



## Red Heart Tattoo

*Lurlene McDaniel*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

# Red Heart Tattoo

*Lurlene McDaniel*

## **Red Heart Tattoo** Lurlene McDaniel

At 7:45 a.m. on the day before Thanksgiving break, a bomb goes off at Edison High. Nine people die instantly. Fifteen are critically injured. Twenty-two suffer less severe injuries. And one is blinded. Those who survive, struggle to cope with the loss and destruction. All must find new meaning for their lives as a result of something they may never understand.

Lurlene McDaniel's signature expertise and finesse in dealing with issues of violence, death, and physical as well as emotional trauma in the lives of teens is immediate and heartrending.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Red Heart Tattoo Details**

Date : Published July 24th 2012 by Delacorte Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780385734622

Author : Lurlene McDaniel

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance, Realistic Fiction



[Download Red Heart Tattoo ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Red Heart Tattoo ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Red Heart Tattoo Lurlene McDaniel**

---

## From Reader Review Red Heart Tattoo for online ebook

### Sandra says

When I was growing up I devoured Lurlene McDaniel's books, whether I begged my parents to buy them for me or I got them from the library. I must have read *Don't Die, My Love* at least ten times. So obviously when I found this book on NetGalley I was very excited. I devoured *Red Heart Tattoo* just like the rest of 'em.

The morning before Thanksgiving break begins, a bomb goes off at Edison high school. *Red Heart Tattoo* follows the lives of those affected both before and after the bomb goes off; several are wounded, some die, and one is blinded.

It's a simple plot, but such a powerful novel. Getting to know the characters before the bomb goes off helps you get to know them, but reading about them after the bomb lets you get to know who they really are. People aren't always what they seem - and that's why my favorite character was Roth. He was what some would consider a troubled student, but I really enjoyed getting to know the real him by the end of the novel.

We all know school shooters/bombers have mental problems and most of the time want the attention, so I was glad not too much time was spent on the two bombers. Instead, we saw just enough of them to understand why there was a bomb in the atrium and the rest of the book was focused on the people the bomb affected, both before and after the explosion. Sometimes it's important to focus less on the "why" and more on the "how" it affects other people.

Overall, this was a fantastic little novel about a very serious topic - written in the gripping way Lurlene McDaniel does best. This is surely to be a hit along with her other books like *Don't Die, My Love*.

...more YA reviews at [pandareads.com](http://pandareads.com)

---

### Debbie I Heart YA Books says

*Red Heart Tattoo* ripped my heart to pieces. Lurlene McDaniel has a gift for writing heart-stopping storylines. I definitely knew I had a heart because it was breaking for these six teenagers. *Red Heart Tattoo* is told from five POV's with the main prospective coming from Morgan. All the characters in this story will steal your heart. Lurlene McDaniel has taken high school drama to its darkest emotional level. I'm sitting here writing this review through tears. After reading this novel, it will take me a few days to get my own emotions together again. McDaniel is an awesome writer who takes readers deep into the teen world of jealousy, hate, violence and death. But McDaniel also shows you the hope, forgiveness, healing, love and the strength to survive.

Morgan is a senior who has everything going for her: excellent grades, student council president, and her boyfriend Trent is a soccer star. Morgan and Trent are in the elite group along with her best girlfriend Kelli, who's the lead cheerleader and Kelli's jock star football quarterback, Mark. Everything comes easy for this elite group. But nothing comes easy for the loner group, and this is the group Roth is in. He's a badass with tattoos and face piercing's, but still Roth wants what he knows he can't have. Roth has wanted Morgan ever since sixth grade, and this is his last chance to get what he wants. So to hell with the consequences. There is

one more group, the losers, who sit back and watch all the groups. And with their jealousy and hate, they want to get even with the other groups.

At 7:45 a bomb goes off. This will change everything in the lives of these groups at Edison High School. Careers will be destroyed, bad situations that seemed hopeless will be given away out, and love that had no chance will get its chance. But for some, tomorrow will never come.

