

Sunflowers in February by Phyllida Shrimpton

3 stars

An exploration of life after death.

'Lily wakes up one crisp Sunday morning on the side of the road' and soon realises she is dead. She has been the victim of a hit and run accident.

This is how the story begins and we soon learn that Lily is fifteen years old and has a twin brother, Ben. As she floats above the world she has left behind, she watches as the news of her violent death is given to her family and close friends. After her funeral she realises she is not ready, or prepared, to 'move on'. It is then that she visits her twin brother and decides to take over his body. She also learns that the person responsible for her death in the drink driving accident, is the mother of her boyfriend, who, overcome by guilt is now drinking herself into oblivion. Lily's violent death at such a young age is having a devastating effect on those around her and she soon witnesses her previously close family falling apart. Will she be able to help them, will she be able to expose her killer and will she feel able to return Ben's body to him and leave the physical world? These are the questions that are posed for the reader.

The nub of the story is where Lily inhabits Ben's body and she starts to live his life. This has its problems for her, as being a girl, she is out of her depth both physically and socially. She also begins to learn there is a dark side to her twin that was completely unknown to her.

I am always rather nervous of 'life after death' stories in 'The Lovely Bones' genre. There cannot be a reality to them and it brings out the sceptic in me. This was an ambitious subject for a first novel. There are interesting aspects but it didn't really hold my attention.

Jane

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.