



## **Beneath a Meth Moon**

*Jacqueline Woodson*

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Laurel Daneau has moved on to a new life, in a new town, but inside she's still reeling from the loss of her beloved mother and grandmother after Hurricane Katrina washed away their home. Laurel's new life is going well, with a new best friend, a place on the cheerleading squad and T-Boom, co-captain of the basketball team, for a boyfriend. Yet Laurel is haunted by voices and memories from her past.

When T-Boom introduces Laurel to meth, she immediately falls under its spell, loving the way it erases, even if only briefly, her past. But as she becomes alienated from her friends and family, she becomes a shell of her former self, and longs to be whole again. With help from an artist named Moses and her friend Kaylee, she's able to begin to rewrite her story and start to move on from her addiction.

Incorporating Laurel's bittersweet memories of life before and during the hurricane, this is a stunning novel by one of our finest writers. Jacqueline Woodson's haunting—but ultimately hopeful—story is beautifully told and one readers will not want to miss.

## **Beneath a Meth Moon Details**

Date : Published February 2nd 2012 by Nancy Paulsen Books

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Author : Jacqueline Woodson

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## From Reader Review Beneath a Meth Moon for online ebook

### Jackie Miller says

Since I've started combing the depths of YA fiction I haven't yet read a drug/addiction/disorder book. This is my first, so I'm kind of a newbie. But I have to say that this book is pretty powerful. I've never struggled with a serious addiction, but I've seen enough people succumb to it. One thing I've noticed that holds true across the board is that addiction is the symptom of a different problem or hurt. Although this is pretty dark subject, the book is written with a hopeful tone.

This book showcases the downward spiral of Laurel. And it's painful to read. The whole time that she is telling her story, how she ended up addicted to moon (meth), I just feel so much sadness for her. I mean, this is real life. Everything is so bleak and covered in a sheen of sadness, but then along comes Moses. His character seemed to shine a light onto the pages, and you see how he has such a great effect on Laurel even when she's at her lowest low.

This book takes you on a journey through addiction. I've seen addiction from the outside, but this book is a raw glimpse into what is going on inside the head of an addict. I'm still playing parts of it through my mind. I guess you could say it's haunting my thoughts a bit. I have three kids of my own that I pray never face this kind of struggle. We all have pain in our lives in some form and deal with it in different ways, but hopefully in a healthy and productive manner.

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### Linda Lipko says

This is an author who does not disappoint. An award winning Newbery and Coretta Scott King recipient, this latest book packs a wallop.

When 15 year old Laurel Daneua moves to a new area with her father and little brother after her mother and grandmother were killed in Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina, despite the incredible grief and heartache, the family valiantly tries to pick up the pieces and start again.

Finding a new friend who introduces her to meth quickly equates to a life swirling into a deep, dark tunnel. Even though Laurel has a support base of those who love her, she chooses the drug to mask the pain of loss.

Woodson powerfully portrays the gritty down fall and harsh reality of the frightening power of meth.

Highly recommended.

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### Karen Ball says

Teaching middle school, I'm always a little edgy about ordering substance abuse related fiction. This one was a stellar purchase, though. Laurel has lost her beloved mother and grandmother who were killed during Hurricane Katrina because her grandmother refused to leave her coastal Mississippi home. Laurel's father moves the family to central Iowa, where they try to pick up the pieces. Starting a new high school is stressful enough, but Laurel seems to find a place with the cheerleading squad, her new friend Kaylee, and her

basketball star boyfriend T-Boom. T-Boom introduces her to the moon... crystal meth. He cooks it and sells it out of an abandoned house, and once he gives Laurel a taste of the moon, she's hooked. It's not just the incredible good feeling she got the first time -- when all her sadness seemed to float away and suddenly the world seemed full of possibility. It's the itching, creepy crawling sensations she gets when it wears off... and if she could just have a little more, it would all go away. As her life spirals downward, the cravings for meth replace everything for Laurel, including her father and her four-year-old brother. She is reduced to a homeless beggar, living in the dark unheated back room of an abandoned hardware store in the next town. When she meets Moses, she is at the point where she can't bear to even look at her reflection in windows... she has that filthy, emaciated, malnourished meth user look to her. Moses sees a spark of something in her, though, and as he paints memorials to other young people who died from meth use, he gently encourages Laurel to see that she's not completely lost yet. Powerful writing that shows the curse of this particular drug epidemic realistically, but also hopefully. Absolutely amazing.

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### **Mark says**

"I celebrated my fifteenth birthday sitting in the rain begging for money. I was living in Donnersville by then. Nights inside that room in back of the hardware store, days walking and begging for money. Always Mama's voice inside my head whispering, "Daneaus don't lie, and they don't steal," so loud and hard that a part of me wanted to scream, "Then I'm not a Daneau anymore!" But scared always that the voice would go away, that her hand on my back, when I was shaking and sick with the need for moon, would lift off and disappear. Forever and ever. Amen."

