



# The Hill

*Karen Bass*

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## **The Hill** Karen Bass

Jared's plane has crashed in the Alberta wilderness, and Kyle is first on the scene. When Jared insists on hiking up the highest hill in search of cell phone reception, Kyle hesitates; his Cree grandmother has always forbidden him to go near it. There s no stopping Jared, though, so Kyle reluctantly follows. After a night spent on the hilltop with no cell service the teens discover something odd: the plane has disappeared. Nothing in the forest surrounding them seems right. In fact, things seem very wrong. And worst of all, something is hunting them. Karen Bass, the multi-award-winning author of Graffiti Knight and Uncertain Soldier, brings her signature action packed style to a chilling new subject: the Cree Wihtiko legend. Inspired by the real story of a remote plane crash and by the legends of her Cree friends and neighbours, Karen brings eerie life or perhaps something other than life to the northern Alberta landscape in The Hill."

## **The Hill Details**

Date : Published March 31st 2016 by Pajama Press

ISBN : 9781772780024

Author : Karen Bass

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Adventure, Cultural, Canada, Horror, Fantasy, Thriller, Fiction

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# From Reader Review The Hill for online ebook

## Red2Delta says

The book is about a teenage boy named Jared was going to visit his father but about half way there something goes wrong and the plane starts to lower to the surface covered in treetops. Thankfully Jared and the pilot survive on impact, but what really saved them was another teenager named Kyle that stays in the bush during his summers. After Jared was safe and out of the plane he started complaining about how he doesn't have signal, so he looks around to find the highest hill and once he spots his next destination he starts going that way. Kyle told him not to because that was a very dangerous place to go, but because Jared thought he had the best phone ever he could easily get signal. Kyle ended up following Jared because he would believe that his Kokume ( grandmother ) would want him to help this stranger because he is not accustomed to the way things work in the bush. Turns out when Jared got to the top he hasn't received signal, and soon they found out that going up the hill was a mistake.

I really liked this book because it gave a good sense of adventure and thrill, with combining the need to work together to get to a shared goal between the characters. When Jared and Kyle fought, they realized that they needed each other to help fix the mess they have caused. I found it amazing how two characters can see how they can have mutual trust and respect for each other in a short amount of time, an example is when they needed to jump off a cliff into a body of water Kyle stated he wasn't a strong swimmer but Jared ensured him that it'll be ok because he swims back home. It's also really funny to realize how many times Kyle has helped Jared throughout the book out of pure kindness, but there are many times that they end up arguing because of Jared being an idiot in general. Overall I really enjoyed this book and seeing how teamwork and trust can play a big roll in the outcome of all of this.

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## Keitha says

3.5-4 Stars

"Sometimes scared is the smartest thing you can be..."

This book is downright creepy. While the characters were not perfect, the plot was fast paced and gave me goosebumps. I also think it provides an important look at modern prejudice in Alberta and Canada at large.

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## That One Librarian says

2.5-2.75

"The Hill" is a forthcoming release from Canadian, YA author Karen Bass. Hill has previously written four other novels for young adults, including 2011's "Drummer Girl". You can find her online at <http://www.karenbass.ca/>

"The Hill" begins when Jared - a wealthy, if diminutive teen - rushes back to consciousness after the private jet on which he was traveling crash-landed in the northern Alberta wilderness. Struggling to calm himself, Jared is rescued by another boy named Kyle. The two quickly find the pilot (unconscious and badly injured)

and Kyle explains that his brother has run back to the family camp for help. Jared, however, wants to get out immediately. Even before the tale's exposition is complete, Jared and Kyle are at each other's throats. Kyle is Cree; Jared is white. They are both exceptionally prejudiced and neither trusts the other. As Jared starts up a nearby hill while Kyle warns him to stop. Jared refuses to heed the warning and the boys soon find themselves stuck on the hill in quickly-approaching night and no rescue. Things get eerie when the crash site disappears and strange sounds haunt the night. Together the conflict-ridden teens find themselves in another world and hunted by a terrifying legend. It is very clear that they will only survive if they can both set aside their differences and work together.

