



2003

Home of the Braves

Elizabeth Myers

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Klass, David. *Home of the Braves*. Illustrated by N/A. Frances Foster Books, 2002. ISBN 0374399638. \$18.00. 312 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Soccer--Juvenile fiction; High schools--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction;

High school soccer captain Joe Brickman has waited for years to tell his best friend Kris just how much he cares for her. Now, with the arrival of the Brazilian soccer "phenom" Antonio Silva, Joe finds himself fighting feelings of jealousy as it becomes apparent that he's waited too long with Kris, even as the Phenom saves his team from a crushing season. But romantic troubles aren't the only thing going on in Joe's life. The school has recently cracked down on violence with a zero tolerance policy, and when brutal acts still erupt, Joe struggles to decide whether it's better to let it go on, or try to stop it once and for all.

In essence, *Home of the Braves* is a coming-of-age story that details how Joe ponders the consequences of his and others' actions. Klass handles Joe's soul-searching sensitively and realistically; Joe himself admits when he's less than a nice guy, especially when dealing with his feelings about Kris and Antonio. However, at a crucial point in the book, he makes a decision that shows his growing maturity, and actually makes him more of an adult than his father. While various accounts of violence and crude language may turn some off to the book, *Home of the Braves* would be an excellent read for teens who are just about to push out into the adult world.