



2018

Chinese Handcuffs

Abigail Packard

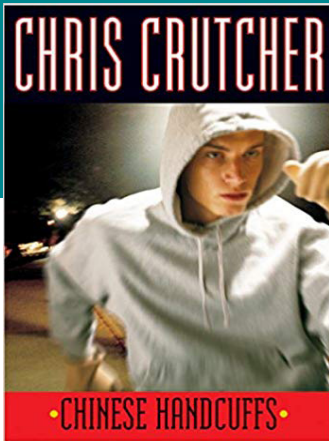
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Packard, Abigail (2018) "Chinese Handcuffs," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 39 : Iss. 10 , Article 51.

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Book Review

Chinese Handcuffs

Author

Chris Crutcher

Illustrator

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Reviewer

Abigail Packard

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

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Pages

208

Year

1989

Publisher

Greenwillow Books

ISBN

9780688083458

Dillon's life is shattered after his older brother, Preston, commits suicide. The worse part is that Dillon witnessed the whole thing. Torn up from this horrific tragedy, Dillon tries to find solace in preparing for an ironman and working with the girls' basketball team. Dillon meets Jennifer, a basketball star with her own set of horrific secrets. Jennifer has been sexually abused by her father and step-father for years. Try as she might, she just can't escape. As Dillon learns more about Jennifer and her plight, he develops a plan. Together, Jennifer and Dillon work to overcome the horrors they have lived and are living through.

Written as a part-prose, part-epistolary novel in which Dillon writes letters to his dead older brother, Dillon's story, combined as it is with Jennifer's, is one filled with grief and horrors that no one should have to live through. Crutcher handles the subject matter well and his writing, although a bit dated, is easy to follow. These horrific scenes of Preston's suicide and Jennifer's sexual abuse at the hands of her father and step-father are somewhat graphic, but never overly so. The story itself, though, will give readers hope despite the heartbreakingly sad experiences of these two characters. This is a solid read.

*Contains moderate language, moderate sexual content, and moderate violence.