Bass has created a well-paced and engaging read in "The Hill". There is at least one truly scary moment worthy of gooseflesh when the haunting legend is first unveiled. However, Bass's characters fall so short that these moments cannot save it. Both Kyle and Jared are woefully one-dimensional. The "you're not like me, so I don't like you" dialog is worthy of an elementary or middle-grade novel at best. It flattens the characters and makes for infuriating dialogue. To top it off, the switch from hate to best friends happens in mere seconds; it is not even remotely believable. In the end, the resolution for Kyle feels whole but Jared is more of an incomplete post script. "The Hill" could have been so much more, but one-dimensional characters sabotage a brilliant premise.

I had access to an advance reader copy of this book courtesy of NetGalley. Thank you!

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## **Nicolas Lontel says**

Je voulais lire des livres qui utilisaient le Wendigo comme personnage, après Polatouche, je tombe maintenant sur ce roman pour jeunes adultes (à partir de 12-13 ans sans problème à mon avis).

En gros, le protagoniste (Jared) est le fils d'un riche homme, son avion privé dans lequel il voyageait s'écrase, tombe en territoire Cri et il rencontre un chasseur, Kyle, de son âge (16 ans) et s'aventure par accident avec lui dans le monde des esprits où ils sont pourchassés par un Wendigo (Wîhtiko dans le livre) et ils doivent aussi sortir de ce monde pour retourner dans le monde réel.

Par où commencer...?

Ce livre n'est en rien original, les différentes péripéties se résument à se balancer des insultes (parfois racistes) tout le long, fuir un ours, sortir d'un marécage mouvant, fuir Wîhtiko et trouver de quoi manger (et évidemment sortir du monde des esprits, mais il était assez évident qu'une fois qu'ils se débarrassaient du Wîhtiko, il n'y aurait pas de problème).

Pourquoi je n'ai pas aimé?

Le chasseur cri est un le cliché le plus complet de l'autochtone: vivant en tribu, chassant, ayant une connexion très proche avec la nature (il peut dire à un ours d'arrêter), les esprits et la famille; super agile en tout, utilise des expressions pour désigner le protagoniste qui signifie « homme blanc » à répétition, pense que les Blancs sont des bons à rien (et ils s'avèrent que ses intuitions sont bonnes), considère la ville comme ennemi, vient toujours à la rescousse du protagoniste (sauf à deux reprises où c'est l'inverse).

Le protagoniste lui est un jeune homme blanc dont les parents sont très riches qui n'a pas de véritables amis, ses parents lui donnent de l'argent à défaut d'affection, crache à peu près toutes les insultes et stéréotypes du jeune homme cris qui ne l'abandonnent jamais malgré toutes les fois où il le réclame presque. Bref, deux mondes à l'opposés complètement et qui passent leur temps à se détester, mais doivent travailler ensemble pour s'échapper du monde des esprits.

Comme si ces lieux communs n'étaient pas suffisants, la fidélité du jeune cri envers Jared est complètement insensée surtout considérant le nombre de remarques racistes qui lui sont adressées, Kyle lui sauve aussi la vie tout le temps sauf évidemment vers la fin où c'est le protagoniste qui lui sauve la vie une fois et qui à l'idée de génie de comment se débarrasser de Wíhtiko (alors que tout le restant du récit, c'est le Cri qui montre à tout faire et comment survivre), le Cri l'accepte tout de go dans "sa tribu" du monde de l'esprit (et évidemment deviennent amis à la fin).

C'est un récit où l'auteure dit dans sa postface qu'elle espère que les gens se seront identifiés à Kyle qui est astucieux (pis toute pis toute), mais pourquoi ne pas l'avoir fait le protagoniste alors plutôt?? Pourquoi aussi donner le beau rôle final du sauvetage à Jared. Il m'est avis que c'est définitivement un récit de formation d'un jeune homme blanc en terre sauvage et que Kyle n'est vraiment là qu'à titre de compagnon fidèle le temps qu'il apprenne à se débrouiller. Après coup, Jared est tellement à l'aise dans la nature qu'il est même considéré comme membre de la tribu cri. Il y aurait aussi des remarques à faire avec le totemisme autour du carcajou. Il y aurait encore BEAUCOUP trop de choses à dire en fait.

