



Hanging on to Max

By Margaret Bechard

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It's Sam Pettigrew's last year of high school. And he's spending it figuring out how, at age seventeen, he is supposed to care for his baby son, Max. Max wasn't part of the plan. He wasn't even part of the backup plan. But he's here now, and Sam is attending an alternative high school with other teen parents like himself. Talk about a wake-up call. But Sam is determined to make it work, to show everyone -- his dad, his new girlfriend, himself -- that he has what it takes to be a good dad. Trading footballs for diaper bags and college brochures for feeding schedules, Sam gives fatherhood his best shot. Only no one told him it would be this hard. What if his best isn't good enough?

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Hanging on to Max By Margaret Bechard Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Between the midnight feedings and the diaper issue, it's never easy being a new parent. But when you're also a high-school student trying to graduate, the job becomes even more overwhelming. Sam Pettigrew never dreamed he'd spend his senior year pushing a stroller. But when his former girlfriend, Brittany, decided that she couldn't handle being a parent, Sam knew he had to try. Now attending an alternative high school that provides daycare, Sam desperately juggles homework and parenting duties. "The list above my desk said, 'Get Max to sleep by 9:00.' Right under 'Drink out of a cup' and 'nap schedule.' I couldn't even remember what 'nap schedule' meant. " Sam's biggest problem is his lack of support: Brittany has left town to start over, and Sam's widowed father, angry over Sam's decision, refuses to help Sam other than financially. Claire Bailey, another teen parent, only serves to show Sam how alone he is--her family loves to babysit and buy toys for her baby, Emily. Finally, after a disastrous night spent in the emergency room when Max cuts his hand, Sam becomes defeated. How much longer can he keep up this crazy schedule of school and fatherhood? Yet, how can he bear not to keep it up, when giving it up means giving up Max?

With this kind of subject matter, it would be easy for seasoned author Margaret Bechard to slip into didactic "after-school special" mode. Instead she has penned a truly tender, reversed-gender tearjerker with an ending as realistic as it is heartbreaking. A four-hankie recommended read. (Ages 12 and older) --*Jennifer Hubert*

From Publishers Weekly

Sam, a 17-year-old unwed father, is the candid, unusually likable narrator of Bechard's (If It Doesn't Kill You) involving novel. A senior at an alternative high school that offers day care, Sam struggles to juggle his responsibilities as a parent and student. He and 11-month-old Max live with Sam's largely uncommunicative widowed father, who has agreed to support them until Sam graduates high school and takes a construction job. Sam finds much-needed companionship when Claire, whom he has quietly admired for years, shows up at his school with a baby of her own. Flashbacks effectively fill in the missing pieces of the story, recalling the evolution of Sam's relationship with Brittany, Max's mother; Claire's presence in his eight-grade English class; his mother's last days fighting cancer; a memorable childhood fishing expedition with his parents; his first glimpse of the newborn Max; and his resolve to keep the baby when Brittany decides to give him up for adoption. The teen's conflicted perceptions of his role as father, friend and son, as well as his future aspirations, are intermittently droll and wrenching. While the story has been told before, it comes across as unfailingly real; and even the surprise ending conforms to the lifelike atmosphere. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up-Sam Pettigrew has transferred from his old high school to an alternative school for a very good reason. When his girlfriend wants to give their baby up for adoption, the 17-year-old assumes the role of custodial single parent of his son, Max. The story begins with Sam in his new role as father and moves back and forth between his current troubles and his earlier ones: the death of his mother, his emotionally distant father, and his peer relationships. Sam's world is generally a supportive one, full of friends, teachers, and family. However, he and his father made a deal; if Sam graduates and then goes on to work a construction job, he'll support Sam and Max for one year. There will be no college in Sam's future, even with his great SAT scores. The young man has taken responsibility for himself and his actions. However, he is still an ordinary teenager trying his hardest to do the right thing, the best thing for the tiny, much-loved son that transformed his life and possibly his future. As Bechard deftly shows, the choices made in small ordinary moments are as important as the big "turning points" in determining the course of a life. In a world where

much of YA literature is fraught with "noir" plots peopled with dysfunctional characters caught in tragic situations, *Hanging on to Max* is a breath of fresh air. Bechard has written a poignant winner of a book peopled with human beings all struggling to make their lives work. And she has created in Sam an unforgettable and realistic protagonist full of heart and guts.

Jane Halsall, McHenry Public Library District, IL

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sarah Fernandez:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or read a book entitled *Hanging on to Max*? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have additional opinion?

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Charles Sizemore:

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Louise Denison:

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