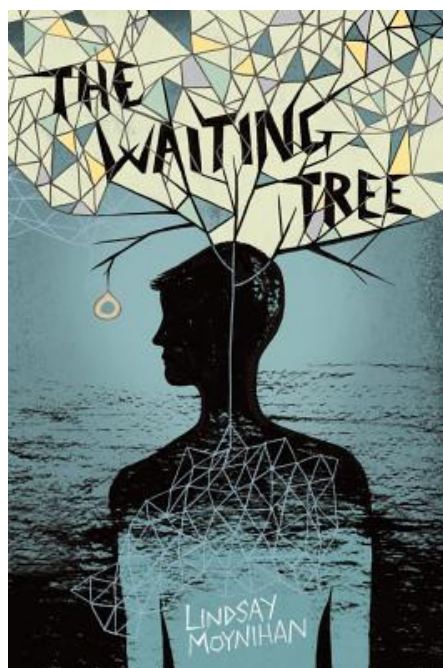




The Waiting Tree

Lindsay Moynihan

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The real me? I thought. What was I now, the fake me? Would I suddenly wake up and discover I'd dreamt up this entire year or had been in some sort of coma? Eighteen-year-old Simon Peters wants to stand up for the truth about who he is. His love for Stephen is unwavering, but does he have the courage to defend it when his entire church community, including his eldest brother Paul, have ostracized him? Will Stephen's feelings change now that he's been banished to the Waverly Christian Center to learn how to be "normal" again? Trapped in a cashier's job he hates, struggling to maintain peace with his brothers after their parents have died, and determined to look after his mute twin and his friend Tina, Simon puts everyone else's needs before his own. It takes a courageous act on the part of Jude, his devoted twin, to change both of their lives forever. Jude, who is wiser than anyone ever knew. Jude, who understands that the meaning of the fig tree blooming in their scrappy backyard can finally set them free.

The Waiting Tree Details

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Author : Lindsay Moynihan

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From Reader Review The Waiting Tree for online ebook

Leeanna says

This review originally appeared on my blog, www.leeanna.me

When I read the summary for **THE WAITING TREE**, I thought the book would be about Simon's difficulty in being gay in a community where Being Gay Is Not Acceptable. In part, that's some of the story, but Simon also has a lot of other problems. **THE WAITING TREE** is his journey of self-discovery.

Simon and his three brothers were orphaned after their parents died in a car accident. Simon didn't even get to finish high school. Instead, to help out financially, he had to get a job at a place that's very reminiscent of a certain big blue retailer. Simon works nights because during the day he watches his twin brother, Jude. Jude has never spoken a word in his life and can't take care of himself. On top of everything else, Simon lives in an economically dead and conservative town, so there aren't a lot of options. And the very worst part? His boyfriend, Stephen, was sent to a "de-gay" center after Stephen's dad found the two having sex.

THE WAITING TREE is not a cheerful book. It is realistic and gritty, but also hopeful. I think a lot of teens will empathize with all the burdens Simon has. Times are tough for teens and young adults (and everyone else), and I think readers will understand what Simon is going through. They might even feel like they're going through the same sort of thing themselves -- overwhelmed by everything, and just getting through day by day.

And that's exactly what Simon's doing -- living day by day. His main concern is Jude. Second is his love for Stephen. As I read **THE WAITING TREE**, I was both sad and hopeful, and I enjoyed seeing Simon eventually realize he couldn't just sit back and shuffle through life, that he had to take steps if he wanted to change things.

I would have liked to see what happened when Simon went to get Stephen. The ending was my least favorite part because it was open ended; I'm the type of reader who likes closure. But otherwise, I enjoyed the book, and I don't think I put it down while reading. It's not a very long book (the ARC is 218 pages) so it's easy to finish it in one or two sessions.

Simon and Jude stole my heart, and when Jude made a very painful decision, I actually said, "No, don't do it!" As for what that decision was, you'll have to read **THE WAITING TREE** to find out, which I recommend you do. Although it's a Young Adult book, I think adults would enjoy it too. As I said, it's not a cheerful book -- there's a lot of bad stuff going on I didn't mention -- but I think the message behind the book is a good one.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book through the Amazon Vine program in exchange for an honest review.