Fifteen year-old Laurel has recently moved to rural Iowa with her father and younger brother; her mother and grandmother were lost in hurricane flooding back home in Mississippi, and they have moved north to try to start over, and recover from their losses. Laurel makes a new friend, joins the cheerleading squad, and is beginning to find her place. When she meets T-Boom, a star on the school's basketball team, she can't believe it's all happening for her. T-Boom quickly introduces Laurel to "the moon," the meth that has captured so many other young people from the area, and which quickly takes hold of Laurel. Her downward spiral is quick and devastating, and her lies and betrayal in order to score more will test her limits, and those of her family.

I'm going between 3 and 4 stars on this one, and I think I'm being swayed because as I read, I could hear Woodson reading the text aloud. Her lyrical prose is infectious, and this book demands to be read in her quiet, hushed tones. Still, as an account of teen drug use, it's a fairly predictable story; in fact, there's not much action in the book - beyond the frequent flashbacks to happier times, and the flood itself, this is very much Laurel's stream-of-consciousness narrative. The Christian references, while appropriate in spots, seem forced in others. Like poetry, there are some passages that resonate more than others, but I'd still recommend this without reservation.

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### **Claudia says**

I love Woodson's poetry and often recognized lyricism in this book about the horrors of meth addiction. Laurel has already suffered so much...the loss of her beloved grandmother, her mother, and her home. She and her father and brother move to rural Iowa from coastal Mississippi. I can understand Laurel's culture shock, but things seem to be going so well...when she falls for the start basketball player and follows him

into regular meth use.

Woodson doesn't honey-coat the effects of addiction, or the dangers. She faithfully portrays the hopelessness, of the addict and of the people she loves. Laurel watches the people she loves turn their backs on her and walk away.

I love Moses -- the artist who captures the souls of the dead addicts on his own canvasses...the brick walls of the buildings in town. His back story and his devotion are inspiring.

Woodson calls this book an 'elegy' and it does have the elegiac tone...writing and poetry and stories are important...and the elegy ends quietly, with hope.

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### Mary Farrell says

Fabulous book! Jacqueline Woodson is an amazing writer. This is not just a book about meth addiction. This is not just a book about the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. The author combines them both with breathtaking writing. I highly recommend it!

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### Shima says

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### Lisa Campbell says

Lisa Campbell  
Contemporary Realistic Fiction

This is the story of Laurel Daneau, hurricane Katrina survivor, cheerleader, best friend and meth addict. Hurricane Katrina took the lives of her mother and grandmother and Laurel's father moves the family from Mississippi to Iowa. Instantly popular, Laurel attracts the eye of T-Boom, co-captain of the basketball team. T-Boom introduces Laurel to 'moon' and she is immediately in its grip. Laurel descends to living in the streets and begging for money. Everything about Laurel's life hurts – the deaths in her family, the disappointment in her father's eyes, and the ache of leaving her little brother. But the thing that hurts most of all is not having meth. Through the help of Moses, a 17 year old street painter, Laurel slowly finds her way home again.

The author, Jacqueline Woodson, is such a beautiful writer. The value of this story lies in its honesty. It is a revelation into the life of a young addict. This book would be of value to any parent or teen trying to understand the drug issues that is affecting their lives. The cause of Laurel's drug addiction was not family problems, although her life had not been easy, it was simply the addictive qualities of meth. It is a cautionary tale that would of value to any teen.

## Sepideh Salarvand says

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## Brina says

Jacqueline Woodson is a leading young adult novelist, and her books are usually autobiographical in nature and poetry in motion. Most recently, her books *Another Brooklyn* and *Brown Girl Dreaming* have won multiple awards and fit the above description nicely. *Under a Meth Moon* is out of this comfort zone because does not appear to be autobiographical or fluid poetry. Rather, Woodson has penned the story of teenaged Laurel Daneau, a victim of Hurricane Katrina who has moved to Iowa with her family to try to recover the remnants of her life.

I enjoy Woodson's writing because of its poetic nature, but I do not enjoy reading about substance abuse. Woodson has touched on this issue before in *Tupac and D Foster*, but in that book, it seemed that the issue hit closer to home for her. In *Meth Moon*, Woodson is describing a rural Iowa community where most people pine to leave, a far cry from the bustling streets of Brooklyn. It is little wonder to me that teenagers like Daneau, who is struggling after traumatic events changed her life, would turn to drugs as a way of moving past both the upheaval and boredom.

Woodson's writing is still beautiful as she describes Daneau and her path to addiction and recovery, but it is not quite as poetic as her other books. It takes courage to write out of ones usual comfort area, so I give Woodson credit for picking a topic that is not easy to write about. Still, it was hard for me to relate to the some of the central, drug-addicted characters. I rate *Under a Meth Moon* 3.5 stars; 4.5 for Woodson's writing and 2.5 for the story I was not as captivated by as her other work.

