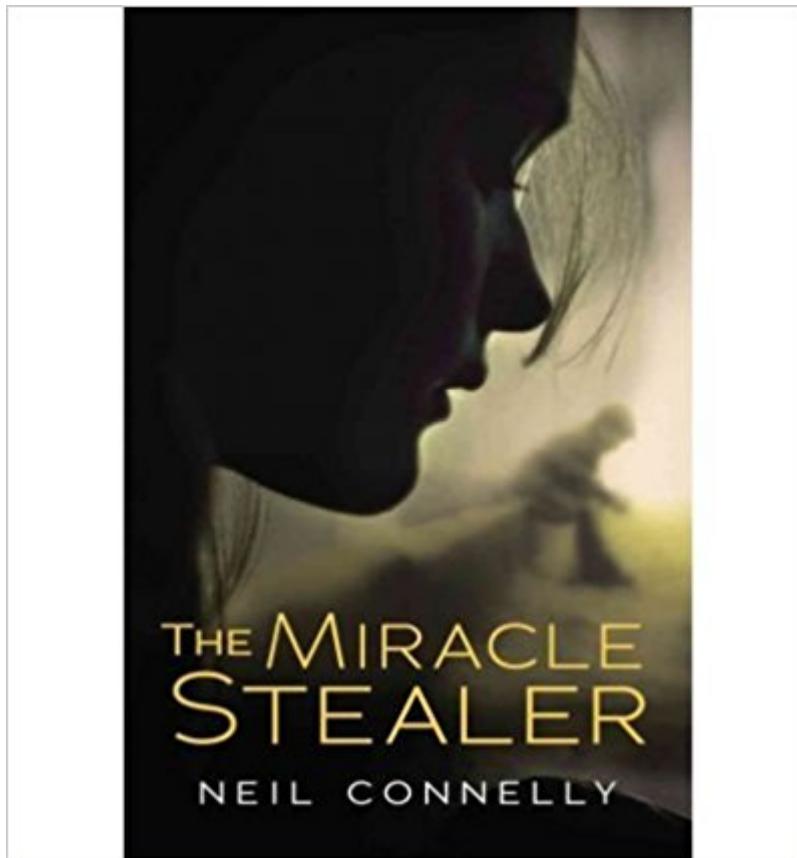


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The Miracle Stealer



Synopsis

The second YA novel from the author of the critically acclaimed ST. MICHAEL'S SCALES will twist you in knots with its suspenseful and shattering take on faith, hope, and miracles. Andi Grant adores her 6-year-old brother Daniel, a "miracle child" who fell down a mine shaft and survived. People regularly come to him for blessings and healings (which sometimes seem to work), and Andi is horrified by his exploitation, esp. when she finds signs of a stalker around their home. With the help of her once-and-maybe-future boyfriend Jeff, she comes up with a plan so audacious, so dramatic, it will stop the attention on Daniel forever: an "Anti-Miracle" that will unravel with the slightest examination of the facts, and cast doubt on Daniel's powers forever after. (cont.)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up
When Andi Grant's brother, Daniel, was three, he survived being buried for three days after falling down an old well. The residents of Paradise, PA, have prayed together for his life, rejoiced and praised God when he was recovered alive, and the townspeople slowly begin to believe that he could perform miracles. Andi, a teen who has always had solid faith, sees it begin to crumble as the pressures grow for Daniel to intercede with God. She is happy to see the mania stop after Daniel's prayers are unable to save a dying woman, but three years later, he assists in the birth of a baby, and it starts again. This story is complicated, but Connelly paces it well. However, the novel might have a problematic religious stance for some readers. A few elements seem to suggest that Andi was punished by God as she and her boyfriend were considering having sex for the first time when Daniel fell down the well. An avid runner, she

loses her leg during an attempt to stage an accident to debunk her brother. The main characters lack believability. Daniel's mother has no problem with her three-year-old son being pressured into interceding for an entire town. Andi has little internal dialogue as she wrestles with her beliefs. Nor does she attempt to talk with anyone about the possibility of miracles. Daniel, as both a three- and a six-year-old, seems to be unfazed by the scads of believers who flock to him seeking help. If readers are not bothered by the lackluster attention paid to the deep questions raised and focus solely on the action, they could be satisfied. —Emily Chornomaz, West Orange Public Library, NJ. (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Starred Review The power and danger of religion receives a realistic, gutsy—and yet movingly spiritual—examination in this ambitious and graceful drama. “You ain’t special” is what 19-year-old Andi tells her 6-year-old brother, Daniel, over and over. It’s for his own protection: ever since he was rescued from a well on national TV as a baby, he has been known as “Miracle Boy,” and his prayers and touches have purportedly remedied everything from stillborns to arthritis. Despite Andi’s objections, her devout mother feels it is their duty to help others—especially during the Paradise Days festival that, it is hoped, will bring tourists back to their struggling town. Andi is a remarkable protagonist, a no-bullshit atheist convinced that this “superstitious crap” will damage her brother. Secondary characters breathe just as deeply: a horribly scarred but gentle reverend; Andi’s ex-boyfriend, dragged into her dangerous Anti-Miracle Plan; and a creepy lurker known as Scarecrow who wants to “test” Daniel. Rarely has the dilemma of miracles been articulated so succinctly; if people start changing for the better, is it a miracle regardless of the impetus? Connolly writes with such calm assurance—never too much, never too little—that what could have been an overwhelming epic is instead a slim book that reads with miraculous speed. Grades 9-12. --Daniel Kraus

