*That You Remember* by Isabel Reddy is one of the most difficult books I’ve ever sat down to read, but in the best way possible. In this fictional tale of a disaster at a coal mine in Otter Creek, Kentucky that very closely resembles the Buffalo Creek Flood, Reddy examines the perspectives of both coal miners and coal executives in such a situation. As someone who grew up on Buffalo Creek hearing stories about the flood from several survivors, Reddy’s novel pulled at my heartstrings. The characters she created felt like people I know, and reading of their suffering was a reminder of what the people of my home community endured. The novel is well-paced, and with each page you read, it will leave you eager to move on to the next.

 The story focuses on Aleena Rowan as she tries to find details about a mysterious woman named “Sara” from her father’s past. Aleena’s search leads her to Otter Creek, where she learns things about her father’s past that she could have never imagined. As the story unfolds, the reader learns the truth alongside Aleena, building to a conclusion that you know is coming, but floors you, nonetheless.

The relationships and interactions between characters feel genuine, as do the concerns they express over the potential disaster that’s at hand. You can feel each character’s love for their community and their desires to protect it. Meanwhile, each page is filled with a sense of impending doom. You know that disaster is imminent, and you are left hoping and praying for all those in the small community of Otter Creek.

Along with a well-developed story, Reddy provides much insight into the world of coal mining. Her descriptions of day-to-day life in the mines, as well as for the coal operators, prove that she’s done her homework. She also examines both sides of the industry, giving a fair and accurate portrayal of both. Rather than pointing fingers to place blame, Reddy focuses on the variety of factors that compound to create such a disaster, leading you to sympathize with both those who are in the coal mines and those who operate them.

*That You Remember* is a difficult book to read because of how closely it resembles a real-life disaster that’s effects are still felt in West Virginia and throughout our nation today, but it is an impossible book to put down. Reddy’s writing and characters draw you in, making you feel every ounce of their dread and suffering. As her fictional debut, the author should be extremely proud of her work. *That You Remember* is a book that will stay with you, as Reddy has made it a story that is impossible to forget.