Red Heart Tattoo will pull at your heartstrings. I never do spoilers, but there's a scene where Roth said the most beautiful words, and I just have to share: He lowered her onto the pillows, leaned down and kissed her closed eyes. "I'll take whatever you want to give me, he said. "Nothing more." The ending in Red Heart Tattoo was very different and definitely a surprising one. I highly recommend Red Heart Tattoo as a must read.

---

### **Joy (joyous reads) says**

Ripped from the headlines, *Red Heart Tattoo* is a story of people coming together after a couple of attention-hungry kids set off a bomb in a high school. And in the centre of the chaos was Roth; a tattooed senior with a reputation for inciting malice. Roth has been attracted to Morgan for what seemed like an eternity. But Morgan was on the opposite spectrum of Roth's world; she's popular, president of the students council and was the other half of the 'IT' couple in school. That didn't deter Roth from trying to catch her attention either way, however and Morgan would do just about anything to calm her breathing every time she catches Roth staring at her like he was flaying her skin. When the senseless violence happened, they found themselves at the centre of it all; Roth was the hero, Morgan, the straight A student whose blindness was brought on my PTSD.

This is the story of coping - to perish or to strive. A story about hope and how a traumatic event can change a person. From the beginning of the novel to end, the characters' metamorphosis was astounding. Roth, for example was a completely different person. Gone was the arrogance, the egotism that you'd know of him at the beginning of the novel. Physically he was still Roth, tattooed, pierced and perpetually disheveled. But on the inside, he'd become responsible and a person who actually cared. This was basically the theme of the book: what would become of a person after going through a harrowing experience. It wasn't just the physical damage that was costly. These are high school kids - fragile in some ways. Adolescence is hard as it is, compounded with this trauma and you've got yourselves a succession of appointments with a therapist.

I wish this book was longer. I wish there was a sense of contentment when I finished this book. It wasn't rushed or anything, but I wanted to read more. There were characters here that barely scratched the surface of who they were and who they could be. But I understand. It's difficult to end this novel with rainbows and unicorns. This novel wasn't about a couple of kids who got bullied. These was about them being bored and lacking the attention at home and school. Senseless violence, no matter what the motive, is still *senseless*. There's no valid reason.

---

## **Damaris (GoodChoiceReading) says**

I actually finished reading this book a couple of days ago and I liked it. It was very emotional and touched a subject that is very close to reality.

It was sad to think about because as a mother we send our kids off to school thinking they will be safe there. *Red Heart Tattoo* touches a little bit of bullying, jealousy, anger, teen pregnancy, and lots more. I mean for such a tiny book it was packed with a lot of real life issues. Two students at Edison high created a bomb and actually thought it was funny and got enjoyment out of the destruction and the lives they took.

This book reminded me a lot of the movie CRASH in the sense that somehow everything that takes place somehow involves each character. They have some part of it. Not in the bombing, but everything else around it. You would have to read it to understand what I mean.

The only issue I had was that each chapter jumped characters and McDaniel didn't really give any warning. So the first couple of chapters I found myself confused because it jumped from one character to the other. Once I caught to McDaniel's writing style, I was able to follow the story better.

Good story!

4 out of 5 stars!

---

## **Anjana says**

*Red Heart Tattoo* is told from the perspective of different characters, each teenager belonging to their own cliques - the popular girls, the jock, the loner - unfortunately, just as it is in reality. As mentioned in the synopsis, the novel begins with a tragedy - there is a bomb blast at Edison High, , planned and executed by two kids calling themselves Apocalypse and Executioner, and we see the consequences of that day faced by five students, each of them dealing with the grief.

*Red Heart Tattoo*, for the most part, was everything I expected it to be - powerful and emotional. The plot on its own was enough to capture my attention, but the author began the story in such a way that had me completely hooked. It was interesting and at times, an emotional overload to read the aftermath from the different perspectives.

