

Kara Hemphill

Review: *Mr. Splitfoot* by Samantha Hunt

Samantha Hunt's third novel takes readers on a mysterious, often bizarre trip across the state of New York. Ruth is an orphan whose sister aged out of the foster care system, leaving Ruth behind at the Love of Christ! Foster Home. There, she forges a close friendship with Nat, who can purportedly speak to the dead. As Ruth and Nat near their eighteenth birthdays, they team up with a con man named Mr. Bell, who teaches them to make money from their act. But Mr. Bell has a mysterious past of his own that threatens to catch up to the trio. Fourteen years later, Ruth's niece Cora is pregnant with a married man's child when Ruth reappears, mute and determined to reach some unknown destination with Cora in tow. The two women embark on a months long journey filled with strange characters, potentially perilous encounters, and, as the book's epigraph suggests, dead things. Hunt weaves the past and present together intricately in alternating chapters, generating plenty of suspense and intrigue as both storylines barrel toward the same conclusion. Despite the many fantastical and macabre elements, Hunt manages to include very authentic meditations on motherhood, family, and death. This thought-provoking novel is sure to haunt readers long after the last page.