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If You Find Me



Synopsis

NOW INCLUDING A BRAND-NEW EPILOGUE! There are some things you can't leave behind . . . In *If You Find Me* by Emily Murdoch, a broken-down camper hidden deep in a national forest is the only home fifteen year-old Carey can remember. The trees keep guard over her threadbare existence; the one bright spot is Carey's younger sister, Jenessa, who depends on Carey for her very survival. All they have is each other, as their mentally ill mother comes and goes with greater frequency. Until that one fateful day their mother has disappeared for good, and two strangers arrive. Suddenly, the girls are taken from the woods and thrust into a bright and perplexing new world of high school, clothes and boys. Now, Carey must face the truth of why her mother abducted her ten years ago, while haunted by a past that won't let her go . . . a dark past that hides many secrets, including the reason Jenessa hasn't spoken a word in over a year. Carey knows she must keep her sister close, and her secrets even closer, or risk watching her new life come crashing down.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years
Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review Carey's little sister, Jenessa, has not spoken since the white starry night, a night so traumatic that neither acknowledges it happened. But now Carey's father, with

the help of Mrs. Haskell, the social worker, has arranged for the girls to live with him and his new family, even though Jenessa is not his biological daughter. He and his wife, Melissa, and stepdaughter Delaney offer the girls a life that is, while not without its challenges, far from their druggie mother who disappears more frequently than she stays, and the hardscrabble existence of canned beans, pee-smelling coats, and cigarette-burned flesh. First-time author Murdoch has written a painful, hopeful, surprisingly quiet book that charts the best and worst of humanity, especially family, with characters who worm their way into your heart—or repulse the reader’s very nature. Her narrative is full of unique yet breathtaking similes, detailed descriptions, and unflinching dialogue all masquerading as backwoods Tennessee dialect. Exposing child abuse, sexual abuse, and drug abuse for the terrors they are, she validates the courage and ingenuity of young people the world over for whom survival is instinctive, protection of siblings is nonnegotiable, and love is both a right and a gift bestowed upon those fortunate enough to find it.

Grades 8-12. --Frances Bradburn

“A story about redemption, self-forgiveness and the healing power of truth...emotional truth. Lyrical...heart-wrenching.” —New York Times Book Review (Editor’s Choice)

“Beautifully written. The deep bond between the sisters is almost physically palpable, as is their intense longing for love and acceptance; they will quickly endear themselves to readers.” —School Library Journal (Starred Review)

“A compelling narrative that is both unflinching about life’s pain and hopeful about its possibilities.” —Kirkus Reviews (Starred Review)

“First-time author Emily Murdoch has written a painful, hopeful, surprisingly quiet book that charts the best and worst of humanity, especially family, with characters who worm their way into your heart-or repulse the reader’s very nature. Her narrative is full of unique yet breathtaking similes, detailed descriptions, and unflinching dialogue all masquerading as backwoods Tennessee dialect... She validates the courage and ingenuity of young people the world over for whom survival is instinctive; protection of siblings is nonnegotiable; and love both a right and a gift bestowed upon those fortunate enough to find it.” —Booklist (Starred Review)

“Within two pages, I was so hopelessly hooked, I felt like the story had attached itself to me. The storyline is original and suspenseful, but most of all, it was Carey’s voice that had me flipping the pages. This is one of those books you devour.” —Jennifer Brown, author of *Hate List*

“If You Find Me grabbed me by the heart on page one and didn’t let go till the very last word. Murdoch’s language is lovely, her storytelling gripping.” —Carol Lynch Williams, author of *The Chosen One*

“Searing . . . hurt my heart and will probably

haunt my dreams - a beautiful book about survival, identity, family, love and so much more. — Jenny Downham, author of *Before I Die* “Carey and Nessa’s story is memorable and deeply moving, and readers will find it very easy to fall in love with these girls. — Publishers Weekly

If you find me by Emily Murdoch This book is not for the weak of mind or faint of heart, its not all hearts and flowers. This book describes the life struggles and pain for two young girls who are growing up in the world of methamphetamine and moonshine. Carley is determined to make life as great as it can be for her little sister Janessa. However, that starts to prove difficult when you live 7 miles in the woods, in a run down camping trailer, with no water and a dwindling supply of beans. That is until the day a social worker and man show up tramping through her woods, and not just her woods but her home. Obviously looking for something, they are calling her mother, herself and her baby sister by name. Oblivious to world outside of wood fairies, beans and cock roaches, Nessa’s eyes are watchful and excited as she sees all the new things around her. The new foods, the warm water, even a real bed that isn’t made of two sleeping bags stuffed with news paper. Having selective muteism helps her to fully absorbed everything and one around her. Shes so quiet they forget the 6 year old is there most of the time anyway. But things for Carley are much harder to ease into. A life of malnourishment, abuse, and neglect has made her fearful of what she could loose. To keep her sister in this life of love and family they have been given she adapts her tweaker mothers mato from her fake AA meetings, Fake it till you mean it. That’s just what she plans on doing to keep her sister safe, loved and happy. Until she has to tell the truth behind the events that caused her sister to stop speaking.

3.5 of 5 stars Fourteen-year-old Carey lives in the woods with her six-year-old sister Jenessa (Ness) and their meth-addicted mother who sometimes disappears for weeks at a time. Ness hasn’t spoken in over a year. This time she’s been gone two months and food supplies are dwindling. Then they are found by a social worker and Carey’s father, the same father who beat her mother, her to flee into the wood where they have lived for ten years. Now Carey and her sister have enough food in their bellies, soft beds to sleep on, and brand new clothes. And a stepsister who’s not to happy to share her parents. Carey is carrying a secret from the woods, one that could tear her away from Jenessa, maybe forever. Carey’s first person narration was such a realistic voice I almost feel like I could hear her speaking. IF YOU FIND ME (IYFM) is a compulsively readable novel. Debut writer Emily Murdoch is a fresh voice in YA literature. While IYFM isn’t suspenseful, I was glued to my

Kindle. The fast pace was due to my nonstop interest in Carey and Nessa's story. The plot and writing were the strongest components of IYFM. Carey was likable and easy to root for. Her adjustment from being neglected and abused by her mother for 10 years was too easy, too perfect. She didn't show enough signs of PTSD, anger, or fear and her adjustment was too linear, with tiny bumps in the road instead of the huge chasms that would surely be present. Neither she nor Nessa had any therapy to help their adjustment. Nessa received speech therapy, but selective mutism is better treated in play therapy since the issue isn't an inability to speak, but an unwillingness to talk for psychological reasons. I'm picky about mental health issues being portrayed accurately in fiction. The other characters were one dimensional: a father who knows when to step back and when to get closer, a perfect stepmother who always says and does exactly what's needed, the snarky stepsister who's not so bad underneath, and the cute guy who is immediately smitten, sensitive and understanding. Despite flaws, I thoroughly enjoyed reading IYFM and will look forward to future books by Emily Murdoch.

Didn't want this to end, it was really good! I was worried it was going to be a bit more "tween" type book, but it wasn't really. I loved the characters and how they developed, especially when you consider how hard it would be to write about someone with so little knowledge of the outside world. It even offered a nice little twist at the end that I didn't see coming (The secret Carey vowed to keep to herself.) It could be said that sometimes things were a little too easy, the conflict it did offer was usually resolved quickly without much struggle, but sometimes you just need a book with happy endings. Very happy I found this book and would definitely recommend it to others!

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