



Dark Water

By Laura McNeal

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Fifteen-year-old Pearl DeWitt and her mother live in Fallbrook, California, where it's sunny 340 days of the year, and where her uncle owns a grove of 900 avocado trees. Uncle Hoyt hires migrant workers regularly, but Pearl doesn't pay much attention to them . . . until Amiel. From the moment she sees him, Pearl is drawn to this boy who keeps to himself, fears being caught by *la migra*, and is mysteriously unable to talk. And after coming across Amiel's makeshift hut near Agua Prieta Creek, Pearl falls into a precarious friendship—and a forbidden romance.

Then the wildfires strike. Fallbrook—the town of marigolds and palms, blood oranges and sweet limes—is threatened by the Agua Prieta fire, and a mandatory evacuation order is issued. But Pearl knows that Amiel is in the direct path of the fire, with no one to warn him, no way to get out. Slipping away from safety and her family, Pearl moves toward the dark creek, where the smoke has become air, the air smoke.

Laura McNeal has crafted a beautiful and haunting novel full of peril, desperation, and love.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 8 Up—The catastrophic wildfires that ravaged Southern California in 2007 serve as the backdrop for this compelling story of a forbidden romance with tragic consequences. In the inland farming community of Fallbrook, 15-year-old Pearl tells her story through a leisurely voice. She deals with her parents' divorce; her cousin's anger at his father's suspected adultery; and, most significantly, her undeniable attraction to the alluring undocumented Mexican migrant worker Amiel, whose damaged vocal chords limit his speech but not his communication. Disaster is referred to throughout the narrative, filling readers with a sense of foreboding as Pearl's persistence overcomes Amiel's trepidation and the two draw together in an intense secret affair. All of this leads to a heart-pounding final act when the wildfire breaks out and Pearl must choose between family and romance, safety and uncertainty. The ramifications of the ill-fated decisions made by both Pearl and Amiel will surely spark strong discussion among readers. Both the plot and setting are grounded in rich, realistic detail; the author's love for the town of Fallbrook shines vividly through lyrical descriptions of avocado groves and orange blossoms. While Amiel remains a somewhat mysterious figure, Pearl's relationships with her family and friends are fully realized through her nostalgic recollections of simpler times. Drawn in by the appeal of clandestine love and looming disaster, teens will also be rewarded with much thought-provoking substance in this novel's complex characters and hauntingly ambiguous ending. *Allison Tran, Mission Viejo Library, CA*

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Review

"This debut solo effort after several collaborations with husband Tom McNeal (*The Decoding of Lana Morris*, 2007, etc.) stands out in the crowded coming-of-age field. The affecting narrative springs believably from the first-person thoughts of Pearl DeWitt as she recalls her 15th summer, when, entranced by a nearly mute, illegal Mexican migrant worker, the beautiful and gifted teenage Amiel, Pearl makes choices that lead to tragedy. Evocative language electrifies the scenes between the pair, as they develop a relationship both complicated and deepened by their limited verbal communication. Her warnings to readers of impending disaster amplify rather than diminish the impact of the misguided, wrenching decisions she makes when a raging wildfire sweeps through their rural California community. Besides her poignant relationship with Amiel, Pearl navigates her father's recent abandonment of her and her mother and her complicated relationship with her cousin Robby as he blunderingly deals with his father's apparent infidelity. Notable for well-drawn characters, an engaging plot and, especially, hauntingly beautiful language, this is an outstanding book."

-Kirkus Reviews, starred review

About the Author

Laura Rhoton McNeal holds a master's degree in fiction writing from Syracuse University. She taught middle school and high school English before becoming a novelist and journalist.

Together, Laura and her husband, Tom McNeal, are the authors of *Crooked*, winner of the California Book Award for Juvenile Literature and an ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults; *Zipped*, winner of the PEN Center USA Literary Award for Children's Literature; *Crushed* (called "compelling" by *Publishers Weekly*); and *The Decoding of Lana Morris*, a *Kirkus Reviews* Best Young Adult Book of the Year.

The McNeals live in Southern California with their two sons, Sam and Hank. To learn more, please visit the

authors' Web site at www.mcnealbooks.com.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Walter Gagne:

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Margaret Head:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or even go to the outside with them household or their friend. Do you realize? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you want to try to find a new activity here is look different you can read any book. It is really fun for you. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent all day every day to reading a book. The book Dark Water it is very good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. In case you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not very costly but this book offers high quality.

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