



## Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

### **Surfing Summers**

James Connor

Xlibris

978-1-4568-9545-7

Four Stars (out of Five)

In *Surfing Summers*, Turk and Kenny decide early in the beach season that this is the summer they will ride the waves on real surfboards. Due to three drownings in Seagrove the year before, the fourteen-year-old best friends have been forbidden to surf. The boys must develop a plan to get their hands on boards. They decide to lie to their parents, hide their bathing suits under their clothes when sneaking out of their houses, borrow surfboards, and pray they don't get caught. James Connor's second work of juvenile fiction is an enchanting story of intrigue, rebellion, and friendship.

The provocative and iconic Moonlight Beach serves as the perfect setting for the story. The forbidden surf lures the two boys away from their innocent family vacations and provides a dangerous conquest. Connor does a good job of building up the location as a legendary spot where the cool, older teenagers hang out and dot the beach with bonfires late into the night.

Connor's portrayal of the relationship between Turk and Kenny is masterful. Often complicated and captivating, the conversations between the two boys, which are peppered with sarcastic remarks, indicate the competitive nature of their friendship. Even so, a deep sense of trust and brotherly respect anchors every interaction between them. At one point, when they discuss the possibility of injury, their tender camaraderie is apparent: "Are you afraid of drowning?" I asked him. 'Of course not,' he said. Then both of us laughed. Both of us were a little afraid after the drownings last year. By laughing Kenny was admitting he was afraid too. It made me feel much better to know this."

Although there are a few dramatic scenes that add tension to the book, *Surfing Summers* lacks a pronounced climax, which is one of its major drawbacks. The previous year's drownings on Moonlight Beach are mentioned repeatedly, but the surfers seem to avoid danger completely, with the exception of a minor character's broken arm. The author might have missed an

important opportunity for the plot to build and be resolved. Because of this lack of tension, the story is sometimes repetitive and slow.

Even so, Connor stays true to the point of view of fourteen-year-old boys, from the descriptions of cute girls to the depictions of older surfers. The result is a series of entertaining vignettes that are rich in sincerity and mixed with humorous insecurity. For example, “Kenny had grown more during the school year than I had. I could tell two things from watching Susan. The first thing was that she was still very interested in Kenny.”

Overall, young readers will enjoy spending the summer surfing and sneaking around with Turk and Kenny. *Surfing Summers* is a charming piece of juvenile fiction with strong characters and a consistent tone.

*Colby Cedar Smith*