FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Young Adult Fiction

Disconnected
Shelley Hrdlitschka
Orca Book Publishers
978-1-55143-105-5
(November 30, 1998)

Many young people wonder if they are adopted, or perhaps half of a set of twins separated at birth. Hrdlitschka capitalizes on this dual fascination in her new novel for teens. Disconnected is about twin brothers, Tanner and Alex, who are not aware of each other's existence or that they have been adopted. The author juxtaposes Tanner's and Alex's stories in alternating chapters, like carefully placed footsteps moving ever closer. Even after readers figure out the boys? true relationship, Hrdlitschka's plot contains surprises.

Disconnected by geography and family ties, the fourteen-year-old boys are mysteriously connected by dreams and thoughts. Tanner, who lives inland from Vancouver with his family, suffers from a recurring nightmare and headaches. Alex lives near the coast with his alcoholic, abusive father and his powerless mother. Alex runs away to Vancouver, where he desperately tries to live independently. But he is just a kid. Unable to get work, he falls victim to criminals who prey on the vulnerability of hungry and tired runaways. He is in danger and is expected to commit a crime for his captors. Instead, he decides to make a run for it.

Meanwhile, Tanner has discovered that he is able to exert mind over matter. During a trip to Vancouver with his hockey team, he wills an object to fall on a tormentor's head. Thrown off the team for this misdeed, Tanner heads for a park. By chance he meets Cara, who has come to Vancouver to search for her missing boyfriend, Alex. Mistaken identities lead to rough times for Tanner when the bad guys think they have recaptured Alex. Tanner is badly beaten, and ultimately, it is up to Alex to rescue the boy on the news who looks like him.

Adults will appreciate that the author does not glamorize the life of a runaway; life on the streets is fraught with hardship and peril. In the end Tanner returns to his good and loving family; Alex, to his mother, who has finally left his abusive father. The boys remain happily linked

through their telepathic powers.

Hrdlitschka is also the author of Beans on Toast, which deals with another timely topic for teens: divorce. And although some dialog in Disconnected is weak, the engaging plot will make teenage readers look forward to staying connected to this Canadian author's imagination.

Linda Salisbury