



This Is Not a Drill

By Beck McDowell

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Two teens try to save a class of first-graders from a gun-wielding soldier suffering from PTSD

When high school seniors Emery and Jake are taken hostage in the classroom where they tutor, they must work together to calm both the terrified children and the gunman threatening them--a task made even more difficult by their recent break-up. Brian Stutts, a soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Iraq, uses deadly force when he's denied access to his son because of a custody battle. The children's fate is in the hands of the two teens, each recovering from great loss, who now must reestablish trust in a relationship damaged by betrayal. Told through Emery and Jake's alternating viewpoints, this gripping novel features characters teens will identify with and explores the often-hidden damages of war.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

It's already rough going when exes Emery and Jake are paired together to teach French to a class of first-graders. But then Brian Stutts, an Iraq War vet suffering from PTSD, charges into the class to take his kid. The teacher resists and out comes a gun, and from that moment everyone in the room is held hostage. Cops, ambulances, and SWAT teams gather, angling for a way to reason with Stutts. In alternating chapters, we discover how both Emery and Jake are processing the situation as well as their past relationship. The fact that there's a gun being waved around sometimes makes these tangents feel too leisurely, and it's also unclear how the two are able to hold private conversations inside the same room as the gunman. That said, the setup is irresistible, and McDowell's authentic handling of the confusion and fright of the class of first-graders lends the story a constant undertone of tension. Purposeful in parts, but fans of Todd Strasser and Paul Volponi will relish it. Grades 6-9. --Daniel Kraus

Review

"Fast-paced, suspenseful thriller. . . . The hours-long standoff comes to a dramatic and violent climax. . . . A vividly depicted and gripping tragedy." — **Kirkus Reviews**

"The setup is irresistible, and McDowell's authentic handling of the confusion and fright of the class of first-graders lends the story a constant undertone of tension. . . . Fans of Todd Strasser and Paul Volponi will relish it." — **Booklist**

"What makes this story stand out are the discussions between Emery and the gunman, who is suffering from PTSD. . . . McDowell balances the gunman's plight against his son's shame, fear, and divided loyalties. Written in a format that will appeal to reluctant readers . . . an excellent choice for sparking classroom discussion." — **School Library Journal**

"Ripped from the headlines. . . . Fast-moving story that will keep the reader's attention with bits of humor to lighten the mood. McDowell excels in depicting the voices of the teenage narrators, the first-graders, and a soldier suffering from PTSD." — **Library Media Connection**

About the Author

Beck (Rebecca) McDowell lives in Huntsville, Alabama. *This Is Not a Drill* is her first novel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Carter:

Do you one among people who can't read gratifying if the sentence chained inside the straightway, hold on guys this kind of aren't like that. This This Is Not a Drill book is readable simply by you who hate those straight word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable studying experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer involving This Is Not a Drill content conveys objective easily to understand by lots of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different by means of it. So , do you nevertheless thinking This Is Not a Drill is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

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James Bouchard:

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