



Saving Max

Antoinette van Heugten

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Max Parkman—autistic and whip-smart, emotionally fragile and aggressive—is perfect in his mother's eyes. Until he's accused of murder.

Attorney Danielle Parkman knows her teenage son Max's behavior has been getting worse—using drugs and lashing out. But she can't accept the diagnosis she receives at a top-notch adolescent psychiatric facility that her son is deeply disturbed. Dangerous.

Until she finds Max, unconscious and bloodied, beside a patient who has been brutally stabbed to death.

Trapped in a world of doubt and fear, barred from contacting Max, Danielle clings to the belief that her son is innocent. But has she, too, lost touch with reality? Is her son really a killer?

With the justice system bearing down on them, Danielle steels herself to discover the truth, no matter what it is. She'll do whatever it takes to find the killer and to save her son from being destroyed by a system that's all too eager to convict him.

Saving Max Details

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Author : Antoinette van Heugten

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From Reader Review Saving Max for online ebook

Lissa says

OMG! I honestly dont know where to start. This novel captivated me right from the beginning. The second I started it, I couldnt put it down. IT WAS SO GOOD. I finished it the same day. I was up until 5:40 in the morning, and listening to my tunes.

I was so moved by Danielle and Max. I would picture it, and it was just unreal. I hated Jonas's mother since the beginning. I knew something was up with her. I just can't beleive someone would go to that extent. Mariannes journals were absolutly horrendous. I remember putting my hand to my mouth so many times. I even cried at the ending. I was so happy that the charges against Max, Danielle and Tony got dropped. I can't imagine what they went through.

The only thing that disappointed me with the novel, was the ending. I thought that the author should have added more after Mariannes disappearance. I really hope that she writes a sequel.

But all in all Antoinette van Heugten has my 2 thumbs up. I really look forward to her future works. This is a highly recommended novel.

Meagen Hudson says

Ugh. I don't even know where to start. I understand that this is a work of fiction but it was SO FAR out there that it was almost cheesy. First off, I'm pretty sure you can't stalk someone, break into her house, steal her personal property, and then use that stolen property as evidence in court. This "shocking" evidence (which was obtained so illegally and would never be allowed, ugh, I seriously can't get over that) obviously lays out everything. Apparently, every crazy person writes a journal that details all their secrets and past endevors. Oh yea, let's mention the "love" story. The main character has a one night stand and immediately falls in love although the next time she sees him is a week or so later when SHOCK he's set up to be her attorney. Seriously. The main character is also an attorney which is apparently a clever way to make it plausible for a crazy lady to show up late to her own court date (half a day late and after violating bond by taking off her tracking device and fleeing the state) with stolen evidence to represent herself. The judge allows all sorts of questioning of witnesses to go on which should not be allowed (leading, speculating, hearsay, etc) and the author makes it a point to have the judge say "normally, I wouldn't allow this because what you are doing is illegal but since I'm the judge, I'll let it go". After all is said and done, the murderer gets away (she just happens to escape from court after being revealed as a murderer...). Also, there is a doctor who is using his patients as testers for a new, experimental drug, which is also just another plot device to explain the patient's hostile behavior which actually has nothing to do with the overall story line. The doctor also disappears SHOCK. So instead of resolving anything, every one acts totally crazy and then the antagonists just disappear. The end. Don't waste your time.

Crystal says

Why I read this: I was asked by the publicist if I would like to read it and I really like the titles put out by

Mira Books. I read the description and I knew I was hooked and had to read this one.

How is the novel driven: Action and character, since this is a suspense/thriller novel, action is the dominant driving force, but character development is key as well.

My thoughts: I have read mixed reviews so I wasn't sure what I was going to think about this one before I started. But as I started reading this one and as I finished I realized I'm on the gushing side of this one.

Saving Max hooked me from the first page which takes place in the present and then the book starts and goes back to the point in time where the prologue occurred and then the events after. It's an intriguing start and when the event that occurs in the prologue finally occurs in the timeline of the book - I found I was still really shocked.

As the book continues, the suspense ratchets up. I went through so many emotions and so many things that I thought was happening only for the author to keep proving me wrong. Then there is a final aha moment where I figured it out, but it doesn't end there, I was kept on the edge of my seat right up until the end.

