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The Missing Piece of Charlie O'Reilly

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Last year, Charlie went to bed annoyed with his little brother, Liam, wishing he would just disappear. When Charlie woke up the next morning, his wish had come true. Liam was gone, along with every trace of his existence. No one remembers Liam—no one except Charlie. Now, a year later, Charlie is determined to find Liam, but the search seems hopeless. Until one day, Charlie receives a note that is unmistakably in Liam’s handwriting. The note leads Charlie to the old, mysterious asylum on the hill, where he finds Liam, along with many other children who have wished their lives away. But now that Charlie has entered the asylum, can he and Liam get out? With the help of Charlie’s best friend, Ana, and Jonathon the friendly baseball coach, Charlie makes the ultimate sacrifice for his family, learning a few lessons about the power of forgiveness and unconditional love along the way.

The pacing and plot progression of this book are just right. The characters are well developed, and their relationships with each other are wonderful and real. Charlie’s unbreakable friendship with Ana is a special treat, and the bonds that are forged with other characters throughout the story feel authentic and genuine. The book has an eerie mood throughout, but it is not quite as spooky as you might imagine the story to be from the title and cover of the book. However, the elements of magical realism and mystery that are woven into the book truly create a stunning, multifaceted, and intriguing story. The past and present intertwine to form a mesmerizing book that would make a great read-aloud at bedtime or in the classroom.