



Disappear Home

Laura Hurwitz

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In 1970, as the hippie movement is losing its innocence, Shoshanna and her six-year-old sister, Mara, escape from Sweet Earth Farm, a declining commune, run by their tyrannical and abusive father, Adam. Their mother, Ella, takes them to San Francisco, where they meet one of her old friends, Judy, and the four of them decide to head off and try to make a life together. Finding a safe haven at the farm of kind, elderly Avery Elliot, the four of them find some measure of peace and stability. Then their mother's crippling depression returns. Confused and paranoid, Ella is convinced that she and the girls must leave before Adam finds them and extracts revenge. The girls don't wish to leave the only stable home they've ever had. But as Ella grows worse and worse, events conspire to leave them to face a choice they never could have imagined. Shoshanna has always watched over her sister and once again she has to watch over her ailing mother. Will she ever live a "normal" life?

Disappear Home Details

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From Reader Review Disappear Home for online ebook

K. M. Donnelly says

I very much enjoyed reading this book and I had a good time while I was reading it, but at the end I felt a strong desire to sit down with the author and discuss ways that I thought it could be improved. While I liked it, I felt that the novel could have used one more draft before being published to really bring it to its full potential.

The tone of the story was a very nice and well-written mixture of sweet and sad, but the characters seemed to be trying to suggest that I be fearful or concerned for their safety, which I was not. While there were threats to be faced throughout the story, I could never believe that Hurwitz was not looking out for her characters or that she would let anything too awful happen to them. I felt much more sure of their safety than the characters did, which made me feel less connected to any of them, even the protagonist Shoshanna. This connection could have been helped had the narration been more grounded inside Shoshanna's head, giving us thoughts, feelings, senses, and details from her point-of-view instead of relying mostly on dialogue to move the plot along. A lot of things were told instead of shown, which was disappointing.

While Shoshanna, her sister Mara, and her mother Ella have every reason to be overly wary and paranoid, and are stated to be very cautious people, they rarely seem to be. They make very quick and positive opinions of other characters and give their trust and love very willingly.

The story often moves to quickly, and this is most likely because there is very little happening. The book does not feature the conflict it needs to to be truly riveting. Despite Shoshanna continually telling the readers how concerned she was about her father, Adam, finding them and how much she thought about him and what he would do to her, she very rarely thinks much about it. Despite being told, numerous times throughout the book, that "Adam has radar," readers are never really given an opportunity to feel that or decide whether it's true or not. Although Adam is certainly established as cruel, he never feels like a genuine threat at the time of the story. Instead, the book seems to mostly cover the time after the real threat and danger have gone instead of focusing on the conflict of trying to leave the farm. The characters were said to have struggled, but by the time we meet them, things are coming to them fairly easily with friendly faces and helpful hands everywhere they seem to turn. Instead of building to a big conflict, the plot slowly peters out, with no particular climax.

While not as deep as I would personally like it to be, point-of-view is consistent for about 99.5% of the book, but occasionally loses Shoshanna completely and gives thoughts from other characters or details Shoshanna shouldn't know for a paragraph or two before returning to her.

But with all of those things, I still very much enjoyed reading *Disappear Home*. I felt that this book was worth the time I took to read it and that a great start, but could have used more conflict and an extra draft. This was a good first novel and leaves me with high hopes for Hurwitz's future projects (which I do want to edit, though).

Heather A says

I recieved a copy from Netgalley.

Actual rating 2.5 stars

This one caught my eye whilst browsing on Netgalley, not my usual thing but figured I'd give it a try. A relatively quick read, I finished it in a few settings, a somewhat bittersweet story about two young girls and their mother who escape from a hippy commune in the 1970s and try to start a new life in California.

While it had its moments, some of it was quite moving and tear jerkery, particularly towards the end, I still felt like...something was missing. The story didn't quite grab my attention, I liked it okay, but still....

It felt like a lot of tell and not show, I didn't feel any particular connection to the characters. The story is told from the point of view of the fourteen year old daughter, who was reasonably likeable, given the horrific circumstances. The mother was the most unlikeable character, though she was smart enough to get her kids out and away, she found her way across the country through somewhat illegal means and guilt talked the 14 year old into helping. As a reader you can understand why in the circumstances, but it was all very flat. The mother suffers from a crippling depression but again it's all tell and not show, there didn't seem to be much of an emotional impact when this came about.

What I did love about this novel (even though the hippie lingo did wind up annoying me greatly) was the sense of friendship, family and community the girls and their mother find. I loved how people were willing to help them out and get thrown their feet and into a more stable normal life. That was quite heart warming to read about.

