

turbing, *The Dream Where the Losers Go* captures readers in a difficult tale of teenage sexuality and violence. This novel is not for the faint of heart; Goobie goes where few others would, and, in so doing, offers young readers a brave narrative that speaks to their reality and in their language. If I have a criticism of this novel, it is that Goobie insists on adding a fantastical element to an already deeply layered story. Skey's psychological awakening is made possible through her trips to a kind of dream world and her encounters there with a troubled, nameless boy. The dreams themselves are strongly written, and on their own they would have highlighted the story beautifully, but Goobie cannot resist imposing an unnecessary narrative trick at novel's end that adds little to the story, a plot device readers can see coming miles away.

Further, both Wennick and Goobie are determined to pack their narratives with as much trauma as possible. The overcrowded result ends up reading more like a litany of horrors than a portrait teenagers can recognize their own lives in (although clearly some would find "litany of horrors" an appropriate description of adolescence). The authors' impulse is to create a place where damaged kids can go to find themselves reflected, but, in tossing every conceivable trauma into the mix, I fear that the novels alienate readers more than involve them. Being a teenager, all on its own, is difficult; it "sucks." The material one could derive from puberty, from sexual assaults, abuse, and incest, each on their own, provide more than enough material for any one story. In resisting the urge to cover everything and touch everyone, authors may achieve their goals of reaching kids far more effectively than they are able to in jam-packed novels such as these.

Ultimately both novels do offer complex and interesting depictions of adolescence. Only Goobie's, however, manages to peer beyond adult perceptions of teenage life to offer a narrative that is uncomfortably true — speaking in the voice of a fifteen year-old girl who is able to eloquently capture adolescent culture and its pain, swear words included. Her writing talent has been recognized in 2001: her recent book, *Before Wings*, was shortlisted for the twelfth Mr. Christie Award in the best-books for young adults category.

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Lesson Number One: Attitude

Double or Nothing. Dennis Foon. Annick, 2000. 168 pp. \$7.95. ISBN 1-55037-626-8. Early in this novel about gambling addiction, the central character Kip shares two "rules" sure to lead to success in gaming. The first is about attitude, "If you feel like a loser, you will lose." Kip gets his rush from thinking himself into a bet, believing he cannot lose. This is the edge he craves, and he carries the attitude around like a second skin.

Author Dennis Foon does such a good job of creating this attitude or style

that he skates close to creating a thoroughly dislikeable central character. Kip is a high school elitist, scorning lesser gamblers, uncool teachers and people who simply don't share his interests. Kip's opinion of an English teacher as "crabtooth, Mr. Cheese, a.k.a. Belch Face, a.k.a. Fart Machine, a.k.a. Most Boring Turd on Earth" is so acidic, so nasty, it condemns both the object and the speaker.

Foon sets up Kip's arrogance in passages such as this so that the youth's fall is the more dramatic. Along with Kip's early winning streaks, his superiority goes unchallenged, until the stakes are raised. Inevitably, he starts to lose. At first, the losses are small, then they compound and become frightening. Kip begins to test the strength of his second gambling lesson: *Never get ahead of yourself. Don't start thinking about what will happen if you win or if you lose.*

Naturally, he does begin to worry, especially after his addiction threatens his relationship with the two women in his life: his mother and his girlfriend. His mother, a self-sacrificing woman who adores her son, becomes the measure of his degradation. As his gambling addiction grows, he steals from her bank account of hard-earned cash. Once he begins to steal from her, he cannot stop. His downward spiral becomes inevitable and depressing.

This is an edgy book. The reader's journey into the psychology of a young gambler is convincing and full of tension. The plot moves relentlessly to a conclusion that is both foregone and yet suspenseful. Much of the success of the story is due to Foon's taut writing. When Kip is withdrawing money from his mother's account, he almost turns away from the bank machine but is unable to resist its lure:

The screen reads: END OF TRANSACTION?

Before I can stop it, my freed finger flies, hitting everything in sight. It punches the NO button, the WITHDRAWAL button and then ... the \$500 button.

Ten crisp, clean fifty-dollar bills emerge from the slot. I stare at the money, stunned. What just happened? How did my fingers manage to do all that so quickly?

This novel is fast-paced and entertaining, yet serious. In the end, the reader wants Kip to kick his habit and build a new, happier life.

Lyle Weis is the Edmonton author of several books for young adults and a collection of adult poetry. He teaches writing to students of all ages, across the country.

The Colours of Awareness

The Colors of Carol Molev. Beth Goobie. Roussan, 1998. 194 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 1-896184-40-5.

Sixteen and teetering on the edge of discovery, sexual and otherwise, Carol Molev