I noticed that the author explored the story from characters that mostly have nothing in common and it was interesting to see the story play out for each one of them. That being said, you know how with some characters, you feel like it's **you** who's experiencing what's going on in the book and with others, you feel more like an observer? Well, with this book, like I said, the overall plot affected me but I felt like the observer and to me, that's not a great thing. I'm not sure where the author lost me but while I was interested in the story, I didn't really connect with any of the characters.

Like I said, I was gripped at the beginning but the feeling didn't last throughout the novel. I'm an obvious, happy ending kind of girl. I can handle twists as long as it's not the end but with *Red Heart Tattoo*, I didn't

get the closure I needed.

However, this is the first book of this kind that I've read and Lurlene McDaniel's writing is really captivating. I would definitely recommend this book to any young adult reader with an eclectic taste.

---

## **Laura says**

### **3.5 Stars**

Confession time. I might have been looking forward to ripping this book apart. **\*\*Hanging head in shame\*\*** I know, I know...I'm scum, but growing up Lurlene McDaniel books were just not my style. I skipped right on by to rocker boys, shenanigans, and big trouble! :D I brushed her books off as fluff or Lifetime movies in print. Not that there is anything wrong with Lifetime movies! But...

I was wrong. Red Heart Tattoo by Ms. Lurlene McDaniel surprised, impressed and moved me.

Life can change in an instant. A bomb explodes at Edison High School changing the lives of the students and the town forever. Readers are introduced to "always-color-in-the-lines" Morgan, Trent with his "Hey Babe" personality, "trouble-is-my-middle-name" vibe Roth, Kelli, Liza, Max, Carla and many more students and parents before the bombing and travel with them through the grief, loss, and pain of the tragedy. The emotional trauma and changes these characters experienced made such a strong impression and impact on my heart. Most of the plot points and big "secrets" with some of the characters were really obvious. If you cannot figure out what's up with Kelli, you are living under a rock! I don't believe surprise or shock was the point though. The focus was more on how each character responded to the life decision, change, pain, or loss in their life.

Every single one of the characters in this book faced a life altering tragedy, decision, or event in their life before or after the bombing. Everyone! How we react to life's hard decisions and pain make us who we are in this world. The different voices come together to inspire readers to reflect on their own path in this world or how they might affect others around them. Curl up or stand up? Trust someone with your heart or not? Many of the characters made me think, but Roth's story really touched my heart with warmth, humor, pain, and honesty. His transformation and journey through these pages is truly a joy to experience and take to heart.

There is a lot going on in such a short book. Some points felt underdeveloped and glossed over, but in the end this book did make me think, smile, swoon a bit, and wonder. How would I react? What would I have done?

The scary part--We won't know until it happens to us.

Thank you to NetGalley for my very first Lurlene McDaniel book. It will not be my last.

---

## **Michelle says**

Actual Rating: 1.5

To me, *Red Heart Tattoo* was the book equivalent of that friend's mom/new teacher/random adult who was trying so hard to relate to the teens around them that they never stopped to look around and actually see who the teens were. Lurlene McDaniel tackles some pretty hefty issues in this book, but the reality of these issues seem to just pass her by. Since the 'issues' seem to be such a focus in the book, I will review in a list of issues that I found most problematic:

### **School Shootings/Bombings:**

Okay, I realize that there is still some debate, BUT most scientific studies agree that playing video games *does not* make kids violent! And the studies that say they do? Most of them suffer from serious methodological deficiencies and don't provide sufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship. If they did, I am sure Linda Sanders would have made bank after Columbine. According to the National Institute on Media and the Family, as of 2001, roughly 79 percent of America's youth play video games, many of them for at least eight hours a week - that a whole lot of kids not shooting or blowing up their schools. Also, according to FBI statistics, youth violence has declined in recent years as computer and video game popularity soared. (And, not to let the cat out of the bag here, Elvis' gyrating hips won't make your daughter promiscuous! Who knew?!) In *Red Heart Tattoo* we are given two teens who come from ostensibly upper middle class homes with no references to family strife or bullying. All we are given is that during lunch they sit by themselves, they sneak a drink of a parent's whiskey once, and that they play video games every time they get together. They even call each other by their avatar names. Also, this:

The bedroom was like a cave. The walls were painted black, with black lights in two lamps and a lava lamp on the dresser. Gaming posters of death and destruction, of war and carnage hung on the walls, slapped up haphazardly. The rumpled bed was wrapped in black sheets that glowed purple under the black lights.

