

Reviews

“Bowles' writing is lively and fun, yet still grounded and full of depth. The characters pop off of the page, all vividly realized. No one in this book is perfect, but they are all trying their best. They're real and three dimensional. They hide things from each other not to be mean, but because they don't want their loved ones to worry. This is a wonderful book that cleverly explores some powerful and painful emotions.”

—Victor Catano, best-selling author of *Tail & Trouble* and technical director at the Conservatory of Dance at Purchase College

“Tackles sensitive social issues with heartfelt emotion and tender wit. Readers will be instantly drawn into the world of Harper Ella Southwood.... Well-drawn characters and themes exploring the mysterious power of the unseen infuse this inventive, revelatory novel.”

—Kathleen Gerard, author of the novels *The Thing Is*, *In Transit*, and *Cold Comfort*

“The plot—revolving around the kinds of tragic occurrences that, unfortunately, we read about on an all-too-regular basis these days—feels real and relatable.... You quickly find yourself rooting for [Harper Southwood].... I found myself smiling as she sneezed.... All in all, an enjoyable and captivating read.”

—Brian S. Leon, author of *Havoc Rising*

“A novel that tugs on all the strings, bravely tackling a host of real issues affecting the average American teenager... While the people around her are falling apart, Harper tries to be the glue that holds them together, confronting life's tragedies with the maturity of an adult, the awkwardness of a teen, and the courage of a child. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes hopeful, always true, *Down in the Belly of the Whale* reminds us that life can hit hard no matter where we are in it, and our strength and charity will have more to say about how we handle those hits than the number of years we have behind us. Bowles' writing is superb, her characters dimensional and identifiable. *Down in the Belly of the Whale* is *Ordinary People* for a new generation.”

—Jason Parent, author of *What Hides Within* and *Seeing Evil*

“Kelley Kay's very personal story of 'growing up peculiar' is at all times humorous and harrowing, romantic and revealing, and an honest true-to-life lesson about being a teenager in this most interesting of times. Though not written for trolls, it's definitely a must read for anyone who's ever felt not quite human.”

—Shawn Clingman, English/drama teacher and director, Grand Junction High School.

“A consummate supernatural coming-of-age story. Harper Southwood is the girl I wouldn't have given a second look at when I was in high school, but look back on as an adult with regret at passing up the chance to get to know her.”

—Ira Creasman, a high school librarian who reads a lot of young adult fiction and ruminates over what might have been

“A fast-paced, yet heartfelt account of an average teenager girl whose life takes a series of sudden and unexpected turns.... Possibly the most important aspect of *Down in the Belly of the Whale*, are the messages that it conveys. Some of these messages are to be brave, even when you do not think you cannot be, that you belong even when you think you do not, that the person you thought you loved is not the right person for you, and that high school anatomy is as awful as I have I remember it.”

—Timmie Quitugua, librarian



Aionios Books, LLC

Publisher@AioniosBooks.com

P.O. Box 1010, Carlsbad, CA 92018

“I was immediately transported back to my high school hallways, my high school dramas... my high school self. Harper Southwood is winsome and charming. I laughed out loud when Harper talked and cried with her when she was afraid. The fact that acupuncture had a cameo role in the story was just icing on the cake.”
—Sara Beckner, MACoM (Masters of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine), Lac (Licensed Acupuncturist)



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