



Ghost Boy

By Iain Lawrence

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Ghost Boy By Iain Lawrence

Harold Kline is an albino--an outcast. Folks stare and taunt, calling him Ghost Boy. It's been that way all of his 14 years. So when the circus comes to town, Harold runs off to join it.

Full of colorful performers, the circus seems like the answer to Harold's loneliness. He's eager to meet the Cannibal King, a sideshow attraction who's an albino too. He's touched that Princess Minikin and the Fossil Man, two other sideshow curiosities, embrace him like a son. He's in love with Flip, the beguiling horse trainer, and awed by the all-knowing Gypsy Magda. Most of all, Harold is proud of training the elephants, and of earning respect and a sense of normality. Even at the circus, though, two groups exist--the freaks, and everyone else.

Harold straddles both groups. But fitting in with those who are "normal" comes at a price, and sometimes it's recognizing the truth beneath what's apparent that ultimately leads to happiness . . . and turns a boy into a man.

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Ghost Boy By Iain Lawrence Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Fourteen-year-old Harold Kline is an albino--white from head to toe, even his hair and his eyes that are like drops of water. His life is made unbearable by the other kids, who call him "snow" or "maggot," and ever since his father died and his brother was reported missing in Vietnam, his mother has become angry and withdrawn. And so Harold runs away, although it is a wrench to leave Honey, the elderly dog who has been his only comfort. And where would an albino kid on the run end up? In the circus, of course--in this case a down-at-the-heels road show where he is sheltered by a kindly lady midget and her huge man-beast companion and given hugs and unquestioning acceptance by the other "freaks." There he falls in love with the beautiful but duplicitous trick horseback rider and gains self-respect and the admiration of the other circus folks when he accomplishes the seemingly impossible feat of teaching the elephants to play baseball. But Gypsy Magda forecasts a "great harm" lurking in the future, and it has something to do with Harold's rejection of the "freaks" who have sheltered him as one of their own.

In this strange, moving novel, the author of sea adventures *The Wreckers* and *The Smugglers* has built a compelling metaphor for the universal teenage fear of being declared an outsider. With great emotional veracity, Iain Lawrence plays many intriguing variations on the theme of alienation in a work full of fascinating characters, marvelous scenes, and tragic surprises. (Ages 12 and older) --*Patty Campbell*

From Publishers Weekly

Lawrence seamlessly shifts from the open sea (*The Wreckers*; *The Smugglers*) to landlubber territory with this tale of an albino boy who runs off to join the circus. Although the novel's premise may be familiar, there is nothing conventional about the author's portrayal of this taunted hero growing up in a post-WWII America. In lyrical prose, the narrative probes the isolation and alienation of 14-year-old Harold, better known as "Ghost Boy." As the novel opens, Harold awaits a train that does not stop (two years after the war, he still hopes his brother will be on it), when the Old Indian from Hunter and Green's Circus approaches him, posing as an exotic lure. With his father and brother both claimed by the war, his mother remarried to a banker, and the townspeople tormenting him because of his looks ("From the soles of his feet to the top of his head, his skin was like rich white chocolate, without a freckle anywhere"), Harold dreams of heading west. The circus provides his ticket out. Depicting the circus as a microcosm of society, Lawrence effectively conveys the universal desire for acceptance and approval. His knowledge of the big top and insight into humanity add depth to his writing as do vibrant images of circus life and razor-sharp characterizations (e.g., the tiny Princess Minikin, fur-covered Samuel the "Fossil Man" and the compassionate Gypsy Magda, a Holocaust survivor). This poignant adventure invites readers to look beyond others' outer appearances and into their souls. Ages 12-up. (Oct.)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 8-10-Harold Kline, an albino, is taunted with names such as "ghost," "whitey," and "maggot" by the residents of his small Midwestern town. His father and much-admired older brother have been lost in World War II and his mother has married a man who doesn't understand his fears or his dreams. Harold thinks he has found salvation the day Hunter and Green's Traveling Circus comes to town. With the encouragement of sideshow "freaks" Princess Minikin, the Fossil Man, and the Gypsy Magda, he runs away with the troupe of performers. The Ghost's journey is one of discovery, and by the time the circus reaches Oregon, Harold has learned that most things in life are not as they appear, and that true beauty and freakishness are determined by a person's soul, not by his face. Lawrence's outstanding coming-of-age novel features fascinating, fully

rounded characters who drive the story forward while drawing readers in to think about perceptions vs. reality. The setting is wonderfully realized and captures the magic of the big top and the decidedly different world behind the scenes. This touching novel will speak especially to readers who consider themselves different, flawed, or misunderstood.

Toni D. Moore, Simon Kenton High School, Independence, KY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Long:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or read a book eligible Ghost Boy? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with it has the opinion or you have other opinion?

Bertha Franke:

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Harold Dalton:

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Julio Huntsman:

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