The suspense is very tightly written and it is something that will keep the suspense lover intrigued through the book. I liked the mother of an autistic child (*Max* has Asperger's) angle and how that mother had a high-stress job as well as being a single-mother yet she still did the best she could for her child. The book is well-written, the characters are very intriguing. There is some romance, some family, lots of suspense and it is just a great book. I think this is one I'll be recommending for awhile.

Danielle is a character I think most moms will relate to, she is simply trying to balance a career with a personal life and then add a special needs child on top of that. But she loves him like every mother loves her child no matter what the problems are and she simply wants the best for him, and she never stops wanting the best for him and will sacrifice herself and take risks to make sure he is taken care of. I think of her as an admirable character and I really like how she is developed through the book.

When I read Heather Gudenkauf's *The Weight of Silence* for review last year - it was her first book and I felt like it was one of those iffy things, will I like it or won't I, but again it was a Mira book and I love this Harlequin Imprint. I ended up loving *The Weight of Silence* and that is how I feel about *Saving Max* as well. Antoinette van Heugten is an author worth giving that first chance, and after you read her I'm sure you will want to read more from her and as soon as possible (hint, hint Mira books and Antoinette!)

Kimberley says

i read this book quickly (in a day and a half) but that is no indication that it was a good book. this is a book club selection and our meeting it next sunday. i only purchased the book on friday and with current plans for the weekend, i had to cram now.

the characters were so flat. you never really got to know max or danielle or why she was confident, other than being his mother, that he wasn't crazy and didn't kill a fellow mental patient. the writing itself was rather tired. if the author used electricity to explain one more thing, i was going to scream. i didn't really get interested until the middle of the book and quickly fell out of interest again when the courtroom work came.

i think the book could've been done better in more skilled hands. i needed more character development and maybe some reorganization of the events in the book to have pulled me in from the beginning.

Krissy says

The writing annoyed me at times and the story was full of convenient coincidences and very improbable actions BUT it still kept me interested until the very end. So for that reason I'll rate it 3 stars.

Side note: The narrator of the audiobook, Therese Plummer, did a good job except for the fact that she was a loud swallower. I hate that.

Kooheli says

This book was not unlike the fastest rinky-dink roller coaster ride at a local carnival: high drama, fast pace, occasional highlights, but alas, not particularly memorable when recalled the next day. I read this in about four hours on a Sunday afternoon, a strong testament, I suppose, to its suspenseful narrative. Although the two main characters, Danielle and her son Max, are disappointingly one-dimensional, theirs is a predicament that demands a resolution. I felt the need to know what happened. By the time the resolution occurred, though, I was struck more by the outlandishness of the plot than anything else. Van Heugten seemed to get carried away by her own story, looking to outdo herself on each page. By continuously looking for the next you'll-never-believe-this scene, she manages to create a story that is, well, unbelievable. One bad apple? Maybe. Two starts to tear at the fabric of credulity. I'll give her points for imagination and story-telling, no small feat, but I don't think I need to go to the carnival when it's in town the next time.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: One of the book's main characters is described as having Asperger's and since I, myself have Asperger's I was immediately interested. But the book's plot and setting of a psychiatric hospital also had me eager to read the book.

The book opens with Danielle, the mother of Max, entering a patient's room and finding him brutally murdered while huddled on the floor nearby, unconscious, is her son, Max, with the murder weapon in his hand. Danielle is a lawyer and her son, Max, has Asperger's. Max is about 16 and has become very moody and suddenly started to show violent tendencies. His doctor recommends that it is time Max go to a psychiatric hospital for a full evaluation. When he enters, Danielle is advised to go home but she is determined to stay until he is ready to come home but the doctor will only allow her short visits in the morning and afternoon. Max's behaviour reportedly deteriorates and he becomes extremely violent, has to be sedated and restrained. After the murder occurs Max is arrested as is Danielle as an accessory. Danielle does everything in her power to prove her son's innocence and this takes her along two very different paths, both with a deviant and horrifying end.

