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Set in 1992 Los Angeles amidst the boiling tension of the Rodney King trial, about a destitute teenager named Nikki who ends up living above a punk rock bar, and must investigate the disappearance of a young girl who has either succumbed to the streets, or something far worse.

City of Angels Details

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From Reader Review City of Angels for online ebook

Mimi Ryan says

City of Angels is a gripping novel of loss, grit, and ultimately redemption within the seedy underbelly of Los Angeles. Nikki Black's journey of perseverance, commitment, and survival will keep you entranced...I was thrilled to receive an advance copy...Belcamino always hits the mark!

Sharon says

I loved and thoroughly enjoyed this newest novel by Kristi Belcamino. While it is classified a YA, it is a book for all ages. The story is set in 1992 after the historic Rodney King beating verdict. Veronica "Nikki" Black is a 17 year old and wandering in Los Angeles until she finds a group of teens living in The American Hotel. As in life, these teens face heartache and drama but throughout it all, they bond together and show the true meaning of family. This story is full of wonderfully developed, very human characters which anyone could relate to. In addition to a bit of history, there is also music throughout which is delightful. City of Angels is a thrilling story about relationships, family, trust and what defines true grit. I have read all and devoured all of Kristi's other books but this one is unique and extremely heartfelt and gripping. I highly, highly recommend you read City of Angels – you will not be disappointed!

Bill Wehrmacher says

City of Angels opens with a prolog, which apparently is bad form according to "the rules." However, in my many efforts to find an artistic bone in my body, I now know that art comes from appropriate and necessary breaking of "the rules." *City of Angels* is art.

Kristi Belcamino created both an exciting story line driven by a high spirited, 17 year old girl who carries guilt for the death of her mother and young sister. We find her rescuing a 12 year old girl from a child porn purveyor. It does turn out even worse, but I won't spoil the suspense; and there is plenty to be had.

Within the story, Nikki, the protagonist, earns some friends, all of whom are at least as broken as she.

I have a couple of issues with the story line. It may be because I am seventy years old, have two daughters who never suffered any of this sort of trauma, tend to be a romantic and like happy endings. In this story, there are incidents and deaths that I would prefer be resolved more happily in my opinion. There are three cast members who are completely innocents that end up dead. I am not very acquainted with YA genre, but I don't know if this is normal fare. This, however, should not be counted against the book.

Basically, we are made to love the characters we are supposed to like, and despise the characters we are supposed to hate. I am a bit disturbed with the negative portrayal of the police, and adults in general, although they do regain credibility at the end. I enjoyed the evil corporation, which elicits an image of the Church of Scientology in my mind, getting it comeuppance.

I do give Kristi high marks for painting the evils of drug abuse, both in young people and old. I think it is

elegantly and necessarily woven into the story. I thought the warnings were needed to color to the story, but a bit heavy handed as a warning message.

I am a little disappointed that the ending does not seem to lend itself to a sequel. I would be happy to follow up on the life, times, and adventures of Nikki and company.

With the proviso concerning the level of violence, both shown and implied, I recommend this book highly.

Kristin Boldon says

A fast-paced twisty thriller set in LA during the Rodney King riots with a feisty main character, Nikki, who has to shoulder way too much, way too young. The bad guys are rich and powerful, and include a familiar cult-like church in LA. The heroes are small and scruffy but they fight like hell. A fun and satisfying read.

Mikki says

Loved this book! It grabbed me from the get-go and I had to read it all the way through without stopping. Great story, authentic setting of time and place; some really, really bad guys, and believable, admirable heroes/heroines. Fast paced, but sentimental at times, affects many emotions. Listed as a Y.A. (Young Adults) genre, but I would recommend it to adults. I could sympathize with the main character and her friends. An extremely gratifying read. So grateful for the opportunity to read an advance digital copy.

Steve Avery says

This novel will be shelved in YA, but this is an intelligent thriller adults would enjoy. Kristi evokes the 1990 Harry Bosch L.A.. This novel is set during the L.A. Riots of 1992. Historically accurate, issues of time are explored; Child pornography, Homelessness, Religious cults. The central character Nikki's journey of self discovery is well developed. My favorite character was Ernie an L.A. policeman with a minor but significant role. In summary, Kristi's 1st (but hopefully not her last) YA novel is well worth reading. I am confident when YA Edgars are announced in January 2018 this novel will be short listed for an award.

Steph Post says

I love a badass heroine and Nikki Black, the tough, 17 year old protagonist of Belcamino's City of Angels, is right up my alley. City of Angels opens at a breakneck pace and keeps it up, page after page, as Nikki's wild and dangerous adventure through the underworld of early '90s Los Angeles unfolds throughout the novel. I particularly appreciated how honest Belcamino is with her characters- they are tough, but vulnerable and authentically drawn. Belcamino lets them be complicated and messy, something not always found in contemporary YA novels. (City of Angels is YA, yes, but I think it's at the higher-end of the age spectrum: I'd recommend the novel for a mature 16 to 25) I also loved the inclusion of west coast '90s punk culture. This was my first novel by Belcamino, but certainly won't be my last and I'm excited to check out her adult crime novels as well.

