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www.invisiblepublishing.com
promotion@invisiblepublishing.com

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READING GUIDE: Tyler Hellard's *Searching for Terry Punchout*

Hi, and thanks for picking up *Searching for Terry Punchout*.

My favourite writer is John Steinbeck. He often wrote about the kinds of communities people build with each other—sometimes these communities are based on family, but a lot of times it's just proximity. He wrote beautiful stories about places, the people who live there, and their tremendous sense of obligation toward each other. I love these stories (for my money, *Cannery Row* is the best of them) and they've had an enormous influence on me.

Searching for Terry Punchout is ostensibly a story about a hockey player and his son, but I wanted the setting to have significance. Pennington, Nova Scotia is fictional, but very much based on Summerside, where I grew up, and Antigonish, where I went to school. What role does Pennington play in Terry's life? What role does it play in Adam's? How does this small community respond to each of them returning?

Like Adam, I was never quite comfortable with where I come from, and I left as soon as I could. That said, it's still home—it will always be home. In the book, Adam calls this sense of nostalgia "a design flaw." Is he right? What is home and why does it matter so much, even if we leave? Is Adam justified in feeling the way he does about Pennington and the people who live there?

Finally, this is a book about violence. Fighting takes up a lot of space in this story and, while writing it, I often considered how men behave. How does violence fit into the characters' lives? How does each either justify or confront this behaviour, if at all? How do they feel about fighting, how do they use violence, and who, if anyone, does it help?

Thanks again for choosing my book—I'm genuinely honoured, and I really do hope you enjoy it. I also hope these questions help get your discussion started and reveal some of my intentions with this story.

Best regards,

Tyler Hellard