This was a fantastic mystery! A page-turner book that I couldn't put down until I'd finished it. The supposed Asperger's theme is not very prevalent. At the beginning we meet a teenage boy with AS and learn some small details of the condition but the story soon morphs into a whole different set of circumstances where the

Asperger's can no longer be recognized. At the end, it is addressed again and Max's original problem is dealt with nicely. But this is not a book to read to find out about Asperger's. It simply contains a character who has AS in the same way one would read a book where a character was blind but one would not read it to find out all about blindness.

The story is superb. I love reading books that take place in psychiatric institutions; it is such a private, secluded world that the potential for evil to be taking place within its walls is perfectly plausible in one's imagination, and of course with the deplorable history of asylums and loony bins not *that* far away in the past it doesn't take a great leap of imagination.

Max is a wonderful character and though he is hard to get to know for most of the book because he's often sedated there does come a time when his true person comes through. It is at this point that some of the benefits of his Asperger's personality come into play (his intelligence and obsessiveness) and he helps vitally with his case. The mystery leaves a wonderful trail of suspense as it unravels. I admit I figured out whodunit quite early and why but the details were still disturbing as they were unearthed.

A totally engrossing psychological suspense. The author's website states that she is working on another book that will once again feature a character with a psychiatric disorder and I am most emphatically looking forward to its release.

back-to-books.blogspot.com

Arielle says

This book was recommended to me by a friend. She spoke so highly of it, and all the emotions she felt while she read it. She is the only reason I stuck it out to the end.

This book was horrible! I don't even know where to start! The writing was very elementary. It reminded me of when I was in the seventh grade, and a few friends of mine and I tried our hand at writing stories with adult characters. It was what we perceived adults to be--not what they truly were. That is how this book is. The author did little to no research about law, psychosis, and several other elements in the book.

The writing was rudimentary at best. Repetitive usage of the same adjectives and hyperbole. If I never hear the phrase "her words are bullets." as a stand alone sentence describing how angry a person is in my life again, it will be too soon. "Her eyes are steel." Etc. Try being more descriptive?

The tense in which she decided to write did not flow with her style of writing. It was awkward, but my biggest complaint is that she spent absolutely no time developing a foundation for a relationship between the characters. She has a best friend that is unbelievable and forced as a best friend. She has a son with whom she loves dearly, but the reader is only told this, and never quite feels or believes it. She has a lover who goes from one night stand to love of her life in the span of 24 hours. It can happen, but van Heugten did not make me believe it. Some of the characters were distractions or unnecessarily rude without any sense of what drives them or complexity. Some of the character background (Georgia and her family) was pointless and distracting.

The big thing is--NOBODY acts like any of these characters did! The court system does not work that way. Law enforcement does not work that way. Judges don't, lawyers don't, nurses and doctors don't. It takes a

suspension of reality to just go with it, but I have to admit that I spent most of my time rolling my eyes and shaking my leg in restlessness.

Even with the unbelievability of it all, the courtroom scenes are the best--even though they are entirely too drawn out. Danielle is a good lawyer (so we are told over and over, but only glimpse it here). The ending is suspenseful, and actually quite good--but that does not save this book from being a bad read.

All in all, if you could read only the diagnoses scene and the very end, you would not have missed much. This book is 90% bad, 7% ok, and 3% good.

Debby says

When I first got into this book, I thought I was going to end up with a three-halfer or four star. The story captured my attention from the very beginning. A single mom is raising a special needs child who is autistic with other non specified mental health issues. The mom makes a fateful decision to take her son to a special psychiatric hospital for treatment. But treatment doesn't help and the son is accused of murdering another patient. The mom, a lawyer herself, faces criminal charges of her own related to the murder and must fight to clear her name and her son's. Great plot for a murder mystery...or so you would think. However, the story loses all credibility because of several factual impossibilities and improbabilities. For instance, this is written by an attorney....who shame on her....should know better: minors, even if tried as adults are constitutionally prohibited from receiving the death penalty; plea agreements in criminal cases can not be confidential; and a defense attorney will not represent co-defendants. There were many more of these inaccuracies the author tried to slip in. They did nothing for the story except make it laughable...not in a good way. Aside from the inaccuracies, the author creates a ludicrous love interest. Why ludicrous? Well, the love develops immediately upon the consummation of a one-night-stand where, by the way, the female lies about her identity and everything else. So really, how can love develop under those circumstances??? My advice...don't waste you time reading this!

