

Alone: Survival is on the Line

C. D. Shelton

Choice Publishing House

(334pp)

978-0-9991517-1-6

Alone is a detailed coming-of-age story about survival and identity.

In C. D. Shelton's young adult adventure *Alone*, a plane crash forces a rebellious teen to confront his role in his rift with his distant, workaholic father.

Wall Street executive Baron Hunt is sending his fourteen-year-old son Morgan to the Royal Military Academy in Toronto because of Morgan's lackadaisical attitude toward school. Baron tasks his personal pilot Tony with flying Morgan to the academy. En route, the plane flies into a flock of snow geese and crashes on the remote northern shore of frozen Lake Erie. Morgan escapes the wreckage with Tony, who dies soon after. When a raging blizzard blunts any hope of his immediate rescue, Morgan is forced to fend for himself. Meanwhile, a worried Baron attempts to rescue his son before elements take their toll.

The story deals with themes of loss, survival, and identity. Following the death of Morgan's mother, Morgan and Baron have grown distant; Baron deals with his grief by delving into work, while Morgan's coping mechanism is neglecting his schoolwork. The plane crash serves as the center point of these three themes: Morgan once again experiences loss while forging his own identity and struggling to survive; the event is a wake-up call for Baron, who confronts the possibility that his grief has played a role in his crumbling relationship with his son.

The narrative alternates between its two main characters' points of view. In the beginning, Morgan appears to be a lost, indifferent teen whose rebelliousness is stoked in response to his father's disinterest. But he is also resourceful, methodical, and clever in plotting his survival in the Canadian wilderness, as when he harvests Cessna parts to fish, cook, and trap wild game. Baron demonstrates similar traits as he searches for his missing son, if he is more hesitant and behaves foolishly during dangerous circumstances.

Language is straightforward and easy to follow. Paragraphs are almost scientific in their reliance on logical, step-by-step descriptions of the action. This directness also highlights characters' thoughts and motivations. The dialogue is stiff, though.

Transitions between the different parts of the story are abrupt. The story takes its time establishing Morgan's methodical approach to survival and Baron's desperate rescue mission. Their reunion feels rushed, and the last third of the book departs from survival and rescue to deal with Morgan's adaptation to military school, diluting its rewards.

Alone is a detailed, if emotionally distant, coming-of-age story about survival and identity.

NANCY POWELL (December 29, 2018)

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