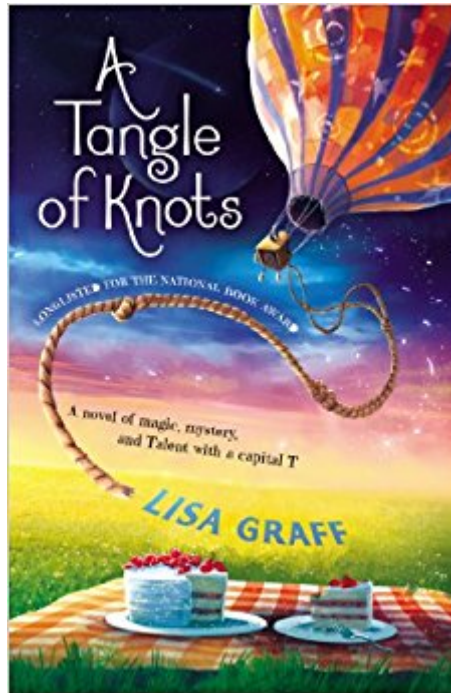




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A Tangle Of Knots



Synopsis

A National Book Award nominee! The magic of Savvy meets the complexity of When You Reach Me in this "blithe magical puzzle," --The Wall Street Journal Told in multiple viewpoints, A Tangle of Knots is a magnificent puzzle. In a slightly magical world where everyone has a Talent, eleven-year-old Cady is an orphan with a phenomenal Talent for cake baking. But little does she know that fate has set her on a journey from the moment she was born. And her destiny leads her to a mysterious address that houses a lost luggage emporium, an old recipe, a family of children searching for their own Talents, and a Talent Thief who will alter her life forever. However, these encounters hold the key to Cady's past and how she became an orphan. If she's lucky, fate may reunite her with her long-lost parent. Lisa Graff adds a pinch of magic to a sharply crafted plot to create a novel that will have readers wondering about fate and the way we're all connected.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 3-7-Graff has created a world very much like our own, but just a little bit magical. In this version of Poughkeepsie, New York, many lucky people have Talent, one skill that makes them special. Cady, an orphan who lives with kindly Miss Mallory, can look at a person and immediately know

what they like and bake their ideal cake. Miss Mallory's talent is finding just-right parents for orphans, but so far, she hasn't felt that perfect-parent pull for Cady. While the 11-year-old is the star of this tale, the novel integrates an expertly developed cast of supporting characters who all have their own amazing stories. Not until the very end do readers see how their paths intertwine. The plot twists deliciously around an irresistible peanut butter factory, an evil Talent thief, a very important hair pin, and a rare powder-blue suitcase that could hold the key to everything. Sprinkled throughout is a generous helping of cake recipes, perfectly suited to each of the characters, just begging to be tried. Recommend this one to fans of Sheila O'Connor, who will appreciate the charming and unusual setting, and Wendy Mass, for those who like a little dose of fantasy thrown in with their realism. -Mandy Laferriere, Staley Middle School, Frisco, TX

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Starred Review Although she is the last orphan who has not yet been placed in an adoptive home by her orphanage's matron, 11-year-old Cady is cheerful, and she possesses a talent that cheers others: she can bake just the perfect cake to suit the disposition of anyone for whom she cares. Graff, whose middle-grade titles include *The Thing about Georgie* (2007), blends this delicious premise craftily into another story featuring a suitcase lost many years earlier and the gruff old man who seeks to reclaim it. The knot tying these two strands becomes even more elaborate with the introduction of a family of five, including a 6-year-old and his pet ferret. With grace and charm, as well as recipes for Cady's various cakes, Graff develops a clever series of plot twists and eccentric, fully formed individuals, each of whom has his or her own secrets, worries, and points of intersection with the knotty problems arising for the other characters. Complex without ever being confusing, witty, and sprinkled with gently scary bits, Cady's story is as satisfying as her cakes. Combining the literary sensibility of E. B. White with the insouciance of Louis Sachar, Graff has written a tangle that should satisfy readers for years to come. Grades 3-6.