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## Kelly says

This left me disappointed, given the heavy topics dealt with. It was too slight. Laurel lost her mother and her grandmother in Katrina, and when she, her father, and baby brother move up north, she finds herself falling for a boy who leads her to meth.

While it was sad, I didn't feel like there was much character development, and I found the treatment of the subject matter didn't give it the sort of impact it should have had. This is a really stripped down story and Woodson writes it well, but it needed just a bit more. It seemed too easy and quick for Laurel to go from

grief to drug addict living on the streets. What I did believe and really appreciated was the manner in which rural meth use impacts communities.

I can see reluctant readers liking this one a lot because it is fast-paced, it delves into a series of really powerful topics, and it doesn't waste a lot of time getting from point a to point b.

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### **Richelle says**

*Beneath a Meth Moon* is a beautifully written novel about the horrors of meth addiction. Woodson expertly floats the reader through each short chapter as 15-year-old Laurel floats through her addiction. As a child of Katrina, Laurel moves to a small Missouri town with her father and brother. She quickly becomes entranced by the town's basketball star who introduces her to meth behind the town's 7-Eleven, because that's where all the cool kids hang out. As Laurel falls deeper into her addiction, she floats farther away from her loved ones, until she is strung-out and homeless in a neighboring town. A kind stranger named Moses, who has his own personal connection to meth, takes an interest in Laurel, and becomes a sort of guardian angel. Laurel eventually crashes hard, but seems to learn, or rather, be learning how to cope in the sober worlds as the book ends. A refreshingly un-didactic look at teenage addiction.

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### **Snotchocheez says**

Jacqueline Woodson's YA substance abuse tale *Beneath a Meth Moon--an elegy* is, fortunately, not nearly as 8th-Grade-Health-class-scare-tactic-filmstrip-esque, or as elegiac, as the somewhat unfortunate title might indicate. (To be honest, if even strangely perverse, I chose this from the library after being blown away by her National Book Award-winning autobiography in verse, *brown girl dreaming*. I picked the title I thought I'd. least enjoy first and work my way through her {pretty extensive} back catalogue to see if her other titles were as worthwhile).

I did enjoy this sad tale (insofar as one could enjoy a book featuring a fifteen year-old girl falling down the abyss of meth addiction). We follow Laurel from Pass Christian, Mississippi (where Hurricane Katrina wipes out her family's hometown, and her mom and grandmother) to the town her father can find work in: Galilee, Iowa. There she becomes a cheerleader for the town's high school, and falls for a basketball player who "likes to party", and begins her downward spiral.

While I was not real impressed by the story (or lack of it: it's only 170 pages long), I did like the non-preachy, stripped-down, and often sadly beautiful prose Ms. Woodson employs to convey Laurel's path toward self-destruction. This could've easily become a shamelessly ham-fisted public service announcement, but the histrionics and drama are reined in and what's left is a pretty effective cautionary tale that doesn't condescend to its target audience.

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### **Erin says**

There's a line in this very book that might capture my feelings exactly: "I like to read. . . . A hundred and ten books in my house and counting. I read all of them. Some sucked, but I kept reading, hoping they'd turn good at some point. They didn't though. But you don't give up on something—"

I read this book in about two hours, max. It's fairly insubstantial. I will say that for a title that gives it all away it's not as bleak as I'd been imagining, and all told nothing bad seems to really happen to this addict. There's no plot, no conflict, just a junkie's stream of consciousness. Kind of boring.

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### **Kathrina says**

I've been seeking out some titles that might appeal to juvenile offenders or that horribly-named demographic -- "at-risk" teenagers -- that concern characters in difficult, "urban" situations but are not graphically violent, offensive or sexual. It's hard to even say that this book is "urban", since it takes place in small-town Iowa. I don't know a better word -- street lit? Regardless, Woodson is kind of the queen of teen street. Most junior and high school teachers rely on her works for their urban reluctant readers, and this one should be no exception. Being an Iowan myself, I groan a little whenever Iowa and meth are linked in the same sentence, but the truth is, methheads are everywhere around here, especially in rural small towns. This story hits home in a big way. Would I recommend this in a classroom or school library? Yes, here's why:

1. No bad words, no sex, no R ratings here, yet not a condescending or G rated plot, either
2. The central character (in fact, all the characters) is likeable
3. Readers have the opportunity to empathize both with a drug addiction experience and the trauma of surviving Katrina
4. The story ends with hope -- maybe a tad unrealistic-- but it really needs to end this way
5. Homosexual character included, but not central to the plot -- just a part of real life, and he's a hero (not because he's gay, but because he's a good guy)

This is a great book for the right reader, and I could imagine some great discussions coming from it. One thing I don't like: horrible title. Wish she'd just called it "Moon".

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