



# The One Safe Place

*Tania Unsworth*

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## **The One Safe Place** Tania Unsworth

In this near-future dystopia with echoes of "The Giver" and "Among the Hidden," Tania Unsworth has created an unsettling page-turner; fast-paced, smooth, filled with dread that's wholly satisfying and startlingly original.

Devin doesn't remember life before the world got hot; he has grown up farming the scorched earth with his grandfather in their remote valley. When his grandfather dies, Devin heads for the city. Once there, among the stark glass buildings, he finds scores of children, just like him, living alone on the streets. They tell him rumors of a place for abandoned children, with unlimited food and toys and the hope of finding a new family. But only the luckiest get there.

An act of kindness earns Devin an invitation to the home, but it's soon clear that it's no paradise. As Devin investigates the intimidating administrator and the zombie-like sickness that afflicts some children, he discovers the home's horrific true mission. The only real hope is escape, but the place is as secure as a fortress.

Fans of dystopian fiction and spine-chilling adventure will devour "The One Safe Place;" its haunting themes will resonate long after readers have turned the final page.

## **The One Safe Place Details**

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Author : Tania Unsworth

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## From Reader Review The One Safe Place for online ebook

### Maria Tag says

The One Safe Place was an incredible dystopian novel that really does deserve more popularity than it has. The plot: Devin is a happy-go-lucky farmer's grandson who lives in a little pocket of paradise in a broken world. The farm has its difficulties, sure, but it's nothing compared to what the world outside goes through. Intense heat batters major cities until incredibly strong storms wash the dust away, along with people, homes, and livelihoods. Devin lives in his bubble until one day the unthinkable happens. His grandfather dies unexpectedly, toppling to the ground and then just ceasing to live. Devin is stunned- what will he do? He buries his grandfather first and then tries to undertake the farm work by himself. Unfortunately for Devin, he cannot do it all by himself- it's just way too much work. Eventually, there's one thing left for Devin to do- venture to the city to look for a farm hand to hire with his grandfather's money. The city, however, is not what Devin thinks it is. On the outskirts live the prestigious, with plenty of food, huge mansions, and perfectly manicured lawns. However, once venturing closer in, Devin finds chaos. The remaining police only help you if paid, the buildings that once were glorious are in severe decay, and robbers, gangs, and thieves are EVERYWHERE. Devin gives up on finding a farm hand, but what he does find is a friend. Kit helps Devin survive his first day, and soon enough, Devin is the loop on how to steal and survive in the wreckage. But what happens when Devin and Kit are offered a place in a utopia-orphanage, what do they say? Yes, of course! But soon enough Devin discovers what really is going on at the orphanage. Will Kit, Devin, and their friends take down the Administrator and the company behind the orphanage? Or will darkness prevail? The characters: Devin- 3 stars. Well developed and relateable. However, was missing the uniqueness the other characters had, despite the synesthesia thing. Kit- 5 stars. Pure awesomeness. :) Nuff' said. Others- 4 stars. Some pretty good supporting characters, but there were a few who were a little lame/stereotypical. Negatives: Except what I mentioned above? Nothing. I really loved this amazing, amazing dystopian. Will buy at some point for sure!!!!!!!!!!

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### Donna Burtwistle-Popplewell says

A gripping and suspenseful story (middle-grade-teen) about Devin, a young boy forced to go the city after his grandfather dies, leaving him to fend for their farm all alone. The world has changed; heat waves have destroyed the earth and dispersed populations. When Devin enters the city, he is amazed at all he sees, but also observes the enormous dichotomy between the wealthy and the poor. When he is taken to a home for orphans, he is told that his future will be bright, but something is not right...

