



## The Day the Angels Fell

**Shawn Smucker**

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*Though draped in the mythic, the novel's blood and bones are thoroughly and relatably human.*

The otherworldly and the mundane collide in Shawn Smucker's *The Day the Angels Fell*, a humanizing tale of cosmic proportions.

When death visits the family of Samuel Chambers, mysterious carnival women and strange encounters with animals propel the twelve-year-old boy on a search for the Tree of Life. Samuel seeks a way to reverse death, and though he finds no easy answers, he does stumble into the hidden side of reality, a realm of legends, monsters, and cherubim. Together with his best friend, Abra, Samuel must grapple with the implications of mortality and make choices that could affect the whole of creation.

Characters are the driving force in this intriguing novel. The narrative consists primarily of Samuel's twelve-year-old point of view, but each major section begins with a glimpse of a much older Samuel, a lonely and reticent contrast to the vigorous naïveté found throughout.

Abra shines as a proactive lead, and her friendship, while tested at times, is refreshingly platonic. The villainous Mr. Jinn never fails to be disturbing; he raises the tension whenever he appears on the scene.

While the metaphysics are drawn from a Judeo-Christian cosmology, there are new inventions playfully woven into the fabric of the book. The story feels familiar but never predictable. Secrets are revealed at a satisfying pace, carried by smooth, conversational writing.

At the heart of the novel is death, but it is not macabre. The idea of death as a gift resonates, and Samuel, in his quest to achieve immortality from the Tree of Life, has to confront death as a stark reality before he can overcome his tragedies.

*The Day the Angels Fell* may be draped in mythic garments, but its blood and bones are thoroughly and relatably human.

MEAGAN LOGSDON (September/October 2017)

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