

Every Pointed Star

David Booth

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Moving and consistently enjoyable, *Every Pointed Star* follows eighteen-year-old J.D. Johnson as he struggles along his particularly rocky road to young adulthood. Secrets, lies and self-doubt are just some of the obstacles in his path, and his journey to overcome them results in a memorable and rewarding read.

An only child, J.D. is largely ignored by his parents. His mother is selectively deaf, his father purposely oblivious. They are so removed and distant from him and each other that he never even receives a “good night” from his father, who shares his room. “I always figured that I must’ve done something to disappoint him, and her too, but I couldn’t remember what it was,” J.D. says. “Maybe it was something so bad I wouldn’t let myself remember it. Or something that happened so long ago I couldn’t remember it.”

A loner in high school, J.D.’s only outlet is football, at which he succeeds primarily through cunning deception, a method carefully (if unethically) encouraged by his coach. A scholarship leads J.D. to college where his penchant for deception proves an unreliable crutch both athletically and academically. A violent consequence of his actions leaves him with a wired-shut jaw and a great deal of time to reconsider his choices in the past and discover who he truly wants to be in the future. Forced into silence, he learns to listen, and as his body heals, his soul begins to heal along with it. Mysteries are soon solved much as they are in life, leading to a better understanding though not necessarily instantaneous resolution.

By turns as charming and exasperating as any teenager, J.D.’s narrative voice is wholly genuine, drawing the reader in and propelling the story. Through authentic use of language and believable actions, author David Booth deftly builds J.D.’s character into someone we feel we could both know and like, despite his flaws. Two new friends who are there for him when he most needs them—an English professor who inspires subtly and brooks no nonsense from his students, and a mysterious former college football star—play roles in J.D.’s eventual metamorphosis into a young man with the courage to face difficult truths and become who he’s meant to be.

With a clever first-page hook that grabs the reader’s attention, Booth skillfully crafts an affecting and satisfying coming-of-age story filled with humor, angst and hope. Readers will find themselves deeply invested, hoping that J.D.’s parents will be there for him, or that he chooses to do the right thing this time, or that the girl he’s been admiring in class will turn around and smile at him. It’s a rare book that achieves such full engagement of the reader, and a truly exceptional storyteller who can inspire it. With *Every Pointed Star*, Booth does so to perfection.

Readers looking for a compelling and sensitive book that can move them to both laughter and tears with equal enjoyment would be wise to choose *Every Pointed Star*. Very highly recommended.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (June 28, 2010)

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