

## From the Magical Mind of Mindy Munson

**Nikki Bennett**

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*This magical story of fantastical creatures helps children dealing with the loss of a parent.*

*From the Magical Mind of Mindy Munson* is a story about four children and the magic they encounter in their new home. More significantly, it is an honest and insightful story about dealing with loss.

Susie is the oldest of four siblings in a family coping with the loss of both parents. Their aunt moves them from a small apartment in the city to the country, where they live in a large old house in need of repair. The children are quick to explore their new environment, finding great adventures in every tree and bush, and in every nook and cranny of their new home. The youngest, Mindy, who speaks only to her twin brother, tells her siblings that the house is filled with magical creatures; though the children cannot see them, they find evidence of the creatures' existence every time they look. As they discover the stories of each creature they encounter, they learn about the history of their home, and a little bit about themselves, as well.

*From the Magical Mind of Mindy Munson* is an entertaining and well-written book with interesting characters in an even more interesting house. Though the book's theme is dark, the story itself is not. Author Nikki Bennett has done an excellent job writing a book that deals with the myriad issues orphaned children often face—a new home, new school, and a new guardian who can never replace a parent—while telling a story about imagination and the adventures children are able to create for themselves. The book offers unique insight into the mind of children dealing with tragedy. For instance, Susie talks about her brother telling their therapist about the Thing that lives in their basement: "And Dr. O'Neal won't believe him. He'll tell Jesse not to worry—we're safe with Aunt Julie. Nothing bad will happen to us. Adults always say stuff like that. I guess it's easier than explaining how bad things *could* happen."

This book is sure to appeal to children who enjoy monsters, myths, and fantasy. More importantly, it may be helpful to children who have suffered loss. The story addresses the anger, pain, and sorrow of death, while offering the hope of new beginnings. The rich imaginations of these four siblings provide them with a way to order their world and understand their own emotions. Reading the story may help children understand their own emotions as well.

CATHERINE THURESON (November 20, 2014)

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