Bref, aucunes péripéties originales ou même intéressantes, un roman bourré de lieux communs, de clichés et de propos racistes, plein de "bonnes intentions", mais qui ne trouvent pas de support et qui donne un roman vraiment médiocre. Au moins, c'est bien écrit (traduit).

À éviter à moins que vous ne fassiez un panorama des Vendredi dans la littérature ou que vous voulez absolument lire tous les livres qui parlent de Wendigo vu son absence dans le paysage littéraire.

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### **Karen Upper says**

The Hill by Karen Bass is a simple title that belies the fact that I found this to be anything but a simple story. It is a tale of two totally mismatched teen boys from different backgrounds, that find themselves in a race to 'out run', 'out wit' and survive in a parallel dimension -- oral accounts shrouded in the mists of the distant past that are often regaled as scary stories told around a campfire. Only by learning to trust and working together do Jared and Kyle discover that they might have a remote possibility of enduring and escaping the nightmare they find themselves in!

Highly Recommended --- if you can handle the fear factor!

Thank you to Pajama Press for the ARC.

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### **Stefanie Michelle says**

Full review will be posted [HERE](#) closer to publication

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 5 Stars

Goodreads

Author's Website

**"Sometimes afraid is the smartest thing you can be."**

I am constantly thinking that there isn't enough good Canadian fiction out there. Especially Canadian YA. But I just found what has become one of my favourite books of all time - and it **just so happens** to be set in Northern Alberta and feature fascinating Canadian First Nations lore.

I have a kind of wordy, thought-out review style on this blog lately, and I'm trying to stick with that and not just flail around madly like a nerd. I just loved this book so hard.

It also really reminds me of *Winterkill* by Kate Boorman (I loaned my gorgeous hardcover out and lost it. MUST REBUY. SO GOOD. And there's a sequel out now. Ugh. Forever behind, LOL.)

**What I Liked:** Okay, this book was brilliant. First of all, the plot. The plot was amazing, captivating, page turning, and satisfying. It was also *scary*. Honestly, I am pretty sure I will think of this book every time I walk in or near a forest until I am old and grey. And it's so hard to fangirl about why it was scary because you're better off going in **without knowing anything**. But there were some seriously spine-chilling lines where even sitting here thinking about them I feel on edge.

This book has two male main characters. No love interests. The author did a phenomenal job of capturing their voices. Both of them managed to annoy me and make me want to strangle them at times, but it was always genuine to their character. For example, Kyle, who is Cree, talks constantly about the racial difference between him and the other main character, Jared. Jared, who is white, constantly acts like a spoiled bratty twit. To the point where I was kind of annoyed with both of them.

But by the end of the book, I didn't mind it. Heck, I kind of liked it. Yes, I feel like Kyle has a victim complex to some degree and it plays into the constant 'white people are the reason for everything bad to have

ever happened ever' and Jared's whiny rich boy thing played right into that stereotype. But it **worked**. Whatever the author's views and whether or not I agree with them, she made me understand who the characters were and why they believed and behaved as they did. Not many authors can pull that off - hopefully I'm making sense here! I fell in love with both of the boys - not romantically. It's common to write swoon-worthy male MC's. It's something else entirely to write characters you can 'laugh and cry' with and feel like you're right there as they grow as people!

The writing was fast paced and often beautiful. I highlighted lots of little lines on my Kindle app because they were just too pretty! I also learned a lot about Cree legends which was very interesting. This book would be wonderful to read in school. There are so many issues to discuss (including social issues like I stated above) as well as historical and cultural details to dive into learning more about. I plan to homeschool my son Dawson, and I hope we can read this book together when he's older!

I also really felt like it would make an **amazing** movie. I kind of hope this book blows up impossibly big and gets made. I don't say that about too many books, but seriously. *I would probably pee myself in fear if I watched a movie version.*

**What I Didn't Like:** Well, there were a few times I felt 'adrift' in the writing, where it wasn't clear how a setting was laid out or whether it was day or night (Once I started noting more when it was daytime, the book was even creepier to me. Even forests in the day aren't safe?!), but they were few and far between and might be worked out in the final copy.

