*How to Be Found* by Emily Pohl-Weary rev. by Sara Dawidian

Arsenal Pulp

Emily Pohl-Weary is a Vancouver-based author. Her first book, *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merril* (2002), was a biography of her grandmother and won a Hugo Award for Best Related Book. She’s since gone on to write several other novels, including award-winning *Ghost Sick: A Poetry of Witness* (2014) and N*ot Your Ordinary Wolf Girl* (2013). *How to Be Found* is the latest in her bibliography; it was released in the US on November 14, 2023.

*How to Be Found* follows sixteen year-old Michie, who’s distraught upon learning of the disappearance of her best friend, Trissa. This pain is worsened when she discovers the cops have written her off as a runaway party girl who’s probably lying dead in a ditch somewhere. As her world descends into grief and chaos, Michie refuses to give up hope, instead choosing to search for Trissa herself— a mission that leads her into dangerous and unexpected places.

“Trissa is fine, I repeated to myself. She has to be. We completed each other. Without her, I barely had a life. She was the exciting one. She danced and sang and yelled. She dragged me into impossible situations. Without her, I would just watch and read and listen.”

The way Pohl-Weary depicts Michie and Trissa’s relationship is simultaneously beautiful and heart-wrenching. Neither of the girls is perfect, as Trissa has a habit of crossing lines and Michie can be self-deprecating. But they’re fiercely protective of each other regardless. It’s no wonder Michie considers Trissa her chosen sister, and it makes it even more devastating when Trissa goes missing.

At its heart, the book examines the realities of modern day adolescence, both joyful and tragic. Pohl-Weary’s vivid descriptions and charged storytelling transport you into the world of Michie, Trissa, and Anwar (another of Michie’s friends, whom she enlists to help with her search), making the reader feel as if they’re racing through Toronto alleyways and sneaking into abandoned apartments right along with them. Every pang of grief Michie feels over seeing the things Trissa left behind and moment of crippling uncertainty throughout the investigation emanates through you with the same strength of sensibility as a teenager. These powerful emotions not only tie the reader to the characters, but the characters to each other.

Throughout the book, there’s a strong theme of found family. As mentioned before, Michie sees Trissa as her chosen sister: a bond stronger than blood. These bonds are what carry us through life’s ups and downs, as is the case with her. Although she faces insurmountable odds, she refuses to give up hope. This type of stubbornness and steadfast resiliency is typical of many young adults, but it’s especially potent in Michie. Despite being a self-described shy introvert, she’s bold enough to bar abrasive cops from entering her apartment when it’s clear they don’t care about finding Trissa and has enough self-assurance to keep her chin up when being mocked by the PPs (perfect people).

 *How to Be Found* gives readers a glimpse at the joy, heartache, and uncertainty of being a teenager with everything to lose. It’s equal parts grit and wit, perfect for any fan of mysteries and urban fiction. Although it deals with heavy topics such as grief and loss, the sprinkles of humor and uplifting theme lend some much-needed light to the darkness, a combination that will leave readers lingering behind on the streets of Toronto long after they turn the final page.