There is always the threat that the mothers horrible boyfriend, the commune leader will come looking for them, and there are a few examples of terrible things he's done told to us in the plot, but again, it was stunted somehow and didn't feel anywhere near as frightening as it could have been.

The end was probably the most moving part of the novel, and did have a bit more of an emotional impact. Though over all, the novel was just okay.

Thank you to Netgalley and Albert Whiteman & Company for approving my request.

AJ says

This book had a really good premise, but it was HORRIBLY written. I mean, horrible. And I've read a lot of books. I give it one star (well, 1.5 if I could) because I managed to stick it out to the end, but I really had to skim at the end because it was just so awful.

The plot advanced way too quickly, almost everything that happened in the book happened in very awkward dialogue, and there was just too much spoon-fed to me as a reader. For example (and I paraphrase): "oh hey, I'm going to park my car really sloppy over here and keep one tire on the crosswalk, I know I could take two extra seconds to park better, but I'm not going to, so there!" And then a page later the car gets a ticket (which leads to several more very convenient plot developments). Wow, didn't see that one coming!

In general, none of the characters were well developed. You get little glimpses of everybody, but nothing about what really makes them tick. And everybody gets along, like, instantly, and there's almost no drama or tension between people. It was seriously like an episode of the Waltons, as far as drama goes. (view spoiler)

It's all just such a shame, because this book could have been really good, if somebody else had written it. Or if the author had burned what she'd written and started over again, and the second time, actually did a good job writing.

-RadioactiveBookworm- says

Goodreads Synopsis: In 1970, as the hippie movement is losing its innocence, Shoshanna and her six-year-old sister, Mara, escape from Sweet Earth Farm, a declining commune, run by their tyrannical and abusive father, Adam. Their mother, Ella, takes them to San Francisco, where they meet one of her old friends, Judy, and the four of them decide to head off and try to make a life together. Finding a safe haven at the farm of kind, elderly Avery Elliot, the four of them find some measure of peace and stability. Then their mother's crippling depression returns. Confused and paranoid, Ella is convinced that she and the girls must leave before Adam finds them and extracts revenge. The girls don't wish to leave the only stable home they've ever had. But as Ella grows worse and worse, events conspire to leave them to face a choice they never could have imagined. Shoshanna has always watched over her sister and once again she has to watch over her ailing mother. Will she ever live a "normal" life?

My Review: Who doesn't like the peace and love folk? This book was a breath of fresh air and completely different from anything I've read lately. It's about two young girls – Shoshanna (15) and Mara (6) and their mother, Ella and their life on the run. The book starts out with the three leaving their home at a run down old commune full of sketchy people, and where life takes them. They meet up with old friends, and adventure to a new life together, a happier life together. They escape an abusive husband/father, a horrible place to live for a family, and start to rebuild. The characters are extremely well thought out and realistic, and everything seems so read and I just love it. This is a great story. I imagine this is how people would be in the time and setting they're in. The ending was happy and beautiful and just so fulfilling. I want to read it again and again. Sorry for the short review, but it's an awesome book and I definitely recommend you check it out! I got my copy from Netgalley. Thanks for reading!

(radioactivebookreviews.wordpress.com)

PinkAmy loves books, cats and naps says

In 1972 Shoshona, her little sister, and mentally ill mother steal a car and escape from her abusive father and the commune where they've lived for the past five years. Her mother falls deeper into paranoia and depression, and may be more ill than Shoshona realizes.

I received a complimentary ARC ebook from Net Galley in exchange for my honest review of DISAPPEAR HOME.

I was excited to read this novel, while I was a little too young to be a hippy, I remember those years fondly. I hoped this would be a blast from the past. Except for a few "man" punctuations the dialogue during the early parts of the book, the characters used modern words and phrases. I wasn't fond of Laura Hurwitz's writing. DISAPPEAR HOME doesn't read like a YA book. For instance, I've never read a YA story where the parents were referred to by their first names and where a large part of the third person POV was that of adults. Because of the POV, I had a hard time caring about the characters. The girls were in a difficult situation, but the writing lacked enough heart to make me care.

I am sorry, but I don't recommend DISAPPEAR HOME.

Allison says

I received an eARC of this book from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Thanks!

While *Disappear Home* was a quick read, it was not because it was riveting and captivating. Unfortunately, this book was quite stale and disappointing. I liked the idea behind it well enough but the execution was just not there. Nothing really *happened*. Everything was just skimming the surface and the conclusion was far too rushed and tied nicely with a bow.

