



# Just a Drop of Water

*Kerry O'Malley Cerra*

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Ever since he was little, Jake Green has longed to be a soldier and a hero like his grandpa, who died serving his country. Right now, though, he just wants to outsmart—and outrun—the rival cross country team, the Palmetto Bugs. But then the tragedy of September 11 happens. It's quickly discovered that one of the hijackers lived nearby, making Jake's Florida town an FBI hot spot. Two days later, the tragedy becomes even more personal when Jake's best friend, Sam Madina, is pummeled for being an Arab Muslim by their bully classmate, Bobby.

According to Jake's personal code of conduct, anyone who beats up your best friend is due for a butt kicking, and so Jake goes after Bobby. But soon after, Sam's father is detained by the FBI and Jake's mom doubts the innocence of Sam's family, forcing Jake to choose between his best friend and his parents. When Jake finds out that Sam's been keeping secrets, too, he doesn't know who his allies are anymore. But the final blow comes when his grandpa's real past is revealed to Jake. Suddenly, everything he ever knew to be true feels like one big lie. In the end, he must decide: either walk away from Sam and the revenge that Bobby has planned, or become the hero he's always aspired to be.

A gripping and intensely touching debut middle grade novel by Kerry O'Malley Cerra, *Just a Drop of Water* brings the events of September 11, which shook the world, into the lens of a young boy who is desperately trying to understand the ramifications of this life-altering event.

Winner of a Florida Book Award, the Crystal Kite Award, and named to VOYAs Top Shelf Fiction for Middle Readers' 2014 list, *Just a Drop of Water* is a read for all age levels.

## Just a Drop of Water Details

Date : Published September 2nd 2014 by Sky Pony

ISBN : 9781629146133

Author : Kerry O'Malley Cerra

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# From Reader Review Just a Drop of Water for online ebook

## Stacey Lee says

13 yo Jake is best friends with a Muslim boy named Sam. After the events of September 11, Sam's dad is interrogated for possible connections to the terrorists. School friends begin taking sides. When Jake's mom begins to question Sam's family's innocence, and Jake is forced to make a decision - stand up for his friend, or walk away.

Truly moving account of the events of 9/11 from the perspective of a kid. I loved this book. Jake and Sam felt absolutely real, and their choices, authentic. Voices are fresh, and engaging. Read it to your kids!

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## Cindy Rodriguez says

I was able to read this ARC as a member of the Fearless Fiteeners. Kerry's debut novel allows middle schoolers to experience the events of 9/11 through the eyes of Jake Green, a character their own age. As a teacher, I think this is an ideal way to introduce students to tough subjects and moments in history. The description of the attacks on 9/11 gave me chills, and the things that happen with Jake's family and friends afterward are examples of what happened throughout the country. Kerry also "gets" middle school boy in that Jake is confident one minute and confused the next, all the while believing he is right and can fix things :.)

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## Leslie Balding says

The conversation and thoughts flowed effortlessly..I was so engrossed I found myself feeling protective over the characters..wanting to right the wrongs..excellent book for people too young to remember the events of that tragic day.  
Superb.

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## Meredith says

The story of two boys—one Christian, one Muslim—whose friendship is tested in the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. A powerful, important book, and a must-read for all age levels.

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## Lola says

I'm so happy such a diverse, realistically-told, family and friendship-focused and touching middle grade book was written.

I won't lie, I wasn't attracted to this book at all at first. That cover, meh. That plot, maybe? I wasn't even

supposed to read it, but unexpected book mail is always welcome.

The moment I started it though, I knew this would be a story I wouldn't forget. Jake is such an authentic thirteen-year-old boy who tries to make sense of the 11/09/2001 catastrophic event.

His best friend, Sam, whose family is Muslim, started being bullied after the events of the towers falling. Jake does his best to protect and defend him and his family, but as much as he wants for everything to go back to normal, he by himself cannot open the eyes of thousands of people who believe Islam and its believers are their new enemies.

But he sure as hell is going to try.

Lines become blurred, friendships threaten to break, secrets are revealed...

What a beautifully-written book. Cerra captured the emotions thirteen-year-olds are bound to feel when such a tragedy occurs so, so well. I'm disappointed this book hasn't gotten more attention, because it, without a doubt, deserves it.

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## **Nicole Cabrera says**

Kerry, is a masterful storyteller. She'll have you sprinting for the last page. Stunningly crafted. Get your copy today.

