FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Young Adult Fiction

After Hello
Lisa Mangum
Shadow Mountain
978-1-60907-010-6
(September 4, 2012)

The rush of New York City is the perfect backdrop for this sweet, young-adult story about the beauty and consequences of what happen after "Hello."

When Sara spots Sam, she can't help snapping his picture with her ever-present camera. The two become involved with the impossible task of finding the perfect piece of art for a temperamental actress. As they race through New York, Sam and Sarah's connection grows, and as the walls between them break down, they slowly learn about each other—and themselves.

The story is told in alternating viewpoints, giving readers perspective into both teens. The two main characters are fully, realistically imagined by best-selling author Lisa Mangum with complex histories, personalities, and mannerisms. Readers can imagine the nervous way Sara hides behind her sunglasses, and also understand why she feels the need to do so. Similarly, the tragedy of Sam's past speaks to his restless character.

The "after hello" premise takes on tremendous significance throughout the book. As the teens get closer, they both experience the fear, vulnerability, and ultimately the happiness that comes from being honest and connecting with another person. For example, It is only after Sam finally reveals his past that he can feel any sense of relief from the tremendous burden he has been carrying. Perhaps most importantly, as the characters open up to each other, they have to confront some of the most difficult truths about themselves. Her conversations with Sam help Sara realize just how guarded she has been, and how much she has clung to the past.

Though the characters are realistic, there are more romanticized elements that not all readers may believe. However, teens who appreciate more romantic fiction will love the instant spark Sam and Sara feel toward each other as well as the rewarding ending.

The strengths of the book may lie more in the themes and relationships Mangum creates rather than an intricate or incredibly compelling plot. However, the subtlety and liveliness she brings to her characters, as well as the lovely themes about relationships make for a sensitive

young-adult novel.

Alicia Sondhi