



Anatomy of a Miracle

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A profound new novel about a paralyzed young man's unexplainable recovery--a stunning exploration of faith, science, mystery, and the meaning of life

Rendered paraplegic after a traumatic event four years ago, Cameron Harris has been living his new existence alongside his sister, Tanya, in their battered Biloxi, Mississippi neighborhood where only half the houses made it through Katrina. One stiflingly hot August afternoon, as Cameron sits waiting for Tanya during their daily run to the Biz-E-Bee convenience store, he suddenly and inexplicably rises up and out of his wheelchair.

In the aftermath of this "miracle," Cameron finds himself a celebrity at the center of a contentious debate about what's taken place. And when scientists, journalists, and a Vatican investigator start digging, Cameron's deepest secrets--the key to his injury, to his identity, and, in some eyes, to the nature of his recovery--become increasingly endangered. Was Cameron's recovery a genuine miracle, or a medical breakthrough? And, finding himself transformed into a symbol, how can he hope to retain his humanity?

Brilliantly written as closely observed journalistic reportage and filtered through a wide lens that encompasses the vibrant characters affected by Cameron's story, *Anatomy of a Miracle* will be read, championed, and celebrated as a powerful story of our time, and the work of a true literary master.

Anatomy of a Miracle Details

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From Reader Review Anatomy of a Miracle for online ebook

Jill says

After reading several outstanding advance reviews of this book, I was very eager to get my hands on it. The premise, cited as a *true story, is intriguing: when a young paraplegic Afghanistan veteran experiences a full recovery, what does it mean? Is it a true miracle or a medical breakthrough? More importantly, what if the veteran is harboring secrets and is not defined as “worthy”? Can or should he still be a symbol for divine mercy if he is perceived by misguided fundamentalists as a sinner?

This book very aptly mines the hypocrisy of those who claim to follow the Church, fast to define inexplicable events as “miracles” and equally fast to dissemble that definition if a person doesn’t live up to man-made definitions of what a “saint” should be. It takes the reader on a journey from the war zones of the Middle East to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to a local convenience store where the “miracle” occurred. And it integrates science, medicine, the online community, TV film producers, local neighbors and more.

So why do I find this book hard to rate? I found the enormous amount of detail to weigh down the forward propulsion, and often found myself scanning full pages because of what I considered superfluous background. As a literary fiction reader, I found the fact-laden long-form journalistic approach to lack magic. Still, once I got past the ponderous opening pages, I did settle in and actually began to admire what Jonathan Miles was doing as well as his pitch-perfect dialog, thoughtful plot twists, and above all, important themes. The magic did begin to emerge.

The ultimate theme is, “How does someone reclaim his authentic life from the glare of others' expectations?” It leaves the reader with much to ponder.

Sue Dix says

What an extraordinary book. It starts slowly, but builds and builds into an ever increasingly quick paced adventure. This book ostensibly deals with what constitutes a miracle, but ultimately it deals with what constitutes a human being.

Kate says

A story about the riddles of the human heart, the contradictions we carry, the wounds seen and unseen, and the many sides to a story. Haunting and humble, Miles presents the residents of small town America, a place still ravaged from Hurricane Katrina, as they deal with the extraordinary healing that has occurred there. From the war zones of the Middle East to the dusty shelves of a local convenience store, questions of science and faith and love emerge, presented almost documentary style. Getting to the ending was an emotional journey that left me with a lovely book hangover!

Darcysmom says

I received an ARC of this book from Netgalley for free in exchange for an honest review.

Anatomy of a Miracle is a wonder. We are thrust into Cameron Harris's world with the exacting view of an investigative reporter. Within the first few pages, I forgot I was reading a novel and had fully bought into Cameron's story.

Cameron, like many young men who are adrift, joined the Army. He went to war and came home paralyzed and battling PTSD. For four years he existed with the help of his sister, Tanya. Then one day everything changed. While waiting outside a convenience store for Tanya, Cameron stood up and took several steps. Then he took more steps. Soon he was in physical therapy rebuilding his atrophied muscles.

Cameron standing is where the story really begins. Cameron attained a minor level of celebrity and signed on for a reality show focused on him and his recovery. Much of the story is related through the lens of the reality show camera. There are also significant flashbacks to illustrate the essence of Cameron before his injury. The weaving of past and present allows us to view Cameron as a fully fleshed out character, not just a potential miracle.

The central question the novel considers is how was Cameron healed? Was it a miracle? Was it a medical anomaly? Does an answer really matter for Cameron?

I enjoyed Anatomy of A Miracle tremendously and definitely recommend reading it.

