

Crossing

Andrew Xia Fukuda

Reviewed by: Ryan Lee

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High-school freshman Xing Xu is not happy with his life. As one of the only two Chinese-Americans in his entire school, he spends every day with his head down, hoping that the inevitable racism and discrimination choose to pass him by. His father is dead and his mother works two different jobs to support them both, while he spends his days counting the hours until he is free from school. The only person who can share his frustrations is the other Chinese-American student Naomi Lee, his best (and only) friend for years. However, even she is gradually growing apart from him, as her natural intelligence and beauty give her poise he lacks. Xing retreats within, but discovers a natural talent he has not exercised for years: he can sing. He is tapped for the upcoming school musical as a back-up singer, but secretly wishes to become lead so that he can prove himself to Naomi, who he has developed a crush on. Further complicating things is the beginning of a series of mysterious disappearances that leave the entire community on edge. While those in the mainstream are baffled by the abductions and have no clues as to the kidnapper's identity, Xing's position on the fringe of society allows him to notice the things others do not. As he prepares for the performance, he is also drawn deeper into the mystery of the kidnappings even as his relationship with Naomi is falling apart. The separate threads of the story eventually converge, setting up Xing to face the disturbing end of the affair in an equally disturbing manner.

Though I admired *Crossing's* structure and liked how the author wove the disparate storylines together, the plot itself did not catch my interest. It was vague and somewhat unclear, as well as being resolved far too quickly after not being given enough attention for a long stretch of the novel. Xing himself comes off as a regular high-school student, and while his unique situation makes for interesting and believable teenage angst, his reactions to developing events are often over-the-top and/or heavy-handed. This is entirely understandable, but the focus of the story is shifted from a teenager dealing with racism and prejudice to a teenager focusing only on the negative things in his life and raging about them. The result was that Xing became a not entirely-likeable protagonist, as evidenced by his harsh treatment of perhaps the only person lower in the social pecking order than him. I enjoyed the book, but several flaws kept me from becoming a true fan of the novel.

Though rated as a young adult novel, there are some graphic scenes, and so I would recommend it to the higher end of the teen spectrum: sixteen-to-seventeen year-olds would probably be best suited to reading this novel. Mystery fans should also take a look at it, though the resolution of the mystery is not entirely clear and may disappoint those looking for complete closure.

Recommended Titles

American-Born Chinese, by Gene Luen Yang

Throwaway Daughter, by Ting-xing Ye

The Star Fisher, by Lawrence Yep

Miles from Nowhere, by Nami Mun
Wait for Me, by An Na