



The Tension of Opposites

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When Tessa's best friend Noelle disappears right before the start of eighth grade, Tessa's life changes completely--she shies away from her other friends and stops eating in the cafeteria. Now, two years later, Noelle has escaped her captivity and is coming home, in one piece but not exactly intact, and definitely different. Tessa's life is about to change again as she tries to revive the best-friendship the two girls had shared before Noelle--now Elle--was kidnapped; puts up a futile resistance to the charming new guy at school; pursues her passion for photography while trying to build the bravado to show her photos to the public; and tries to balance her desire to protect and shelter Elle with the necessity to live her own life and put herself first.

The Tension of Opposites Details

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From Reader Review *The Tension of Opposites* for online ebook

Runa says

such an accurate look at life after trauma

Lisa (*A Life Bound By Books*) says

4.5 Stars – First off, I read this book pretty much in one sitting. It was one that I didn't want to put down, one of those books that grabs you from the first page and doesn't want to let you go until you've heard all that it has to tell you. Until its characters within get all who read to hear their story. And what a story McBride has created!

This is a book about two friends and the aftermath of what happens when one is kidnapped, survives and how not only the victim is affected but the people around her.

I was able to quite clearly understand just what our main character Tessa was going through since the kidnapping of her best friend Noelle. It was easy to really know what it felt like to be in Tessa's shoes from when it happened right through to the end. Since Noelle's kidnapping Tessa had become more of a loner who enjoys taking pictures in solitude then letting people get too close. She has her reasons for this that'll be clear to each reader.

Then we have Noelle... one of our other main characters. She was kidnapped and held for two years. Living with her kidnapper and all she went through changed not only her, but the people around her. We learn little about what Noelle went through, but it's a story that makes it not hard to imagine what she had to live through day to day in order to survive. The reasons why she finally got away are told throughout, but don't worry... I won't give anything away. I'm not one who likes give to much away in my reviews, so no need to worry; I try my hardest to always be spoiler free.

It's a sad story, one that'll pull on some of your emotions. One that'll make you feel for each of the two girls and what they are going through. There's trauma, understanding, love, pain, and fear in this one, yet none of these emotions too overpowering – as McBride has written just the right mix to leave a mark.

One person who was such a light in this story full of emotional scars was Max. He had a clear head and was there for Tessa in a way she never allowed anyone to be for her before. Never pushing, never questioning, just being.... I liked the fact that he was the boy next door type. Max had some great things to say to Tessa that made her think and that I found was needed to balance out some of the healing of Tessa and through her to Noelle.

All in all *The Tension of Opposites* is one of my favorite books for 2010. McBride has made a fan out of me and I'm looking forward to seeing what she writes next. I would recommend this book to anyone, so be sure to keep an eye out for it. It arrives in bookstores on May 25th. Enjoy it guys.

For more info and reviews please visit my Book Review Blog here - [A Life Bound By Books](#)

Steph Su says

THE TENSION OF OPPOSITES is one of the nicest contemporary realistic YA fiction novels I've read in a long time. This is a great achievement by debut author Kristina McBride, easy readable, and full of relatable characters and turbulent emotions.

Kristina McBride's writing pulls us into Tessa's world from the very first page, and carefully explores the pain and confusion of the effects of trauma on a friendship. Tessa's struggles to balance her own happiness with that of her friend's is extremely well drawn, its subtleties clear and real. It's not that we may necessarily agree with all of Tessa's actions and beliefs: it's more that we can see why she chooses to do what she does, just like a confused teenager dealing with a terrifyingly strange situation would.

The characterization is good, but not quite as good as I thought it could've been. Oftentimes Tessa's inner turmoil seemed detached from her borderline cheeky conversations with her crush and friends. I also wanted to get a better sense of Tessa and Noelle's friendship before the kidnapping, to contrast that with the drastically different relationship shown us in the novel. Noelle's development felt choppy sometimes, one minute harsh, the next almost unconvincingly vulnerable. And I was unconvinced that Max, the love interest, would fall immediately for her and continue to pursue her after she so continually pushes him away. This is more wishful thinking for how teenage relationships go, than reality.

