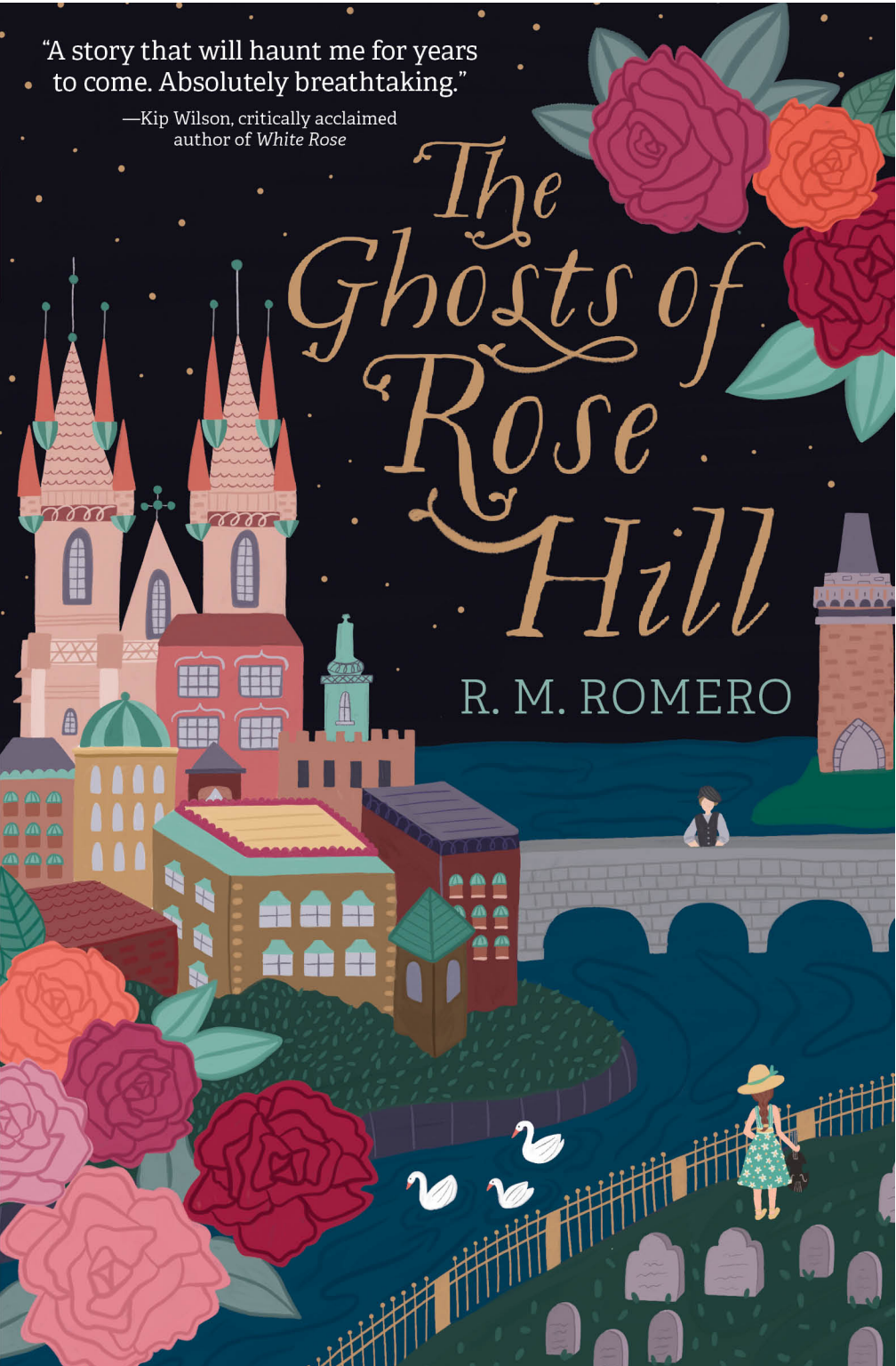


"A story that will haunt me for years  
to come. Absolutely breathtaking."

—Kip Wilson, critically acclaimed  
author of *White Rose*

# The Ghosts of Rose Hill

R. M. ROMERO





## Chapter One

**The city I was born in**  
embraces each person  
who steps off the mainland  
and onto the island  
known as Miami Beach.  
It understands  
we have nowhere else to go.

A dozen countries  
converge here;  
languages tangle  
like bright ribbons  
in the humid air.

Nearly everyone  
on the island is an expat,

a survivor of a tragedy  
that swallowed their family  
and nation  
whole.

So the last thing I expected  
was to be exiled  
by my own parents.

**When my grades**

in math and science  
slipped  
last semester,  
when my PSAT score  
was less than ideal,  
my parents blamed:

my best friends,  
Sarah and Martina,  
the parties  
I sometimes went to,  
my obsession  
with playing the violin.

They even asked  
if I was sneaking around  
with a boy.  
I swore I wasn't;  
they didn't believe me.

## *The Ghosts of Rose Hill*

Dad scowled  
as he looked over  
my report card;  
Mom raised her voice  
like a fist  
as she lectured me.

*I almost named you Marisol,  
because the sea gave me freedom—  
the freedom to do  
and say whatever I like.  
I studied hard;  
la pluma no pesa—  
the pen has no weight.  
You must do the same.  
Do not waste  
what the sea and I  
have given you!*

I'm glad  
she didn't name me  
after the ocean—  
it's much too powerful.  
I'm just a girl  
who dreams about magic  
and can't wrap her mind  
around algebraic equations.