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# Aldo's Fantastical Movie Palace



## Synopsis

In the Darkness of this Theater, Anything Can Happen The family's broken-down theater has always been a safe place for Chloe. There, no one can see the scars that line her face—scars her inventor father accidentally caused, leaving even deeper wounds between them. In the darkness she meets Nick, a boy with his own hurts. While Nick isn't the most pleasant companion, a rocky friendship is formed over their love of films. Soon the two are working on a movie script about a fantastical world—one that suddenly comes alive on the screen. Chloe and Nick are transported into an adventure beyond what they ever imagined, filled with dragons, magical pools, and a sinister vapor that threatens to destroy everyone. But when tragedy strikes, Chloe must find the courage to step out of the shadows and find what she's always longed for.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6-Twelve-year-old Chloe lives with scars on her face and neck caused by an accident with one of her father's inventions, and she is constantly aware of them: at school, where she is called Scarface, and at home, which is full of her anger and her father's guilt. When she meets Nick, a blind boy who writes a movie script about a fantasyland called Retinya, they begin to work on the story together. In the projection box of her family's movie theater, Chloe and Nick are magically transported to the world they've created and find themselves engaged in a struggle against the evil spirit Vaepor, who wipes away people's memories, leaving them in his thrall. Nick quickly disappears, and Chloe is left to puzzle her own way through this dangerous and confusing world as

she searches for him and follows enigmatic clues in order to defeat Vaepor. Friesen has created some compelling characters and settings, but the story line begins to wander much like Chloe herself. Ultimately, the world of Retinya does not fully come alive. It remains as confusing to readers as it is to Chloe, and the device of having her as a coinventor of the world along with Nick is not followed through consistently enough to be successful. Strictly an additional purchase.-Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Metaphorical to the max, this begins with two damaged teens forming an entertainingly contentious bond as they work on a screenplay featuring a magic land. Then the story turns suddenly into a therapeutic quest fantasy set in that elaborately imagined world. Chloe, physically and psychologically scarred after a childhood accident, is both repelled by and drawn to blind, epileptic, and very angry Nick, who has created a country called Retinya where he can see. After a bitter fight in the projection booth of Chloe's family's movie house, Nick finds that he can crawl into the horror film that is showing. When Chloe follows, she finds herself in a darker version of Retinya, where she is charged with rescuing Nick and the other inhabitants from having their memories expunged. Chloe ultimately triumphs over both a monster and her own anger issues with help from a colorful supporting cast that has parallels in both worlds. Though reduced to a secondary character in Retinya, Nick also comes away with a measure of inner peace that lessens the impact of a tragedy that closes this somewhat contrived but action-filled adventure. Grades 5-8. --John Peters

This story is totally not what I thought it would be. For there is no other fantasy story I have read that is like this story. If you like fantasies, then you love this story!

I liked how it was adventuresome and sort of like the real world when you deconstruct it. I didn't like how the book dragged in some places, but overall, to me, it's award worthy.

From the author of *Jerk*, California comes Aldo's Fantastical Movie Palace. Jonathan Friesen has written a book about two damaged kids; Chloe who has facial scars on her hands and neck and Nick who is blind. The story takes the two main characters into an enchanted "story" where each is confronted with their own darkness. Both kids learn that their "baggage" isn't all that heavy and they learn to focus on love and life instead. It's a book about self-discovery, healing and