I was not at all invested in the characters. Besides the basic information that we were given - an abusive father and husband, a hippie commune gone wrong - I did not really find myself satisfied with this motivation. We got microscopic snapshots into the family's past but nothing substantial and able to catch my attention. The characters were flat and unremarkable. The mother, Ella, deals with depression; however, we didn't ever get a huge look into this condition. Sure, she was tired a lot and grumpy and paranoid but, at the end of the day, we were more privy to her physical illness than that in her head - disappointing.

In writing and reading, I usually enjoy the idea of "show, don't tell." This book was a whole lot of telling. Like, a whole lot. The dialogue was, at times, incredibly longwinded and unnecessary. It told us things that would have been better delivered through action and well-crafted images. The dialogue also didn't seem natural - either the statements were dripping with hippie slang like "bread" (meaning money) and, of course, tacking "man" onto the end of every sentence, or they were so precise and stilted that I couldn't imagine any of these characters saying it. We, as readers, were *told* that this commune was bad. Told that Adam was abusive and dangerous. Told that this and that and the other thing. Show me! The setting was also poorly drawn. Besides the references to the hippie culture and some other quick details, there was nothing grounding this story in the 1970s. Overall, the writing style was simple and, in my opinion, lacking.

As I mentioned at the start of this review, I do think the plot is an interesting one. I was really looking forward to reading this book but, instead, I'm writing this review and wrapping up my experience with it feeling disappointed.

?Dani? says

I received this novel from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.

INTRODUCTION

Let's start with the good. When I read a historical novel, I want to feel like I'm a part of whatever bit of history I'm reading about. Sure, a novel set in the 18th century England might have a fantastic plot, but if I'm not feeling the setting, then it seems a bit of a waste to me.

And that's where this book shines. The world building is fantastic, really bringing you back in time through the use of language, descriptions and slang. It's the little things- like telling us Ella and Shoshanna believe in 'vibes', and that Jefferson Airplane is on the radio.

But then it goes too far the other way, and lets its plot get eaten up by the fabulous setting. The novel is so busy creating and sustaining this brilliant setting that it never really does much to advance the plot, or create

any sense of emotion. We get no conflict or fight to succeed. And that's the novel's fatal flaw.

THE CHARACTERS

Shoshanna- I didn't dislike her, but she was fairly forgettable as a protagonist. She had so much more potential than she ever used- she's a capable thief, intelligent, caring and somewhat world-weary, but she manages to fade into the background of the story, rather than getting up and fighting for what she wanted.

Ella- An extremely frustrating individual, but a brilliant character. A hippy who is also battling mental illness, she is willing to put up with a lot in order to stay with Adam, the man she loves, but is also willing to do whatever it takes to keep her daughters safe from him. She's stubborn, and very often wrong in what she says, but that's why I liked her. She isn't always doing the right thing, but she's always trying to, even if her mental illness takes its toll on her.

Mara- A well-written child, which you don't often see in fiction. She's messy and outspoken and naïve, but also sweet and good-natured. Honestly, Mara was probably my favourite character.

Judy- I liked Judy, but there's not much substance to her, and I never really understood why she was so important to the story. She's way younger than Ella, and would have been only a teenager when they were friends, which I found a bit unrealistic. She hasn't seen Ella in years, and she's willing to go off and live with her, and then she's able to (view spoiler). I don't see why the novel didn't make Judy and Ella sisters- it would have changed very little, except to make these things more believable.

Adam- An excellent shadow over the novel, but his end was way too anti-climatic. There was no sense he was ever defeated, or that he ever won, he just (view spoiler) I wanted to see Shoshanna face up to him, or maybe not face up to him, and have to deal with that. Something. Anything. Especially considering there were issues regarding Mara's paternity, that were never dealt with.

Avery- Fairly bland, and provided no conflict. Just another clockwork figure to keep things running smoothly.

THE CONFLICT

Conflict? What conflict? Everything worked out too well, especially when we got to the end. (view spoiler) It was all too easy and convenient.

Sure, (view spoiler) died, but even that provided no conflict. Everyone just quietly accepted this fact, and then moved on. Other than the initial runaway, none of the characters ever had to fight for anything, and that annoyed me.

And just for the record, this book has a plot VERY similar to Jacqueline Wilson's *Lola Rose*- mother escapes an abusive relationship with her teenaged daughter and much younger child; they settle into a new life while fearing the return of the father; there's a auntlike figure who takes care of the siblings; and (view spoiler), but I do honestly think that's a coincidence. I'm just pointing it out because *Lola Rose* deals with these issues with far more depth and emotion than *Disappear Home* does, bringing the characters to life, and getting you right inside their heads, as well as showing the difficulties they face in each situation.

