



The Same Stuff as Stars

By Katherine Paterson

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Angel Morgan needs help. Daddy is in jail, and Mama has abandoned her and her little brother, leaving them with their great-grandmother. Grandma is aged and poor, and doesn't make any attempt to care for the children—that's left up to Angel, even though she is not yet twelve. The only bright spot in Angel's existence is the Star Man, a mysterious stranger who appears on clear nights and teaches her all about the stars and planets and constellations. "We're made out of the same stuff as the stars," he tells her.

Eventually, Grandma warms to the children and the three begin to cobble together a makeshift family. Then events in Angel's life take yet another downturn, and she must once again find a way to persevere.

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The Same Stuff as Stars By Katherine Paterson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Few authors explore the theme of what defines a family with more compassion and sensitivity than Paterson (*The Great Gilly Hopkins*; *Flip-Flop Girl*), as she demonstrates once again in this contemporary novel set in rural Vermont. Eleven-year-old Angel Morgan, despite her youth, is the head of her family. With a father in jail for robbery and murder, and Verna, her mother, too preoccupied with herself to care for anyone else (she once "forgot" her children in an all-night diner), Angel looks out for her seven-year-old brother. She keeps a house key around her neck and taxi money in her sock, "just in case." Before long, Verna proves Angel's fears well founded, when she drops the children off at their great-grandmother's house and leaves in the night. Paterson enters Angel's consciousness through a third-person narrative, revealing, for example, how the girl rationalizes Verna's erratic behavior ("How could anyone expect her to know about being a good mother? She couldn't remember having a mother of her own") as well as the way Grandma's (as they call her) ramshackle house transforms into a welcoming haven with a nearby library and a pasture with a view of the night sky. At the novel's center is Angel's blossoming friendship with a mysterious "star man" whom Grandma calls "Santy Claus." He leaves food and chopped wood at the door, and introduces the heroine to galaxies beyond their own. Angel's intelligence and abiding trust in the direst of situations will convince readers that, despite the unresolved ending, she will rise above her circumstances. Ages 10-13.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8-Paterson has once again crafted a beautifully written, wonderfully told story that exposes some of the most disturbing parts of our society while at the same time teaching the value of each and every person. She returns to rural Vermont in this tale of Angel who, in her nearly 12 years, has attended eight schools and twice been in foster care. She is more a parent to her seven-year-old brother, Bernie, than their frequently drunk and unreliable mother or their father, whom they visit weekly in jail. Their mother abandons Angel and Bernie at the ramshackle farmhouse of their great-grandmother, who is too aged and poor to care for children, and when she returns for just Bernie, Angel's loneliness is as immense as the night skies that a kind stranger teaches her about. The man turns out to be her Uncle Ray, a Vietnam vet whose life has been damaged by drugs and jail time, yet who convinces her that she is made of the same elements as the stars. The enchanted night sky gives Angel perspective on her life; it becomes a metaphor on many levels in the novel. As always, Paterson conveys great respect for the poor, and for preadolescents in tragic circumstances who have the resiliency to transform themselves. A new novel by Katherine Paterson is cause for great celebration and this one more than measures up. Angel Morgan will take her place in readers' hearts right next to Lyddie, Gilly, Lupe, and Jip.

Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME

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Review

"A gently written tale of family caught in the most corrosive of situations,...readers will recognize and root for Angel." Kirkus Reviews, Starred

5Q/5P "Paterson's deft characterization, her insight into the human soul, and her glorious prose make this book one to rejoice over." VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

"Paterson's beautiful words root the wonder of astronomy in gritty details of daily survival. This focused

story evokes timeless tales." Booklist, ALA

"Thanks to the fine talent of Paterson, children's literature has another memorable heroine." KLIATT

"Those who love her work will celebrate; those who aren't familiar with it will have discovered a new star." Riverbank Review

"Paterson's salt-of-the-earth style is in fine form here, making Angel's dilemma credible, and Angel herself a compelling and believable figure." The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

"...Magical book...takes place in the most unmagical...circumstances...complex story...about what it takes to be a good person." NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW New York Review of Books

"Angel is an ultimately triumphant character." The HORN BOOK GUIDE, Pointer Review Horn Book Guide, Pointer

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lewis Manns:

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