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Just a Normal Tuesday

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It’s a normal Tuesday until sixteen-year-old Kai finds a letter from her sister in the mail; a suicide note with apologies but no explanation. Kai helps with funeral arrangements in a haze of shock, guilt, and anger. She’s desperate for answers that no one has, angry at her parents for seeming to just move on, and angry at Jen for abandoning her and all of their plans. Grief quickly falls into a downward, self-medicating spiral that comes to a screeching halt when Kai’s parents announce that they’re sending her to the Tree House, a summer camp for grieving kids. Kai is not a camper, and the furthest thing from happy to be dumped with a bunch of strangers. But as everyone begins to open up, she learns that there is relief in sharing each other’s pain. By the time the month is up, Kai is actually happy to see her parents, and leaves camp with hope, new friends, and something more.

Dealing with the suicide of a family member is a weighty topic, but the excessive exposition and heavy-handed use of synonyms and unique dialogue attributions makes it difficult to take Kai’s tragedy seriously from the start. The writing frequently comes across as clichéd and melodramatic, especially at the beginning. Readers may also find it difficult to relate to or like Kai, who comes across as a hypocritically materialistic rich white girl for much of the book. That being said, some of these issues taper off once Kai gets to camp, and you can tell that this is where Turrisi is really getting to the story she wanted to write—Kai’s journey of processing and healing from her trauma and grief. Turrisi’s approach to several different kinds of pain and tragedy through Kai’s group members is well-crafted and emotional to read, carrying through from her own experiences. The romance between Kai and Graham may be a little over-the-top for some, but it doesn’t overshadow the growth Kai experiences. Overall, a book with a very important topic and message, that suffers at the start from trying too hard. Readers should be aware that this book contains moderate potentially disturbing descriptions of death.

*Contains moderate language, moderate drug abuse, and mild sexual content.