FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Young Adult Fiction

Waiting for Christopher
Louise Hawes
Candlewick Press
978-0-7636-1371-6
(April 30, 2002)

Is it kidnapping to take a child who has been left in a parking lot? High school sophomore Feena hears a young mother yell to her toddler, “You cry one more time, and I’m leaving you right here” for the second day in a row, and then watches as the mother really drives off. Learning that the child is called Christopher, Feena is flooded with emotions, recalling her infant brother of the same name who had died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Feena rushes over, scoops up the stunned child, and runs to an abandoned restaurant where she can catch her breath and create a plan for shielding and protecting this Christopher. She wonders “why, in the name of cheerleaders and prom queens everywhere, had she taken it upon herself to right the world’s wrongs.”

Popular Raylene, who works in the drug store where Feena takes the toddler to buy diapers and milk, guesses Feena’s secret and together the girls conspire to share responsibility. Their plans include using an abandoned boat as a safe refuge and covering each other for missing school and nights at home.

Feena learns the mother’s name and address from a newspaper account of the missing child and is drawn to see where Christopher had lived. Standing across from “a turquoise doublewide in the Bide-A-Bit Trailer Court,” she hears a man’s angry, loud name-calling and the thud of heavy things being thrown against walls. She watches as Christopher’s crying mother flees from the dismal scene.

The toddler’s plea—“want ma”—forces Feena to consider returning Christy to his mother, despite Raylene’s anger at the idea. The girls begin to understand the value of strong personal bonds.

The author has written fourteen young adult novels, many of which have received International Reading Association Choices recognition and YA Book of the Year nominations. She offers lectures and courses about children’s writing at colleges and universities across the

United States. Her short stories have been anthologized in many U.S. and Canadian collections and journals.

This story explores the common adolescent issues of loneliness, personal loss, and the value of friendship. The characters discover that “Real life is full of sad things,” and that adult decisions can be painful. Teen girls will easily sympathize with the well-defined characters and find the plot very believable.

Linda Cooley