choices Selection
Maine Student Book Award 2017 Finalist
???

About the Author

Zana Fraillon was born in Melbourne Australia, but spent her early childhood in San Francisco. Zana has written two picture books for young children, a series for middle readers, and a fictitious book for older readers based on research and recounts of survivors of the Forgotten Generation. She now lives in Melbourne, with her three sons, husband and two dogs. When Zana isn't reading or writing, she likes to explore the museums and hidden passageways scattered across Melbourne. They provide the same excitement as that moment before opening a new book preparing to step into the unknown where a whole world of possibilities awaits.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Rohe:

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Ronald Canty:

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Helen Widner:

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