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### Sarah Marie says

The One Safe Place by Tania Unsworth

**4.5 stars**

Devin has always lived on a farm and when his grandfather dies he knows it's his time to go into the city. What Devin finds in the city is a world of poverty. The rich are the ones living in houses, drinking water, and

eating. The homeless are children and people who can't afford to live nicely. Devin meets a girl on the streets and they become fast friends. Rumors of a home where homeless children go to be adopted are whispered amongst the homeless, but Kit says they are just stories. Until they aren't. Devin is offered to go to the home and he's taking Kit with him. Not everything is what it seems in the home. Horrible things are being done to the children and there is no escape. I've never read *The Giver* or *Among the Hidden*, so I have nothing to compare it to, but I was highly impressed by this novel. I hit a lot of sour reads through Netgalley and even more mediocre ones. I always get so excited when I find books that are genuinely fantastic on there. This is one of those books! I was very thrown off at first. It is an odd book from the beginning. This is a dystopian novel. It doesn't seem like one but it is. I like the feel of that in writing. I know the world is horrible, but it feels like today's current world only in the behind the scenes. Our world is wrecked with poverty whether we want to acknowledge it or not. In that sense, this novel heightens the form of poverty to no middle class. You are either rich or homeless. There's no in between.

Dystopians can always seem predictable. There's your basic regime government of supposed utopian society gone downhill. There's a revolution in the underground waiting to break free that the main character discovers and leads. Your basic romance that can sometimes just be absolutely gut-wrenching (I'm looking at you Suzanne Collins). Dystopians have a basic set up, but *The One Safe Place* goes against your basic backdrop. We have absolutely no interaction with the government and there is no revolution. We do meet someone who in a way governs the orphans, but is in no means the government. There's no takedown per say, but there is a conclusion that leaves hope for the characters. There is also no romance, just a strong friendship that could be more in the future. I loved all these differences. It's refreshing. It made me enjoy this book. I went from apprehensive to absolutely thrilled.

The main male character is Devin. It's interesting to be thrown into a dystopian where the main character hasn't grown up in this environment. His family has lived on a farm as a way to escape this world. As Devin journeys into this world we feel the same confusion and questions about this world that Devin has. It was an interesting perspective and I really enjoyed it. Devin also has synesthesia. I have never read a book with a character that has this disability, but I have quite a few on my TBR list. I thought it was a very interesting take for Devin, but I don't feel like it was fully touched on or even touched in the proper way. I'm not sure though since this is my first time reading about or even really getting knowledge on it.

### **Swoon Worthy Scale: 7.5**

The main female character is Kit. There's no romantic connection between Kit and Devin. It was hinted at as a possibility, but when you are fighting for your life it's put on the back burner for these characters. This is something I really enjoyed. It doesn't have to be all about romance and it was refreshing for it to be put on hold to let the plot be the main focal point of this novel. I didn't particularly like Kit though. She could be very naïve about things and as well as annoying. I understand her reasoning though.

### **Kick-Butt Heroine Scale: 6.5**

**The Villain-** That twist?! The problem that orphans face in this utopian home is that they all go into a Dream. The Dream was not what I was expecting at all. I was completely blown away by the actual thought behind the Dream. It was just so cool.

### **Villain Scale: 8**

I loved the orphans. They were such a colorful cast of characters. How could I not smile at the simple jokes? Also the pig was just such a fun touch to the novel.

### **Character Scale: 8**

I'm highly impressed with The One Safe Place. It's very different from current dystopians and worth the read. I highly recommend it if you are looking for a dystopian that is different from Divergent or The Hunger Games.

**Cover Thoughts:** I really like the cover. It's simplistic, but it's not amazing. I just really like the simplicity of it.

*Thank you, Netgalley and Algonquin Young Readers for sending me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Bex (Beckie Bookworm) says**

I received this book in a first reads give away and i enjoyed it immensely, i found it well written different to anything i had read before and i finished it in one sitting, I think The one safe place would appeal to both younger and older readers and i am planning to read it with my two boys of nine and ten as i think they would greatly enjoy it.so a thumbs up from me a good read.

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### **♥Marie Gentilcore says**

I really liked this book. It was a quick and easy read and it was a different take on a dystopian future. In this world the earth has gotten hotter and the divide between rich and poor has gotten bigger. The main character, Devin, lives with his grandfather on a farm. When his grandfather dies, Devin tries to run the farm alone but he can't so he sets off for the city where he finds many children living on the street. He becomes friends with a girl named Kit. The city is a rough place and the children speak of a home for kids where they can have all

the food they want and they can play all day. It seems like wishful thinking but then Devin and Kit go there and at first it is what it seems but then Devin starts noticing things like how you can't leave.

