

Miracle in Las Vegas

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Las Vegas may be famous for many things, but being a location for miracles would probably not rank very high on the list. Beyond the glitzy casinos and the steady flow of tourists dreaming of quick riches, lies a city beset with common urban problems such as homelessness. Could a major miracle really happen in such an environment?

In *Miracle in Las Vegas*, Richard Stewart seems to be uncommonly blessed as he heads to Las Vegas to scour a new location for his Omaha-based sporting goods company. But the handsome twenty-nine-year-old bachelor's first attempt at securing a site is promptly squelched. Then his friendship with Juan Gonzalez, the manager at the Paris resort, leads to Richard's introduction to Paula Summers, a stunning television reporter. A call from the office of James Forrester, a local mover-and-shaker at a prestigious public relations firm, starts Richard on a path to becoming a cornerstone in Forrester's latest resort development. With a blossoming love life and the potential for a major business deal in sight, Richard believes a guardian angel is watching over him.

But when Richard and Paula are approached by a homeless man asking for money to help a runaway girl, Richard begins a journey that will lead him to the startling revelation of the city's homeless problem. His business and personal life continue to soar, but his social conscience has been awakened, and the pull between personal success and helping others threaten to create problems with his lover, the development project, and his thriving business back in Nebraska. Could there be one or two more miracles left, or has his good fortune run its course?

Author Paul D. Smith, a public school teacher and a newspaper and television writer, skillfully handles the task of weaving a strong, character-driven storyline with the socially-relevant topic of homelessness without being preachy. He easily juggles the various plotlines without shortchanging any of the characters or stories. The closing chapters neatly tie up all the plotlines and end with that 'major miracle'.

Smith combines exciting visual descriptions of the city and its famous nightlife with a solid, believable story that moves at a steady pace. *Miracle in Las Vegas* allows the reader to be entertained and socially educated at the same time, and that itself probably qualifies as a minor miracle.

JEFF FRIEND (January 6, 2011)

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