★ Sleeping in My Jeans

Connie King Leonard
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Connie King Leonard's emotional and intense *Sleeping in My Jeans* is led by Mattie, a determined sixteen-year-old who wants to go to college and get a good job so that she can help her six-year-old sister, Meg, do the same. Her plans are threatened when her mother's boyfriend beats her mother up, and the family has to leave the home though they have nowhere to go.

Family troubles extend beyond domestic abuse and homelessness when the girls' mother drops them off at the library and does not return. Mattie knows that her mother would never willingly leave; she is certain that something is terribly wrong. In addition to trying to keep both herself and her sister safe, she searches for her mother.

Mattie does not allow herself even the most basic of comforts. When Jack, a boy at school, tries to get to know her, she rebuffs him, though she longs for the friendship. It is painful to witness her suffering and to share her fear and loneliness.

Though a work of fiction, the book deals with real young adult issues, including homelessness and vulnerability. Mattie's situation is not romanticized—she is hungry and tired and cold, and she fights hard to protect her mom and sister. Her ordeals leave serious scars, but she never gives up.

Sleeping in My Jeans is an enlightening teen read; its serious issues and compelling story make it impossible to forget.

CATHERINE THURESON (November/December 2018)

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