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The Sacred Lies Of Minnow Bly



Synopsis

Now a Morris Award finalist and Golden Kite Honor Book! A hard-hitting and hopeful story about the dangers of blind faith and the power of having faith in yourself. The Kevinian cult has taken everything from seventeen-year-old Minnow: twelve years of her life, her family, her ability to trust. And when she rebelled, they took away her hands, too. Now their Prophet has been murdered and their camp set aflame, and it's clear that Minnow knows something but she's not talking. As she languishes in juvenile detention, she struggles to un-learn everything she has been taught to believe, adjusting to a life behind bars and recounting the events that led up to her incarceration. But when an FBI detective approaches her about making a deal, Minnow sees she can have the freedom she always dreamed of if she's willing to part with the terrible secrets of her past. Gorgeously written, breathlessly page-turning and sprinkled with moments of unexpected humor, this harrowing debut is perfect for readers of Emily Murdoch's *If You Find Me* and Nova Ren Suma's *The Walls Around Us*, as well as for fans of *Orange is the New Black*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Twelve years of Minnow Bly's life have been stolen by the twisted but charismatic leader of the Kevinian cult, the Prophet. When her father became a deacon for the cult when she was five, everything in Minnow's life changed. They live in the woods with no communication with the outside world. Women in the cult are married off young and their only purpose is to have children --- they are not even allowed to learn how to read. Men have several wives and serve as the

Prophet's deacons. Everyone seems content to believe all that the Prophet tells them --- everyone but Minnow, that is. Slowly she begins to question the things that the Prophet has taught them, especially after she meets Jude, a boy her age who also lives out in the woods with his family. Jude teaches her about life outside the cult, and the two become fast friends. However, things take a turn for the worse when Minnow shows the Prophet the ultimate disrespect --- and as punishment, she loses her hands. After a twist of events, the Prophet ends up dead and the cult's camp is burned to the ground. Now Minnow is in a juvenile detention center for beating a boy almost to death. She struggles to adapt to modern times and life in the detention center. Fortunately, she has the help of her roommate, Angel. Fiercely independent, wickedly smart and surprisingly deadly, Angel teaches Minnow about everything she missed out on in while she was in the cult. Angel also serves as Minnow's protector and friend during her time in the juvenile detention center. However, Angel cannot protect Minnow from everything, including remembering all that happened to her and her family in the cult. These flashbacks only grow worse and more painful when an FBI detective visits her as he attempts to find out what really happened the night the Prophet died and the Kevinian camp went up in flames. The detective promises to make a deal with her if she tells him the truth, but this means confronting painful truths about herself and her past. But, if she can face it, the truth could mean setting Minnow free forever. Beautifully written and filled with emotion, *THE SACRED LIES OF MINNOW BLY* is an unforgettable tale of grief, loss and hope. This is author Stephanie Oakes's debut novel, and she did a fantastic job in all aspects of the book. The writing is wonderfully done; the language is poetic and insightful and Oakes's voice shines through the entire novel. One of the best parts of the novel, though, is the plot. Twists and turns fill the story; readers will definitely be sitting on the edge of their seats until the last page. Because the novel is told partially with flashbacks, it allows the story to be told both in the cult's camp and in the detention center. The all-girls juvenile detention center provides an interesting and effective background for Minnow's story; it allows Oakes to explore not only Minnow's character and strength, but also a wide range of other female characters and the unique ways they handle the struggles in their own lives. It is their stories, along with Minnow's, that will have readers captivated. Oakes also did a great job creating effective, complex characters. The cruelty of the Prophet and those in the Kevinian cult will have readers astonished, while Minnow's strength through everything will inspire. Minnow makes a strong protagonist, and her quest for the truth is noble and worth cheering on. Throughout the novel, readers can see Minnow develop into a complex, interesting character. While she has a sweet and caring nature, she can also be fierce and just as dangerous as her new roommate, Angel. An

interesting character herself, Angel is not only independent, but she is also extremely smart and caring --- she is even willing to put herself in danger for Minnow's sake. Her heartbreakingly tragic background was only mentioned a couple of times in the novel, and while I wish Oakes had divulged more of Angel's history, I think she would make a great protagonist herself if Oakes decides to continue writing about the world of THE SACRED LIES OF MINNOW BLY.