And, as we all know, if liking video games doesn't say you're homicidal, liking black sure does! This willful misunderstanding and oversimplification of a very serious and complex issue really frustrates me. In order to have meaningful discourse about why kids are moved to do things like this, we have to stop looking for easy answers and actually examine the kids who are doing it!

### **Teen Pregnancy:**

I actually think this is the issue which McDaniel handled best. I appreciate that, while the pregnant girl was a cheerleader, at least she didn't make her a "slutty" cheerleader. Rather, she was a girl in a committed relationship. It is nice that McDaniel shows it can happen to anyone who is having sex - whether it be seldom or regularly, with one guy or a lot of guys. Getting pregnant is not a punishment for being a 'slut;' it is the natural outcome of a biological process. We don't see that reality portrayed enough when people talk about teen pregnancies. I don't, however, like how she 'resolves' the issue. Having a child at a young age definitely makes life harder, but it doesn't make it *stop*. You can still go to college, have a successful career, and have a happy and balanced life. It may require more work, but it is still within the realm of possibility. I think that McDaniel's handling of the subject within *Red Heart Tattoo* implies that having any sort of positive future is

almost impossible without adoption or abortion (but at least McDaniel included the possibility of the latter!)

### **Grief:**

Oh, my goodness! I almost don't even know where to start here. The portrayal of the town's grief, as a whole, was pretty much the only part of this that in any way felt authentic. When it came to individual characters, though, there wasn't any! Trying to avoid spoilers will make this a little harder, but in the simplest terms, Morgan has two rather debilitating results of her grief. We are told this, but never really show this. Even while suffering from these...problems...she is starting up her relationship with Roth. Any person who is so grief stricken that they suffer from those particular issues would not be dating someone within a matter of weeks - or even months. That allows no time for the regular grieving process - not to mention the very probable PTSD and survivor's guilt that most of the kids who were there would have been feeling! However, at least Morgan showed some grief. Everyone else seemed to be too caught up in how the tragedy had affected their schedule, or how it had impacted their own personal goals, to be thinking about the *classmates* who had *died*.

### **Disability:**

I will be brief here. Two different characters come out of this with a disability. Different people handle sudden disability (and lifelong disability, for that matter) in different ways. While there are people who quickly and calmly accept it, that is rare. It is also rare for an individual to uniformly accept disability (even disability they have been born with!) in such a way. It offended me that McDaniel seems to censure the character who had the most realistic reaction. Take it from a person who knows, our world is not set up to be a friendly place for individuals with disabilities. Even the most gracious and accepting of people who are disabled will at times become intensely frustrated, and that is **okay**.

### **Physical Appearance vs. Personality or Character:**

This is the part where I really wish that McDaniel would listen to her own message. She wants us to be outraged that Roth is the primary suspect simply because he has a bunch of tattoos and a history of being a prankster. However, again with the vagueness to avoid spoilers, she expressly tries to shed doubt on another character by highlighting their tattoos, funky hair and slightly troubled past. This character is only redeemed after covering the tats, growing out the hair dye, and getting a job. Also, the 'good' character only gets a discrete tattoo in a place that is very personal. Hypocrite much?

### **Beauty vs. Worth:**

For this issue I will start with a quote:

Why did the jocks always get the pretty girls? And why did the pretty girls flock to the jocks?