Like in *Lola Rose*, the ten year old daughter is forced to deal with nightmares due to her escape, the challenges of a new home, taking care of her brother, money issues, nights away from her hospitalized mother, begging for food from neighbours, working out who to get help from and then she goes through a self-imposed challenge to deal with her greatest fear, hoping it will make everything better. After all this, the end is satisfying, and leaves us feeling fulfilled, as we saw how the plot affected the characters.

In *Disappear Home*, there is no sense of challenge or work in order to get to where they do. Shoshanna grows some vegetables, (view spoiler)Where's the fight, whether internal or external? Why doesn't Shoshanna work to get what she wants? It drove me mad.

It all just seems to result in the novel missing some emotional impact. This sort of novel should have had me sobbing, and yet I always felt kind of distant from the story, which is the reason it's not really deserving of four stars, despite the fantastic setting(because seriously, I can't stress that enough). I'd definitely read another book by this author, but there needs to be more conflict and fight in her next book for me to really fall in love with it.

Ms. Yingling says

Shoshanna Ebersole has lived with her mother, Ella, and her sister, Mara, at the Sweet Earth Farm commune for years, but the three finally escape when Shoshanna's father, the drug addicted Adam, is overheard offering her to one of the other commune members as a "gift". Taking the commune's run down station wagon and \$10 for gas, the three make it to San Francisco and find Judith still living in a house (pad) where the family once crashed. She's fed up with the drug addiction and unseemly types that have moved into Haight-Ashbury by 1972, and wants to move to Half Moon Bay, where some friends run a store that sells hippie artwork. When visiting, the Ebersole's car is identified as stolen and involved in a few crimes, including a hit-and-run. Luckily, the store owners know a farmer, Avery, who needs help and they move into Avery's barn and help him out. It's good that Judith is with the girls, because Ella is depressed and ill. When she becomes unable to care for her daughters, what will happen to the?

Strengths: This reminded me a bit of Norma Klein's *Sunshine*, and I think it is probably the best coverage I've seen of commune life at the time. I'm sure that there were (and are) some very lovely communes, but this one showed the negative side of communal living while still having supportive, helpful people around for the girls. This will be great for the 1960s/70s unit my 7th grade teachers do.

Weaknesses: There's a lot of drug use mentioned, and there is more sex alluded to (including a description of what 5 year old Mara saw, which is... borderline for me), but that was a big part of the hippie culture. Since it's not overly descriptive, I think I'll buy this. Very sad, but hopeful.

What I really think: This will circulate with girls who want books about abuse as well as for the historical unit, so I'll be very pleased to get a copy of this.

Jessica says

Did Not Finish. I tried to get into this one and I just couldn't. I think this story had potential but it was poorly executed and kind of fell flat.

Peter Riva says

This is an exceptional book. Based on what are clearly memories and recounted family tales, the pathos of the characters, the strength of the mother, the place and time of the hippie values and ethic - these all ring true and soundly echo the emotions those of us who were out and about back then experiences. A warm, engaging and heartfelt read.

Vanessa Fry says

The book centers on teenager Shoshanna Ebersole, a girl who escapes a hippie commune/cult with her sister and mother. The three are running from Shoshanna's father and cult leader, Adam. Shoshanna must find a way to keep her family safe while Adam is hunting them, and her mother's health is failing. Ultimately the plot kept me interested in the novel, but overall, the author's style left much to be desired. Hurwitz seemed to be trying too hard to make it believable that the book was set in the 70s, especially within the dialogue and the actions of some of the characters. I would have liked it a bit more if there was some more action between Adam and the family or if the ending wasn't so predictable. Overall, this was a decent first novel from Hurwitz, an interesting take on the idea of the hippie commune, and I would love to see what Hurwitz comes up with next.

Ella says

GUYS.

I HAVE FOUND IT.

drumroll

A BOOK WITH A 14-YEAR-OLD NARRATOR THAT DOESN'T HAVE THE MATURITY OF A 2-YEAR-OLD.

dies of shock

WHAT IS THIS MADNESS??!!!

Mandy says

I hadn't realized this was a YA book when requesting from the library, but I read it anyways and it was sweet.

Amie's Book Reviews says

DISAPPEAR HOME by Laura Hurwitz

Genre: Young Adult Fiction

Publication Date: March 1, 2015

* I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

This book can be considered historical fiction since the events take place 43 years in the past.

This book is set in 1972 (coincidentally that was the year I was born). The hippie movement is basically over, but there are still many hold-out hippies living on communes or clinging to their old neighborhoods even as they decline around them.

