Clarion Review

Young Adult Fiction

Hear
Jacqueline Abelson
CreateSpace
978-1-4752-7309-0
Five Stars (out of Five)

“I have to go deaf,” says seventeen-year-old Charlotte when she’s told about the tumors growing on her auditory nerves. “I need to go deaf to save my life.” Yet understanding the life-saving procedure and accepting it are two different things.

Insightful and gripping, *Hear* is a touching account of a teenager’s struggle with the unfairness of disease and its unwelcome theft of her most precious ability. Based on a true story, *Hear* follows Charlotte Goode as she tries to deal with her grief and anger as well as her desire to live a normal life.

Deafness is especially difficult for Charlotte, an accomplished violinist whose exceptional ear for music earned her a job writing reviews for the prestigious *Musique Magazine* . Despite a childhood filled with regular doctor visits and multiple surgeries, Charlotte has managed to keep an upbeat attitude—until now. Although she no longer sleeps with a toy sword under her pillow to fight Death, she still has to cope with impending devastation. It’s not easy with overprotective parents, much less a brother-in-law who thinks deafness makes her unfit to be a good godmother.

With only one month until the surgery, Charlotte sets out on a whirlwind tour to store up memories of sounds she’ll never hear again—simple things she’s always taken for granted, like silverware slicing through pancakes and sausages, or seagulls screeching high above the island waves. One month to say goodbye to sound—forever.

Teen author Jacqueline Abelson captures Charlotte’s voice with the accuracy of a peer, injecting sarcasm, playfulness, bitterness, anger, desperation, and optimism into everyday scenes like fighting with overprotective parents, bargaining for the right to savor her last moments of hearing, or falling for the wrong guy just because he is charming. And it’s often hard for Charlotte to stay positive. “The make-up on my face gives the illusion that I am all happy and

cheerful," she says. "Well, I'm not … and Mom knew it when she saw me, though she believed that she could cover up my sadness with a touch of eyeliner and mascara."

There are many reasons to love this novel. Well versed in the symptoms and emotional trauma of neurofibromatosis, Abelson creates a believable setting filled with despair and, ultimately, hope. The side characters are highly developed, too, and they serve to push Charlotte away from being selfish and immature while helping her become someone who learns to listen. The plot is tight and fast paced, offering an intense read with short chapters that don't tell the whole story but, instead, allow readers to piece together Charlotte's life and thoughts.

Filled with clever wordplay, poignant scenes, and subtle sarcasm, this story will appeal to musicians, teenagers, and anyone who loves a happy (though bittersweet) ending. It is a book worthy of notice.

Emily Asad