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Stoner & Spaz

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Written in the fast-moving style of American teen soaps like Dawson's Creek or Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Stoner & Spaz packs quite a punch. It's the story of two outsiders. Ben, the 'spaz' of the title, comes from a wealthy background, has an over-protective grandmother, no friends and cerebral palsy. Colleen, the 'stoner', is from the other side of the tracks, addicted to her scary boyfriend and whatever drugs she can lay her hands on. Told through Ben's eyes, the story charts their unlikely friendship and innocent romance. As a disabled person with a funny walk and a useless arm, Ben may feel like the invisible man at school, but when he starts to hang out with Colleen, others begin to notice him too. She is the first person of his age that he has ever really talked to. She doesn't patronise him nor regard him as an object of pity. Her advice is to 'get over himself'; other disabled kids at school don't hang around like a fungus in their homerooms, they talk to people and make friends. These are words Ben needs to hear, but soon he finds himself out of his league and has to acknowledge that however much he cares for Colleen, he cannot stop her being a junkie. It is still unusual in any fiction, teenage or adult, for the voice of the disabled character to lead the narrative and this book is as far away as you can get from the if-only-I-could-be-cured tone of some stories which deal with this subject. Ben's voice, and Colleen's too are clever and self-mocking, with lots of great one-liners (and what a BBC directive might call 'strong language'). Koertge has a real feel for the lives of young people and has created characters whose voices are truthful and strong.

Running Order:

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