

Because I Am Furniture by Thalia Chaltas

Told in brief (one or two page), intensely personal poems, this novel manages to be both fast-paced and agonizingly slow. Anke's character bounces between a life on the volleyball court that makes her shout for joy and a home life where keeping her father from noticing her is the difference between feeling unloved and being beaten (or worse, as she begins to realize her sister knows all too well). The contrast between the two Ankes makes the transition from school life to home life at times almost violent, and Chaltas manages to do this by using a quiet, tense voice for Anke at home and a loud, exuberant voice at school. Two very different romantic interests and the choice she makes between them add insight into how her relationship with her father is influencing her first interactions with boys. Her eventual choice and an explosive confrontation with Dad after catching him with one of her acquaintances lead to a painful new world that could either allow Anke to reconcile her two lives or lose both. This book is a nominee for the 2012-2013 Rosie Indiana High School Book Awards.

There are plenty of other novels told in poems out there, and for a similar title, try Ellen Hopkins' *Burned*, about a young Mormon woman who escapes an abusive father to a Nevada ranch. Ann Warren Turner's *Learning to Swim* is a memoir-in-verse about a happy family life shattered by sexual abuse at the hands of an outsider. If you're not feeling the poems, try Josie Bloss' *Albatross*, about a young musician whose father's anger issues cloud her judgment when it comes to boys. *Touching Snow*, by M. Sindy Felin, deals with what happens after an abuser is arrested and put on trial, examining the conflicted feelings of family members and the embarrassment of public scrutiny. There are also plenty of books that can help survivors of abuse deal with the aftermath -- *Beginning to Heal*, by Ellen Bass, is a great example because it focuses on both male and female survivors, but there are a number of other titles available at the library, too. For crisis help, call 911 (emergencies) or the ChildHelp hotline (counseling, non-emergency, referrals).

Posted by Chris H. on March 12, 2012

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