I get so very tired of this in YA. Let me break this down: we have a person looking at a 'pretty' girl asking 'why doesn't she want me? She's so superficial to always go after the good looking guys.' This goes both ways. 'Plain' girls in books often ask why the 'hot' guys only go after 'pretty' girls instead of giving them a chance. This is JUST AS SUPERFICIAL! They know nothing about the person they are pining for other than that they are attractive. They are precisely what they are accusing their object of being. They are *objectifying* someone. It would be better if they asked of themselves, 'why don't I get to know that guy/girl

who sits next to me every day in band/math club/chess club/whatever?' Chances are the cheerleader and the jock are dating -- not because they are superficially trying to concentrate the hotness in one place -- but because they attend a lot of the same events, spend a lot of time together, and have quite a few things in common. They *know* each other!

To sum it up, I think that *The Red Heart Tattoo* was not a frank or honest look at anything. Every character, relationship, and interaction felt staged and contrived; puppets being pulled through the motions to get to the *issues*. It felt like an out-of-date after-school special about what adults think kids are going through. I imagine there will be some adults who find this book meaningful and insightful, but I think actual teens will be rolling their eyes.

---

### **Giselle says**

With an eye widening prologue that winds up your emotions, *Red Heart Tattoo*'s powerful beginning sets the ideal mood for the whole book. Told in five perspectives, we experience the before and after of a school bombing that leaves grief at every corner, and loss at every rubble.

With five perspectives, we get a lot of individual consequences to the school bombing. Showing us how different people cope, how they grieve and support each other. Since the book begins a few months before the incident, we get to know each one of these kids from before, when they were relatively happy and life was simple. This builds the characters greatly, getting us to care about them. With so many POVs, it's natural to have a few that will get into your hearts more than others. Overall the cast is well balanced with characters that will make you feel their pain, their heartache, but also their love, and their strength. Morgan, our main perspective, shows us that even though dire consequences may seem like the end of the world, we should never let it break us. I adored her and admired her attitude.

Although a truly emotional book, *Red Heart Tattoo* potentially could have been a million times more poignant if we hadn't skirted around some of the most powerful scenes. Instead of witnessing the consequences and emotions during a few of the big happenings, we're simply told via memories after the fact. It's disappointing to finish a chapter in a breakthrough, only to start the next once the climax of its reactions has come and gone, leaving us yearning for what their immediate responses and feeling were.

Regardless, the story has great, realistic developments, some predictable though never unaffectionate, some that will leave you with pain, some with warmth. An overall very satisfying school bombing story that, surprisingly, has a lot of heart amongst the trauma. As far as the ending, I can't help but feel like the epilogue leaves us hanging. We fast-forward a year, and what we learn feels jumbled and incomplete. I did not see the necessity to include it at all as it adds no real substance to the story, only wonderment. One could argue that that was the point, life is never certain. Yet, I can't help feeling that it would have been better left alone pre-epilogue. I also have to mention the cover; I understand its significance after the fact, but it could be misleading as the romance is not on the forefront of this novel.

School crimes and violence regrettably happen way too often, Lurlene takes a disastrous event and creates an eye-opening, affecting story that, even though it encounters a bit of lost potential, it's certainly worth the read.

--

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at Xpresso Reads

---

### **Carla Evans says**

A story of how a school bombing affected the lives of the students of Edison High. It focuses mainly on a few perspectives: of how they coped with the loss and upheaval it caused. While there is romance, it was not as front and centre as the cover and title make it out to be.

It was a page-turner for me and read it mostly in a night. Lurlene has a way of putting the reader in the character's shoes and feeling like you are experiencing the characters thoughts and feelings and giving you their lens for that time of their life in a way that is easy to cope with and to understand them without complexity. While I found it very similar writing style to most of her books, it reminds me mostly of her other book "Prey" as she takes on some darker perspectives that she usually does not write from. She has a way of giving you an opportunity to see an experience you likely will not (or hopefully will not) experience in a way that is not overburdening, but accessible. Some parts were predictable, and some were unexpected. But she does leave you with a cliffhanger ending!

