



The View From Who I Was

By Heather Sappenfield

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On a cold Colorado night, Oona Antunes leaves Crystal High's Winter Formal, walks deep into the woods, and lies down in the snow to die. She awakens in the hospital, suffering the effects of frostbite and hypothermia. But her physical injuries aren't nearly as painful as the wound she can't name, the one she feels cutting deep into the core of who she is. While recovering from her suicide attempt, Oona discovers that the roots of her problems go beyond herself. To fully understand what happened that night in the woods, she must confront not only her own pain but the hidden past that's suffocating someone she loves. *The View from Who I Was* is a story of the damage that can be passed down through the generations, and the healing that can arise from tragedy. Praise: "Beautifully written." **KIRKUS REVIEWS** "This debut novel packs a walloping punch...Raw but with insight and tenderness, this story deftly explores lives varied riches that come from the connections we build with others." **BOOKLIST**

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—Wealthy, beautiful high school senior Oona Antunes gets good grades, has a loving boyfriend, and hangs with the popular crowd, yet she flees the Winter Formal dance and lays down to die in the Colorado cold. Rescued and revived, she loses some fingers and toes to frostbite and struggles to make sense of the pain behind her suicide attempt. Unfortunately, readers will also struggle, since Oona's distant relationship with her parents, and the envy she engenders in her classmates, seem to be the only sources of conflict in an otherwise smooth life. Told in brooding first person by Oona's disembodied soul (a clunky device that never quite coheres), the rest of the book is a jumble of high school drama, Oona's physical and psychological recovery, and intergenerational tragedy. A big reveal about Oona's father near the end of the book comes across as far-fetched rather than providing insight into the family dynamic. The self-consciously literary writing is heavy on metaphor and cliché, sapping Oona's story of emotional immediacy. Furthermore, Latino and Native American characters play stereotypical roles in helping European-American Oona to heal. For example, a Navajo teen gives Oona an eagle feather to acknowledge her strength. Much better books about teen mental illness and suicide exist: try Ned Vizzini's *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (Hyperion, 2006), Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now* (Random, 2004), Jay Asher's *13 Reasons Why* (Penguin, 2007), or Leila Sales's *This Song Will Save Your Life* (Farrar, 2013) instead.—Sarah Stone, San Francisco Public Library

Review

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About the Author

Heather Sappenfield (Vail, CO) received an MFA from Pacific University. She has written for *The Writer's Chronicle*, *Mountain Flyer Magazine*, and *Mountain House and Home*. Her fiction has appeared in *Meridian*, *Shenandoah*, *Limestone*, and *Tampa Review*. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has been a finalist for the Serena McDonald Kennedy Award, the St. Lawrence Book Award, the Doris Bakwin Prize, and the Flannery O'Connor Award.

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