See more of my reviews:

Lottie Eve says

The Waiting Tree first caught my interest when I saw the dazzling cover that the book proudly showed off.

Just look at the greens and blues and the tree mosaic! The cover is an absolute beauty. Unfortunately the contents are not nearly as good as the cover. In fact, I really wish that I just admired the cover from afar and didn't read the book at all. This novel just made me angry.

The story isn't centered on Simon being gay as much as it is centered on the cruelties of people and the unfairness of life. Most of the cruelties Simon has to endure is because of the gender he is attracted to, but that isn't all the book is about. It's about how people seem to push away and hate people who are not 'normal.'

First and foremost, I felt that The Waiting Tree is just very extremely negative with its portrayal of things. Almost all the characters in this book, aside from Simon and his friends, are thought of as either hypocrites or people who are just cruel. The members of the church are specifically portrayed in a negative manner. This book doesn't show the other side of the church that is accepting and caring. I know that there are people who are devoted Christians that don't mind that you like people of the same gender as yourself. But that isn't shown anywhere in this novel.

The characters weren't all to great either. I can't say that I loved them, much less liked them (except for Jude. Bless his heart). I just couldn't feel any strong emotion for them other than rage. Not a good sign when the book's purpose is to pull on heartstrings.

Another major flaw is the ending. Nothing is resolved by the time the ending comes. It's vague and literally ends with a "this is just the beginning" line. If this was a series, I might forgive that, but this isn't a series. So I basically just trudged through a ton of things that offended me greatly and sent me into rage only to feel unsatisfied. The Waiting Tree is only 218 pages. Surely the author could have added 50 or a 100 more pages to tie things up, right?

If you are looking for a book that writes the issue of being ostracized in a sensitive way I would recommend Speechless by Hannah Harrington, a book that not only has amazing characters that are rough around the edges, but also an ending that doesn't make me want to throw my Kindle across the room.

An advanced copy was provided in exchange for a honest review via Netgalley.

Dani says

Originally posted at The Cozy Armchair.

I made the mistake of glancing through the Goodreads reviews before starting this title, and I saw an overwhelming number of negative reviews, which is always disheartening right before you're about to start a book. But I still tried my best to approach The Waiting Tree with an open mind, and I want to say that I succeeded. I think I enjoyed The Waiting Tree marginally more than those that gave it negative reviews, but it's also definitely not a book that you "enjoy" perse because it deals with really heavy topics, and it is not a happy book at all.

It is a realistic book, though, that tackles issues such as homophobia, dysfunctional families, etc., in an honest way. It doesn't shy away from presenting a harder way of life, but I don't think it did so in an excessive way. I went in expecting to see Simon facing a barrage of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse because of his sexuality, but it's not so blatant. Or, basically, the book was not all about Simon's sexuality. In many ways, it is; Simon is shunned by most of the town/church and his older brother, but he also has allies.

There were so many other elements to this book beyond Simon's sexuality, which really caught me by surprise and redeemed this story for me. Simon's brother, Jude, was such a great character and a definite (heartbreaking) highlight of the story. Simon's relationships with his family and friends are a focal point of the story too, more than Simon's relationship with Stephen. Speaking of, I like how Stephen was brought into the story later and, although his situation was terrible, it wasn't hopeless. I was afraid the book would go down the route where Stephen would deny his relationship with Simon, but I was pleasantly surprised by how it did deal with their relationship.

Don't get me wrong, though, this book is incredibly sad at points, especially toward the end. Everything gets worse for Simon and his family, and we never really see it get better. It can be argued that there is no real resolution for these characters' problems. In that way, I do have to say that it was not satisfying. I was especially disappointed in the rage-inducing route it took in the last section because it felt like everything had to literally fall apart before the book could end. It was such an unfair turn of events, particularly for Simon's brother Jude, and I was incredibly frustrated. The ending did try to present a somewhat hopeful outlook where Simon looks toward the future rather than wallow in the problems his family has, but I didn't like how Jude got the short end of the stick in general.