Another character that I would love to have learned more about is Jude, although readers do get to learn a bit about him and his family through Minnow's flashbacks. With the book's rather open ending, though, readers don't know for sure what happens to him or the rest of the characters. Hopefully this means a sequel is in sight because readers will definitely be wanting to see more from Oakes very soon. Reviewed by Cheyenne C.

The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly by Stephanie Oakes intrigued me in so many ways. I was immediately drawn into the story from the very first sentence! A girl who has no hands - extremely sad. A girl whose hands were cut off purposely by someone else - horribly tragic and frustrating. Minnow's hands were taken from her just because she didn't want to marry someone who already had eight wives. When Minnow was five, her family joined a religious cult lead by a prophet named Kevin. Therefore, they were known as Kevinians. This compelling story has so many different facets, so once I started reading it, I had a hard time putting it down. The cult life, Minnow's anger and confusion, the sadistic prophet, Jude and his struggles, Minnow's escape and first confrontation with a city dweller, and the forensic psychologist Dr. Wilson and his affect on Minnow. This book is inspiring with the message that it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks or believes, it only matters what you think!)

The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly by Stephanie Oakes is a unflinchingly honest portrayal of life inside a religious cult. Although a work of fiction, every heartbreakingly tragic detail rings true and the novel raises very thought-provoking questions and answers about blindly following the teachings of a self-proclaimed spiritual leader. When Minnow Bly was five years old, her parents followed Prophet Kevin into the Montana wilderness where they helped build and then lived in a secluded Community with other followers. They never questioned the Prophet's increasingly bizarre teachings and they followed his every command without any protest. The Kevinian cult believed in taking more than one wife and the Prophet decided which young girl the much older men would marry. The women and children carried out the most strenuous tasks while the men were made Deacons of the church. The cult members had no contact with the outside world but Minnow faintly

recalled small details of life before her family joined the Prophet which caused her to doubt some of his proclamations. When the novel opens, Minnow has been arrested for a vicious assault on a young man following her escape from the wilderness compound. She is convicted of the crime and sent to a juvenile detention center where an FBI forensic psychologist offers her a deal that could lead to her parole on her eighteenth birthday. In exchange for his testimony at her upcoming parole hearing, Minnow must tell Dr. White the harrowing details about the night the Prophet died and the Kevinian compound was set ablaze. Through flashbacks and her vivid account to Dr. White, the story of Minnow's life with the Prophet is revealed and surprisingly, with the help of the doctor and her cellmate, Angel, Minnow begins to heal from her horrific ordeal. While not technically a mystery, there is a suspense element to the storyline. Minnow is reluctant to divulge the events of the night of the Prophet's death but why? What reason could she possibly have for keeping a secret of this magnitude? Is she responsible for his death? If not, who is trying to protect? The answers to these questions might just lie in her surprising and unexpected friendship with Jude, an outsider who lives close to the religious compound. This friendship leads Minnow to sneak away at every opportunity to escape her cloistered life with the Kevinians. These experiences with Jude also foster some of her skepticism of Prophet Kevin's somewhat ludicrous teachings. At the juvenile detention center, Minnow strikes up an unlikely friendship with Angel who helps her navigate the confusing life among the other inmates. After years in seclusion, Minnow is incredibly naive and at first, she finds it difficult to leave behind the teachings of Prophet Kevin. She is also uncertain of her own opinions and looks to others to tell her what to think about the questions she has about life, faith and the world in general. Minnow is extremely intelligent and through the programs available to her, she begins the arduous tasks of learning to read and gain the skills needed to live a regular life. Surprisingly, Minnow does not turn her back on faith and she finds comfort in certain passages from the Bible. The *Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly* is an extraordinarily fascinating novel and the storyline is incredibly compelling. Minnow is an extremely complex and sympathetic character and she is also very easy to like despite the circumstances that led to her incarceration. Cults are infinitely intriguing and Stephanie Oakes provides a credible scenario for how disenfranchised and dissatisfied people can easily be led astray as they search for a better life for themselves and their loved ones. An absolutely outstanding novel that is quite hopeful despite the rather serious subject matter and one that I highly recommend. I received a complimentary copy for review.

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