



Holding Smoke

By Elle Cosimano

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John "Smoke" Conlan is serving time for two murders—but he wasn't the one who murdered his English teacher, and he never intended to kill the only other witness to the crime. A dangerous juvenile rehabilitation center in Denver, Colorado, known as the Y, is Smoke's new home and the only one he believes he deserves. But, unlike his fellow inmates, Smoke is not in constant imprisonment. After a near death experience leaves him with the ability to shed his physical body at will, Smoke is able to travel freely outside the concrete walls of the Y, gathering information for himself and his fellow inmates while they're asleep in their beds. Convinced his future is only as bright as the fluorescent lights in his cell, Smoke doesn't care that the "threads" that bind his soul to his body are wearing thin—that one day he may not make it back in time. That is, until he meets Pink, a tough, resourceful girl who sees him for who he truly is and wants to help him clear his name. Now Smoke is on a journey to redemption he never thought possible. With Pink's help, Smoke may be able to reveal the true killer, but the closer they get to the truth, the more deadly their search becomes. The web of lies, deceit, and corruption that put Smoke behind bars is more tangled than they could have ever imagined. With both of their lives on the line, Smoke will have to decide how much he's willing to risk, and if he can envision a future worth fighting for.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—In juvenile detention, where John Conlan is serving time (he was convicted of a double murder but was spared from adult prison to avoid being near his father), he's known as Smoke and deals in information. Want to find out if your girl is faithful? If your mom is okay? Ask Smoke. His fellow inmates assume that he has strong connections on the outside, but the truth is he can go outside—sort of. A few years earlier, the teen was beaten to death by his father, then revived by the EMTs. He now exists somewhere between life and death and is able to leave his body and slip through the prison walls while everyone is sleeping. The tenuous grip his spirit has on his body is weakening, and he's beginning to think the information he digs up is doing more harm than good, so he's decided to quit his side job completely. When one of his last fact-finding missions leads him to a tough and alluring girl named Pink and he comes across some information that might point to who actually committed the crime he was accused of, Smoke realizes that he has to stay in the game, even though it's getting more dangerous by the day. The story plods along, and the gritty tone results in a feeling of coldness rather than suspense. VERDICT Descriptions of prison life and politics abound, which is the novel's greatest strength, but a slow pace and clunky turns of phrase make this thriller a secondary purchase.—Beth McIntyre, Madison Public Library, WI

Review

"An inventive paranormal gambit, a compelling lead character, and a plot that twists and turns through to the last page . . . HOLDING SMOKE stands out as original and inventive."? *Claudia Gray, New York Times best-selling author of the Evernight series*

"Part ghost story, part redemption story, part mystery, and very engaging."? *School Library Connection*

"[A] fantastic yet real portrait of a survivor seeking answers . . . Intertwined spectral and real worlds deliver double the thrills."? *Kirkus Reviews*

"*Holding Smoke* is a smash-you-in-the-mouth book that's intelligent, sharp-edged and action packed. Fans of hard-hitting YA better get ready to strap themselves in, because Elle Cosimano has arrived on the scene."? *Alan Lawrence Sitomer, author of The Hoopster and Caged Warrior*

"Compelling . . . Cosimano, a warden's daughter, brings authenticity to the depiction of prison life . . . Smoke is a complicated, sympathetic character, and his redemption feels earned."? *Booklist*

"A complex story of shady guards, honorable bad guys, romance, and the foibles and limitations of the justice system."? *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

About the Author

Elle Cosimano grew up in the Washington, D.C., suburbs, the daughter of a maximum security prison warden and an elementary school teacher who rode a Harley. As a teen, she spent summers working on a fishing boat in the Chesapeake Bay. A failed student of the hard sciences, she discovered her true calling in social and behavioral studies while majoring in psychology at St. Mary's College of Maryland. Fifteen years later, Elle set aside a successful real-estate career to pursue writing. Her debut novel, *Nearly Gone*, was an Edgar Award Finalist, winner of the International Thriller Writers' Best Young Adult Novel Award, and winner of the inaugural Mathical Book Award recognizing mathematics in children's literature. Elle lives

with her husband and two sons in Mexico, somewhere between the jungle and the sea. Website: www.ellecosimano.com. Twitter: @ellecosimano.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Helland:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book eligible Holding Smoke? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have additional opinion?

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