This could be seen as an issues book, and it's definitely a gritty contemporary story, so I know it won't appeal to everyone. If this isn't the kind of book you would normally pick up, then don't because it won't be a good reading experience. If you're intrigued by the premise, then do give it a try! I found the characters and their relationships really interesting, and you may too.

P.E. says

Simon is gay in a small town where being different is enough to have you shunned from society. When he's caught with Stephen by Stephen's dad, Simon's life changes in the worst way. Even his brother Paul has a hard time accepting him.

Let's be real: Simon's life sucks. It actually depressed me a little because I couldn't see very much of a bright side to the story. Simon has an awful job, didn't finish high school, his parents are dead, his brother is an idiot, his twin brother needs extra help and attention that Simon's unable to completely provide and his best friend has been sent away. The whole situation was uninspiring because it just seems to get worse every day.

I couldn't connect with Simon because our lives are so different. So much of the racist and homophobic crap he has to deal with doesn't exist where I live, at least so blatantly. I have no doubt that there are garbage people who say garbage things but living in possibly one of the most multicultural communities in the world where there are so many religions, ethnicities, and cultures, I couldn't believe the way they treated Simon. If anyone has to experience that I feel for them but there's a better world out there; they just need to find it.

Simon himself was meant to be someone I sympathized and I did, but I didn't connect with him. I have never experienced the influence of a church or felt ostracized for any reason. I also couldn't get a grip on Simon's character. The one trait that defined him was that he cared more about others than himself and that trait was a little bit forcefully fed to the reader as the supporting characters kept saying it. I didn't feel like Simon had much of a personality. Those little details that make people real— maybe they listen to a certain type of music, watch TV or have an online life— just weren't there.

That's something I wondered a lot when reading *The Waiting Tree*. Where was the technology? This book was written with the intention of being gritty and realistic so does it take place a while ago? The reason I ask is that technology is integrated to the life of every teen. Even if you can't afford internet there is WiFi.

Libraries offer free internet access and through the internet there are communities and resources that could have been beneficial to Simon. If there isn't a group you feel you relate with in reality, you can hang out with one online. So that bugged me just because I wanted this story to be realistic not just in the bad ways but the good ways too and I don't feel like that happened.

The other thing to consider is this is not my usual type of book so I wasn't very into it. It never drew me in and that's because I don't usually read these types of books for a reason. I rarely read contemporary that isn't intensely tragic; life lessons aren't my thing. Life in jeopardy is. That's just the type of reader I am. I didn't enjoy reading *The Waiting Tree* and I felt like the ending was abrupt and not as enlightening as it was meant to be.

So, this book gets 1 star. It just wasn't my type of read because I couldn't relate to it. I wouldn't discourage anyone from trying *The Waiting Tree* if it seems like the type of book you'd enjoy.

Hope Wilson says

The overall story was good, however the ending left a lot of things unanswered. Didn't touch too much on the outcome of the romantic relationship, more on the main characters relationship with his brother.

Sameer Bapat says

I'll cut straight to the chase. "*The Waiting Tree*" is one of the worst novels ever written. When I picked it up for a school assignment, I thought it would be a compelling and interesting drama, but I hated it. The terrible cover art should have warned me, but of course, I didn't listen to my gut instincts and I ended up reading *The Waiting Tree*. It is the coming of age story of a homosexual young man, who must find his place in the world. After the first fourth of the book, it lost focus completely. A major plot point is forgotten, the already unintelligent dialogue turned even worse, and an immensely irritating character is introduced into this mess of a story. I won't bother to talk about all the reasons why I hated *The Waiting Tree*, but long story short, do not waste your time with this novel.

Heather says

Simon lives with his three brothers in a small rural town. Nothing ever happens there and everybody knows everybody as well as their business. So when Simon was caught with Stephen in a compromising situation his life takes another turn for the worst.

A few years ago his parents died and the boys were left to fend for themselves. Though they did stick together times were hard and Simon had to drop out of school to get a job to help take care of the house and his twin brother Jude. Jude is different, he is a mute, but super intelligent. The twins have a close bond that no one quiet understands and Simon takes it upon himself to care for Jude during the day and works at the local Stop 'n Save at night. Though hating his job, having Stephen taken away from him and put into a Christian center to help get rid of the evil inside of him is unbearable.