Sue says

Reading other reviews, people seem to either love or hate this book. I am one of the ones who loved it! It's a quick read because I just couldn't put it down. Now there are a few bits that are rough around the edges, but in the main it's an unusual psychological thriller. Danielle is a single parent to Max, who has Asperger's Syndrome. At sixteen he is getting worse, and she checks him into a renowned psychiatric unit for short term assessment. However, within a few days he is accused of the brutal, and bloody murder of a young fellow patient.

Saving Max brings up all sorts of issues, and would make a great book group book for discussion. How far do you go to protect your child? Can you hand on heart say "My child didn't do this" when your child is mentally sick and in a psychotic break? Can you trust an institution just because the medical staff seem so well qualified? Can you trust the justice system to get to the truth when judicial rulings can seem so random? Can other people present a mask to you that is so good that you never can see the reality beneath? And just how far would you go against the system before you caved in?

My tiny negatives are nothing against the pluses in this book. Why call the Head Nurse by the name of Kreng. "Nurse Kreng" just smacks of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". And why did we have a random character such as Naomi? I felt that she was put in just to muddy the waters. Also there were a couple of occasions when I felt that the author had Danielle do something that I felt was unbelievable. It seemed as if she couldn't think of any other way to move the plot along with the next bit of information.

Having said that, I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It was fast paced and interesting, and I look forward to reading the next book by this author.

Laura says

I will not even give this book one star as it is one of the worst books I've ever read. The storyline is very similar in many ways to Jodi Picoult's latest book. The writing is amateurish, boring, and worse than the simplistic Danielle Steele type books I used to read when I was a teen. In fact the one love scene I read before I quit reminded me of those romance novels. The most annoying and I think dangerous thing about books like this, even though they are fiction, is the false impressions they give about psychiatry. I work in the field of child psychiatry and am the first person to say it has lots of problems... I am far from its biggest defender. But this book is complete trash and is not even close to the truth about the field. I just hope no one that reads this book is afraid to seek care for themselves or their child because of things like this. I will say the storyline has potential and the characters could have been interesting but I couldn't get beyond the lies to finish the book. Don't waste your time.

Harlequin Books says

Reading Log - Day 1

Danielle's life seems to be falling apart in every way imaginable. Her job is in danger. Her best friend needs her because her life is falling apart. Most importantly, her son needs her. My heart goes out to her when she finally hears what the doctor diagnose him with. The list seems never-ending and quite hopeless. If it wasn't for the one night she spent talking with a complete stranger, I would say she has nothing positive to hold on to and even that could potentially be filled with more stress. Good thing she is a lawyer and has proven she has a large amount of strength because she needs it with no one she can lean on for support. As for Max, it has to be so frightening for him. The rare moments he lets his mom see that fear will tug at your heart like it did at mine.

Anyone else feel like telling Dr. Fastow off? He irritates me to no end!

Reading Log Day 2

I'm still going to read more today but I had to stop to cook dinner and thought I would come share my thoughts while they are still fresh. All I can say is OMG! The way part 1 ended caught me by surprise even though I was expecting a murder at some point in the story. Part 2 has its surprises right from the start as well. Poor Danielle! Poor Max! Is he the murderer? I'm not sure. Yes, Danielle is definitely in denial over many aspects of her son's mental evaluation but is she totally off the mark or is there really something else happening at Maitland that she needs to protect Max from? If it wasn't for the fact that my daughter is

beginning to grumble that she is hungry, I wouldn't have been able to stop reading. She is doing some of the prep work for our dinner but I can hear she is just about ready for me so I'll leave you with another question.

Do you think Danielle should be allowed to see her son before the trial? Were you surprised by Max's lawyer? (Please no spoilers!)

Reading Log Day 3

The more Danielle digs, the more she finds that makes me wonder who really killed that poor child. However, she is taking so many risks that sooner or later everything will fall apart and she could be putting herself in real danger. I can't imagine what it would be like to have my child in as much trouble as her son is in. I would probably be doing everything I could to help also but I can't help but feel she should be listening to her lawyer and not making things more difficult for the case. Antoinette van Heugten definitely has me feeling the confusion and desperation right along with Danielle but I'm still able to think straight and can see nothing but trouble coming Danielle and Max's way.

