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***Knights of the Borrowed Dark* by Dave Rudden**

Publisher: Puffin / Penguin Random House

RRP \$23.00

For maximum effect, this spooky debut young adult novel is best read by candlelight in a creaky, old house. For more sensitive readers, a brightly-lit room is a better option to stave off nightmares.

Denizen Hardwick is a thirteen-year-old orphan boy who has lived in a gloomy, isolated orphanage since he was two-years-old. Other than a few early memories of his mother, Denizen has come to terms with his unknown past and copes with the dreary orphanage by immersing himself in reading old library books.

Denizen's one friend, Simon, makes orphanage life bearable. The two boys have been in the same dormitory since they were three-years-old. Simon's calm personality always reassures Denizen whenever he feels cynical about people. When Denizen receives an invitation to visit an aunt he's never heard of, Simon encourages him to accept.

It's the start of a new life for Denizen where he delves into parallel worlds inhabited by dangerous creatures. Alongside iron-fisted warriors he trains to quell shadowy monsters that emerge from the dark. He learns of his family heritage and the terrible cost of belonging to the Hardwick clan.

This first title in the series is a spine-tingling, deliciously scary read.

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Reviewed by children's author, Jean Bennett

