

The Boy in the Burning House

By Tim Wynne-Jones

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An Edgar Award Winner

Two years after his father's mysterious disappearance, Jim Hawkins is coping -- barely. Underneath, he's frozen in uncertainty and grief. What did happen to his father? Is he dead or just gone? Then Jim meets Ruth Rose. Moody, provocative, she's the bad-girl stepdaughter of Father Fisher, Jim's father's childhood friend and the town pastor, and she shocks Jim out of his stupor when she tells him her stepfather is a murderer. "Don't you want to know who he murdered?" she asks. Jim doesn't. Ruth Rose is clearly crazy -- a sixteen-year-old misfit. Yet something about her fierce conviction pierces Jim's shell. He begins to burn with a desire for the truth, until it becomes clear that it may be more unsettling than he can bear. What is the real meaning of the strange prayers Father Fisher intones behind the door of his private sanctuary? Why does Ruth Rose suddenly disappear? And what really happened thirty years ago when a boy died in a burning house?

The Boy in the Burning House is the winner of the 2002 Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Mystery.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

From its opening scene, in which a teenage girl overhears her stepfather's creepy confessions, to its terrifying conclusion in a deserted mine shaft, Tim Wynne-Jones's *The Boy in the Burning House* has the magnetic energy of a well-crafted made-for-television thriller, without pausing for commercial breaks. Like the best of the TV thrillers, *The Boy in the Burning House* features a smiling, unredeemable villain: Father Fisher, who leads the Church of the Blessed Transfiguration in a remote farming community.

Fourteen-year-old Jim Hawkins's father, Hub, has disappeared, and Ruth Rose, the pastor's stepdaughter, tries to convince him that Fisher killed Hub. If that possibility isn't unsavory enough, Jim discovers that his dad and Fisher were both involved in a fire that killed another teenage boy 30 years before. It is the unraveling of this long-hidden mystery that gives *The Boy in the Burning House* its page-turning edginess. As Jim investigates his father's past, his memories of a gentle and morally upright father are twisted out of shape. "He felt like he was burning up," Wynne-Jones writes, "and there was a boy inside him hammering to get out into the air."

As the novel roars towards its conclusion, some of its psychological richness and narrative consistency are sacrificed to fast-paced action sequences. Fisher's midnight stalking of Jim and Ruth Rose is as terrifying as Jack Nicholson's frenzied house crawl in *The Shining*, but Wynne-Jones never fully explains how Fisher became a monster. *The Boy in the Burning House* is a great read, but one that starts to wobble like a house of cards once the thrills are over. --Lisa Alward

From Publishers Weekly

Wynne-Jones (Stephen Fair) builds an action-packed thriller around the mysterious disappearance of a Canadian farmer. Although Hub Hawkins's body was never found, most members of his small community believe he committed suicide. His son, Jim, starts to suspect foul play, however, after a teenage acquaintance, "crazy" Ruth Rose, makes some startling accusations. She insists that her stepfather, Eldon Fisher, a highly respected minister, is really a murderer. In order to find out if the pastor was really responsible for his father's death, Jim must first dig into the past and solve another mystery involving a boy a childhood friend of both Hub and Eldon Fisher who died in a burning house. Beginning on an ominous note with Jim's fateful meeting with Ruby, this eerie novel grows darker with the revelation of each succeeding secret. While the roles of Father Fisher and his wild-spirited stepdaughter are somewhat over-dramatized, the protagonist's character remains authentic, and the swift-moving plot will keep the pages turning. Ages 10-up.

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From School Library Journal

Gr 5-9-A Band-Aid of silence has protected Jim since his dad vanished two years earlier. Now a voice begins to pick away at his scab. Ruth Rose with her wild, dyed-black hair, nose ring, and history of uncontrolled anger and mental breakdowns says some things to him that he can't dismiss as sheer crazy talk. She tells him that Father Fisher killed his dad. Father Fisher was one of Dad's best friends, and he's Ruth Rose's stepfather. The pastor's voice soothes away Jim's misgivings. He is the well-respected pillar of the community, and his friendship with Jim's dad goes back to their youth and a town tragedy that bound them to secrecy. Now someone is trying to resurrect the past. Blackmail has unleashed the dangerous actions of a desperate man. Jim, slowly recovering from the trauma of his father's disappearance, isn't sure that Ruth Rose is for real. Her

prodding smacks him with the pain that he's effectively pushed away. When Father Fisher's behavior becomes increasingly odd and menacing, Jim's friendship with this bad-tempered girl becomes sure. While the plot develops as a murder-mystery, the underlying suspense pivots around the terror with which Ruth Rose and her mother are forced to live. The conflict builds methodically, waiting for Father Fisher to make his final play. The strengths and weaknesses in human relationships are consistently well drawn, yet the systematic introduction of so many characters from the past breaks the flow of the plot, sometimes slowing down its momentum.

Alison Follos, North Country School, Lake Placid, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michelle Beltran:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled *The Boy in the Burning House*. Try to face the book *The Boy in the Burning House* as your close friend. It means that it can being your friend when you experience alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you far more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let's make new experience and also knowledge with this book.

Marcus Leiva:

The actual book *The Boy in the Burning House* has a lot details on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was written by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research prior to write this book. This specific book very easy to read you will get the point easily after looking over this book.

Jess Cooke:

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try point that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition info. Even you love *The Boy in the Burning House*, you may enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout people. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Brett Munoz:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that will question when you got college students? We believe that that

question was given by teacher to their students. Many kinds of hobby, All people has different hobby. And also you know that little person such as reading or as looking at become their hobby. You should know that reading is very important and book as to be the point. Book is important thing to include you knowledge, except your own teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update regarding something by book. Many kinds of books that can you decide to try be your object. One of them is The Boy in the Burning House.

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