Dazy says

Kristi Belcamino knows how to write a page-turner. This one is categorised as a Young Adult (YA) novel, but it is not exclusively that. In fact, it may not be for the very young, (13 - 14 yrs) unless they are a precocious, worldly sort. The story deals with 17 year old Nikki Black, who finds herself alone in Los Angeles after following her boyfriend out from Chicago. The year is 1992 and the Rodney King verdict has brought major upheaval and civil unrest to the city. From the get go, Nikki is in trouble and the reader is pulled in by Kristi Belcamino's fast paced, action packed writing. The setting is the American Hotel, known for its funky, artsy residents and the punk rock club on the ground floor, Al's Bar, which are actual locations. Like Belcamino's other protagonist, Gabriella Giovanni, Nikki Black is honest, true to herself, and has a knack for finding herself in sticky situations. I would recommend this book, not only for young adults, but for anyone who likes tense, page-turning drama in their reading.

John says

Let me start by saying that I am an unabashed fan of Kristi Belcamino's Gabriella Giovanni series, and have come to expect terrific writing from her. That being said I was a little apprehensive as I began reading her newest novel, City of Angels, a book being marketed as "Young Adult" fiction. I was concerned whether her foray into a different "type" of writing would result in a book that might disappoint me.

I am very pleased to say that City of Angels was a wonderful read, capturing and engaging my attention immediately with a cast of young (thus the YA tag) characters, sparked by the damaged and flawed Veronica 'Nikki' Black; all of whom I quickly came to care about for their roles in an unfolding drama, featuring the trademark grit, relevance, tension, and feels which I have come to expect in a Kristi Belcamino novel.

I think this novel will speak to, and engage, readers across the age spectrum, as there are vivid life challenges portrayed which will find and touch a sensitive spot in every one of those readers.

Well done.

(My thanks to the publisher for making available an electronic ARC of City of Angels!)

Kathy Martin says

CITY OF ANGELS tells an interesting story about a complex time in American history. Nikki Black has fled to southern California after her mother's death and her father's self-destruction. She finds herself in Los Angeles alone just in time for the LA riots that followed the Rodney King verdict in 1992. The story tells what life is like for a runaway with no friends.

Nikki finds herself staying in the American Hotel with a bunch of other young misfits. Since Nikki fled a creepy boyfriend and a movie producer who makes child porn with twelve-year-old Rain, she has to be careful that they don't find her. Rain is drug-addicted like Nikki's mother was and also being groomed by a child predator. When Rain disappears one night, Nikki is sure that she has been sucked back into the world the two recently escaped.

Nikki begins an investigation fueled by her own guilt at not being able to save Rain or her mother that has her looking at a new creepy church and the world of child porn. She is assisted by the motley crew that has

become her family.

The mystery aspect of the story was engaging and well thought out. The problems I had with the story centered on two things. First, most of the characters were stereotypes: the happy-go-lucky gay character who just learns he's HIV positive, the former cover model who lost it all because of drugs and is just getting her life back in order, the multiracial couple, the musician with the string of girls and his own hidden guilt. Second, Nikki herself seemed much older and much more self-aware than any seventeen-year-old.

Fans of the time period and fans of teens forging their own futures will enjoy this one.

Devin says

Fantastic read. Belcamino's depiction of young life and loss in 1990's LA is breathtaking. Well-developed characters join a realistic feel of the city to create a truly wonderful book.

Nina O'Daniels says

Set in the summer of 1992, just a few short months before the Rodney King verdict and LA Riots, in the seedy underbelly of LA's streets, *City of Angels* paints a not so pretty picture of the town where dreams are made. Nikki, a runaway from Chicago at age seventeen, is quickly learning that picking up a guy at the bus station probably wasn't the best idea she's had. But, she followed Chad to LA and finds herself in the middle of some serious trouble. The kind that can get you killed- or worse. She's in the home of a big shot Hollywood director who wants her to be the star in a film. Against her will. Without any clothes. She escapes the director and her boyfriend but finds an even younger runaway, twelve-year-old Rain, being held captive at the same house. The two hitchhike a ride into LA. She has nowhere to go but ends up at a bar where a band she knows from Chicago is playing, but they've left before she gets there. Rain has other plans and ditches, Nikki. After chatting up the bartender, she's able to find residence at the American Hotel which sits atop the bar. The rent is cheap, and someone knows of a job she might get. Nikki fits in well with the eclectic group of musicians, waitresses, poets, and students but keeps to herself. She can't stop thinking about that girl and makes it her mission to find her. On her day off, Nikki walks around LA, taking pictures when she spots her and brings her back to her hotel. Protecting Rain helps quiet some of the demons she left behind in Chicago, but Nikki is in way over her head, especially since Rain is addicted to heroin. Nikki is no stranger to seeing what drugs can do to a person and is one of the main reasons she's not in Chicago. A mysterious black car is following Rain, but she won't tell who is in it until the day she is taken. No one believes that Rain was screaming and fighting the man in the black car, chalking it up her being a drug addict, so Nikki takes on the task of finding her alone. She's not prepared for a fight against crooked cops, a cult disguised as a church, the wealthy and powerful, and the pornography industry. While this industry is a huge part of the story, nothing is ever written in detail or does anything (quite the opposite, actually) to glorify it. I was a little hesitant with this storyline as it's a pretty heavy and taboo subject for YA but after finishing and seeing how it was handled, I felt much better. Sadly, the Rodney King verdict and ensuing LA Riots were a mere backdrop of the story. This could have been an excellent way to introduce students to some of the social justice issues that happened before they were born and mirrored in our lives now. Rife with strong characters that aren't afraid of a fight, this is a quick, suspenseful mystery that will make you look at LA in a whole new way.

