Feathered by Laura Kasischke

Praise For Feathered

Afterward, Terri will tell everyone that, from the beginning, she knew something terrible was going to happen on spring break.

Something bad was going to happen.

She knew.

It was supposed to be the perfect vacation: hot guys, impeccable tans, and no parents. But for two high school seniors, an innocent car ride will drive them into the heart of their worst nightmare.

Feathered is a provocative and eerie tale that flies readers from safe, predictable suburbia to the sun-kissed beaches of Cancún, Mexico, and into mysterious Mayan ruins, where ancient myths flirt dangerously with present realities.

My Personal Review:
...about making the wrong choice even when all evidence and emotion point to it being the right one. Michelle and Anne know better than to accept a personal tour of Mayan ruins from a stranger old enough to be their father, but on their spring break in beautiful Cancun it seems nothing can be truly dangerous. The novel captures perfectly the illusion of invincibility travel to a foreign country can create; the risks that don't seem risky when one is away from home. "Feathered" is also a smart examination of how trust is formed from instinct, and how dangerous it can be both to trust and question that instinct.

Since the novel is told from each girls' point of view in alternating chapters, the reader doesn't know whose instincts to trust. Is Ander, the older man, really as creepy as Anne thinks he is, or is he simply treating them like surrogate daughters, as Michelle wants to believe? Are those boys Anne
trusts to give them a lift back to their hotel really safe just because they are sunburnt Midwestern boys from a familiar-sounding Illinois town? Each girl has seemingly unerring emotional, instinctual, and logical reasons for placing their trust where they choose. The novel's suspense is so well crafted the reader absolutely cannot guess which choice is the wrong one; which one will put them in danger.

The descriptions of Michelle's and Ander's exploration of the Mayan ruins are both beautiful and chilling. The depiction of Anne's long night alone on the road after tragedy unfolds is one of the scariest, most wrenching descriptions I've read in a while. One of the things I liked about this novel is that although the girls are victimized they are not portrayed as victims. Each girl has her own vulnerabilities that lead her to make the wrong choice, but they are strong when faced with the dangerous consequences of their choice, and fight to protect each other. Teenage readers of this book will love the main characters and the challenging twists and turns in the plot.

I am not a young adult reader. I read "Feathered" because I have enjoyed Kasischke's other novels and find her storytelling poetic and compelling. I have always enjoyed Kasischke's themes concerning the underlying danger of beauty, and the harm that inevitably comes when we, innocently or not, make the wrong choices. But I am especially drawn to "Feathered", particularly the redemption parable that plays out in the last part of the novel. Michelle's literal journey through the jungle of trauma's aftermath, and the healing she finally finds in the end, were unexpectedly thought-provoking and inspirational to me.

"Feathered" is a wonderful book, as suspenseful and meaningful for the adult reader as the young adult one. I have given my copy to my teenage stepdaughter for her to read on summer break!

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