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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Where the Line Bleeds

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“Christophe slid closer to his brother, and when his arm slid along the length of Joshua’s forearm, for a second it was as if Christophe had touched himself, crossed his own forearms: toucher and touched.” Strengthened by each other’s support and love, fraternal twins Christophe and Joshua DeLisle have their entire lives ahead of them as they haphazardly make plans to enter adulthood.

The prologue introduces the boys and their older cousin Dunny after hours of too much to drink has encouraged them to leap off a bridge in celebration of their graduation later in the morning. When Uncle Eze asks if their plans for the future include college, Christophe quips, and Joshua concurs, “You better be glad we graduated!” They intend to get jobs at the same place, be it Wal-mart, McDonald’s, or a convenience store. Just before they fill out applications at the dock, they smoke marijuana, but somehow Joshua gets hired, leaving Christophe jobless in rural Mississippi, where he tells himself that the only other opportunity for employment and career advancement is in selling drugs. Concerned about his bleak future, Christophe turns to Dunny, who ironically soothes him by saying, “You really think I’m going to let your dumb, ungrateful ass struggle out here when I can put you on to my hustle?…What kind of a cousin do you think I am?”

Before long, Christophe and Joshua are drifting apart, only managing to come together around their love for Ma-mee, the woman who raised them; their indifference to Cille, the woman who gave birth to them and deserted them when they were five; and their hatred and disdain for Sandman, their father, a homeless drug addict. While Joshua has a legal job, a girlfriend, and more of his mother’s attention than Christophe can manage, the boys decide to try to remain close. In the end they realize that though their lives are difficult, they will survive. Like the mullet they return to the bayou while fishing, “They would survive, battered and cunning…dying old and fat….”

A thin line exists between the people involved in the complex relationships in this novel. The author, a Stanford and University of Michigan graduate, was recently awarded Stanford University’s Stegner Fellowship, an opportunity she plans to use to work on her second novel. Though the conclusion and the lack of attention to careful editing may be disappointing, the people and concerns presented here are compelling. These largely ignored issues and experiences of poverty, underemployment, and crime deserve a place in literature, as the popularity of “urban fiction” suggests. Devoted fans of the genre will want to read this book to see how some dilemmas common in urban areas have no geographical boundaries.
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