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### **Chinook says**

This book was fine - I was interested enough in the plot to see it through to the end. But there were some pretty major flaws for me. I don't understand why Devon didn't just recruit a merry band of kids and return to the farm from the city, particularly after the gym experience. Kids don't have enough food, the farm has food. I also didn't buy that he had time to trust and care about Kit as quickly as the book had him doing so. Some sort of motivation - that she looked like his long dead mother or something - might have helped there. And I suppose, it seemed incredible that his practical grandfather wouldn't have come up with a plan to find others to help on the farm long before his death. That involves too much stupidity for someone otherwise surviving well in a dystopic world.

So, the premise of the world and the old people's actions, those all worked for me but the actions of the characters just didn't. It's maybe more of a 2.5 stars, because I'm toying with 2. I think I'm stopped from taking that star off because it's so clearly YA and I think that it would work well for plenty of younger readers even with those plot holes.

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### **Katie says**

Interesting. I kind of forgot this kind of dystopian novel can exist, where it's not about love triangles and taking down the government.

I figured out most of what was going on pretty quickly, but I don't think the target audience would.

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### **Kristen says**

3.5 This was a pretty good middle grade sci-fi read, but with the glory days of dystopian fiction behind us, these kinds of stories just don't appeal to me like they used to. The One Safe Place has an original premise and some pretty good (though somewhat under-developed) characters. The "reveal" was a pretty predictable as an adult, but I can see kids being a little more surprised and horrified.

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### **Jenna Buss says**

2.5 stars. This book was lacking in a variety of different things.

The characters were under-developed, were stereotypical, and had no personality.

Devin, the main character, has synesthesia, which means his senses overlap. However, the reader had absolutely no idea- except for a couple random hints dropped here and there- that he has synesthesia, until one of the characters actually TOLD us. I feel that the story would have been way more entertaining if the author has included descriptions of what Devin was experiencing. I kept forgetting that he had synesthesia, because there was no mention of it.

The subject was intriguing. However, it was extremely similar to other books of the genre. I wish the author had tried to make it more original, but unfortunately, what happened to the kids in the Home was very predictable. I could tell exactly what was going to happen in two pages.

On the other hand, I enjoyed Devin's relationship with horses, which is probably why I gave this book a higher rating than it deserves. Really the only part of the book that actually included any imagery and/or descriptions was when Devin was interacting with horses, so that was a plus that when the author actually tried to make the story interesting, it was at a good part.

However, I did not enjoy this book very much, and don't really recommend it.

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### **Toni FGMAMTC says**

I really like how this shows kids bonding together. It's not about how they save the world, and there are no romances. They are just saving each other. The environment isn't doing well. The separation between rich and poor is big. Experiments are being done to some of the children. I liked this book. I think younger readers will love it.

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### **Stuti (Turmeric isn't your friend. It will fly your ship says**

*The One Safe Place* is the kind of heartfelt book that I come across only once in a while. It doesn't go overboard in its message and delivers only the simplest of them- indeed one so ordinary, it's a way of living: when life tries to knock you down, stumble back on your friends.

After his grandfather dies of old age and leaves him alone in their isolated paradise of a valley, a hidden island in the decrepit world outside that is like a fairytale to him, relegated in stories of both marvel and peril, the burden of their farm and its silence becomes too heavy for Devin and he ventures out into the nearest city to find help.

From then on, the realities of the world he never knew are revealed to him in dark alleys, turbulent rains and girls on rooftops who bear scars of a worse life than the scrounging creature she's become now. Comes along a teenager who promises them a world of comfort, removed from all misery, seemingly pulled right out of their myths and stories. Only not everything is right, some kids disappear with nothing of theirs left behind but a picture of them with the centenarian folks that have adopted them, others go insane right in front of him yet he's never to speak of it.

There are lots of subtexts in between, friendships and mistakes of a child that cause another everything, guilt and terror and lost sisters, doubts that can break you and yours, forgiveness, and above all, the *want*. The want of a street-hardened urchin for a millionaire family who'll never take a belt to her for looking the wrong way, even if it costs her mind, her childhood; and the unacceptable, of old decrepits who can't let go of what they once had.