There was one super weird analogy about a basketball made of ice in someone's stomach (?) that dragged me from the story.

That's it. That's all I got, LOL.

**Final Thoughts:** Read this. I don't care who you are or if you're Canadian, read it. Especially if you marvel at character development.

Oh, and if you like reading about male MC's and/or books without romance. Disclaimer: I like female MC's and I like romance. But sometimes I change it up.

\*\*\* A big thank you to Pajama Press and Netgalley for providing me with an ARC in exchange for my honest review. \*\*\*

### **Content Warnings:**

Love,

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### **Marsha says**

Karen Bass has made a name for herself by writing well-researched and page-turning historical fiction from a post-WWII German teen's point of view. What I love about her books is that she breathes life into bits of history that no one else is writing about and she does it with muscular aplomb and page-turning suspense. *The Hill* is utterly different from anything Bass has written before. It's a contemporary thriller about Jared, a rich spoiled teen whose plane crashes in remote northern Alberta, and Kyle, a Cree teen witnesses the crash and comes to assist. The two protagonists are the same sex and age but that's the sum of their similarities. Jared survives the crash with just a concussion and his pilot is alive but injured. His cell phone has no service and he wants to get to the top of a nearby hill in order to light up a few bars on his phone. Kyle tells him that they cannot do that. It's a forbidden place.

They go anyway.

There's no cell service, and when they come back down, there's no plane.

It turns out that by climbing the forbidden hill, the teens have slipped into a different dimension, and this alternate reality is a dangerous place populated with creatures from Cree legend. Now that they've slipped into this other dimension, how do they get out? Only by setting aside their differences can the boys puzzle that out and save themselves.

In less capable hands, the novel's premise could be a disaster but Karen Bass anchors the fantasy element with such gritty, sore and smelly reality and such nail-biting terror that the reader has no choice but to be hooked.

I read this novel in a single long gulp because I could not put it down. And after I was finished, it stayed on my mind.

A phenomenal page-turner. Love the premise. Love the writing. Don't read this book in bed.

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### **Teresa says**

I first met Karen Bass through the Grande Prairie Cygnets Writers' Group. I am so pleased that she is



kicking-ass with one award-winning book after another. Although this book is for young readers, I think that many adults will also enjoy the adventures that the two main characters are thrust into as they journey to find their way home under hopeless circumstances in the vast Northern Alberta wilds. Karen spices the pages with Cree words, culture, and history. There is a nice blend of clash of cultures, history, geography, horror, suspense, and adventure.

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## **pati says**

I thought this book was going to be another Hatchet, but it isn't, so that's good. I got to the part about the windigo and had to stop because I am a 'fraidy cat. The writing is great and believable enough to scare me into stopping.

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## **Peter says**

I'm an adult and I really, really liked this book. My teenage self loved it. Extracting from the back cover blurb by Larry Loyie: "gripping story of survival and mystery..." and "successfully weaves Cree mythology into ..." and "learn that outwitting a creature from the spirit world...". And he's nailed it.

Now for a rant:

Pity, then, that the book will not reach enough of its intended audience - Young Adult readers. It's not the writer's fault. And kudos to Pajama Press for publishing it. I picked the book up and read based on a recommendation; without that recommendation the book, as it sits on a bookstore shelf, is invisible. And that is almost criminal when books compete ferociously for attention. Why invisible, and or a complete turn-off? Lets start with the front cover, the first and second impression is of mud. A visual field of mud. At third impression, and let's face it, few get past a first impression, reveals that this a "forest" scene with hints of trees and a dull sky. The embossed title, in scarlet, is almost lost in the field of mud. The author's name is prominent enough at the bottom of the cover but, between the title and author's name, in the middle of the cover and in a smaller font, one finds: "By the award-winning author of Graffiti Knight". What's that doing in the middle? My teenage self, had it gotten past the mud, would have been immediately repulsed - not even looking at the copy found on the French Flaps. (Yes, imo, the money spent on those flaps was an utter waste). To cap it all off, the back cover blurb from Larry Loyie ends with: "...outwitting a creature from the spirit world *is only possible with [the] mutual respect [of the two protagonists].*"

None of the above, again imo, appeals to the intended reader. It might appeal, or at least not repulse, librarians and teachers.

