

“TWICE SHY” (Book Review)

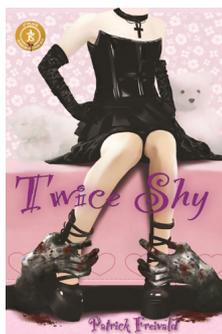
Written by Michael Gingold

Saturday, 29 September 2012 09:47



Patrick Freivald's TWICE SHY (JournalStone) is cute. That's not meant to be derogatory; it's really the best way to describe this novel about a teenage girl living incognito as a zombie.

The plot, put simply, is: Ani Romero died at age 14 after living with the zombie virus from birth. It's assumed that she died of the "ZV," as there's no mention of any other mode of death. She reanimated as a living dead girl, but without the drooling, subhuman mentality of a walking corpse, making her the only zombie to retain her full mental faculties. The story picks up two years after this event, with Ani living as an "emo" at her scientist mother's insistence, rather than as her normal pink and Kei\$ha-loving self, allowing her to hide her tallow skin and cuts from constant tissue-sample extractions under thick makeup and long sleeves.



This is a book that doesn't quite know what it wants to say. It's about the difficulty of parenting a special-needs child, accepting that what makes you different is what you are, learning who your true friends are, the different layers of responsibility...the list could go on, but TWICE SHY never fully commits to any of these ideas. For a chapter, the story leans into an AIDS allegory, as Ani shifts her concern from living day to day to questioning why she has the virus in the first place. It's an interesting direction to go, but then, before any real depth is achieved, Ani is saying goodbye to her mom and hitting a party with her emo friends, feeling completely out of place among their drunken and drugged-out reverie of misery and pining for the days when she cheered on the soccer team and could wear pink in public; now it's a story about being true to yourself. Again, an interesting direction when the protagonist is an infectious zombie. How true can a person be when one slipup means an entire town will be incinerated? But before this

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concept is fully explored, the story is off again onto personal responsibility.

The plot is paced well enough, and the characters are interesting, if a little flat. The touch-and-go nature of TWICE SHY makes giving an honest review difficult. The characters are quite clichéd and poorly thought out in places...unless this is supposed to be a take on the old-school SWEET VALLEY HIGH-style young adult books of the '90s, in which case the clichés are spot on (except for some confusion on Freivald's part on the difference between Goths and emos) and fascinating when placed in the context of a post-zombie-invasion environment. The lack of detail in describing this world, where the ghouls have come and gone but the threat remains, is at times infuriating...unless this is an AIDS allegory, in which case it is understandable that no one would ever talk about those days when the dead walked the Earth and flu symptoms meant quarantine.

Really, TWICE SHY is not a terrible book, and it's always neat to see another take on this subject after so many have previously offered their interpretations. The combining of a popular-girl type with a walking, rotting corpse does make for a fun, quick read and is very...

Cute.

