

YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN TO COPE

Two parents too many. Brenda Bellingham. Scholastic-TAB, 1985. 107 pp., \$2.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-71516-X; **When spring comes.** Lynda Hargrave. Overlea House, 1987. 207 pp., \$3.95 paper. ISBN 0-7172-2265-9; **Getting even.** Paul Kropp. Seal Books, 1986. 148 pp., \$3.50 paper. ISBN 0-7704-2112-1; **Me and Luke.** Audrey O'Hearn. Douglas & McIntyre, 1987. 147 pp., \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-88899-066-9.

Each of these four short novels for adolescents deals with teenagers learning to cope with either a broken or disintegrating home. The similarity of subject matter emphasizes the differences in quality.

Two parents too many is a sensitive and thoughtful account of how two adolescent sisters attempt to prevent their mother's imminent remarriage. Though there are some hilarious moments as the girls strive to discourage the unwelcome suitor, their slow realization of adult needs is seriously and touchingly presented. The story is refreshing in the honesty of its tone and contains a minimum of sugar coating.

The conflict in *When spring comes* is rivetingly suspenseful, involving an intense and complicated family situation. Jenny is faced with a severely retarded brother, a mother who has chosen to devote herself entirely to her crippled son, and the disintegration of the parents' marriage. Jenny is a gifted vocalist whose dreams of becoming a famous opera star appear to be dashed with her brother's death and her parents' separation. How she copes with these events, the tensions between parents, parents and children, and among teenagers makes for interesting reading. There are some grammatical rough spots, however, and Hargrave's use of operatic references could be enriching but it often seems artificial.

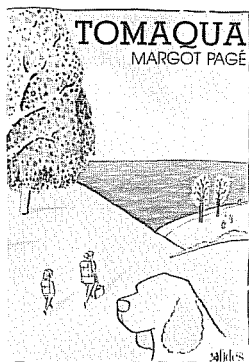
Kropp's *Getting even* disappoints by not realizing the potential of a promising conflict. Keith feels over-shadowed by a high-profile brother whom he refers to as "God". Jane is filled with resentment against her divorced parents. The personal and interpersonal development of the two characters is well served by a point of view that alternates between them. There are a number of moving moments, but the high level of tension established at the beginning is difficult to sustain. Jane's tough language comes across as forced and the psychological transitions are not quite believable.

On the other hand, *Me and Luke* is the most penetrating of the four in its treatment of the subject of family conflict. O'Hearn tells the story of Matthew whose girlfriend has decided to put their newborn son up for adoption. Matthew, out of school and out of work, living in a Toronto flop house, haunted by the vision of his own father who walked out when Matt was seven, cannot bear to abandon his own son. He leaves the hospital with baby Luke inside his

jacket and takes refuge with his grandmother in her cottage up north. O'Hearn offers vivid and exciting descriptions of dangerous situations, unsavory characters and truly loving and caring individuals. Her depiction of Matt's ambivalence, self-doubts and gentle but determined paternal devotion is psychologically logical and compelling. The reader is fascinated by the story and at ease with the solidity and ultimate level-headedness of her main character.

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UN VOYAGE D'INITIATION



Tomaqua. Margot Pagé. Collection des Mille Iles. Montréal, Fides, 1988. 67 pp., 5,50\$ broché. ISBN 2-7621-1421-7.

Partir en auto-stop vers une destination inconnue, c'est un fait quotidien pour beaucoup de jeunes. Mais voyager "sur le pouce" et dormir à la belle étoile avec sa mère et son chien? Même à notre époque, où on prétend avoir tout vu, c'est une expérience qui sort de l'ordinaire. Peut-être faut-il avoir une mère artiste, en mal de paysages à peindre, pour se lancer dans une telle aventure.

Justement, Isabelle Montour, douze ans, quitte son village natal de Deschambault et la maison de ses grands-parents, pour descendre avec sa mère le Chemin du Roi, à la recherche d'une nouvelle demeure. Pourquoi sa mère aurait-elle décidé de partir? Serait-ce vraiment pour chercher dans de nouveaux paysages l'inspiration artistique qui commence à lui manquer? Isabelle soupçonne que c'est plutôt pour retrouver son père, qu'elle n'a pas vu depuis l'âge de deux ans. Suite à un accident d'avion, ce dernier avait dû rester dans une clinique et devant les réticences de sa mère à son sujet, la jeune fille se demande s'il n'était pas gardé de force.

Et Tomaqua? La jeune Indienne qui donne son nom au récit avait vécu autrefois à Pointe-du-Lac, où arrivent Isabelle et Marjorie la veille de la Saint-Jean. Fatiguée par le voyage, Isabelle s'endort, la tête remplie d'histoires de contrebandiers, pensant au sort des pensionnaires des cliniques, songeant au manoir maudit où jadis une jeune fille de son âge, nommée par coïncidence