Erin says

Absolutely loved this book! In Veronica "Nikki" Black Kristi Belcamino created a character who is fierce, genuine and good hearted. The kind of girl you want to be friends. City of Angels is a Young Adult novel but a story that adults will love to.

Kathy says

Do you hear your heart beating?
Can you feel the streets reaching?
Has your soul gone screeching into the whirling abyss?
Growing stronger with the punches,
Mind makes consequential crunches.
And the city rewards you with its welcoming kiss.

The City of Angels by Kristi Belcamino is inspiring. I am no poet, but this new novel by Belcamino led me to create a poem, trying to express a bit of what the book felt like. It is the author's first young adult novel, after starting her fiction writing career with the successful Gabriella Giovanni crime series. I am such a fan of the Giovanni series that there was some trepidation about the new direction of a YA book. Of course, I should have trusted Kristi implicitly, as everything she's written, fiction or non-fiction, has been exceptional. This novel takes off at a run, literally. Nikki Black is a seventeen-year-old Midwest girl who follows a fast-talking guy to Los Angeles with the lure of becoming a photography intern through his movie connections. With her mother dead and her father blaming Nikki for that death, the choice to accompany her fast-track boyfriend Chad to L.A. was an easy one for Nikki. The action starts with Nikki escaping from Chad at a director's house after she discovers her guide to a better life wants her for a porn movie. After kicking Chad where he deserves it, Nikki must make a run for it in the ensuing chaos. Along the way, she picks up a twelve-year-old runaway named Rain, who has been held captive at the director's house. The girls in constant motion finally end up in downtown L.A. at the American Hotel, a collection of low-rent rooms over a punk-rock bar named Al's, and Nikki finds a waitress job to pay the rent. It's 1992 in the city of angels, and the trial of the policemen who beat Rodney King senseless is stirring up discontent that threatens any haven Nikki is seeking. Fortunately, she is rooming on a floor with a multi-cultural mix of young people who are both creative and caring, but even those connections can be fragile for someone who doesn't come to trust easily. But, when Rain disappears, first into an addiction with heroin and then into an ominous black car. Nikki is determined to find the girl, who she has quickly come to feel responsible for, fighting against powerful forces that are just as determined to stop another rescue. Nikki must either choose to trust and let her floor-mates help, or give up on saving the young girl. It is a fast-paced, high action race which had me biting my bottom lip more than once. Belcamino knows how to write action, fraught with suspense and tension enough to keep the pages turning quickly.

Kristi Belcamino's writing checks so many boxes that must be right to result in an engaging novel, a novel that leaves a lasting impression on the reader. The characters, beginning with the main character of Nikki, to her floor-mates, to the homeless character of Frank are developed with careful attention to detail. Dress, hairstyle, actions, dialogue, hobbies, dreams of these characters all work cleverly to reveal them and bring them to life. Descriptions of the lay of the land create a visual that ensconces the reader into the story, walking down the streets of a troubled city, with shadows lurking over the shoulder or running on the beach with terror choking you. The plot is always under calculated control and moving forward with seamless transitions. Nikki's backstory is included in well-paced intervals that don't distract from the current action.

City of Angels packs a punch with history and issues that will appeal to readers well beyond the teen

audience. Those who remember the L.A. Riots, the early days of HIV, and punk rock bands like Nirvana will have an appreciation of their importance. Issues such as child pornography, sex trafficking, homelessness, religious control, and racial profiling are ones that our country has still not dealt with effectively. And, yet, at the heart of this novel is a seventeen-year-old girl who shows what courage, resilience, and resolve the young can hold. Kristi Belcamino is an author who can weave all of those issues and that history and that heart into a compelling story that will take your breath away.

I received an advanced copy of City of Angels in exchange only for an honest review. My review reflects my sincere experience in reading an outstanding book.

Sheila Beaumont says

This fast-paced, riveting YA thriller is set in L.A. in 1992, and the author gets it just right: the punk rock music, Al's Bar, the hair and clothing styles, the homeless, and the riots arising from the Rodney King verdict. And there's a fictional, but familiar, cultlike church that doesn't believe in psychiatry and has an elaborate mansion for celebrities called the Star Center. This is not a children's book; I'd recommend it for older teens and adults. This is the first book by Kristi Belcamino I've read, and I'm looking forward to reading more.
