

Review of Closer in The School Librarian Autumn 2011

Mel is finding things difficult at home. Her mum and stepfather are rowing all the time, her stepfather can't seem to get a job and she is not getting on with her elder sister, Hannah. Tensions escalate when Granma dies after a long illness. However, there are a few people in her life she can rely on such as her best friend, Chloe, and her Art teacher, Sally Griffin. But what about her complicated relationship with Raj and why is her stepfather wanting to spend so much time with her? Matters reach a crisis within the family one evening and everyone is forced to reassess their relationship with one another.

Closer is a sensitive exploration of the difficult theme of incest. Linnell has created a feisty but vulnerable protagonist in the character of Mel, whose world falls apart when she discovers the real reason for her stepfather's attentions. The novel also celebrates courage and the bond between sisters and friends. The book shows that a positive outcome after such a trauma is possible, but not before a great deal of pain and adjustment is experienced first.

Recommended for young adult readers.

Rachel Bowler.