But perhaps these small issues I had with the book are actually regular behaviors for people in this situation, because one of the greatest things about THE TENSION OF OPPOSITES is that it is a prototype: I have not read anything like it before. And the small issues are basically me nitpicking anyway. Overall, this book was a fantastic read, and goes down like a smooth cup of your favorite refreshing beverage, with a thoughtful aftertaste.

Nic says

I really enjoy Tension of Opposites. It is a great debut novel!

Tension of Opposites is the story of Tessa whose best friend Noelle was abducted two years ago. Since then Tessa has become shy and withdrawn, the only thing in her life is taking photographs. Then one day Cooper, Noelle's brother, meets with Tessa telling her that Noelle is alive and coming back. Tessa can't believe she will finally have her best friend back. But when Noelle returns she begins to realize life can never go back to the way it was.

This story is from Tessa's point of view and how the abduction has affected her and still is. Because of its heavy subject matter this book could have been too dark and emotional, but it seemed to have a good balance of emotions. It was well written and moved along at a good pace. The characters were powerful, interesting and realistic. There was also some romance in there which I loved. It is one of the things that helped this book to be not so dark. I found Max and Tess's moments together really sweet and real. Max was a great character who supported Tess and helped her to finally start living her life.

Overall, a thought-provoking book, that is definitely worth a read. I am excited to see what Kristina McBride writes next.

Andrea says

First of all, let me say that I liked the premise of this story. I had never heard of Stockholm Syndrome (where the person who has been abducted shows signs of loyalty to the kidnapper) so it was neat to read about this in the story (although Elle claims that she did not experience this).

But I'm not too sure about other parts of the story. For example, I just plain didn't like Elle. Yes, I know she just went through something traumatic, for two years, but to me, she just plain seem like a bitch. And from some of the flashbacks that Tessa has, it seems like Elle was sort of like that before she was kidnapped. There was no reason for her to be so mean to Tessa. It seemed like all of her anger was directed at her and I just didn't get it.

There also seemed to be a lot of loose ends. For example, how did the kidnapper know Noelle's name, her family members name, and their addresses? There had to be a connection there somehow but there was nothing divulged about it. Another thing was that Elle was seen out in public and even had other friends while she was kidnapped, but she never tried to get away or to have her kidnapper caught. And while she claimed she didn't have Stockholm Syndrome, she never really explained why she did what she did. I kept thinking something else would come out.

So while I enjoyed reading this story, and it held my interest, I think there needed to be more in it.

Sara Grochowski says

The Tension of Opposites is one of those novels that pulls you in from the first lines and refuses to let you go until you've read every last word. Devour is almost too tame a word to describe how quickly I read this novel... inhale might be a better fit. It's always a magical experience when a reader finds an author whose writing style fits perfectly with his or her preferences - and I'm happy to say that I experienced that magic with Tension.

I feel that I should mention that the the description of Tension only conveys the darker elements of the plot, despite the fact that there is plenty of lighter material in the novel as well. Not only are both light and dark elements present, they are perfectly balanced. With a novel that addresses such a heavy topic, attempts at lighter material may be awkward and disrupt the flow of the novel, but this isn't so with Tension: it plunged into the inky dark depths of emotion and managed an amazing love story. The fact that the story is told from the point-of-view of the victim's best friend offered a unique perspective and, I think, ultimately allowed McBride to write such a balanced story. I would have been frustrated if the entire story was dark, since Tessa is the narrator and I wanted her to move past the traumatizing event and find happiness, despite the horrors that Noelle suffered. It will never be something that she will forget, but she can't postpone her life indefinitely, no matter how much she loves Tessa. In ways, I thought the fact that Noelle lost so many things provided even more reasons that Tessa shouldn't. Noelle had those things taken... Tessa shouldn't just give them up.