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## **Ms. Yingling says**

Jake doesn't like to run cross country but loves track, and knows that his coach demands that he do cross country or he'll be cut in the spring. He hopes to be made a team captain along with his long time best friend Sam, but a new boy and fast runner, Kirk, is made captain instead. When the Twin Towers in New York are bombed, Jake's world is shaken. His mother, whose father was killed in a war, is nervous and upset, especially since his father had flown on business on Monday the 10th. One of the bombers was from the boys town of Coral Springs, Florida, and had withdrawn a large amount of money at the bank and was assisted by Sam's father. Because his card was found with the terrorists things, he is questioned by the FBI and eventually taken away... because the family is Muslim. Sam suffers greatly at the hands of local bullies Bobby and Rigo, who are targeting any Muslims they can find. To make matters worse, Kirk's father was working at the Pentagon and was killed. Cross country meets are suspended, school is a tense place to be, and both Jake and Sam are struggling to get through the days following the bombing. The school decides to try to help students by planning a peace assembly, and Jake realizes that Bobby and Rigo have something planned. Can he stop them from being complete idiots and causing even more pain to the community? Jake's grandmother believes that "just a drop of water" can have a big impact, and Jake starts to realize that he can, too.

Strengths: This book does an excellent job of addressing a need in historical fiction—9/11. By next year, all of the students in our school will be much too young to remember 9/11. Not only was the day itself described much as I remember it, but the aftermath of public outcry and support are also accurate. Jake, Sam, and Kirk

all have ties to the event that are convincingly described, and the cross country details are good as well. Sam's lack of knowledge about his cultural heritage and then his suffering on behalf of it are a genius stroke. Weaknesses: While the involvement of Jake's grandfather in a previous war situation is a nice twist, and the presence of a neighbor who was in WWII adds some depth to the story, it also makes it slightly confusing.

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### **Katie B says**

Easily one of my favorite books I have read this year. This is not only an excellent middle grade book, it is just a good book in general for anyone wanting to read historical fiction about 9/11. The author managed to convey perfectly the mood and atmosphere of the nation during the days after the attacks.

Jake Green's biggest problem before September 11, 2001 was wanting to beat a member of a rival cross-country team in the next race. However, the attacks on U.S. soil change everything including relationships he has with his family and friends. When Jake's best friend, Sam Madina, is beaten up for being an Arab Muslim, he fights right back to defend him. The FBI soon goes after Sam's father and many people including Jake's mother wonder what the Madina family is hiding. Did Mr. Madina help some of the hijackers before the attacks?

What I enjoyed most about this book was how it captured the feelings and actions of people in this nation after the attacks. It showed the kindness people had to one another. It showed how some people outwardly displayed their hatred of Muslims. And it also illustrated the fear that kept people from wanting to associate with anyone they thought was Muslim.

While I won this book in a giveaway, that in no way influenced my thoughts and opinions. I truly loved this book and am thankful I was given the opportunity to read it.

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### **Dorothy Decarli says**

Loved it! Reliving September 11, through the eyes of a 13 year old boy brings back the memories of fear, sadness, hatred, patriotism and resilience. Kids who were not alive then will be able to share this part of history with the adults in their life in a positive, thought provoking way.

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

A powerful tale of trust and friendship, *Just A Drop of Water* deals with heavy topics but in the end asks the biggest question of all... are we so afraid that it's making us blind to the good of humanity?

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### **Debbie O says**

Just a Drop of Water, is an engaging story geared for middle grade readers. However the theme and the

messages conveyed in the book span all ages. Reading this story I was inspired by Jake's struggle, his perseverance and ultimately his choices.

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### **Wendy says**

This was an absolutely wonderful book! The story is captivating, resonated with feelings and reactions I had myself regarding 9/11, and was wonderfully entertaining as well. I fell in love with the characters and was amazed how the author captured the different moods and feelings of every age group, during that very sad time in American history. I would highly recommend this book for readers of any age.

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### **Aspen says**

This is one of my favorite books of all time! It makes you want to keep reading it and is very unpredictable.

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### **David says**

#### **A Must Read-- no really.**

I had the good fortune of reading this book when I was in a writing workshop with the author. I also had the misfortune of witnessing 9/11 from my side of the Hudson river where we lived on that day.

I always wondered how the other part of America viewed the event and it absolutely shocked me to discover, through reading this book, that perhaps the rest of America had just as profound and visceral a reaction to the event as anyone who witnessed it up close.

America was different after that day, and I believe this is one of those books that will help tell our young ones exactly what it was like to be one thing one day and something completely different the next. The book is wonderfully written and set in a very unique setting. This novel magnificently captures the pulse of the nation both big and small as all of us, even those in the far corners of Florida, struggled with the horror of that day.

I can't recommend this book highly enough for having the boldness to tell a story so close to the soul of America. Kudos to the author and if you are still considering whether or not to read this book... I'm insisting that you must.

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### **Marge Keller says**

Good book -- good explanations. Worked well to introduce facts. Race/religious views. Both boys and girls will like it. Touching. Interesting relationship with parents. Adding Wilkey's was interesting.

