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Book Review on Brady Udall's *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*

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BRADY UDALL'S THE MIRACLE LIFE

THE MIRACLE LIFE of Edgar Mint begins when seven-year-old Edgar gets his head stuck under a mail truck's rear tire. From there, things pretty much go downhill. With his single, drunk mother unreachable in California and his grandmother thrown into a mental institution, little Edgar is left to fend for himself. His life meanders slowly through different phases while a few things remain constant: his miraculous recoveries from various injuries, the inexplicable presence of the doctor who saved his life, and Edgar's concern with finding the mailman who ran him over and assumed Edgar died in the accident.

As Edgar's life progresses, each new location is a little more disturbing than the last, and you quickly realize that this is not going to end like a made-for-TV movie. Scenes of graphic violence

E OF EDGAR MINT

Reviewed by Janay E. Garrett

between school boys are so constant and terrifying that even after putting down the novel, you find yourself eyeing the people around you, waiting to see which one is going to jump you first. Freshman hazing has never looked so tame in comparison, and readers should be prepared for some graphic content.

What is surprising is that throughout the succession of tragic events there are moments of pure hilarity that make you laugh out loud then stop and wonder what kind of a person laughs at such tragedy. It's impossible to ignore the absurdity of Edgar's situations, and yet you find yourself hoping for redemption—hoping that in some way all of the horrible things that have happened will be smoothed out and Edgar will remain in your mind as the sweet, innocent miracle boy who

managed to overcome all obstacles with his dignity intact. If that's what you're looking for, then this novel isn't for you.

What this novel does do spectacularly is hook the reader into the story without much of a driving plot and manage to pull things together in a way that is simultaneously surprising and satisfying, making you wonder why you didn't see it coming. It's exactly the kind of ending that makes readers finish the last paragraph and sigh out loud, "oh, that was good," then wonder how halfway through they were ready to put the book back on the shelf.

One of the more amusing aspects of the novel is the narrator's ability to personalize an event by switching between first and third person, frequently referring to himself as "little Edgar" and "poor Edgar." What's so endearing is the way this makes you feel like you're sitting in a room with grown-up Edgar, reminiscing about the old days and sipping lemonade as you rock together in your chairs.

It's not a novel for the faint of heart. Emotionally it pulls you in directions that you may never have contemplated before; it will thrill you and disgust you at the same time. Be prepared to hate it. But keep reading till you don't—it's worth it.