Tessa and Noelle's relationship was painful and heartbreaking. I felt for Tessa... She waited so long to regain her best friend, guilty and afraid to live her own life after Noelle's had been cruelly shattered. When Noelle

returns home, Tessa knows that things won't be the same, but nothing can prepare her for the new Noelle... Elle, who doesn't seem to have even a glimmer of Noelle left in her. At the same time, I understand why Noelle had to adopt this new persona: Noelle, Tessa's best friend, is dead. I think McBride accurately conveyed Tessa's POV, which is different than most other YA novels dealing with the same topic, as they usually told from the victim's POV.

One of the brightest elements of the novel is the romance between Tessa and Max, the boy who finds a way past Tessa's carefully constructed walls and into her heart. Max and Tessa's relationship is one of my absolute favorites... and I read a lot of good love stories. I think the realistic quality of their story is what really won me over... I believed in their story. That and the fact that there is the definite possibility that it might not work out between them and I desperately believed that they should be together! Tessa's ready to do anything to help Noelle, including giving up her own happiness... and Max.

Grade: A+

Cover Notes:

When I first saw the cover I wasn't really a fan, but after reading the novel I think it's a perfect fit!

Natalie says

So for a debut novel, I thought this was pretty good, but the subject matter was pretty dark. Tessa's best friend Noelle has just escaped after being kidnapped and imprisoned for 2 years. The book is about both of them picking up the pieces and moving forward.

I have to say, I wasn't a big fan of Noelle (or Elle as she calls herself after her return). She didn't seem like a good friend to Tessa at all, even before she was kidnapped. She was more of a frenemy than anything else. I get that she was traumatized and going through a lot, but she didn't treat anyone very well and made all kinds of bad decisions. Tessa felt responsible for her and kept putting her own life on hold to take care of Elle.

Tessa was okay, but seemed a little pushy at times. Like, someone would tell her Elle wasn't up to seeing her, and she would insist on seeing her. She was a good friend to Tessa, but also something of an enabler.

I thought Darcy was a good friend to Tessa. I liked her much better than Elle. The love interest was okay, but didn't feel like a realistic teenager.

I thought when I picked this up that it would be more of a mystery, but this has very little to do with the crime itself and more to do with picking up the pieces afterward.

Erica says

I have to admit that this book was four material even leading to a 5 in the beginning but I guess it did not make that mark because the story did not go the way that I thought it was going to. It took a different path, the description of the book was a bit misleading and I thought that it was going to be an action packed novel,

when it wasn't. Do not get me wrong I really enjoyed this book and the story that it told it was really cute and sometimes suspenseful, but I was always able to tell that the "right" thing was going to happen. I would like to read more from this author considering that this is her first novel. I commend her and I think that she did great work, but the novel needed a bit more action, of any type.

Jennifer says

Read my full review [here](#).

Bottom Line – if I had to sum up *The Tension of Opposites* using only two words I would use, *Brave Love*. These two innocuous little words, usually, I will admit, not seen together, can encompass an ocean, drag up feelings, sometimes we would rather not give voice to. But, they fit – like your grandparents hands fit inside each other, each worn in away that complements the other, allowing warmth, desire, and love to seep into each crack, line and bend.

Elle and Tessa are powerful characters, in this emotionally charged, story about what happens after, disaster strikes someone you love more than yourself. Kristina McBride, with her authentic voice and powerful subjects, has demanded attention, which is oftentimes reserved for more seasoned authors. She's not only proven herself, with her debut but has proved that not only does she have a voice that belongs in YA Literature, she's a voice that needs to be heard, felt and devoured. Kudo's to you Kristina, your debut novel is powerful, permeable and eloquent - I devoured it and I can't wait to read more! I give *The Tension of Opposites* 5 mushrooms.

Lori (Pure Imagination) says

How would you feel if your best friend was kidnapped? You never knew what happened to her. She could be dead. She could be in a cage in someone's basement. Now, how would you feel if your best friend was found after two years? That's the story of Tess and Elle.

