

***The Missing Piece of Charlie O'Reilly* by Rebecca K.S. Ansari**

Rebecca Ansari has written a delightful piece of fiction that is all thrilling, heartwarming, and thought provoking. Part mystery, part fantasy, part ghost story, and part historical fiction, this book pulls at both the heart and mind in ways I never expected.

Charlie O'Reilly is an only child, or that's what everyone except for Charlie himself believes. Charlie, however, knows otherwise; he used to have a little brother named Liam, but last year on his birthday Charlie was angry and wished his brother away. To his surprise, his wish came true; now he's the only one who remembers Liam and everyone else thinks Liam is just a figment of Charlie's imagination.

Only Charlie knows better. He doesn't know how Liam disappeared, or how all his stuff vanished overnight, or how everyone could forget about him so quickly, or even how the mirror that Liam broke could be miraculously fixed, but Charlie knows that Liam existed... and he misses him.

Charlie is determined to find Liam at any cost, and his best friend Anna is by his side. She doesn't remember Liam either, but she believes in Charlie because they're best friends, and if Charlie says that he once had a brother that nobody can remember, well then he must have a brother.

But how do you go about finding someone who, for all intents and purposes, never existed in the first place?

This book was intricate and well written, while also being engaging and kid-friendly. It definitely did not go in the direction I first expected it to. It is a mystery, but the mystery itself is almost second to the lessons the story teaches about the importance of forgiving one's self and learning to accept one's own faults and mistakes, and then to move on. It also speaks to the importance of family, and how each bit of the family is essential and comes together as a whole; if someone is missing - even if no one else seems to know - it can affect everyone, regardless of whether or not they realize it. Bits and pieces of the book touch on dealing with mental health and depression, while the historical parts which are woven throughout the threads of the story date back to the potato famine in Ireland and the struggles Irish immigrants might have faced while traveling to and once arrived in America.

As mentioned at the beginning of the review, this is also a bit of a ghost story... but I promise it's nothing quite like you might expect! There is a beautiful sense of magical realism woven throughout the narrative that ties any elements of the fantastical into the real world so that it becomes hard to separate; the result is whimsical and dreamlike, comparable to stories like *Bridge to Terabithia* or *A Wrinkle in Time*.