Allison says

I have read many genres from literary fiction to memoirs, but I can't recall ever reading a book quite like this one. The publisher describes it as "A profound new novel about a paralyzed young man's unexplainable recovery—a stunning exploration of faith, science, mystery, and the meaning of life, " but the whole time I was reading, I couldn't decide if the account by Jonathan Miles was fact or fiction. The story moves between small town life in Mississippi where wheelchair-bound Cameron ekes out a miserable existence with the support of his big sister, and then travels back in time on patrol in Afghanistan to learn how Cameron ended up in that wheelchair. The descriptions are so sharp and authentic they feel like the work of Fannie Flagg mixed with Tim O'Brien. Then as we get deeper into the account, and the author reveals the crucial issue that turns the story from a slapstick comedy to a profound tragedy, the reader is brought up short, wrestling with moral questions that seem beyond the scope of a novel of small town Americana or journalistic reportage. It was only after the story itself draws to a close and I read the afterword and acknowledgements that I was certain that this story is both a beautifully crafted novel and a carefully documented piece of journalism. Miles has done an amazing job of combining the two genres, but what is more amazing is how he lays out the medical and theological questions in the anatomy of this miracle and makes the reader care.

Cheryl says

Cameron Harris is a paraplegic due to a land mine in Afghanistan 4 years prior, his older sister, Tanya takes care of him in their Biloxi, MS home, one of the many victims of Katrina.

A family aware of life's ills: abandoned by their father, the loss of their mother via a car accident, they reside in the shotgun home they were born in.

Life's daily is a trip to the Biz-e-Bee for needs. Tanya pushing Cameron, known to all they pass and within. It's while inside that Cameron is witnessed outside taking his first steps in too many years. Awkward, but intent. Not even sure how or why, himself, he walks. And the praises are sung around him. As is the skepticism, primarily from doctors hearing his recovery labeled as a miracle.

But recovery it is. Then what? With biblical humor, referring to unmentioned life of Lazarus after his resurrection, it goes into what becomes of the cured after the cure?

As physicians grapple for a how to his spontaneous recovery and the Biz-E-Bee begins to see profit in the hoards showing up to the miracle site. The pilgrimages, gawkers, plain curious. The kitsch soon fills the shelf and the register.

But it gets better. Priests to prove, TV documentary to preserve and present, and medical staff to amaze. Yet through it all: the hype, the fame, the riches, all Cameron wants is to know how it happened and why to him.

But even miracles have drama, secrets, and regrets. The twist thrown in during the last cycle, just before the final wringing out, was as much an "aha" as a "well, I'll be..." but still did not answer how the legs that couldn't, now can.

This book is spiritual in a new age way, enlightening, loving and endearing. It is also the best thing I have read in many years. But even better, it is mostly true. Blessed be, Cameron. Blessed be.

Thank you MOST sincerely Blogging For Books for this review copy.

Diane S ? says

I was actually confused while reading this whether I was reading fiction or nonfiction. It is written in the style of the show, Making of a murderer, if one watched that. No murder here but rather a resurrection of sorts, as Cameron a young man who lost the use of his legs in Afghanistan, rises again in a Vietnamese store owners parking lot. We then follow this supposed miracle and all its ramifications. From the miracle seekers who appear, to the different church representatives, and of course the television makers who want to make a documentary of the event. The VA doctor who is trying to figure out medically how this occurred, to the store owner who soon has a burgeoning business selling artifacts.

This is not a fast read, it is very comprehensive, and very well done. We see all sides of this event, but more important we get a very indepth analysis of all involved, I really had the feeling I knew, understood these people. As in real life, however, there are so many things that go wrong, so much more to the story, all of which we learn in turn, right when the knowledge is needed. There is an emotional appeal to this, in a relationship that remains hidden for much of the book. Sometimes there is so much information imparted it threatens the emotional connection and vulnerability that makes this novel a standout. I liked it very much. Faith and culture, a strong bond between a brother and sister, and how quickly a life can turn when the unknown happens.

ARC from Edelweiss and publisher.

Tammy says

The publisher is billing *Anatomy of a Miracle* as a *true story. It's fiction written in a journalistic style and it is compelling. The writing is dense, full of VSD (Vivid, Specific, Detail) and it took me an unusually long time to read. Cameron returns from Afghanistan as a paraplegic and spends four sad years in a wheelchair under the care of his sister, Tanya. Miraculously, he stands up and begins to walk in front of his local convenience store in his Mississippi hometown. Was this a bonafide miracle or a medical marvel? People begin to try to use Cameron's recovery for their own purposes. The media and the Vatican become involved leaving Cam reluctant, confused and conflicted. This satiric novel contains much to ponder not the least of which is the belief in God. Rich in detail, the author guides you through all of the characters stories so you understand why they think the way they do. Miles is a talented writer with the smarts to match.