OH AND THE PREMISE OF KIDS V/S ADULTS. EVERYWHERE. I WILL ALWAYS LOVE IT, AND SO SHOULD YOU.

Too many emotions are jam-packed in this story yet it is never too much, too gratuitous because sprinkled like toppings is the delicate, indelicate and outright disgusting humor that plagues everyone at the most

freeing of times in their lives.

However, there's a certain quality to the writing that distances the reader from the story and its characters, so what you read is not often what you feel, which was a damn shame indeed. Moreover, vagueness in words, lack of concise descriptions and etc is filled by the direct, unfiltered experiences of kids who know very little: this was to be expected but it lent a sparseness that not everyone, including me, enjoys.

In retrospect, *The One Safe Place* was a remarkable story, whose reins I couldn't exactly manage to fit in while on the right for several reasons, but I'm sure there's a more perceptive audience out there who'll definitely treasure this story close to their hearts.

*Thank you Algonquin Books!*

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## **Amytiger says**

A boy, scared and alone, is left at his farm when his grandpa dies. Realizing that being just one person, he came to the conclusion that he couldn't manage his farm. So he left for the nearest city. Once there, he befriended a girl around the same age and had the name of Kit. Then, being vulnerable to lies, they get tricked into going to a place where they are treated fairly until they are summoned to a tower. Inside the tower, they are subject to horrible, awful nightmares. Once snapped out, they are traumatized. Why would they make them go through that? Are they some rats in a giant science experiment? No, the real answer is much, much worse.

Wow, this book was really good! I especially recommend it to kids from the ages of 8 to maybe even 14. The plot was creative, the dialogue was realist, the protagonists were likable and different. There was some foreshadowing that wasn't obvious but noticeable:

"The truth was, he wasn't sure exactly what he'd seen. It had been small and thin, not pressed completely flat against the glass but slightly bent. Had it been a claw?

He pushed the thought away.

"Probably just a trick of the light or something," he said."

"Panic engulfed him, and for several moments he lay paralyzed while his mind whirled, battered by fear and confusion like a bird beating its wings against the bars of a cage. In a little while he became aware of a sound, a low, rasping noise like air squeezed through ancient, leaking bellows.

It was his own breath."

Imagery such as this will makes kids' breath like Devin's while in this nightmare. The morales were along the lines of "All that glimmers is not gold" with the place that seems really nice until they get summoned. Even with all of these good things, there were kinks. "They've got sensors, devices everywhere, keeping track of us." Okay, then how come Devin (the boy who left his farm) could move around to places he shouldn't be going to? He did that multiple times in the Administrator(the person who was in charge of the whole establishment)'s own tower. How come Devin and his friends were able to devise a whole escape plan without doing anything major to cover their tracks? There was wasted potential in the part where Devin accepts someone else's childhood into his own. I would like to see some effects with that, but it never happened. When Devin finally escapes the place with his friends, how come there was no one in the nightmares at that time? It seems that they should at least check before leaving. But they didn't pay heed to the possibility that someone is has been given over to the nightmares. And when they were about to leave the place, Devin, on a horse, saw a boy with a broken arm staggering. He could have said, "Here, quickly take my place on this horse, and I'll run!" Or, "Maybe you can fit too!" Or, "Kit, get off! He needs help and you can run fast!" Instead Devin told the boy with the broken arm to run before he galloped off.



All in all, it's a good book. According to dictionary.com, the first synonym of "good" listed is acceptable under the bold words "adjective: pleasant, fine". Exactly.

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## **Jan says**

With all the middle grade and YA post apocalyptic/dystopian novels being trilogies lately, it was refreshing to read a great one that had it all in one book. Not that I don't love a post apocalyptic/dystopian trilogy, because I do absolutely love *The Hunger Games*, *The Darkest Minds*, *Monument 14*, and *The Rule of Three* trilogies. But they take a lot of work. Usually by the time the second one comes out I've forgotten so much from the first one that I have to go back and reread it before I can start the second one. Same with the third one. I usually end up reading all three of them together. It's a lot of work. Enjoyable for sure, but still it takes a lot of time.

