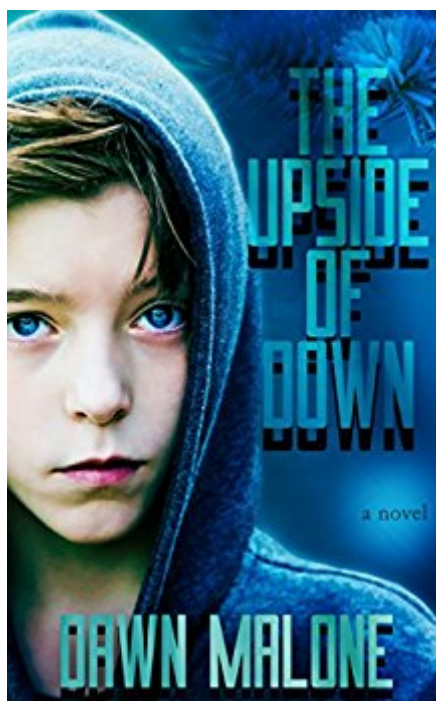


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The Upside Of Down



Synopsis

Hobbs Crane doesn't like distractions. He lives for football, rules the basketball court, and does his best to avoid the neighbor girl with the Jupiter-sized crush on him. With a new kid out to steal his starting basketball position, Hobbs needs to feel in control again. Then Hobbs finds a boy living inside a giant blue spruce on an empty city lot who becomes the biggest distraction of all. How long has he been there? Where did he come from? And why does he seem to be following Hobbs? The boy named Up is in survival mode. Leaving his real name and a neglectful home life behind, Up is running away to Florida to find his older sister who left home years ago. But he's hungry and desperate, and he finds the overgrown evergreen next to the old factory the perfect hideout until he makes a plan. Can Hobbs and Up help each other face their own uncertain futures while forging an unlikely friendship? Or are they too different?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. The Upside of Down is about

two boys finding friendship through extreme circumstances. Up, a young runaway hiding in an abandoned factory and Hobbs, a young sports star trying to keep his life in order. While reading the story, I felt like I was being dribbled and passed between two basketball players. I worried about them and wondered what would happen to them as other 'players' got in the way...some trying to help and some intent to harm. I felt anxious for both boys up until the very end of the book. There are so many books in this genre that can become trite and cliché. This book is far from the cliché. It's the story of a runaway, a jock, a superstar, an unhappy marriage, an unhappy childhood, an unhappy home life and a bully...but it's also the story of a boy trying to do something meaningful for another human being...just because.

It's so exciting to me when I find a new author I enjoy. It's even better when that author delivers the same high caliber quality through a second project. And for me, it's a cherry on top when that author happens to be self-published. That's the case with author Dawn Malone and her second stand-alone middle grade novel, *The Upside of Down*. Her first book, *Bingo Summer*, was a fun, light, rags-to-riches story with some deeper themes that touched on self-acceptance. *The Upside of Down* maintains that easy readability, but it takes a more serious turn, contrasting Hobbs, an all-star athlete from a middle class family, with peers from far less desirable circumstances. When Hobbs' life twines with that of a runaway struggling to survive on the streets of his town, the difficult friendship they forge changes both of them forever. It's a touching story of conscience, self-discovery, and grace. It took me a little longer to be drawn into this one. There are a few more fringe characters to figure out before the focus really tightens. This group of characters, Hobbs' peers and athletes, are necessary to build a school setting, but they felt a little indistinct to me. I had trouble distinguishing between them sometimes. I wasn't even sure what race they were. But it's my single, solitary complaint. As in *Bingo*, I was soon caught up in the emotion of the central story and the beauty of the prose. Twice now, Ms. Malone has delivered sweet, clean reads that touch on deeper issues in a gentle, kid-friendly way. Both absolutely nail the child-maturing-into-adulthood complexities that make middle grade such a dynamic genre. I highly recommend both, and I suggest readers keep an eye out for whatever she has coming out next. I certainly will be.

Beautiful. Just beautiful. This book needs to win the Newberry Award for Literature. My jaw is still hanging open and my eyes are still damp from the perfect ending. Oh my gosh! Okay, lemme be more specific. It's written in first person present tense, which normally drives me loopy, but within a

paragraph or two, I'm completely sucked in to both of the main characters' perspectives. Malone has put a face on the homeless runaway. She has put a heart into the privileged all-star. She shows everyone that sometimes you do the right thing "just because", and you don't wait for thanks or applause or trophies. If these two boys existed in real life, I'd hug them so hard their eyes would pop. The writing style, the story line, the character development--everything--it's all of the highest quality, tight and polished and powerful. This is the kind of book that changes the way you look at people--especially the people who get overlooked by design. It has motivated me to "up" what I do in my community to help the needy. How awesome is that? A work of fiction without any preachiness in it has inspired me to be a better person. Just. Beautiful. It'd make an incredible, Oscar-winning movie if they could find the child actors to play the leads. Until then, the movie it created in my mind will be one of my favorites ever.

This was such a powerful book. I highly recommend it to everyone! In fact, after I read it, I told my best friend who is a reading specialist to read it because her students might find it interesting! And not just interesting but they will learn a lot too! But if you're just in it for a good read, then by all means, pick up the *Upside of Down*. The characters are so real and become so much a part of you that after reading, I promise you will miss them. They find their way inside your mind and heart that it's difficult to let go. And the way the author crafted the story, your emotions are fully engaged because of the action, suspense, and excitement. And of course in the end, you can't help but fall in love with Hobbs, Up, and Cherie. The story is told from alternating points of view and the author handles this so well too! I can't stop gushing. So stop reading this review and one-click this book already!

Hobbs is a middle school sports star. Up is a homeless runaway. When the two boys meet and eventually get to know each other, they also get to know themselves. Hobbs with a stressed family, lots of friends and shelves of trophies learns to put someone else first, just because. Up, a homeless boy who left an abusive mother in hopes of reuniting with his sister, learns to let his guard down and trust others. It isn't just a feel good, heart-warming sappy story. There are a few stressful moments in the book, mostly thanks to the new kid in school, a bully that picks on the smaller Up and who threatens to replace Hobbs as the star of the basketball team. Both Hobbs and Up have their own share of flaws, after all middle school is that difficult journey between childhood and adulthood. The author has clear insight into this time of life and has shared it with us through this wonderful book.

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