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Not As We Know It



Synopsis

For fans of David Almond's *Skellig* and Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*, here is a lyrical, atmospheric, and deeply emotional middle-grade novel with a touch of magical realism. Twins Jamie and Ned do everything together, from watching their favorite show, *Star Trek*, to riding their bikes, to beachcombing after a storm. But Ned is sick with cystic fibrosis, and he may someday leave Jamie behind. One day the boys find a strange animal on the beach: smooth flesh on one end, scales at the other, and short arms and legs with long webbed fingers and toes. Could it be a merman, like in the old stories Granddad tells? Together, the boys name the creature Leonard and decide to hide him in a tub in their garage. But . . . why is Leonard here? Jamie hopes he might bring some miracle that will stop his brother from going where he can no longer follow. But Ned, who grows closer to Leonard every day, doesn't seem to be getting any better. . . . "An elegant story of courage and loss." —*The Wall Street Journal* "A heartrending but ultimately uplifting adventure novel." —*School Library Journal, Starred* "A hauntingly beautiful story about brotherly bonds, wrenching grief, and the untethered hope that everything will somehow work out." —*Publishers Weekly, Starred* "Captivating." —*Shelf Awareness, Starred*

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #544,031 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #383 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #526 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying #660 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health > Diseases

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

Customer Reviews

Jamie and Ned are twins growing up together on a tiny island in the English Channel. They love to do things as a pair, from scouring the beaches for treasures that wash up from the sea to watching Star Trek on DVD. But Ned is not well. He is fighting cystic fibrosis and the most recent treatments don't seem to be working. Then one day, the brothers find a strange creature on the beach. It is hurt and they carry it to their garage where they fill a tub with saltwater and care for it. It's like nothing they have ever seen before with its scales and gills combined with arms and legs. As the boys care for the creature, their grandfather tells them tales of mermen and mermaids. Jamie starts to hope that the creature can work a miracle for Ned, though Ned sees it very differently. This novel for middle grade readers is riddled with sorrow and the drain of watching a loved one slowly decline. Yet Ned is also a ray of light himself, refusing to let his disorder rule his life. Still, the book is clearly headed for Ned to go where Jamie can't follow, a journey he has to take on his own. As the creature brings hope to Jamie, it also brings him distress as he recognizes that his hope may be futile and readers will see it as a natural way to keep from facing his brother's approaching death. Both boys are strongly written characters. Jamie is pure heart, trying to be there for his brother and leaving school to be homeschooled alongside his brother. Jamie is a source of adventure and normalcy for Ned, something that keeps them close and also buoys up Ned's moods and health. Ned is unwilling to do anything but face the truth of his situation and yet that doesn't limit his activities. Instead it seems to fuel his desire to be more than just a dying boy. The pair of them together are pure radiance. A powerful, tragic and hopeful book about brotherhood and death with more than a touch of magic. Appropriate for ages 9-12.

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