This book had a very likable main character in Devin, a boy who leaves the farm he has lived in all his life after his grandfather dies. Alone, running out of food, and unable to do all the chores and care for the animals by himself, he walks for days to the nearest city where he hopes to find people to help him. He finds just the opposite. The city is loud and dirty with people rushing everywhere. It's very different than the calm and quiet life he led with his grandfather. No one in the city seems to care about anyone else. There's a huge distance between the haves who drive fancy expensive cars and live in beautiful homes, and the have nots who live in condemned buildings and scrounge the ground for even the smallest morsel of food. So when the opportunity opens up for Devin and his new friend Kit to go live at The Gabriel H. Penn Home for Childhood, Devin jumps at the chance. Kit is skeptical. She doesn't trust anyone and knows you aren't given anything that nice for free. Until coming to the city, Devin hadn't known anything but trust and goodness in his life and is ready to trust that the home is a good place for them. They will have a nice place to live, plenty of healthy food, toys to play with, and lots of fresh air.

Kit was right to be skeptical as not everything is as it seems at the home. The children there seem sullen instead of happy, and act very strange at times. The director locks herself away in a room at the top of a tower and is a mean scary control freak. But Devin finds out something about himself at the home, something that he thought everyone else in the world also had, but finds out that they don't. He has synesthesia and also a photographic memory. If you want to read a terrific middle grade book that goes into much more detail than this one regarding how a person with this neurological phenomenon views the world around them, definitely check out *A Mango-Shaped Space* by Wendy Mass. Synesthetes, or people who have synesthesia, may see sounds, taste words or feel a sensation on their skin when they smell certain scents. They may also see abstract concepts like time projected in the space around them. Because of this ability, Devin is able to see things going on at the home that no one else is noticing and don't believe are happening at first when he explains it to them. Suffice it to say, without Devin's incredible abilities the kids would not have been able to do what they needed to do to save themselves and each other. This one's definitely a page turner!

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## **B.A. Wilson says**

This is not for me. It's middle grade, but it's definitely lower middle grade. I thought that the ages of the characters (which I never really figured out or somehow missed), were upper middle grade, but the voices of the characters were incredibly young, more like 8 or 9 years old, which is fine but not what I was expecting

based on the description and cover. Also, the characters actions and voices often seemed at odds for me, which I struggled with throughout. It's like the two never meshed in a way that felt honest.

The writing is what really killed it for me with this one. It just needed a lot more editing and better character development. There's a major disconnect, like the characters are caricatures, or ideas, instead of real people. I just didn't care about any of them.

As for the rest of the writing, there's a line that stuck with me from the first part of the story that basically sums up my dissatisfaction with the writing throughout the story. The whole book just sounds rough around the edges, like it lacked good editors. It's full of telling, instead of showing. The line said something about drinking water, and it read similar to, "it tasted orange and brown and gritty."...even though you can't taste orange. You see it. And if you tell me something tastes orange, I immediately think Koolaid or orange soda.

Also, you can't taste gritty. You feel it. I know that sounds nit-picky, but when I'm trying to understand a scene or moment, the word choices and senses impacted matter. Good choices have a strong impact and pull people into the story. Weak or bad choices are off-putting and lead to a disconnect for the reader. Basically, this story lacks imagery and description, and while I'm not a huge fan of excessive description, there has to be some level of successful scene setting in a story like this that's not all telling, as I want to see what's happening, not just read lists about things.

That basically sums up the writing throughout the book. It's just not as effective as it could/should be, because sentences and phrases are tossed around without any careful consideration for what is actually occurring. A good editor should have pushed for clarity and pointed out more of the issues in this story, like the poor use of clues, the too obvious setups and story line, and all the telling instead of showing. I'm giving the author credit for having good intentions and just having some blinders on to the writing issues, because I think this story could be significantly better if it had been edited more thoroughly. However, the actual editing, in the end, is done by the author, so the reality is that it's not clear where the fault lies. The only thing is clear is that this needs more work.

I guess what it boils down to is that I just can't connect to this book, and typically I love this genre.