Pity.

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## **Melissa says**

3.5/5 I'd love to say that this is a really original story (since I've never read anything like it before), but it's actually based on an old Cree legend. I loved how the author created a modern take on it and made it accessible to young readers. The only thing I found particularly annoying was the way the author was

constantly going on about rich white kids and poor First Nations kids. I think it's excellent that these topics are brought up and addressed in kids' literature, but it really felt excessive. It seemed like every decision or comment made by either of the two main characters was supposedly because of their race or social class. I think it would have been just as effective if the characters had just been able to go about on their adventure and become friends, then have realizations about race and class at pivotal moments in the book.

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## **Yuhang says**

Book name: The Hill Writer: Karen Bass Review written By: Yuhang

So first of all, I really enjoyed this book and I like the characters. The book is about two teens Kyle and Jared trapped in a spirit world. And how they worked together. This review you'll know everything that I know about the book, well not much. The book is based on a movie by the way.

### Short summary

'Jared's plane has crashed in the Alberta wilderness (desolate), and Kyle is first on the scene. When Jared insists on hiking up the highest hill in search of cell phone reception, Kyle hesitates; his Cree grandmother has always forbidden him to go near it. There's no stopping Jared, though, so Kyle reluctantly follows. After a night spent on the hilltop—with no cell service—the teens discover something odd: the plane has disappeared. Nothing in the forest surrounding them seems right. In fact, things seem very wrong. And worst of all, something is hunting them.'

What's the problem or what happened to the boys?

- Jared's dad's plane crashed.
- Lost in the forest.
- Trouble finding food and water.
- Trapped in a spirit world.
- The worst is that they meet Wendigo, a legend that lives in the cold forest.
- Conflict between them.

### Conflict

Kyle and Jared need food and water to survive.

They must convince each other to do something

They tried hard to kill Wendigo so they can leave the spirit world. They made several plans and in the end it was moved.

### Problem between Kyle and Jared

There's a pretty big issue about their conversation. A white rich kid (you can know it from his father) and a poor looking native boy (in Jared's way) working together, there's gotta be something different about what they did. Learn more on the "what did I learn" section.

How the book is connected to me, the world and other books? (Connection)

-To Me

I connected to the characters because I can feel the exhaustion that they have when they were climbing up the hill, I can feel the fear when they met Wendigo and I can also feel the curiosity when they hear something weird.

I enjoy the book because I like history and historical fiction books.(Comment)

-To Other Books

I don't know any book that is related to the book 'The Hill'. But I do know there is a movie that is similar to this book.I think is called Cree legend.

-To the world

Kraken,wendigo,yeti...all those kinds of unknown mysterious creatures, monsters, we really should 'check them out', because someday-if they are real-they might attack us human, and it'll be to late if that happens.

What question do I still have?

-I searched up Wendigo on YouTube and it says that Wendigo lived in cold forest but why Kyle and Jared in the book showed us that they found Wendigo at the top of a hill and it was hot that day?(I know this is sort of unnecessary, I'm just curious.)

-How did Kyle get to the forest and met Jared,if he lives in the forest,how and why did he get lost too?

-I'm still not sure where and how is the pilot?

-'sometimes scared is the smartest thing you can be.'

I don't really know who actually create this phrase in the book and what's the meaning of it.

In my opinion, i thought we should be calm instead of scared.

What did I learn?I learned how a rich kid work together with a native,rural kid.And compare what they did differently when they got lost,examples:1 While Kyle was trying to search for clues,observing the forest around him and trying to find a way out,Jared was testing the WiFi,call 911 or that kind of stuff.2 The book told us a lot of things about why they can't be friends'Reason #11 we couldn't be friends:why would a nice guy want to be friends with a PCB?'(From the the book)something like that.3 Kyle build the tent for Jared,Kyle teach Jared what to eat and what not to in the forest and Kyle heal the rift on Jared's leg,without Kyle,Jared can't survive. The best benefit that I know about Jared is that he can chat...a lot!

