

## **Almost Home**

**Joan Bauer**

**Reviewed by: Anika 17**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

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Sugar grew up in Missouri with her mother, grandfather, and her absent drunken father, Mr. Leeland. Everything in Sugar's life turns upside down when she loses her grandfather, King Cole, and is kicked out of the only home she's ever known. Her mother, Reba, takes Sugar to Chicago to find a new life for themselves, but things turn out to be much more difficult than they thought. Reba and Sugar both struggle with homelessness and recovering from the past. Throughout it all, Sugar finds support from her foster family and most of all from her fluffy little friend, Shush, who is always by her side in her journey to find something that feels like home.

Almost Home is a moving and powerful story about a girl fighting against all the odds. Sugar writes several poems throughout the course of the story that are brimming with raw emotions. Joan Bauer's simple, dare I say it, sweet writing style very well encapsulates the struggle and beauty in Sugar's story. Joan Bauer beautifully integrates little life lessons into every moment of Sugar's journey, whether it's from her grandfather's autobiography, her mother, or even all the people around her. Sugar manages to touch the heart of every person she meets and it's no wonder why, knowing that she goes out to show everyone what sweetness truly is, despite her sour circumstances. I feel that Almost Home is a novel that is very much capable of opening people's eyes to the realities of homelessness and showcasing the power of resilience in the face of adversity.

Joan Bauer paints a somewhat rosier experience of homelessness and avoids graphic content and language as much as possible, making Almost Home a suitable story for younger readers, but not so much for an older reader like me. There are hints and references to worse experiences and the use of alcohol, but besides that there isn't a lot of implicating content. For these reasons, I would suggest Almost Home to anyone 11 years or older. Bauer's book would make a great gift to dog lovers and fans of realistic fiction everywhere.

### **Recommended Titles:**

Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer

Close to Famous by Joan Bauer

Peeled by Joan Bauer

Soar by Joan Bauer

Squashed by Joan Bauer