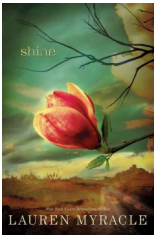


Shine by Lauren Myracle



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Warning: this book contains Serious Issues. You've also been warned that there aren't any angels, zombies, vampires, demons, or changelings. No one has supernatural superhero powers. It isn't set in the future and there has not been an apocalypse. Still interested? Yes! I loved this. *Shine* by Lauren Myracle is a realistic, gritty and powerful coming of age story that is raw and emotional but also completely worthwhile.

After Cat's friend Patrick is brutally assaulted, marked with a gay slur, and left for dead at a gas station in their hometown of Black Creek, NC she decides to figure out who could have done something so horrible. The sheriff is investigating, but seems sure that it was outsiders - just someone passing through. At face value, this book is a mystery. Cat sets out to interview people who were with Patrick the night of the attack to establish a timeline and she tries to determine motive. Patrick was friends with many people in town who were also uncomfortable to some degree with his homosexuality.

But really the heart of this book isn't so much figuring out who did it, but how the characters come to terms with the resolution. Cat also has to face her own demons in this process. I liked that she wasn't a superhero, but a girl who got kind of messed up and is really trying to do the right thing.

This book isn't a superfast paced mystery. The setting of Black Creek is slowly brought to life as are the characters. Because of this, their language and attitudes felt real. Everyone is struggling with poverty and often the accompanying problems of abuse and violence. To complicate things, Black Creek is also awash in meth which brings a whole different layer of paranoia and distrust.

This was recently nominated for the Rosie Award and I couldn't put it down. Consider checking this out if you like realistic fiction. Amid the violence, the sometimes harsh language and the ugliness of the crumbling town were bright spots of beauty and hope.

Posted by sbowman on May 6, 2013

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