acceptance. Right off, this is a Zondervan (Christian publisher) release, so you must expect some element of Jesus or the gospel on some level - other times their works are just clean- wholesome reading that teach well learned morality. Aldo's read like almost a "Young Adult Pilgrim's Progress" in that it followed a character through a land of wonder - where they met fantasy-like characters - carried their "sin" (baggage) faced elements of good and evil and in the end learned about redemption and rebirth. Granted the Christian themes are not as "blatant" in Aldo's as they are in Pilgrim's Progress but they are still there. I would recommend this book to a slightly older reader - there are elements of danger, excitement and some of the characters in the book die. Thank you to Zondervan & Zonderkidz for this advanced copy in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Chloe hates the name-calling. She is sick of being taunted. It isn't her fault she has scars on her face. Instead of facing her insecurity head on, she hides away in her great grandfather's movie theater, Aldo's Movie Palace. When a strange boy comes in, she is immediately curious about his background. In a series of freak accidents, she is accidentally taken into his screenplay, "Retinya." Once there, she is forced to save the entire underworld from the evil Vapor, and help the kingdom of Retinya remember. I liked: The character development. It was definitely among some of the better character development skills I have seen, and the characters background stories were very well rounded. The vivid descriptions. Obviously, until you read the book, you won't understand the importance of the descriptions. They are pretty fantastic. It painted an excellent picture for the reader. I disliked: The lack of God. I have always known Zondervan to be a Christian company, but you wouldn't know from reading this book. Although there are veiled references to analogies of God and the devil, there weren't enough for me to consider this a "Christian" book. That said, if this was , meant to be a secular book, it did a good job of introducing the idea of good and evil to a secular society. The sadness. It was really sad. If it were a book for adults, I would understand (kind of) but this is a book for ages 10+. I hate it when people die in books. Especially when they are sick. Overall, I did not love the book. Although it had its pros, it also had some cons. I would not recommend this book to anyone under age 13, solely because of the death. I would recommend it to anyone who loves a good fantasy read. This book was given to me free in exchange for an honest review. The opinions stated are completely my own.

"Aldo's Fantastical Movie Palace -- where dreams come true, and nightmares too." What I Loved: Okay, so I didn't absolutely loooove this book like I thought I would, but I did like it. I did love the fact that Friesen wrote about two young characters, Chloe (called "Scarface" by her peers at school) and

Nick (the blind movie script-writer boy), who were flawed / had "handicaps" that took us on a journey through a magical screenplay into the fantastical World of Retinya. In Retinya both Chloe and Nick must face their fears and their flaws head on. They ultimately learn that imperfections aren't everything and that forgetting the past is not always wise. Sometimes remembering the past is not easy, but it will lead us down the road to healing and self discovery and peace. Honestly, the story reminded me a little of Hugo Cabret at times with its freedom to just dream out loud onto the page. So, for that, I totally give props to Mr. Friesen! He definitely created a vivid, unique world full of flawed characters that needed to face their fears to find that they were both indeed more than their flaws. And the Fantasy elements of this book were great, I must say! I loved the pilgrimage feel of the story as well (The Pilgrim's Progress, anyone?), as Chloe and Nick struggled to stay on the right paths that would lead them to find themselves and to ultimately make it to the City of Reckoning in hopes of defeating Vaepor. There were also moments where some of the more "side-lined" characters made me laugh immensely, like Chloe's Grandpa and brothers for instance. I really wish that the Grandpa had been a more prominently featured character throughout the entire novel. I really do. Also, from reading the back cover blurb I assumed that Chloe and Nick would be together throughout the entire adventure through Retinya, but this wasn't so. And at first this greatly bothered me. But in a way I thought this was a pretty smart idea on Mr. Friesen's part because it made me think of Hans Christian Andersen's story The Snow Queen and of how Kay and Gerda must go on an adventure too, though they are not together for the whole adventure either...they both come out changed and "found" on the other end.

What I Didn't Like So Much: I won't spoil anything for you all, but I will say that the beginning and ending both left me cringing and upset. Now, that said, I do want to read the rest of Jonathan Friesen's books after having finished reading this one, mainly because while this book left some things to be desired in some instances, overall I really did enjoy Chloe's character, the vividry of verbiage, the Fantasy World of Retinya (cool name, huh? Kind of like retina, you know?) and Mr. Friesen's storytelling abilities. So, was AFMP an instant favorite book? No, not completely. But it was good enough to warrant me desiring to have another go at reading a Jonathan Friesen novel, and I'll admit that I would like to re-read this book in the near future.

Other nit-picky notes... At times I did have trouble keeping up with who was who, as far as the newly introduced Retinyan characters were concerned, mainly because their introductions were almost too swift at times and lacked a thorough background or explanation as to who they were. There were a few grammatical errors, and some uses of the wrong tense/spelling of a word was used once or twice. I'm recommending this book... If you are a fan of The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick, Bridge To Terabithia by Katherine Patterson, The Snow Queen by Hans

Christian Andersen, The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, The Magic Tree House Series by Mary Pope Osborne and The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis then you might just enjoy being swept away into the Fantasy World of Retinya with Chloe and Nick.\*I received this book for free through Charleen Famiglietti of DJC Communications/Zondervan for the sole purpose of this review. I was not required to write a positive review. The views and opinions freely expressed in this post are my own.

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