Stephen and Simon were best friends since they were little and lived next door to each other. When Simon's parents died the two became even closer and a love started to grow between the two of them. Simon unsure

of himself did not know how to go about this new feeling inside of himself. He was a devout Christian and new that his forbidden love was wrong and would send him to hell, at least that is what the church drilled into him. Stephen showed him the way and how their love could grow, but too soon Stephen was taken away and Simon was left to figure out himself and his faith alone.

Simon travels through life, learning about sex, relationships, family and faith. He starts to figure out what is important to him and where it fits into this life and how Stephen will come to fit in as well. He confides in his best friend Tina, who also shows him many different aspects of life and sees how important and in love Stephen and Simon are. But just when Simon thinks he has everything under control and he knows what he has to do, things once again take a turn for the worst and this time he doesn't understand why or what is going on. He has no idea how he is going to fix things this time. He feels alone with no where to turn. But starting over again is not always so bad, or is it?

I loved this book. So very well written and captivating. The story of Simon and his journey into finding himself was interesting. The reader was able to see the struggles that Simon went through daily. His love for Stephen was so profound as was his for his brother Jude. Tina's undying friendship helped Simon through it all and kept him on track, she was his voice of reason. The pain that there was between Simon and his brothers was painful but true, the reader could feel the anger and tension between them all at all times. I honestly did not want this book to end it was so good. Very real and true to life, that is the relationship between siblings and growing to find oneself.

I would like to thank the author Lindsay Moynihan and NetGalley.com for my advanced e-book copy of this book.

Kathy Cunningham says

Lindsay Moynihan's *THE WAITING TREE* is ostensibly the story of a gay teenager struggling with intolerant friends and family. Seventeen-year-old Simon Peters is in love with his best friend, Stephen, but when Stephen's father catches them having sex both of their worlds fall apart. Stephen is shipped off to a Christian "rehabilitation" facility, and Simon becomes the pariah of small-minded Waynesboro, Louisiana. But the novel really focuses less on Simon's relationship with Stephen than it does on a plethora of other social issues, including autism, being orphaned as a teenager, economic struggles, religious intolerance, and relationships with judgmental relatives. Simon's parents were killed in a car accident, leaving him and his autistic twin Jude in the care of their two older brothers, Luke and Paul. Paul is hostile, judgmental, and difficult to get along with; Luke is more understanding, but he wants a life of his own. Simon feels responsible for Jude, who refuses to speak and depends on Simon to prepare his meals, get him dressed and undressed, and help him work in the garden. So Simon has lost his parents, he's lost his lover, his older brother is always angry with him, his twin depends on him, and he loses his job at the Stop 'n Save. It's pretty much a "life sucks and then you die" sort of situation.

Basically, there's too much going on in this story. And add to that a ton of heavy-handed symbolism (including the characters' names, most of which have biblical significance, and the titular "tree," which is actually a fig tree planted by autistic Jude). The symbolism seemed odd in what would otherwise be a very realistic story about a teenager going through traumatic events. While I liked Simon and identified with some of his struggles, he seemed so overwhelmed with the weight of responsibility, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, and confusion over his future that none of the many storylines seemed fully developed. Simon's homosexuality, which seems of primary importance at the beginning of *THE WAITING TREE*, gets lost in the other storylines, any of which could have been the focus of a novel on their own.

The most problematic part of THE WAITING TREE is the ending, which comes completely out of left field and is never fully explained. Without giving anything away, I'll say only that characters behave in ways that make little or no sense, and Simon's interpretation of what happens (and the decisions he makes as a result) leads to an ending that is both abrupt and unsatisfying. Something about this novel feels unfinished, as if Moynihan wasn't quite sure how to wrap up her story and figured an enigmatic ending with heavy symbolic overtones (the fig tree comes into play big time) would do the trick. It didn't.