Rebecca Foster says

(Nearly 3.5) Look closely at the cover of Miles's third novel and you see the central drama depicted: wheelchair tracks snake up and stop three-quarters of the way from the top, where they are replaced by footprints: A paralyzed Afghanistan veteran stands up and walks in Biloxi, MS. Is it a miracle, or an explainable medical phenomenon? Miles has been sly in how he's packaged this. On the title page he calls it a 'True Story', and the style is reminiscent of journalistic reportage (like in Dave Eggers's *Zeitoun*). But he made it all up. Some may feel tricked – which would be a shame, as there are interesting questions of faith and science that would be rewarding for a book club to discuss. Miles's previous novel, *Want Not*, is the book I most wish I'd written, so it was perhaps inevitable this one would suffer in comparison. Dr. Janice and her eccentric Southern author father, Winston, were my favorite characters; I never particularly warmed to Cameron or Tanya, who don't fully outgrow the country bumpkin stereotype.

See my full review at [The Bookbag](#).

Jennifer Blankfein says

After returning to Biloxi, Mississippi a veteran paraplegic, from an horrific event in Afghanistan, Cameron Harris lives with his sister Tanya, spends a lot of time drinking and manages to get around in a wheelchair. From the death of his mother, to the damaging hurricane, to the war, Cameron has suffered his share. And then one day while waiting for Tanya in the convenience store parking lot, he just stands up and starts to walk...was it a miracle, or was there a medical explanation? After a Facebook post about what had taken place goes viral, the local and national media bombard Cameron with questions related to his recovery. Christians believe this was a miracle and proof of God, and even a lawyer sent by the Vatican arrives to investigate. But Cameron is confused about what really happened; his is not driven by religion or faith, his doctor is unable to offer an explanation, and he has a difficult time living up to the American Hero persona that is being forced upon him by TV executives attempting to make a documentary about him.

When the Vatican investigator starts digging to interview the men Cameron served with in the war, a huge secret is revealed that impacts what people believe. As Cameron questions himself and the discovery forces the public to reexamine their explanations, religion and science are up against each other in this search for the truth.

Anatomy of a Miracle is a novel written as if it is true...the highest form of Fake News. Several chapters were quite dense due to the investigative nature and reporting style of writing, but the recap of what went on in Afghanistan and the character development that went along with that gave me great understanding of Cameron. I enjoyed this book; it touched on several topics from religious beliefs, medical science, identity, celebrity and truth, while providing insight into how different types of people assess what is around them and how they work it to their advantage.

While trying to understand one's fate and purpose, often people infuse a bit of imagination to feed their own agenda and to support their beliefs. "Imagination isn't just seeing what's not there. Imagination is also what we use to figure out why what's there is the way it is." Anatomy of a Miracle is SJP's latest pick for the American Library Association's Book Club Central.

Follow my reviews on Book Nation by Jen.
<https://booknationbyjen.wordpress.com>

Jeanette says

As much as I love how this author puts you into the characters quickly and the place setting was also done superbly, I dislike the pace and style of his prose. It just doesn't flow to my continuity "meter" and yet it does have a purpose. He writes in a journalism non-fiction jumble of what seems to me a frenetic paced load of information. And at the same time as telling you so much, so quickly- he also hides huge areas by omission. It's as if he is putting everything left salvageable from 3 Katrina wrecked houses into a single back bedroom of a newer/ rehabbed, smaller house and leaving the entire other 4 or 5 rooms empty until the last 40 or 60 pages. Rarely, rarely do I find myself in wandering attention to a page and then another page 4 minutes later- but I did here. Maybe it was me, but this is no easy read. I found myself wanting to skim long descriptions and losing direction from jumps between sections. Possibly it was because both Cameron and his sister Tanya were not fully fleshed to me for all their word count, not even with those MRI's and all the physical exams. Now, Janice and her father were. And also seemed far more interesting to their personal dynamic between them. Far more real and layered and they had so much more to say to me that came out completely from their own individual "eyes". And about the whole situation too.

But what I liked more than anything else was its Biloxi MS authenticity. Down to Mary Mahoney's and the conversations. And the store owners' too. It's quite period perfect also.

All around a good book with some meaty, meaty topics. But I felt that they got piled up to an extent that you'll need more than a shovel. And I also felt a kind of pounding of the author's "real" too, as if you were being poked. Sometimes it felt rude. Lots to talk about for book clubs, or group reads. But you'll need members who don't mind war and psychological distress to the higher degrees. For all the joy expressed, it does not seem at all a simple or cheerful tale overall- not in any sense. It's chock full of ulterior motives, for instance. And some serious disingenuous posturing. I might also put it into the category of stereotypical anti-cleric fare for those who are sensitive about that endemic literary condition.

Sarah Jessica Parker says

This wonderful book was our 4th selection for ALA Book Club Central! An astoundingly joyous and deeply

humane novel by a great writer.

Cheri says

!! NOW AVAILABLE !!