Neil Connelly has done it again - another beautiful novel about the complicated issues of faith, love, family, and pain. Anderson's voice compels you forward, and her honest search to "save" her brother brings you, and her, right up to the limits of heartbreak and the endlessness of redemption. Only a "children's" book can address these issues with such honesty, complexity, and grace. Read this book, share it with the young people in your life, with anyone who needs the hope of a complex faith in a complex world.

The Miracle Stealer is a great read. It's a book about faith and what happens when you lose it, and also what happens when desperate people have too much. It's a book about love, and also the seemingly overwhelming power of guilt. This is a book that takes an unflinching look at our beliefs and concludes that "maybe" is okay. It gives a reminder that we don't live in a world of absolutes and sometimes the belief in possibility is all you need. The author handles all this with incredible skill without ever becoming heavy handed. He hooks the reader in and delicately lays out the story of Andi and her little brother Daniel in bits and pieces, gradually drawing to a conclusion that is powerful and inspiring. At first I didn't find Andi that engaging; her love for her brother was obvious from the first, but I did not understand why she was so angry and why she had put her entire life on hold to look after him. It was the process of discovering Andi's story that brought me closer to her. The author has created a character so fully realized it didn't take long before I was fully feeling her pain and her rage. In a book about a six year old miracle worker, it's big sister that commands your attention and screams out to be heard. This is a book that will be easy to recommend to anyone seventh grade and up. The author packs quite a bit into this slim volume, and I hope that many adults will discover this book as it has quite a bit to appeal to readers long past their YA years. Be warned, the author's portrayal of Andi's loss of faith is brutally honest and sometimes painful to read. There is inspiration and hope to be found amongst these pages, and even though I am not one to re-read books, I think I will be picking this one up again. Impeccable plotting, fast pacing, vivid characters and emotional depth all combine to make this book a truly stunning achievement.

Recommended.

It all started when little Daniel disappeared. Anderson (Andi) and her friend, Jeff, were told they had to take Danny with them on their walk. They hiked through the woods to the fairy fort. The two teens only took their eyes off him for a minute. Danny was gone. A frantic search followed, only to discover Danny had fallen some twenty feet down into an abandoned well. The rescue effort that followed lasted three days. Most of the volunteers and townspeople thought little Danny would not survive, but somehow the heartfelt prayers of the faithful worked a miracle and the little boy was rescued and simply treated for cuts and bruises. After Danny's rescue, strange things began to happen in and around the town of Paradise, Pennsylvania. Danny's miraculous survival seemed to be contagious. Many believers began to credit him with healing the sick, communicating with the lost, and even bringing the fish back to the local lake. He had become the "Miracle Boy." The problem was that Danny was now several years older, and when he was called upon to "pray" for some

miracle cure or recovery, his older sister, Andi, worried that he didn't truly have any special powers. What if one day his prayers weren't answered? Would he understand or would he take the failure to heart and shoulder unbearable guilt? Why wouldn't people just leave him alone? Andi has seen enough. Her mother seems to want to exploit Danny and his miracle cures. Andi blames her mother for driving away her father. Anger as well as fear for her brother's safety is driving Andi to devise a cunning and dangerous plan to convince Danny's followers that he is just a normal little boy. Will she succeed before well-meaning locals and nutcases coming from near and far manage to ruin the life of her innocent little brother? THE MIRACLE STEALER is the story of faith. Is faith something that can be proven with facts, or is it the feeling that what happens is controlled by a higher authority? Author Neil Connelly takes readers on a journey with Andi as she struggles to decide if she has faith or if fate depends on her actions alone. It is a struggle many face, often more than once in life. Connelly's story will speak to many and perhaps answer the question for some. Reviewed by: Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunk"y"

Great author!

Neil Connelly's THE MIRACLE STEALER tells of a six-year-old rumored to have a healing power - even to bring back the dead. Grant doesn't know the truth - all he knows is his brother may be different. And that reporters and miracle-seekers are changing their lives. Can he make a difference in protecting his little brother?

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