THE WAITING TREE does have merit, and I was engaged in Simon's story. But I have to admit that I wanted more about Simon and Stephen. There's so little in the novel about them, aside from some of Simon's memories. I didn't understand why Stephen, who was eighteen at the time he was discovered with Simon, would allow himself to be shipped off to a Christian hell-hole. I also didn't understand why Simon was so hesitant to contact Stephen. Aside from a brief prologue (in which Simon and Stephen are caught having sex) and one even briefer scene in the second half of the novel, Simon and Stephen are never actually together. Instead, we get Simon's relationship with friends Tina and Tobey, Simon's frustration with his brothers, Simon's lousy and disappointing job, and Simon's overwhelming love for Jude. With all that, there's little room for Simon and Stephen.

THE WAITING TREE could have been a poignant and courageous look at a young gay man living in the rural South. It could also have been a meaningful examination of personal responsibility, or maybe an insightful story about living with autism, or even a stark and honest novel about trying to overcome poverty after traumatic events. But it's hard for any novel – especially one as brief as this one – to be all of this. THE WAITING TREE doesn't succeed in all it sets out to do, and it does leave the reader frustrated in its final pages. But Simon is an identifiable and interesting protagonist. Read the book for Simon. But be prepared for a story that tries to do too much and never quite makes it.

[Please note: I was provided a copy of this novel for review; the opinions expressed here are my own.]

Liviania says

Simon Peters and his boyfriend, Stephen, were caught in a passionate moment by Stephen's father. Stephen was shipped off to a gay conversion center and Simon's struggling in their conservative town. He'd leave, but he can't leave his twin brother, who has an unspecified disability. It's a particularly timely book, completely by accident, since Exodus International shut down and apologized.

I really enjoyed THE WAITING TREE until the end. It's a good contemporary that really gets small-town life and the struggle to escape it when you don't have many resources. But one bit of the ending is treated like a good thing, yet I have trouble seeing it as anything but terrible. THE WAITING TREE turns out well for most of the characters, but this is not a book where everyone gets what's coming to them. Some bad things happen to good people and some bad things never happen to bad people.

Brandon says

The Waiting Tree was my first LGBTQ book that I have read, and I loved it. The plot and central message of the story was heartwarming and bittersweet. One can feel the love and connection between Stephen and Simon and the battles that they are prepared to face in hopes of being together. This book not only captures the essence of not feeling welcomed but also captures the moment of self-acceptance. The ending, in my

opinion, was very symbolic and happy, but that is up to you to decide. Nevertheless, would for sure recommend this book for everyone to read.

Inge says

More like a 3.5.

Simon and Stephen get caught "in the act" by Stephen's dad, but that's just one of Simon's many problems. Simon has been ostracized by his church community, he's got a going nowhere job at the local Stop 'n Save, and he is the sole caretaker of his brother, Jude.

The Waiting Tree is not just a "gay" book. Simon's coming out is probably the least of his problems. There is so much to overcome in his tiny town of Waynesboro, Louisiana. There's the death of both his parents, his overbearing brother, drug trafficking, unemployment, and the constant care-taking of his mute brother, Jude. In addition, his boyfriend Stephen has been sent off to a Christian center where they plan to "pray the gay away". Simon is so completely trapped in his nowhere town, until Jude makes a tremendous sacrifice to give Simon a real chance at a real life. This is not a book with easy answers to any problems. No happy endings are guaranteed for any of the characters. Teens will appreciate its realistic and authentic nature.

Elsbeth says

If you want to read a slit your wrist depressing book, here you go.

All this book did was piss me off, and make me want to hurl my kindle at the wall (poor kindle). I will not be buying this book, I wouldn't really recommend it to anyone.

The family this is about is a hot mess, the oldest brother is a abuser, the second oldest is an enabler. The oldest physically and verbally abuses the main character, and verbally abuses the the youngest brother who is mute.

What pisses me off was the ending, what in the ever loving fuck was that.

I need to read something happy now before I punch a wall...if you can't read between the lines this book wasn't for me.

I got this from NetGalley.

Elijah Howell says

Heartbreaking but worth the read

Cassandra says

02/08/18

Oh boy, I vaguely remember what happened in this book! Hella short review I wrote waaaay back is here!