I think I have a new favorite character, Doaks. When he goes up in the attic, I could picture it perfectly and could hear his grumbling clearly. The poor man, hehehehe.

Would you be taking the same risks as Danielle or would you depend on the system discovering the truth?

Reading Log Day 4

Is this ending seriously creepy or is it just me? Even though the truth comes out before the very end, I found myself turning the pages even faster to find out how it all unfolds and it just kept getting creepier and creepier! I thought her lawyer was going to lose it on her, with every right. Doaks was beside himself. **I** wouldn't want to be the one upsetting him. And, poor Max! The court sure wasn't a good experience for him.

I found the setting of the psych. facility intriguing and I loved the final chapters in the courtroom. Did you have a favorite part?

Happy Reading,
Kim S., *Harlequin Books ambassador*

JoAnn/QuAppelle says

I finished this in about 2 days, so I guess you would say that it engaged me,,,but it was not as good as I had hoped. Interesting premise, but....poor execution. Character development was not well done at all.

I had several other problems with the book. I think it is overwritten (some of the writing is so dramatic and lots of unnecessary similes) and somewhat repetitive. The shift from past to present tense is awkward and unnecessary. Anyone looking for a novel about autism will be disappointed because that is a very small part of it. Many of the incidents in the "asylum" are just silly/implausible and would never happen in today's medical world of high security and privacy.

I also felt that in order to have any feelings about Max, the author should have told us more about him before he was whisked off to Iowa. I have little understanding of what he was like "before", which made his mother's denial - of what he apparently did - seem unlikely. And Danielle, Max's mother, was not a very likable character - as a lawyer she was pretty flippant about breaking the law and seemed really pushy to me.

The search for the evidence in the murder was about all that kept me reading, but parts of that search were very contrived and too coincidental.

Overall, I would say that this book was "just okay".

Wanda says

Okay now I need to write a review about this book even though I decided not to finish reading it. Danielle has a high function autistic son who has asperger's. Now autism is a disorder that is not contagious and it affects 1 out of 110 children born today. I have a handsome 9 year old with autism he has PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder). Like Danielle's son my son is extremely high functioning as well.

Danielle explains how her son was a sweet boy. How he was lovable and sweet. She explained how close they were, before he reaches his teenage years where things change from bad to worst. All this reminds me of my own son, except the bad to worst part because my son is still young.

Now the fact that this book is about a mom and her autistic son is what captivated me to this book. So Danielle's son has taken a downward turn with his autism. He started using drugs and becoming violent, suicidal, etc. So she decided to take him to a country known clinic to have him tested and try to find help and managing his outbursts. But one situation started happening after another. And she finds herself thinking what's going on with her son. He was acting out in ways she never seen before. So she became suspicious of the staff and found herself questioning the staff and the treatment they using with her son. Refusing to believe their prognosis about her son, she started to investigate and realized they didn't tell her everything they were doing with him. So when she decides to take him out of the hospital and get a second opinion, they won't let her take him.

Now that's where I stopped reading. It's my own denial. I pray that I never have to go through what the character in this book went through. And since the author wrote her story so vividly, I started going through my own denial about her case and praying that it never happens to me.

So this is a good book if you consider yourself strong enough to read and accept facts that she has written in this book. Now I'm not saying I'm not strong but I'm not strong enough to read what my future may hold for us

Bethany says

This book was recommended to me by a friend...I had read about the book, but due to the number of lousy reviews it had received, I had never picked it up to read myself. That said...

it really isn't as bad as people say it is. Simplistic? Pretty much. Far fetched? Quite. Derogatory towards the mental health field? Absolutely. Entertaining? You betcha. I don't know about you, but sometimes I want to be flat out entertained...and this book did the trick.

I was hooked from the get go. While this book will probably never win a Pulitzer, it WILL keep you turning

pages into the wee hours of the night. I found myself intrigued, amused and horrified and different aspects of the story line, and I read it in less than two days. Like I said, it's really not as bad as some of these other reviews say it is.

If you're looking for earth shattering, life changing literature, than keep looking because this is most certainly NOT your book. If you're looking for an escape for a while, try this one. You will enjoy it.
