Cara Segal is a born worrier. She figures her worrying works like a whisper in God’s ear – if Cara’s concerned about car crashes, kidnappings, or murders, she lets God know, and he always spares her. But Cara never thought to worry about a fire. And one night while she’s sleeping at a friend’s house, her house catches fire, and her mother and younger sister are both killed. Throughout shiva, the initial Jewish mourning period, Cara can’t help wondering about God’s role in the tragedy. And what is her father’s role in her life now? He walks around like a ghost and refuses to talk about the fire. Cara longs for her family and her home, where sweet smells filled the house as Cara’s mom filled orders for her catering business, Julia’s Kitchen. Then one day a call comes in for a cookie order, and Cara gets a wild idea. Maybe by bringing back Julia’s Kitchen, she can find a way to reconnect with everything she’s lost. Complete with a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms and a recipe for chocolate chip cookies, this debut novel is a joyous
My Personal Review:
I have read JULIAS KITCHEN a number of times, and each time I am moved, heartbroken and healed by this story. It is the carefully and beautifully written story of Cara, who must rely to a great extent on her own internal resources when a sudden and unpredictable tragedy strikes her family. JULIAS KITCHEN will take readers into the depths of Cara's feelings - sadness, anger, confusion, and hope - and offer a rich story of her confusion about her faith, her tenuous relationship with her grieving father, and her questions about how to hold on to the memories of her mother and sister and still move forward in life.

It is a powerful reading experience for the child who wants to be touched and changed by a story, but it is also an opportunity for children, together, to discuss the multitude of issues dealt with in the course of the book - the unpredictability of the world, the unevenness of adults who do not always have children's best interests at heart, the importance of good friendship, the sometimes-confusing nature of faith, and the beauty and importance of inner resilience and hope. JULIAS KITCHEN should not be mistaken for a book about grief. It is a story about the unfortunate, but real, ways children's lives can be shaken - and the exquisite resiliency of the human spirit.

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