



BOOK RESUME: THE GRIEF KEEPER

BOOK SYNOPSIS

It's the summer before middle school and eleven-year-old Bug's best friend Moira has decided the two of them need to use the next few months to prepare. For Moira, this means figuring out the right clothes to wear, learning how to put on makeup, and deciding which boys are cuter in their yearbook photos than in real life. But none of this is all that appealing to Bug, who doesn't particularly want to spend *more* time trying to understand how to be a girl. Besides, there's something more important to worry about: A ghost is haunting Bug's eerie old house in rural Vermont...and maybe haunting Bug in particular. As Bug begins to untangle the mystery of who this ghost is and what they're trying to say, an altogether different truth comes to light—Bug is transgender.

Seventeen-year-old Marisol has always dreamed of being American, learning what Americans and the US are like from television and Mrs. Rosen, an elderly expat who had employed Marisol's mother as a maid. When she pictured an American life for herself, she dreamed of a life like Aimee and Amber's, the title characters of her favorite American TV show. She never pictured fleeing her home in El Salvador under threat of death and stealing across the US border as "an illegal", but after her brother is murdered and her younger sister, Gabi's, life is also placed in equal jeopardy, she has no choice, especially because she knows everything is her fault. If she had never fallen for the charms of a beautiful girl named Liliana, Pablo might still be alive, her mother wouldn't be in hiding and she and Gabi wouldn't have been caught crossing the border.

But they have been caught and their asylum request will most certainly be denied. With truly no options remaining, Marisol jumps at an unusual opportunity to stay in the United States. She's asked to become a grief keeper, taking the grief of another into her own body to save a life. It's a risky, experimental study, but if it means Marisol can keep her sister safe, she will risk anything. She just never imagined one of the risks would be falling in love, a love that may even be powerful enough to finally help her face her own crushing grief.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"Hauntingly beautiful." —*School Library Journal*

"Villasante writes of first love with an authentic voice, beautifully capturing its nervousness, excitement, and awe. . . A story worth reading." —*Booklist*

"In her debut, Villasante captures the pressures of internalized racism in immigrants...Will grip readers and provoke empathy." —*Kirkus Reviews*

Title: The Grief Keeper

Author: Alexandra Villasante

Imprint: Nancy Paulsen Books

Publisher: Penguin Young Readers

On sale date: June 11, 2019

ISBN: 9780525514022

Format: Hardcover

Age Range*: 14 and up

Grade Range: Gr 9 Up

(Recommended by School Library Journal)

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Penguin Random House

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*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

“Villasante’s novel is for the reader who wants to get down and dirty with the emotional landscape, who wants a romance that is hard-earned and sweetly won. The Grief Keeper...[creates] a realistic yet still hopeful world seen through the gaze of an intelligent, curious protagonist.” —Shelf Awareness

“[An] engrossing debut. . . Villasante builds her novel about undocumented immigrants into a suspenseful story with credible relationships, satisfying character development, and elements of science fiction.” —*Publisher’s Weekly*

“Villasante tackles some interesting issues, especially about power and privilege, in this sci-fi touched tale of contemporary realism. . . the compelling issues and main character will keep readers absorbed and give them plenty to discuss.” —*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- An ALA Rainbow Booklist selection
- A YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers
- An Indie Next List Pick
- A Summer/Fall Indies Introduce Kids’ Debut List Pick
- A Lambda Literary Award Winner
- A New Mexico Land of Enchantment Black Bear Reading List selection

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [TeachingBooks.net resources](#)

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