If you were driving through Biloxi, Mississippi on August 23rd of 2014, and happened to stop at the Biz-E-Bee store on Reconfort Avenue and Division Street that afternoon just as Tanya Harris walked in, and her brother, Cameron rolled up, you might have been there to witness the Miracle. Not that they'd gone there looking for a miracle, Tanya was looking to buy some cigarettes, and Cameron, melting in the heat and humidity of the day, had beer in mind to offset the weather.

As it was, it was Mrs. Eulalie Dooley who saw the ins and outs of all the days of this town from her front porch through her very own ninety-one-year-old eyes, which is where she was when Tanya left Cameron sitting in his wheelchair as she went into the small convenience store, across the street from her front porch. Tanya, inside the store, wandered a bit, picking up an extra item here or there, but it wasn't even eight minutes she was inside that store, the last shoppers lined up for paying ahead of her had left by then, her obligatory chat with the store's owners lasting mere minutes.

All the while, Cameron is sitting under the awning in his wheelchair, when suddenly he experiences an unwelcome and unexpected bout of nausea. It passes. Then reappears, this weirdly uncomfortable feeling moving through him. And then it passes again.

What followed was a miracle of sorts, no matter how you see it. Cameron, who hadn't walked since he was in Afghanistan four years ago, wasn't even conscious of doing this, as though his body was taking control so that he would see later on what he was capable of doing, despite surgeries and doctors that had told him otherwise for years. He walked.

Now, Mrs. Eulalie Dooley may have seen some things in her ninety-one years of living, but this wasn't just an everyday something, this was *something*. A miracle. And because she knew she was witnessing a miracle, as this young man whom she'd known all the years of his life had risen from his wheelchair and taken small, tentative, shaky steps, and because she also knew it was unlikely she'd ever witness another miracle as telling as this, she shouted praises to Heaven above from her front porch.

What follows changes as time passes, and as time moves back and forth through time from Cameron's school days, from his days in Afghanistan, and then back to the present as the media gets hold of his story and descends. His VA doctor becomes more involved trying to unravel this medical mystery as to how something medically / scientifically impossible has occurred. The media wants to tell a version of this story, and the media has its followers, who seek out their truth by traveling to this spot where this miracle occurred, which has now added souvenirs as those journeying there needed some token to proclaim that they'd been there. Stood on holy ground. Some arrive seeking a religious experience. Others, like reality television producers, view it as their ticket to a goldmine.

Somewhat reminiscent of *'Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk'* for me, with the focus on those whose physical repercussions forever change the paths of their lives long after their return, there is a witty, satirical twist to this story.

Religions, faith vs. judgment vs. science, are parts of this story, as is how faith is viewed in present-day America, but the heart of this story is love. Parental love, sibling love and the kind of love that your heart recognizes as home.

I wanted to read this after reading the wonderful review by my goodreads friend Diane, check out her review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Pub Date: 13 Mar 2018

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Crown Publishing / Hogarth

Shannon A says

A novel inspired by true events that opens with one unexplainable moment of recovery; which in turn, leads Cameron down the path of unexpected self-discovery.

A true-to-life novel that will leave you wondering: which was the true miracle?

One of the most compelling novels I've read in a long time.

Angela M says

It was as if I was reading a true account of what people were claiming to be a miracle. Cameron Harris is paralyzed from the waist down after being hit with shrapnel while on duty in Afghanistan. One afternoon in front of a convenience store in Biloxi, MS, he gets up out of his wheelchair and walks, something he hasn't been able to do for four years. This isn't just Cameron's story. It soon becomes evident that this is also about a cast of other characters and that there are so many layers here. This is about faith or lack of, in some ways, about the inexplicable, but this is not a preachy quest for conversion. It felt like an expose of society in many ways. - social media, reality tv, the Catholic Church, and everyone who wanted a piece of the action, a connection to Cameron and what happened to him. The head of the VA hospital wants credit for his recovery. Father Ace and the Vatican Representative want a miracle proclaimed. Quynh wants to cash in on the notoriety of it having happened outside his store. The reality tv producer wants a hit show. There are some sincere characters. Dr. Janice Lorimar-Cuevas, Cameron's doctor at the VA hospital wants to find a medical explanation and she genuinely cares about Cameron's well being. The neighbor, Mrs. Dooley who believed in the miracle and just wanted Cameron to pray for her grandson. Tanya, Cameron's sister has always been by his side.

The detailed descriptions of these characters and others is one of the things that makes you feel as if you are reading a true story, as we get background information on why their views on the miracle are what they are and what their motivations are for wanting to connect to Cameron. While all of this is going on, the author also gives us the background story on Cameron and his time in Afghanistan and the secrets he holds close. As Mrs. Dooley notes at one point things have turned into a "circus". But the circus ends and life goes on after the miracle. I loved the ending and think Miles has done a fantastic job of commentary on modern life or really just life, whether you believe in miracles or not.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Crown Publishing/Hogarth through NetGalley.