I was expecting this book to be a bit more dark and twisty than it was. There was a lot of opportunity for it to be dark but there was romance instead. I didn't mind, actually. I found myself a bit more interested in the romance story line than the kidnapped best friend one. The concept was great. It really could have been ripped from the headlines.

The main character Tessa, was a little clueless at times. It wasn't over the top though so it didn't annoy me. There was a few times that I wanted to shake her but that happens in a lot of books. My favorite character was, Max aka cute boy love interest. I really liked him and brought something fun to the story.

The writing was good and it kept me reading. This was a good debut was I think we can expect some great books from McBride in the future!

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Sally Kruger aka "Readingjunk" for [TeensReadToo.com](#)

Tessa and Noelle had been best friends for as long as either could remember. They were ripped apart two years ago when Noelle disappeared. All that was left was her bike abandoned on the sidewalk. For two years, Tessa spent every waking moment thinking about Noelle and missing her. She carried on but refused to enjoy life without her best friend.

Suddenly, life has changed. Noelle has returned. Against the predicted odds from law enforcement officials and other similar cases, she escaped her captor. Tessa can hardly believe it's true. It's like she can finally live again, too.

Dreams of a joyous reunion and catching up on all they've missed together over two years are all Tessa can think about. Instead, she discovers her friend is refusing to see her. Understandable in the beginning, but as the weeks go by, Tessa can't comprehend why Noelle stays hidden away.

When she finally gains access, she is puzzled by Noelle's reaction. One of the first things the kidnap victim insists is that she wants to be known as Elle, not Noelle, and that's not all that's changed. Tessa finds out Elle has not been hiding from everyone, but rather sneaking out at night on risky adventures, and the more Tessa observes, the more concerned she becomes.

Loyalty to Elle is complicated by the fact that Tessa has met Max. At first, he was just the new guy and her partner in photography class, but he's different and beginning to fill a special place in Tessa's life. Elle seems happy for her, but Tessa is torn between enjoying her new relationship and being there for the still emotionally fragile Elle.

Described as "a haunting psychological thriller," *THE TENSION OF OPPOSITES* is one you will want to get your hands on this summer. Author Kristina McBride delves into the minds of her characters to illustrate that trauma takes its toll on victims and survivors alike. Elle may have been the victim of a horrendous kidnapping, but those left behind before her return lived with their own trauma, as well. Even a so-called "happy ending" has its complications, too.

Readers will remember this one long after they turn the final page.

Erica Chapman says

This book was so REAL. I felt like this could happen to anyone, a friend, a sister. I think that's what scared me the most. The relationships were handled expertly. The one between Noelle and Tessa was especially written so well. I believed that the behavior Noelle was projecting would be what someone in her situation would be like. It broke my heart at times. The way Noelle reacted to certain situations, but then again, I didn't blame her. Their relationship was complex yet held an underlining simplicity too.

Tessa who had put her own life on hold, finally had her friend back, but what do you do then? That's the question. Then Max enters and forces her to look at herself again.

I can't even imagine what it would be like for anyone in that situation. I don't want to. But, McBride made me feel it. But not so much that it took me out of the story. I like that we are in Tessa's head and not Elle's, I think being in her mind would have been too much. Too sad. Too...dark.

I loved the use of photography in this. It made me want to see the pictures ;o)

I read this in one sitting. The pacing is handled very well and the characters felt like real people, they could've been my neighbors. Great, unique story.

Excellent book, kept my attention the whole time.

Katelyn says

When I heard that Kristina McBride got her inspiration for this novel from a real kidnapping that took place I became hesitant to read it. I know it isn't right to want to remain ignorant of the horrors that happen on a daily basis in the world, but sometimes I have to block it all out to be able to sleep at night. Meeting Tessa in this book, who's best friend Noelle was kidnapped and then came home after two years was interesting. Tessa felt as if she couldn't move forward because of what happened to Noelle and was also incredibly guarded after the incident. It was tough to read but even harder to imagine going through a situation like that personally. Anyone who picks up this book has to know it's going to be an emotional read but at times the intensity still took me by surprise.

