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Sacred chants are Ada Franklin's power and her medicine. By saying them, she can remove warts, stanch bleeding, and draw the fire from burns. At age twenty, her reputation as a faith healer defines her in her rural Pennsylvania community. But on the day in 1953 that her family's barn is consumed by flame, her identity as a healer is upended. The heat, the roar of the blaze, and the bellows of the trapped cows change Ada. For the first time, she fears death and—?for the first time?—?she doubts God. With her belief goes her power to heal. Then Ada meets an agnostic named Will Burk and his pet raven, Cicero.

Fire Is Your Water Details

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From Reader Review Fire Is Your Water for online ebook

Julie Renee says

My local bookshop hosted author Jim Minick last week, as he read from this book. The premise intrigued me. The author shared that, during the process of writing *Fire is Your Water*, he discovered that the overarching question was, "How does a healer heal (herself)?" I was hooked. I wanted to see what the story revealed.

Minick shared some signposts, too, regarding the significance of the book's cover design (hint: Take off the jacket!! There's more inside...)

There came a point about halfway to two-thirds of the way through, where I started to have rather a metaphysical encounter with the narrative. It was a point where I noticed, for the first time, the impact of literary devices. The events and characters I had prior-to accepted for what they were on the page began to swirl about me, suggesting that they weren't as static or 2-D as I'd assumed. Had some things I had read been foreshadowing things to come? Were certain relationship dynamics reflections of others that I'd yet missed? The various potentialities were in my face, yet totally unseen. Evoked subtly by Minick's pacing, construction, and the still places...full as the breath of a poet. I began to speculate the ending, but knew, too, that the only thing that would lead to my discoveries was to READ ON. And read on, I did, with full enjoyment. The book has a surprise ending, which I never would have guessed. And the answer to Minick's question about how a healer heals, becomes clear...but not obvious.

I also loved the idiosyncrasies of the characters, especially Will. I liked that he waved a lot, a friendly wave, but also using it to his benefit when needed. I laughed out loud at several lines. Minick's humor is understated effectively.

This has been my favorite read of the year. Thank you for this book! It is in my heart now!

Pam says

The value I give a good book is based on the tautness of the story line, the depth and complexity of the characters, and that I cannot figure the outcome and am astonished with each word as it is revealed. Jim Minick, In *Fire Is Your Water*, hits the marks and does not disappoint.

Laurel says

Fire is Your Water is a remarkable novel of love and loyalty, tragedy and triumph, structured with a unique first-person voice that chimes in like a Greek chorus to impart sly insights into the characters and plot. You'll be rooting for Ada, Will, and the raven Cicero too!

Bonnie says

The novel takes place in the Pennsylvania mountains in 1953 where Ada Franklin can heal by faith. Sacred chants are her power and her medicine. By saying them, she can remove warts, stanch bleeding, and draw

a perspective to the larger picture that serve to not only flesh out characters and situations but manage to introduce a mysterious and intriguing bit of foreshadowing that compels the reader to keep going.

Faith is a constant but mostly subtle undercurrent of this novel – it is involved in nearly all of the motivations and actions of the characters, but manages to float low and understated, rising only when called upon to be confronted directly and remind us that it is always near.

Part of the magic of this novel is found in its balance. It presents faith in a way that is not pretentious, and religion in a way that is not preachy or condescending to either side. I found myself sympathizing with Ada, but not discounting Will's reactions and proclivities regarding the church. Environment is used to set the scene and is described realistically and just enough (too many novels spend line after line detailing an exhausting picture of surroundings, to the point of forcing a "skim").

Overall, what really drew me in is Minick's style. In pacing and environment, the way he builds and establishes the main character's world, internal motivations, and sets the stage for plot development began to conjure up a comparison to one of my favorite writers, Carson McCullers.

On the surface, one could begin to describe this book as simple. There is a relatively small cast of characters, the story takes place in one small town, and the progression is clean and linear. The time period of the 1950s even tends to elicit the oft-clichéd "simpler time" phrase. Let's face it, however - simple is often a word we use out of laziness, borne from a comfort we ascribe something because we can see where the pieces fit in retrospect. The truth is that the present is rarely simple outside the perspective of time. Characters are dealing with complex emotions, loss (tangible losses like that of family members, or psychological losses of faith, confidence, hope, etc.). The threat of the Korean War looms throughout. Families struggle to make ends meet and deal with everyday uncertainties. With these situations in mind, I would be loath to use the word simple. This novel is crafted with skill, certainly, but it also has a great deal of heart, which is its greatest strength, in my opinion. I highly recommend this book!

