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Living With Jackie Chan



Synopsis

After fathering a baby, a teenager moves in with his karate-loving uncle and tries to come to terms with his guilt and find a way to forgive. This isn't how Josh expected to spend senior year. He thought he'd be hanging out with his best friends, Dave and Caleb, driving around, partying, just like always. But here he is, miles from home • new school, new life, living with his Jackie-Chan-obsessed uncle, Larry, and trying to forget. But Josh can't forget. So many things bring back memories of last year and the night that changed everything. Every day the pain, the shame, and the just not knowing are never far from his thoughts. Why is he such a loser? How could he have done what he did? He finds some moments of peace when he practices karate with Stella, the girl upstairs and his one real friend. As they move together through the katas, Josh feels connected in a way he has never felt before. He wonders if they could be more than friends, but Stella's jealous boyfriend will make sure that doesn't happen. And maybe it doesn't matter. If Stella knew the truth, would she still think he was a True Karate Man? Readers first met Josh in *Jumping Off Swings* which told the story of four high school students and how one pregnancy changed all of their lives. In this companion book, they follow Josh as he tries to come to terms with what happened, and find a way to forgive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This exceptional young adult novel will stay with you long after the final page. The story covers a year in the life of a boy named Josh who has gone to live with his uncle in order to escape from the burden of facing the consequences of something in his recent past. We're not told exactly what this is right away, but Jo Knowles slowly reveals what is troubling Josh as he adapts to his temporary life during his final year in high school. It shows that many of life's big problems are inescapable, that we must own up to our mistakes, make amends whenever possible and to persist in living life. The budding relationship between Josh and Stella, a girl his age who lives in the same building and accompanies him to his daily lessons at his uncle's martial arts school, allows us to experience how people are often mired in harmful relationships by refusing to recognize them for what they are and to make the changes that are needed. Told in the first person point of view, we live the book through his eyes as he comes to terms with his actions, his parents, his uncle, and his feelings toward Stella, a multi-faceted conflict that goes well beyond the normal teen angst over girls. This book reminds us that no one is perfect, but that the choices we make will determine what kind of person we are capable of becoming, that choice is the first step on the road to salvation or a turn toward oblivion.

Living With Jackie Chan is the sequel to *Jumping off Swings*. Both of these books deal with the contentious issue of teen pregnancy and its ramifications. In *Living With Jackie Chan* Josh, a teen boy whose one-night stand led to parenthood, deals with the aftermath of his poor decision making. After losing his virginity in the back of a van to a girl he cared nothing about, Josh finds himself dealing with the self-loathing and guilt that came about after she gets pregnant and gives the baby up for adoption. Josh's reaction is perfectly natural but it is one that is overlooked in annals of teen pregnancy stories. No one stops to think about the emotional fall-out for teen boys when they lose their virginity or father a child they will never see. This raw and emotional look at both of those challenges the reader to think about sex in a bigger emotional context.

Josh takes time out away from home to process his feelings about becoming a father yet sharing no part of his child's life. He spends this time living with his uncle and learning what it means to be a "true karate man." I loved the story and Josh's journey to maturity, but for the most part he was so

unlikable that I almost abandoned him. While this shows the character's development, that character ought to be likeable enough that the reader cares about him and invested in the story. Fortunately, this story held my attention and will keep me reading more from one of my favourite authors.

I thought "Jumping Off Swings" was interesting, and I was curious about the sequel. While I thought a little too much time was spent inside Josh's head, it also felt like that made sense, given all of the things he was trying to process. I think "Living with Jackie Chan" might be great to partner with "Hanging on to Max" by Bechard and "The First Part Last" by Johnson in a classroom literature study of issues.

This book was referred to me as a well-written YA novel about teen pregnancy. Wonderfully written, it's interesting that it's told from the teen boy's point of view. But there's a depth of sensitivity that just seemed beyond credibility. I think it's a very gentle book that explores the boy's agony about losing a child to adoption, but I'm a little jaded to believe that the motives all ring true.

I loved this book. I found it to feel very real and very emotional. I cried a lot as well as laughed a lot

There are books about pregnancy from the girl's point of view. This book breaks ground by having it in the boy's POV. Imagine having a fling to get one's virginity out of the way, getting a girl pregnant, and then being eaten up inside because the baby was given away for adoption. Josh is the one who feels a tremendous amount of guilt. He's sent to live with his Uncle Larry, who's a karate instructor obsessed with Jackie Chan. At night, Josh listens to the baby upstairs on the floor above him. The baby is a reminder of what went wrong at home. He meets the baby's sitter, a girl named Stella who wants him as a friend but then pushes him away because she has an abusive, jealous boyfriend. Dealing with a new school, Stella's hot-then-cold attitude towards him, the baby upstairs, and other things in his new environment are not easy, but this will all eventually help him heal, as hard as that is. I liked this book, although a few scenes dragged and detracted from my initial excitement of reading it. Josh is a great character and I love the secondary characters. Larry is an eccentric and Stella, even though I was mad at her the times she pushed Josh away, is also multifaceted. Overall, I enjoyed this a lot and I'm glad I read this through NetGalley, courtesy of the publisher.

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