McBride gives readers a chance to look at how these kinds of traumas affect not only the victim of the crime but also the victim's family and friends. It's an intense depiction of a terrifying situation and the aftermath few hear much about. On a slightly lighter note, I will say I really enjoyed the relationship between Tessa and Max. It was a slight reprieve and I appreciated that. It was portrayed in a realistic light which flowed nicely with the development of the story as a whole. There was a lot of growth and understanding throughout.

This is not a light and easy or quick read in my opinion, but I've never been a crime scene show type of girl either. I'm glad I got the chance to read it not to mention how much I enjoyed McBride's writing. I'm hoping this debut is only the beginning for her because I would love to read more of her work in the future.

La Femme Readers says

The Tension of Opposites was a heartbreaking story about the aftermath of a kidnapping. The distress and raw emotions behind the plot was perfectly executed. News channels always mention kidnappings but, they don't normally focus on the victim's state of mind. So, I admired that Kristina took that route. I enjoyed picking through the ups and downs of Noelle's mind. Tessa, Noelle's best friend, was a fantastic character. I loved her determination and continuous support for Noelle. It's hard to see someone you love change dramatically after a tragic event. Patience was key to understanding the changes that Noelle was going through and Tessa was the right person to stand by her side.

This book not only was emotional but also had romance in it. Tessa never really cared about her feelings and just remained a true, selfless friend towards Noelle. However, that slowly changed once she met Max. He was absolutely adorable and a great energy to be around. I think he played a huge role in helping Tessa through her difficult friendship with Noelle. Overall, this book simply hooked me in and left me feeling satisfied. It was creative and well-balanced. I haven't seen this idea in YA before and I am grateful to have read this innovative debut. I look forward to read more works by Kristina since her writing is highly delightful.

Alisha Marie says

I have to start out by saying that *The Tension of Opposites* followed *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott for me, so that probably hurt my rating of this book as that one was pretty great and this one just fell short. Just thought I'd mention in that in the interest of full disclosure. Anyway, back to *The Tension of Opposites*, I thought that this book was just okay. I don't fully understand why I didn't love it, it's just that I felt like I was going through it for the sake of going through it. I wasn't fully connected to it.

I loved the premise of having a kidnapping story told through the eyes of someone other than the person who was kidnapped. That rarely happens and if it does, it's told from the perspective of the parents. *The Tension of Opposites* focuses on the victim's best friend and her reactions to everything that has happened, as well as her wallflower behavior as a consequence to the events. Again, I liked that unique aspect of it. However, I think that the thought of it was way better than the actual execution. For one thing, I didn't feel connected to any of the characters. Since the story is told from Tessa's (the bff) point of view, we don't get the whole story on Elle and her reactions and I just found her a more interesting character than Tessa, herself. Tessa was just so wishy-washy and I was annoyed with her throughout most of the book. I understand being there for a friend and I commend her for it, but it really was a bit much. Tessa was full out obsessing over Elle. If I were Elle, I would've told her to back off at least to have a minute to breathe.

However, while I did understand a bit where Tessa's boyfriend was coming from when he said that Tessa needed to focus more on herself, he came off a bit jerky when focusing on herself was supposed to be focusing on him completely. He just came off kind of douche and self-obsessed with the whole "Baby, I need attention" facade. I'm sorry, but I don't find needy men attractive. In fact, I find them way annoying. And "dude, who's name I totally cannot recall right now" was no exception.

I did like the rest of the supporting characters. I liked Darcy and thought that she was a pretty kick-ass friend and I absolutely loved Cooper. In fact, I totally could've read a whole book from Cooper's point of view and his reactions to his sister's kidnapping. Now, there is an intriguing character. I really did love Coop's relationship with Elle. I thought that it was so sweet.

So, all in all, I thought that *The Tension of Opposites* was just okay. It was a page-turner and it did keep me reading, but I just didn't feel a tangible connection to any of the characters besides wanting to know how they would end up. And again, Tessa was mildly annoying. I do recommend it as it was a pretty compelling read, but it just wasn't my favorite novel.
