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Wintergirls

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Book Review

Wintergirls

Author

Laurie Halse Anderson

Illustrator

Reviewer

Abigail Packard

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

288

Year

2009

Publisher

Viking Books for Young

ISBN

9780670011100

Even after agreeing to work on her recovery and moving in with her dad, Lia is still struggling to eat regularly. She counts every calorie and avoids eating too much so that she can be thin, thin, thin. But when she learns that her childhood best friend, Cassie, is found dead and alone in a motel room, Lia's struggle with eating intensifies and she begins seeing visions of Cassie's ghost. Lia's life unravels more and more as she resists eating. She become estranged from her dad, stepmom, and stepsister. Her relationship with her mother, which has never been strong, deteriorates further. After fainting and nearly bleeding out due to cutting, Lia is brought to the hospital and then moved to her mom's house where she begins the slow, painful steps toward healing. But it's only after Lia is able to face Cassie's ghost head on and banish the habits and attitude they built together that Lia is able to fully move on toward recovery.

Anderson's writing is haunting but beautiful. Lia is a highly unreliable narrator, yet her perspective on the world and on herself is just so spot on in this portrayal of an anorectic's mind. And Anderson does a phenomenal job of drawing the reader into Lia's perspective by narrating all of the events as Lia sees them and by showing all of Lia's thoughts about herself and the world around her. The topics of anorexia and self-harm are very difficult to tackle, yet Anderson's treatment of these topics is well thought out and executed. Anderson writing is filled with poignant images. The thematic elements of cold, winter, and ghosts lend the atmosphere of a ghost story or creepy fairy-tale to the narrative and tie the entire story together. Overall, Lia's story is heartbreaking and sad, but ends with the hope of recovery and healing.

*Contains mild language and mild violence.