*Christmas in July,* by Alan Michael Parker reviewed by Alexandra Dixon

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*Christmas in July* is a collection of ten short stories, all taking place in Saxon Hills, Maryland. Each story centers around a young girl named Christmas, who has cancer. The stories all have different narrators and characters, but all deal with Christmas and the affect she has on their lives. Parker’s decision to create different stories with one constant character is unique and interesting.

The narrative of the book is a unique one. The title character, Christmas, is only seen through the eyes of others. Readers don’t see things from her perspective, but are still able to get a sense of who she is. For example, in the first story Christmas is seen through the eyes of a woman who works in the front office of the school Christmas is about to attend. Through the woman’s eyes readers are able to see that Christmas is angry at the world and her situation. The different narratives in this book are done well and effectively. The narratives consist of a woman who doesn’t want to talk to her mother, an older woman who finds Christmas and wants to help her, a man struggling to take care of his sick mother, a runaway teen, and more. While the book is about Christmas, it’s not just about this one character. Readers get to see the other characters, understand who they are, and understand what they have been through and what has led them there. Christmas is a constant character throughout each story, and in some cases readers don’t actually see Christmas. Sometimes she is merely present in the story through an email or a fake ghost, but her presence and effect on the lives of the characters is clear. Christmas’ Aunt Nikki’s narrative is also well done. In most stories, Christmas talks about how horrible her aunt is, whom she now lives with; readers only see the aunt briefly in the first story until she gets her own story at the very end. With her own story, readers get their own perspective on the aunt and get to see her side of things. Readers understand that taking care of Christmas is hard on her, and she is trying her hardest to do what is best for her niece. The first nine stories depict a young, spitfire girl who has been through the worst with cancer and still somehow touches and affects the lives for the better of everyone she comes across. In the last story readers get to see the aftermath of Christmas’s death and how much she meant to the town of Saxon Hills.

I found this book to be very enjoyable. Reading about a main character’s life story without actually reading it from their point of view or narrative was interesting. The different characters and their stories revolving around Christmas was unique and well done. Because the book deals with cancer and the untimely death of a bright and promising girl, it does get a little emotional. I would recommend this book for anyone who enjoys Lifetime movies, or enjoys books that pull at the heartstrings a little.