I learned that if two people help each other and cooperate instead of quarreling at each other,things will get better always.

About the author/book

The book is write by an award-winning author of Graffiti Knight,she is Karen Bass.She wrote some other books,some famous ones are 'Uncertain Soldier'&'Drummer Girl.She's a Canadian YA (Young Adult)Author.She is also a writer of historical fiction for young adult.She won many award by writing fun historical book for young adult.Just like the book that I am doing right now,'The Hill'.

It's about an archaic creature that lives in the forests.

Wendigo/Other

Wendigo is an unknown creature that lives in the cold forests of North America(You might think that we are in the region, but don't worry, it's still unknown).It's sort of scary, Wendigo is a demonic spirit that is believed by native American. The 'Monster' is human-like(In my opinion, people can only think about monsters that looks like human. They just put some decoration, make them larger, taller or more scary.),but taller and gaunt. They have sunken eyes and yellowish, decaying, rotten skin. They are super thin and have an unending hunger that craves only human flesh. 'The best known way to become a Wendigo is through cannibalism(Eating other humans).'

What can I do better next time?  
I'll add more detail and write more on the conflict section.

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### **Philippa Dowding says**

I was not prepared for how spooky this book was. I knew from the back cover that it was about Cree legends, and two teenagers lost in the Cree spirit world. But I had no idea how realistic it would seem. Or how plausible and terrifying. I loved it and read it in two sittings.

Story-line briefly: rich white kid from Edmonton goes down in a plane crash in the bush, and is rescued by a Cree teenager. White kid demands to climb a forbidden hill to get a phone signal, and rouses an angry spirit who pursues the pair for the rest of the book...

... unfortunately for them, it's the Windigo, which eats human flesh and is never satisfied.

Now, part of my chest-clutching terror at reading this story, comes from my childhood. My father told stories about Windigo whenever we went to Manitoulin Island, which was often. My six year old self has a very vivid image of that monster. And my adult self has quite a remarkably intact response when I read about it again!

There are great moments in this story. When the boys suspect that something weird has happened overnight, and their slow realization that they are in the spirit world. Their ability to see into the thin space of sacred ground, burned by the sweet grass. Their gradual ability to work together to survive.

But the best parts of the story for me, were the description of the hunting Windigo. When it finds them in the ancient village of moss huts ...

GULP!

The book has been nominated for the OLA Red Maple award but I'm sure it's the first of many nominations. Young readers will be riveted, terrified, plus they'll learn quite a bit about Cree legend and culture along the way. What could be better?

All in all, a great book. If you're looking for First Nations reads, add this to your list. It reminded me of an updated *Lost in the Barrens* (Farley Mowat), or *The Orenda* (Joseph Boyden) for a younger audience.

Here's my review of *The Orenda*: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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### **Nina says**

I read this after I found out at the library for B and he really enjoyed it. Interesting blend, a tale of survival mixed with a Cree legend. Enjoyed the read!

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## **Sharon says**

Pajama Press and NetGalley provided me with an electronic copy of *The Hill*. This is my honest opinion of the book.

Jared wakes up to find that he has been in a plane crash on his Dad's company jet. Rescued by Kyle, a local teenager with a chip on his shoulder, the boys end up in the spirit world without a clear exit back to their actual lives. Chased by a creature that has existed in many legends in many different cultures, Jared and Kyle need to learn how to rely on each other and how to use their surroundings to their advantage. As a member of the Cree tribe, Kyle has a lot that he can teach Jared about life in the bush, as well as the real world.

*The Hill* is a story about survival for two teenagers from very different worlds. Jared's privileged lifestyle is no match for the harshness of the bush, not to mention his jaunt through the spirit world. I was not expecting a novel with references to lore and legend, as I thought that this was a book about survival. The addition of the unexpected made the book more interesting and kept the plot moving. Well paced with completely developed characters, *The Hill* is a book that I would recommend to readers who like YA adventure with a twist of horror and paranormal elements.

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