--Francisca Goldsmith --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

A Tangle of Knots is a beautiful tale, told from several different perspectives (hence the name). While I enjoy reading stories from multiple viewpoints, this one had a lot, so it took some brainpower on my part to keep up with who was who and how it all related. But, let me say, this doesn't disparage from the story at all. Once I got into the rhythm of the alternating perspectives, I started looking forward to seeing in what sort of mess I would find the next character. It was pure delight

and I was sorry to see it end. And oh, what an ending. I haven't found many authors who "wrap up" a story as tightly and as wonderfully as this one. It is one of the best "feel good" ending I've ever read. My heart raced as the story rushed toward the climax. At times, I almost forgot to breathe. Though I'm not a fan of stories that involve "little girls" and "baking cakes" (and all that other froo-froo girly stuff), but I ate this story up! It stole my heart as readily as if Cady had baked it just for me. This scrumptious little story left me wanting seconds.

I bought this book for my granddaughter, who is almost 10 and a very good reader. We have a kind of a book club, and so I ordered a copy for myself. I found this book to be difficult to follow. There were too many characters and the plot just didn't seem to come together at all until the very end. I had trouble following it, and my granddaughter didn't like it at all. I encouraged her to keep reading for awhile, but by the time I finished the book, I decided that there was no reason for her to continue if she didn't like it. There are too many good books available to spend time on something that's not enjoyable. The story is imaginative, but a little TOO TANGLED!

This book is cute and the six-degrees-of-separation angle was interesting. Perhaps for children, how everyone ties together in the end will be a surprise, but for me, I pegged the ending about halfway through the book. The only thing I didn't catch onto was the connection between the Owner and Toby. Everything else was pretty see-through. Perhaps I didn't pay enough attention to the description, but I didn't realize that this was a fantasy. Which made it odd. Aside from everyone having a talent - which isn't too fantastical - only two characters, Toby and the Owner, have magical abilities. This made the book a little off-balance. Also, placing it in a real life setting like New York felt weird, since the book didn't treat the fantasy elements as anything other than normal. So having it set in New York and NYC just didn't seem to fit. My only real complaint with the storyline was how we never find out who or what the man in the gray suit was. I assumed he was related to Cady's mother (what with the knot tying and everything), or Zane's new principal, but it was never clarified. He just sort of appears and either ruins things or helps things out, always talking about Fate and what-not. There needed to be more clarification. As far as story telling goes, it was a pretty sloppy plot line to not finish up. Now as for the parental warning and the real reason this book is only getting three stars. I'm so sick of children's books with cartoony, innocent covers aimed toward elementary and middle school kids sneaking in inappropriate things. With this book specifically, about 170 pages in, the Owner decides to yell at two of the children. In doing so he lets slip three cuss words. Now, in my 23 years on this planet, I've heard much worse, but if you're a parent trying to find

innocent books for their kids, they might be upset at finding a book geared for ten year olds having a few cuss words slipped in. Anyhoo, overall it's a cute book. Nothing groundbreaking. It's not bad. It needed some work on the story telling and might not be age appropriate, but it's cute.

You're either "Plain" or you have a special "Talent" and can consider yourself "Talented." Some of those talents aren't all that useful though, e.g., World's Greatest Spitter, and if you're not careful your talent can be stolen. Reading the book is like biking over a rough pavement: we jump from character to character and scene to scene so quickly that it's sometimes hard to remember who is who and what their talents are. Since there's no time for much character development, and most characters are pretty dependent on their talents for identity, the ability to lose or switch talents becomes disconcerting, although that is pretty well controlled. If your kids don't like the story, you can put the book on your cooking shelf, as it includes a number of interesting cake recipes.

My daughter liked the story but, because the chapters jumped around to different characters, she recommended reading it in one or two goes.

My daughter and I read this book together after hearing about it on Sirius radio. The characters are enchanting. It held both of our interest. I only wish that my special cake would arrive at my house - - yellow cake with a pineapple filling. The book will make your mouth water. It is magical, and I hope that it is made into a movie someday. So, Disney people. If you actually have Research and Development folks who look through children's book reviews, get your act together and option this book to make into a feature film. It includes all your key elements: an orphan, a special magic, dark characters and redemption!

I initially bought this book from Scholastic. As I began reading it (screening it for my own kids), the beginning was incredibly confusing...trying to keep straight who is who, and the developing plot line. So I bought the Kindle version, which makes it easier to search key words. I have to say, by the end of the book, the author had done a masterful job of weaving the different plots and characters together into a cohesive story that made sense. There are a few untied ends (pun intended). I look forward to the sequel which she will surely write to tie up those loose ends.

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