Maybe it's just me.

Pages: 304

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### **Tara Davis says**

This was a very easy read! It definitely kept my attention throughout.

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### **Cora ? Tea Party Princess says**

**5 Words: Terrifying, real, special, friendship, mind-blowing.**

Right from the start, I knew that The One Safe Place wasn't your average speculative young adult story. Firstly, it can probably be read by anyone aged eight or up. And perhaps younger readers would realise that

childhood is something to cherish.

A common theme in most media today is global warming and the possible impact that this could have. The One Safe Place explores it wonderfully. This could happen. The world that you explore as you read - yes, reading this book is like walking through this world, excellent writing - is quite terrifying. Imagine being truly alone in world but being surrounded by so many others who are alone? And then imagine that you find paradise. Of course it isn't as you first think.

The main character has synaesthesia, although it's never referenced as such. This makes the world come more alive. And it makes the mystery all the more terrifying. Devin seems to see what others cannot and the sense of foreboding grows and grows to a thrilling climax.

This story gets darker and darker with each page but there is plenty of humour spread throughout too so it never gets too much.

I'd recommend this to pretty much everyone. It was a fantastic read.

*I received a copy of this for free via Goodreads First Reads.*

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### **Tracy The Great says**

I think it was so good and chilling at the end it made me want to jump out of my seat because of all the great action!!!

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### **Veronica says**

The book was a YA read. But, I enjoyed reading it. Not usually what I would read, kept pace and leaving you with a bit of what happens next ending. Kind of a cliff hanger. Considering the author writes another book after this one going in a bit of different direction of fantasy. Not to trust adults at all. Only thing I didn't like about it. They both are fantasy but cataloged YA. Maybe its just me.

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### **Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says**

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life

I received an advance reader edition of this book from Algonquin Books and Net Galley for the purpose of providing an honest review.

4 Stars

I enjoyed this book and found the story intriguing. This book has a middle grade audience but I found it quite appealing even as an adult. The story pulls you in right away and keeps you interested until the very end.

This book is set in a future world that is quite hot. Devin has lived on the farm with his grandfather but when

his grandfather suddenly dies, Devin must take care of the entire farm alone. When he realizes that the task is more than he can handle, Devin decides to head to the city to find help. City life turns out to be much harder than he expected. Devin is quickly robbed of all of his possessions and must make his way with nothing more than the clothes on his back.

Devin soon meets a young girl, Kit, who has learned how to navigate the cruel city. When the rains come, Devin and Kit seek refuge at an old school with other kids where they meet Roman. Roman invites Devin to come with him to a place where he will be taken care of, a home for children. Devin agrees to go but only if Kit can come as well. On the surface the children's home is more than they could have ever wished for but soon they learn that not everything is quite as it seems.

I found the world building in this book to be well done. I could completely envision the cruel city where children are left to fend for themselves in a world with too little food. The children's home was a world of its own even though it was largely a facade. I thought that the book was well written with believable characters.

I do have to admit that I am still a bit confused by Devin's special abilities and found that it added nothing to the story. I also thought that it was strange that Devin wanted to go to the children's home when his goal was to get help for his farm.

I would recommend this book. This is the first book by Tania Unsworth that I have had a chance to read. I plan to look for other works by this author in the future.

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## **Cathie says**

This is a really good story about a boy, named Devin, with a special gift for memorizing everything he sees almost instantly. Devin is forced to travel to the city after his Grandfather dies and there he meets Kit, a street kid with savy and a soft spot for shiny things. He also meets a street trafficker who tells him of a wonderful "Paradise" place where all kids are safe and have more than enough food and toys. Kit, being more street savvy doesn't believe that such a place can exist, but Devin believes and they both find themselves being driven to the Paradise Adoption. ... Things are not what they appear to be.

The Adoption Center is a front for more bizarre activity but if I tell you it will spoil a big piece of the plot, so go read this for yourself. It's very good. It held my interest and I wanted to find out what was going to happen next. All the characters were well defined with backgrounds and actions that held true to their personalities and the story moves at a good pace.

There are twists and turns and the plot line is unique. This is a very good story. Read it.

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