Shoshanna, her sister Mara and their mother have fled Sweet Earth Farm, a commune they had been living at for five years. They have fled from Shoshanna's abusive father Adam.

They fled the commune because hunger, violence, drugs and chaos had become the norm on the commune. There is another darker reason that prompted them to flee when they did which is revealed further into the book.

The story is told mostly from the point of view of fourteen year old Shoshanna. Her mother is 'checked-out' for much of the story and is at best an unfit mother and at worst a criminally negligent parent. However, the girls don't know this. All they know is that she is their mother and that they love her.

The three make it to San Francisco to the home of a friend. This friend readily takes them in and helps them to move to a small farm where an elderly man is in need of help.

Although there are frequent references to the hellish conditions they lived in at Sweet Earth Farm, the girls seem remarkably well adjusted ... almost too much so. Mara is six and is age-appropriately self-centered, but Shoshanna seems almost too good. She puts aside her own desires to help her mother and her sister. She is a teenager. Teenagers have raging hormones. That is just a fact. I would have expected at least one major freak-out, but that was not the case.

One thing that was surprising about this book was that Shoshanna showed zero interest in boys. This is unusual. Most young adult books center around teen romance. That fact alone makes for a refreshing change.

I am having a hard time deciding what rating to assign to this novel. I enjoyed reading it, but there were a few minor plot problems. I also had a hard time believing that so many people were willing to help out. Since I was born in the seventies I don't have any first hand knowledge of what people's behaviors were during that time period. But, things like Avery (an elderly farmer with a struggling farm) being able to afford to eat out every day and to just go out and buy groceries for four more mouths to feed without batting an eye seems unrealistic. But, maybe I am nitpicking.

The story is unique and the setting is not one that is often seen in Young Adult fiction.

I did enjoy the book and it is a quick read. My final rating is 3.5 out of 5 stars and I do recommend it to young adult readers. It will shed some light on the darker side of the hippie movement which is often portrayed as a time of all peace and love all the time.

All things considered, DISAPPEAR HOME is worth reading.

To read more of my reviews visit <http://amiesbookreviews.wordpress.com>

Claire (Book Blog Bird) says

I received a copy of Disappear Home in exchange for an honest review. Thanks to Albert Whitman and

Company and Netgalley. A copy of this review is also on my blog: www.bookblogbird.weebly.com

Disappear Home tells the story of Shoshanna and her mother and sister. It's 1970 and they have just escaped the Sweet Earth Farm where they have lived with their violent father and a bunch of other hippies for the past few years. They flee to San Francisco and meet up with a friend of theirs, Judy, and the four of them try to create a new life together in the nearby countryside.

I have a bit a fascination not only for the hippie movement of the late '60s but also for the aftermath in the early '70s, so this book pressed a lot of buttons for me. I loved the descriptions of when the family lived in Haight-Ashbury in the Summer of Love, but more than this I liked the way the author described how the hippie movement had changed by the early seventies, how there were still plenty of people who believed in the whole peace and love ethos, but that for many the whole scene had turned a bit skeevey with drug addicts and panhandlers where there used to be flower children.

The writing is simple enough to keep the plot flowing well but descriptive enough to give you a real sense of what it was like to live then, basically as an itinerant. Shoshanna and her sister Mara have never been to school, their mum never wants to stay long enough anywhere to put roots down, both from a dislike of authority and the government and a fear that their father will find them. I felt really sorry for Mara as all she wanted was some stability and to be like other kids.

The story is told from a distant third person POV and although Shoshanna is clearly supposed to be the main character, her sister, mother and Judy also take an equal portion of the spotlight. Although the POV meant I didn't connect with Shoshanna as a character that much, it was interesting to see what life was like for the other characters as well.

Judy seemed like a really grounded, lovely person. Shoshanna's mum seemed completely flaky in some of her beliefs - she refused to see a doctor about her cough, claiming that the body could heal itself and refused to let her children eat chocolate or ice-cream because junk food is apparently a right-wing conspiracy by The Man to try to kill minorities with diabetes and heart disease - but at the same time she was a fragile, damaged person with mental health issues, so she was still likeable.

Shoshanna's dad, Adam, was a bit of a one-dimensional baddie, but it was interesting to see the full extent of his evilness to unfold as the story progressed, from someone who was violent to his family, to being a drug addict and dealer and murderer.

All in all I'd definitely recommend Disappear Home, and because the plot is quite gentle and gets wrapped up in a nice, neat Happily Ever After I'd recommend it for the lower end of the Young Adult age range.
