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The Art of Starving

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Book Review
The Art of Starving

Matt is a 17 year old boy who has been raised by his single mother. For as long as he can remember, Matt has struggled with an eating disorder that consumes almost every thought. When his sister suddenly runs away, Matt finds himself in despair and is determined to take revenge on whoever hurt her. In doing so, Matt becomes friends with the high school heart throb, Tariq. Soon, this relationship blossoms from merely a friendship into a loving sexual relationship. His relationship with his mother is strained as she turns to alcohol to dampen her feelings of loss from losing her daughter and her employment. Growing sicker and sicker, Matt is killing himself slowly. Eventually, Tariq breaks up with Matt because of his eating disorder and Matt has a psychotic break which lands him into treatment. This proves to be the best thing that could have happened as he slowly overcomes his disordered eating habits and renews relationships with his family members, finding closure towards Tariq and his unknown father.

This is a beautiful coming-of-age story that explores the themes of teenage romance, family conflict, addiction, and mental illness. Perhaps the most touching theme of all is trying to discover and make peace with one’s true self. The details in this story seek to open the reader’s heart to feel understanding and compassion toward Matt, but it is far too detailed, bordering on sexually explicit, in places that it need not be. While beautiful to catch a glimpse of understanding toward another human being, the book could have as much of an effect on the reader without including sexually explicit details regarding pornography, masturbation, sexual fantasy, and intimate sexual encounters. Readers will enjoy the relationship with Tariq, which shows how love can break down the boundaries of cliques and “coolness” to embrace who you really are inside without shame. The book gives startling insight into eating disorders; Matt feels he has superpowers when he does not eat that he loses when he gives in to the overpowering need to eat. Overall, this book is powerful and touching, but contains unnecessary details which make it a battle to keep reading.

*Contains severe language and severe sexual content.