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Sorta Like a Rock Star

Author:
Matthew Quick

Reading Level: Grades 7+

Amber Appleton is the most optimistic, hopeful, cheerful girl you could meet. She divides her time between Father Chee and the Korean Divas for Christ (a group of Koren women learning to speak English through R&B music and Amber), the elderly at the local retirement home (where Amber engages in a cheerfulness-pessimism battle every Wednesday with Joan of Old),with the Franks Freak Force Federation (her four best friends brought together through group therapy and favorite teacher), with Private Jackson and Ms. Jenny (a Vietnam veteran/haiku poet and his dog), and with her own dog, Bobby Big Boy. Amber lives a full, vibrant life, enriching the lives of everyone she meets. And yet, Amber Appleton lives on a school bus with her alcoholic mother.

Despite her home and family situation, Amber's hopefulness and willingness to give her all to others never wavers, until the unthinkable happens, sending Amber into a deep, spiraling depression. Her faith, previously so strong and infallible, fractures, and Amber Appleton, previously a town rock star, loses herself.

The first half of this novel flies past quickly, Amber's cheerfully whirlwind lifestyle a welcome respite from some of the depressing (yet good!) YA books I've been reading lately. Amber's depressive state is expertly, sparsely written, her discussions with Father Chee about religion a welcome addition to current young adult literature, and the ultimate banding together of the town a heartwarming conclusion.

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