



The Catastrophic History of You and Me

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

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This is a weird book, excessively long and very far from an easy read.

Everything looks wonderful for Aubrie Elizabeth Egan, known as Brie. She is at high school. Her father is a renowned cardiac surgeon. Her parents are still together. Her boyfriend Jacob Fischer is an athletics star. But at the age of fifteen, Brie suddenly dies of heart disease. Most of the narrative of this book is situated in Brie's afterlife. This reader required a period of adjustment to become accustomed to this posthumous narrative.

In a parallel universe inhabited by the recently deceased, Brie frequents a pizza parlour named Slice, where she meets Nintendo kid, someone she calls Lady Gothga and Patrick Darling, who becomes her approximation to a boyfriend in the world of the dead.

Communication is possible between the dead world and the living. Brie can witness some of the catastrophic consequences of her own death, including her father's guilt at being unable to save her, his consequent misbehaviour, her mother's grief, and the way one of her close friends at school takes advantage of her absence to grab Jacob. The story now unfolds to show how Brie and Patrick bring the narrative of their deaths to a less destructive conclusion. The relationship between Brie and her friends is beautifully described. We understand why she hates having had to leave them. Her relationship with her dog Hamloaf is also memorable. And there is a twist in the Brie/Jacob relationship that takes the reader by surprise and is sensitively handled.

On the whole however this book is a daring experiment that misses its mark. The strength of the narrative is insufficient to carry conviction. The reader does not become sufficiently acquainted with Brie in her life to develop strong sympathy with her.

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