---

### **Isabela Libby says**

I really liked this book, but it was very depressing to read.

---

### **Savannah (Books With Bite) says**

Lurlene McDaniel books always find a way to my heart and my eyes are never dry.

What I loved about this book is the moving plot. So intense from the very first page, the reader is captured. There has been many real devastating events like this to see as if I were the characters it amazing. The suffering they go through, the pain, it just heart wrenching.

I really loved the love interest in the book. No, it's not quite a happy ending, but they are left with a connection. After all that they have been through, they can connect on a different level than anyone else. The emotions flowing through the book makes the reader feel shocked, angry, hurt, then healing.

I can't explain much of the book for fear that I would give too much away but know this, this book is good. I read this kind of stories in the news everyday and to feel it as if I were there I can say that I somewhat understand. I don't know completely cause I have not actually been through it but I can know at least what they are going through.

Red Heart Tattoo makes the biggest accomplishment in writing a story, letting the reader be in the story. And Red Heart Tattoo does just that. The fear of the explosions, students screaming, crying and death all around the reader, it's nothing like I ever experienced. A book that delivers more than just a story, Red Heart Tattoo

is amazing!

---

### **Michele at A Belle's Tales says**

I knew what was ahead - it's there in the summary, so I began this story, nervously anticipating the tragedy that was going to transpire. What I wasn't prepared for was how engaging these characters would be. In the beginning of the book, the author does a phenomenal job introducing them and really letting you get to know them. Most are seniors on the verge of graduating and making their mark in the real world. Some have earnest and significant academic goals, and others....not so much. There are the jocks with their highly-valued and prized football scholarships, the cheerleaders who love them, and then there are the outsiders and the social pariahs. All on different paths, from different sides of the track, but there is an approaching, impending disaster that will bond them for life.

We all know how quickly life can change - how swiftly what we have can be taken away. We get lost in our day-to-day, forgetting that so much can be gone in an instant. It's how we deal with it afterwards that separates us and defines us as individuals. I believe that is what is most frightening about this book. This can really happen. This *has* really happened.

Red Heart Tattoo was filled with beautiful and captivating writing. From the popular in-crowd to the outcasts, it was so easy to become invested in these characters. This is not my go-to genre, but I was engrossed from beginning to end. Morgan and Roth's stories were my favorite, but all of the supporting characters rounded out the book perfectly. Morgan's ordeal was devastating and truly heart-breaking. But her strength and her determination to overcome such tragedy were both amazing and inspiring.

*“I will not be broken. We will not be broken.”*

The ending had a bit of a twist that I wasn't expecting. It left me wanting to know more, and I found myself thinking about the characters and their stories throughout the rest of the day. Red Heart Tattoo is the first book I have read by Lurlene McDaniel, and I can promise you it won't be my last.

*A copy of this book was provided by Netgalley for review.*

Originally posted at: A Belle's Tales

---

### **LibraryCin says**

3.75 stars

Morgan is the class president, and her boyfriend, Trent, is a football star at school. Morgan's best friend,

Kelli, is a cheerleader and her boyfriend is also a football star. Roth was orphaned young, and lived in foster homes until his uncle returned from military service and took him in. His Uncle Max is now married, so it feels like he has a real home with people who love him, even though Max doesn't really know how to be a parent. Max runs a tattoo shop and Roth is on the edge of being in trouble, but never anything overly serious. Outsider Liza is Roth's best friend. They are all seniors when someone sets off a bomb at their school. Some die, and some are injured.

I'd give this 4 stars for the story, but 3.5 stars for going through the story so quickly and leaving out a lot more detail. However, it is a YA book, so maybe the 4 stars is still justified. I really liked the story. I sympathized with most of the characters, but it helped that we see the events from many different characters' viewpoints. Definitely good YA.

