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A Snicker of Magic

By Natalie Lloyd



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A Snicker of Magic By Natalie Lloyd

Introducing an extraordinary new voice---a magical debut that will make your skin tingle, your eyes glisten . . .and your heart sing.

Midnight Gulch used to be a magical place, a town where people could sing up thunderstorms and dance up sunflowers. But that was long ago, before a curse drove the magic away. Twelve-year-old Felicity knows all about things like that; her nomadic mother is cursed with a wandering heart.

But when she arrives in Midnight Gulch, Felicity thinks her luck's about to change. A "word collector," Felicity sees words everywhere---shining above strangers, tucked into church eaves, and tangled up her dog's floppy ears---but Midnight Gulch is the first place she's ever seen the word "home." And then there's Jonah, a mysterious, spiky-haired do-gooder who shimmers with words Felicity's never seen before, words that make Felicity's heart beat a little faster.

Felicity wants to stay in Midnight Gulch more than anything, but first, she'll need to figure out how to bring back the magic, breaking the spell that's been cast over the town . . . and her mother's broken heart.



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–7—A delightful and inspiring debut. Mama has a wandering heart, which means that 12-year-old Felicity Pickle and her little sister, Frannie Jo, have wandered along with her in their battered van. But Midnight Gulch feels like home, and not just because it's where Mama grew up. It's one of those quirky little towns where there just might be magic. It's the characters that make this story shine: gruff Aunt Cleo and her tongue-tied swain; Oliver and Ponder, purveyors of unusual ice cream and baked goods, respectively; Jewell Pickett, hair-stylist and auto-mechanic extraordinaire; and her son Jonah, who has the amazing ability to make things better for anybody, despite his own difficulties. And Felicity, who sees words everywhere and uses them in remarkable ways. She's a girl who loves deeply and openly, and who creates her own kind of magic. Added to these elements are a series of folkloric backstories about feuding brothers, doomed romances, mysterious do-gooders, lost children, and a curse. Mibs Beaumont and her magically gifted clan from Ingrid Law's *Savvy* (Dial, 2008) would feel right at home here. As Felicity loves to say, "Yes...yes...yes!"—Mara Alpert, Los Angeles Public Library

From [Booklist](#)

Felicity arrives in Midnight Gulch and learns from her mama that there used to be magic there. Magic is a bonus for Felicity, who longs to stay in one place so she can make a friend. She finds one in wheelchair-bound Jonah, and he fills in Felicity on the town's magical history and its people. And, as it turns out, Felicity is capable of magic herself—word collecting. She sees words everywhere—on people, in her glass of milk, and in the trees. The word “treasures” that she finds are the real winner for this novel. (The words are not part of the sentence structure, but they add to the story by revealing the moods of people she sees, or are used as onomatopoeia.) The unusual language, showing a tinge of Tennessee mountain dialect, spins a web around the story that touches on helping others, budding friendships, and strength of family. First-time novelist Lloyd has produced a “spindiddly” product that will hearten word and poetry lovers and encourage those who have almost lost hope for a happy ending. Grades 5-7. --Martha Edmundson

Review

- A 2015 Children's Choice Book Award Finalist

Kirkus Starred Review

The protagonist of this debut joins a growing list of endearing young girls from the South, and it's an extra bonus that her new best friend and mentor is a boy whose method of transportation, without fanfare, just happens to be a wheelchair.

Felicity Juniper Pickle, her little sister, Frannie Jo, and their dog, Biscuit, have once again been moved by their mother to a new town. This time they are moving in with Mama's sister in Mama's old hometown, Midnight Gulch, Tenn., which used to be renowned for its magic—the kind where people could “sing up thunderstorms and...dance up sunflowers.” Felicity, who has an uncanny ability for seeing and using written words but suffers from stage fright, wants to stay in Midnight Gulch. Her new friend, Jonah, with whom she performs anonymous acts of kindness, persuades Felicity to enter the Duel—a talent show in which her “weapon” will be her words. As the Duel approaches, Felicity and Jonah find themselves caught up in figuring out how to return the town's magic and to reverse a curse from Felicity's “balloon-riding, globe-trotting, curse-bearing great-great-grandfather” (surely homage to *Holes*).

Although pacing is sometimes difficult, this tale offers all the other earmarks of fine storytelling, including colorful, eccentric characters, an original, highly likable narrator and a mighty “spindiddly” plot.

***School Library Journal* Starred Review**

A delightful and inspiring debut. Mama has a wandering heart, which means that 12-year-old Felicity Pickle and her little sister, Frannie Jo, have wandered along with her in their battered van. But Midnight Gulch feels like home, and not just because it's where Mama grew up. It's one of those quirky little towns where there just might be magic. It's the characters that make this story shine: gruff Aunt Cleo and her tongue-tied swain; Oliver and Ponder, purveyors of unusual ice cream and baked goods, respectively; Jewell Pickett, hair-stylist and auto-mechanic extraordinaire; and her son Jonah, who has the amazing ability to make things better for anybody, despite his own difficulties. And Felicity, who sees words everywhere and uses them in remarkable ways. She's a girl who loves deeply and openly, and who creates her own kind of magic. Added to these elements are a series of folkloric backstories about feuding brothers, doomed romances, mysterious do-gooders, lost children, and a curse. Mibs Beaumont and her magically gifted clan from Ingrid Law's *Savvy* (Dial, 2008) would feel right at home here. As Felicity loves to say, “Yes...yes...yes!”

***Publisher's Weekly* Starred Review**

From every angle, Lloyd's first novel sparkles and radiates warmth. Felicity Juniper Pickle, 12, feels an immediate kinship with the town of Midnight Gulch, Tenn., the latest place her itinerant mother has brought Felicity, her almost-six-year-old sister, Frannie Jo, and their dog Biscuit. The remote mountain town has a history interwoven with secret magic, but most of it seems to have evaporated years ago following a dual between a pair of famous magician brothers, which divided a family and resulted in a curse. Felicity's immediate concerns lay with her mother's sadness and her insistence on constantly uprooting the family. With the help of Felicity's new friend Jonah, who has his own secret magic that he works on Midnight Gulch; the stories that Felicity collects from various townspeople; and Felicity's ability to see words that reflect people's hidden thoughts and desires) she tries to save both the town and her own family. Working in the folksy vein of Ingrid Law's *Savvy*, Lloyd offers a reassuring, homespun story about self-expression and the magic that resides in one's mind and heart.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eloise Torres:

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