Raya says

There is never a time when I feel happy about reviewing a one-star rating, or even a two-star rating for that matter. Granted, if a book thoroughly upsets me enough, discussing how and why the story disappoints me can feel therapeutic. It's venting in written form, and although I am pleased and eager to move on, the prospect of beginning a negative review feels daunting. It intimidates me, sometimes more so trying to convince others of a five-star rating. What I would prefer to do is forget the book that left me in such a frustrated state in the first place. Forget and move on to a better story, so why don't I? Why bother writing a negative review? The answer to that question is a nothing but long, and one that I could turn into a lengthy essay. In short, there are certain books I agree to read and make it my goal to review, and I review honestly.

Although Simon is gay, *The Waiting Tree* is not a book about *being* gay. Rather, it focuses on some of life's unfair and ugly aspects—a few of which stem from Simon's sexual orientation. Caught with his boyfriend, Stephen, Simon finds himself alone and an outcast in his church community. With Stephen sent away to 'make-the-gay-go-away' Waverly Christian Center, Simon fears he's lost the one person who accepted him without judgment. As his presence hardly seems tolerated, and Simon can't bring himself to face Stephen's parents, he stops attending church. These, however, are the least of Simon's worries.

After his parents died in a car accident, Paul—Simon's oldest brother—assumes head role in the family. Meanwhile, Simon has dropped out of high school to begin work at Stop 'n Save to add to the family income. As the Peters household try to cope with new roles and responsibilities, caring after Jude becomes Simon's 'second job.' Mute at birth, Jude is perhaps the most peculiar among the brothers. With a gentle disposition, Jude is an easy target for bullying, yet through his dependent nature, he is all-consuming. Stuck in a town that, by vast majority, will not accept him, there can be nothing better for Simon than to move forward in his life. But how can he when the two people he loves the most need him? No one but Simon knows how to care for Jude, and as the clock ticks, Stephen withers away.

Through circumstance, I can relate to Simon's situation: putting the needs of another above your own. I have found myself in that same predicament where the one thing I need most is to think of my future, but how can a person carry on like that when someone else needs help? And what does a person do when caring for that someone is preventing, or hindering, the option to move forward? A person might feel guilty or selfish, frustrated by the conditions, or all-caring and devoted. *The Waiting Tree*, unfortunately, fails to explore not just the answers, but the depth of the situation. Upon reaching the last page, I don't think I could have felt more bothered. For a minute I sat there, staring, and I may or may not have screamed my frustrations out-loud at the entire book. I shouted, *How can it end this way?!* and there a frown and bunched eyebrows marred my face. How can I call this book's ending a conclusion when it feels like nothing is resolved? What an annoyance!

What happens at the end felt more appropriate to occur earlier on, as the events that take place between the first and last pages hardly deserve to be called events. What I find between the covers of *The Waiting Tree* is stupidity mingled in stagnancy and the dry sort of text that's mind-numbingly dull. I'll explain:

Simon faces several issues, and many of these problems pin him down into a daily routine that will never lead to a greener field. This doesn't mean Simon is super-glued into this monotonous, disconsolate lifestyle—if only he would take action! What Simon opts for instead is nothing, unless you consider lots of wishful inaction progressive. By the time I neared the halfway point in the book, the plot had developed by a shocking zero percent. If Simon doesn't commentate on the hot weather, he narrates his walk to work, daydreams about Stephen, grouches about his drug-dealing neighbor, or worries over Jude. When a reader works through a story and this is all that the protagonist feels content on doing with his life, I wonder what the point is—if there is, indeed, a point. Why continue reading if Simon invests more in telling the audience what his family eats than fighting back against his worries?

I laughed and gave him a little push into the house. ‘Well, don’t you have more important things to worry about than my shoes?’ I joked.

Once inside, I grabbed eight pieces of bread so that we could each have two sandwiches. I bought green bananas every Monday so they’d be ripe by Friday. Everyone in the house knew not to eat those bananas.

Jude placed the sandwiches on two dinner plates, and I got out drinks. We sat at the kitchen table eating our lunch, Jude finished quickly and went to the sink to wash off his plate.