Jane Dutton says

I've been excited to read this book since its release, especially since I grew up in the community where the story takes place; my father worked summers at the same Blue Mountain Esso/Exxon station during the childhood; my mother worked at that Howard Johnson's when she was a young adult - and my mother's farming family boarded several of the workers who built the PA Turnpike near Blue Mountain. I also had the privilege of growing up with author Jim Minick and still consider him a friend (as well as relative). Jim has written vividly and beautifully of the Hopewell landscape and peopescap. I was truly mesmerized by his rendering of these hearty and beautiful farming families. His storytelling kept me engrossed long past my usual bedtime; I was up again early the next morning to finish. Rarely have I started a book and stopped my life to finish it within 24 hours. Granted, I was invested in the location and the people since they were so familiar, but this is a book for anyone who cares about heritage, family, the power of love, and how faith and doubt are sides of the same coin. After the final page of this highly satisfying read, the only sadness I felt was that I never had the guts growing up to squeeze through the fence and traverse 4 lanes of highway to get some ice cream at HoJo's.

Susie Zullinger says

I just finished Jim Minick's novel, *Fire is Your Water*. It is one of those rare books that you don't want to end... Local flavor, wonderful characters, and a cranky raven more insightful than some humans... I live in the area that is the setting of the novel; rural Pennsylvania is quaint and beautiful, and Minick's description

of the landscape adds another fascinating dimension to the story. I loved this book, and can't wait for more. Highly recommended!

Rebecca Elswick says

Fire is Your Water is a wonderful story filled with family, loss and healing, and faith. The plot is fast-paced and at times, heart-stopping, but it's the characters who kept me turning the page. To me they were real living and breathing people. The young Ada Franklin struggles with her faith and her lost ability to heal after a fire. Will Burke is a tortured soul who learns the meaning of love when he rescues and tames a raven he names Cicero. At the heart of this story is fire. Even with all of its destruction, fire becomes a symbol of purging and healing in this story. I was lucky to get to hear the author read the first chapter that begins with a barn fire. Truly, it was spellbinding but it was not the only scene that will keep you up late into the night reading until you turn the last page.

Sarah says

2.5*s

Going by Goodreads definition 2 stars is 'Just Ok' and I think that's pretty spot on with this one for me. I initially really liked this, but I expected a bit more than the simple love story we got so as it progressed I got more bored. I also got quite a bit frustrated with our main female protagonist who didn't seem to have any agency outside what the story needed her to do. She was upset when it moved the story and fine when it wasn't needed, with no clear reason for either. She knew the 'why' of what was upsetting her for quite a while, yet she remained melodramatic about it, and her 'resolution' in which she stopped being upset was about half way through and then she was done, the story switched mainly to Will and focused on him, no more Ada seemingly needed.

The best part was Cicero, though the little surprise twist in that narration wasn't really much of a surprise by the time it came around.

Overall just 'Ok' for me. It was a fast read and the setting was strong, but those characters left something to be desired.

Jen says

Ada Franklin has a rare gift for actual faith healing, or powwowing, until something happens during a barn fire that seems to take her gift away and cause her to doubt herself. Will Burk has been finished with church and God since he was 12 years old, perpetually angry about any God who would have chosen to take his mother away. Cicero is a raven that Will found injured and nursed back to health, who understands far more about the world than a bird has a right to. Told through these three perspectives, this is a story of a small community in Pennsylvania in the '50s, about faith and love and pain and healing, and quite literally about fire.

An interesting look at a form of folk medicine or faith healing that I didn't really know anything about - this is not the holy roller, stand up in front of the church with much singing and clapping and loud praise that I know about from my Southern upbringing. This is quiet and private. The book never answers the question of if it "really" works, but the point is that Ada believes in it, and Will comes to accept it in some way. The meat of the story is really their relationship, and how people have to accept one another as they are for a

relationship to flourish. And how love heals all wounds. It's not groundbreaking stuff, but it is a nice story.

Liz says

Generally when it comes to my next read, I am a planner; I know what's next, what it's about, and whether it's available at my library. Recently, I threw out those rules and plucked *Fire is Your Water* from the New Fiction shelf simply because I was drawn to the unique cover. My reward was a beautifully insightful tale of faith and love.

You know how sometimes you just get a good feeling about a book within the first few pages? Well, this one. Minnick's writing style is thoughtful, open, and sincere, the kind of writing that drew me in and endeared me to his characters straightaway. My favorite thing about this book is how the characters are written with such loving detail: Ada, Will, even Cicero the raven. I enjoyed them so much that even the specific descriptions of their daily lives feel like they belong, and make you feel fortunate to be present in their most extraordinary moments.

The story itself contains elements of romantic and familial love, finding and losing faith, facing personal fears, all things that ultimately bring Ada, Will and Cicero full circle onto the path toward healing. And while there are religious aspects to the story, I feel that both Christian and agnostic views are well represented.

This was a serendipitous find and I feel improved for having read it.

Neith says

I don't usually enjoy "A Novels" novels, but I liked this one a lot. It has rich details of daily life; a convincing sense of place that stirred my own memories; and convincing, complicated, likeable characters with internal struggles I actually cared about and that didn't feel forced.

I was really impressed by the author's ability to write Ada's deeply mystical, religious way of seeing the world and Will's equally deep scepticism and atheism in a way that felt real and without narrative judgement.