---

### **Tana says**

This is the first book I've read by Larlene McDaniel, I was given a copy to review through NetGallery and find myself now trying to write a review. Larlene has written many novels as far as I can tell, she writes about love, loss, death, illness, and trauma that young people face today face.

The story starts with the explosion, 7:45 am a bomb goes off at Edison High, the explosion happened in a nanosecond, bursting first with a brilliant flash of white, followed by deafening roar....when the blast was over nothing that existed before would ever be the same.pg1

We are introduced to Morgan, high school president, her boyfriend Trent, football player, her best friend Kelli, and of course Roth, who has a reputation of the bad boy status who happens to have a wild crush on Morgan and Liza who is madly in love with Roth.

The book explores the main characters and the author gives us a view of what their life's are like before the explosion and how it affects their lives after.

This book touches on what it is like for high school students, not just the popular ones we get a bird's eye view on the one's standing off on the sidelines. The struggles youth have today with just being different. It is a good story and Larlene McDaniel does a great job of writing this book, she makes you hope Morgan can move on and be happy, you end up loving Roth and you feel bad for Liza and you want the best for them. If an author can do that with her writing I say she is a great writer.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading y/a novels.

---

### **Mitch says**

*Red Heart Tattoo*'s one of those books that's gonna stay with me for awhile. A high school bombing's obviously a very heavy subject, but, for the most part, Lurlene McDaniel's writing handles it with emotion

and poise. McDaniel doesn't exploit the tragedy for shock value and her words aren't dramatic to the point of being a tearjerker but rather subdued, which makes this book all the more emotional.

I have to admit I had trouble at the beginning. The prologue gave me the impression most of this book would be about the aftermath of the bombing, but turns out the end of chapter one is just a fake out. Instead, *Tattoo* follows the lives of five students via four different, alternating points of view before and after the bombing. Once I hit the midpoint of the book, when the bombing actually occurs, I realize it's actually excellently done, looking at how the bombing has changed the lives of all these students through the lens of a few particular characters. I just needed the shock of the blast to realize it.

I really liked following Morgan and Roth, two of the students. They have such different roles before the bombing, the popular class president and the outsider, and all these different issues they're dealing with. Morgan with her best friend Kelli's strange behavior, trouble with her boyfriend Trent, and going off to college in less than a year, Roth with his family issues, outsider status, and the long odds of him even graduating. Even before the bombing, these two are really complex characters.

But after the bombing, I'm shocked at how poignant McDaniel's writing is. It's not a matter of lots of tears being shed or everything being raw and emotional, but just from the way Morgan and Roth behave, I can see how the bombing changes - everything. Morgan's blinded, and just the way she deals with the aftermath of the tragedy, through her actions, I think something caught in my throat while I was reading. Sure, she adapts to sightlessness maybe a little too quickly, and the part with Trent was extremely obvious and not a great twist, but none of that really lessened the impact for me. And Roth, just the way he reacts to the bombing, what he does in the aftermath, and how this tragedy brings Morgan and him closer, it was all really deep. Even what happens to Kelli and her boyfriend Mark, it all shows how the bombing doesn't discriminate - it hits everyone no matter who they are, where they were when it happened.

Of course, there are four different points of view and they switch off every so often, which I didn't have a problem with because it allowed me to digest what had just happened, sort of maximized the emotional impact of the scenes for me. My problem is Kelli, who gets a few chapters to herself early on, sort of fades into the background after awhile, so while I liked her storyline, I really don't think she really needs a separate point of view from Morgan's. As for the last point of view, focusing on the bombers, no. This should have been a book about the victims, I didn't need to spend any time reading about them. And it's not like those two brought anything new to the table beyond a pair of stereotypical high school psychopaths.

If this book would've focused on Morgan and Roth exclusively, I can see myself giving it five stars. Even the epilogue, because even though the bombing changed everything and brought Morgan and Roth together, life's messy and I get it. But the addition of Kelli and the bombers left me less than fully satisfied.

---