A violent urge to reach my hands into the pages and pluck Simon out before he could finish another food description pulsed within me, because all I wanted was to slap some sense into him. Yes, I wanted to slap him, and I wanted to slap him hard in the face.

By the time Simon does choose to stop squirming in an anxiety puddle, the story is half over. In the very least I had hoped this course of action would not just move the story forward, but that Simon would begin sorting priorities. Oh, the let-down I felt was tremendous, because nothing comes of it. Simon settles back into a hapless life, and the story drives toward a dead-end once again. The one thing—or person, I should say—that holds Simon back is Jude, but Jude is not the problem. The issue of a Simon-dependent Jude is a result the family’s inability to work together, and this remains one of the weaker points in Lindsay Moynihan’s writing.

While I understand Simon’s reasons for concerning himself over Stephen, he needs to move one step beyond assessing his situation. He needs to face the draw-backs head-on, crash through these road blocks, and pummel on down the street. The question remains, still: how can Simon do anything for himself when he has Jude to look after? Allowing Jude to discover independence to a certain degree, or learn how to function without Simon, is what Moynihan needed to focus on. Only when this aspect of the story found a solution could the other problems find closure, or be addressed.

Although Simon is, at best, unmotivated, and I find the plot stale, these are only part of my problem. When I look at the characters overall, each one comes across as flat and without range. Through first-person narrative, Simon is granted a spectrum of thoughts and emotions that readers can see; albeit, the spectrum is limited. Paul, however, never steps foot outside of short-temperedness. Luke is always the jokester and Tina never moves beyond this troubled, “bad-girl” stereotype. Needless to say: did I feel surprised to discover that no character growth happens? No, but it didn’t stop me from wishing otherwise.

I could say that Simon disappointed me, yet it’s Moynihan’s craft—or lack thereof—that fails to thrive. In terms of characters with quality, Simon has little going for him. What irked me the most, aside from his nearly-absent determination, is how Stephen—or reveries of Stephen—consume large chunks of Simon’s days. At some point or another, I couldn’t help but groan, because he doesn’t seem capable of being in charge of his own self.

Losing Stephen made being stuck in Waynesboro even more of a nightmare. There was nobody I could talk to, much less fool around with. It was just me and my hard-on. But more than that, it felt like someone had ripped me into two pieces and hid the other half. I didn’t know how to be me without Stephen. I’d never had to try.

The feeling I get when I meet people who aren't self-aware can't compare to too many things. It's a trait I seek not only in fictional characters, but in people I meet in real life. It's simply easier to enjoy another's company if that person doesn't need guidance to explore his or her own likes and dislikes. Granted, Stephen was Simon's guide. However, if Simon could stop thinking of him—or Jude—for five seconds, I would like Simon to discuss getting his GED, applying for college, and moving out on his own. Above all, I wanted to see Simon form a legitimate plan that would help him move on in life. I wanted his situation to improve. But of course, there is Jude to care for.

No one handles the “Jude issue,” least of all Moynihan. What should have been considered is Jude's well-being, and the well-being of those who care for him. The manner in which Moynihan takes care of Jude and gives Simon his freedom is a cop-out. I can't think of a better word to describe it, and the circumstance surrounding Jude's removal feels wrong. Is it fair to sacrifice the weaker person so that the caregiver can go back to his or her life? Is it fair to anyone, even if the dependent individual says it's okay? These are questions I've asked myself before, and I found myself asking them again. It's not fair and it's not okay, and things don't always work out justly in the real world. There is, however, a huge difference between finding another caregiver versus the vulnerable person landing a jail booking.

By writing this book, the author had a good opportunity to explore family dynamics and deal with problems any breathing person can bump into. Unfortunately, Lindsay Moynihan doesn't grapple with any of the book's conflicts, because the way issues are handled feels like evasion. It's the act of skirting around the problems that disappoint me the most. Dry text and fizzed-out characters fail to entertain, but an unresolved and eventless plot nose-dives straight down toward unwelcome depths of disappointment.

Thank you to Netgalley and Amazon Children's Publishing for providing a free copy of The Waiting Tree in exchange for my honest review.

This review and more can be found at midnight coffee monster.
