



## Genuine Sweet

*Faith Harkey*

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Twelve-year-old Genuine Sweet, of tiny Sass, Georgia, can grant any wish . . . except her own. It's a peculiar predicament, considering how much she could use a few wishes. New friends help Genuine give her family a boost--and then she takes her gift global! Life finally seems to be on the mend. But when she's faced with unexpected trouble that no amount of wishing can fix, Genuine must puzzle out the difference between wishing for a better life and building one.

## Genuine Sweet Details

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Author : Faith Harkey

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## From Reader Review Genuine Sweet for online ebook

### A.R. Beckert says

I picked this up as a mystery book, wrapped in brown paper with the very cryptic single clue - Baking Wishes.

I loved this little book! Within a few hours of finishing, I had it in the hand of someone else I knew would love it. Once it comes back to me, I plan to donate it to the middle-grade library of a teacher friend of mine.

There's a lovely magic about this book, and it's one that doesn't shy away from the bigness of this little girl's gift. It's a lovely story about magic, potential, generosity, real life needs, and what it is to put down roots and grow.

I'd recommend this book for a read-aloud for middle-graders. There are some themes that may be a bit much for the youngest ones, like poverty, chronic drunkenness, and loss of a mentor figure, but I did feel like they were handled with honesty and a good no-nonsense grace.

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### Jill Cd says

I adored this book-everything from the Southern accent right down to the depth of the characters. The growth of Genuine sinks into your soul and helps you examine the good in humanity. There are so many wonderful quotes in this book, I could line my library with them. A exquisite read for middle school.

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### Ms. Yingling says

Genuine lives in the very small town of Sass, Georgia, with her grandmother and her drunken father, Dangerous Dale, who is always out of work. Genuine's grandmother informs her that she is a wish fetcher, and shows her how to get magic from the stars to grant people's wishes. Genuine doesn't know enough not to go telling people; it's not forbidden, but frowned upon. She tells Jura, who is from the big city but would like her mother to get a job in Sass. Genuine bakes magical biscuits, and Jura's mother gets a job fixing cars in town. Realizing that she should be able to get some benefit out of the wishes for herself, Genuine starts trying to trade wishes for things she and her grandmother badly need, like food. This works out fairly well until the sister of a woman Genuine's mother didn't save from dying stirs up trouble for Gen. While some people in the town turn against her, others don't, and with Jura's help, Gen tries to spread her wishes internationally, even curing hunger in Africa. There are some things that Gen can't change, however, and when tragedy hits home, she is glad to have the support of those around her.

**Strengths:** This was a surprisingly readable book with fairly solid magical realism. We don't have any explanation for why Genuine and her family are wish fetchers until the very end of the book, but the suspension of disbelief is not that hard. There are some good characters, and the plot moved quickly even though there wasn't much action.

**Weaknesses:** This is VERY quirky/Southern, and I'm not sure how my readers would react to that. I'm sure that people who liked A Snicker of Magic will like this one a lot.

**What I really think:** Probably won't buy this for my school library, because I don't think my readers will pick

it up. I can see this being very successful in libraries with a lot of requests for magical realism, however.

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### **Celeste\_pewter says**

I read so many books these days, it's become a rare occasion where I'll sit up after reading a book and think: "Ok. This is an author whom I absolutely need to watch." But I definitely had that feeling after reading *Genuine Sweet*.

Debut author Faith Harkey introduces us to *Genuine Sweet*, a young girl who's had a bit of a tough life. Her father is a reknowned town drunk, while her grandmother has worked hard to hold their family together. But even with her grandmother's hard work, *Genuine's* family has still been struggling.

Thus, it's both a surprise and a relief, when *Genuine* learns that she comes from a long line of wish fetchers. The women in her family have long had the ability to grant wishes for others, just not themselves. Armed with this knowledge, *Genuine* decides to use it to help make her family and the town a little better. However, *Genuine* quickly learns that there are caveats when it comes to trying to wish for a better life...

Harkey's tale of a girl with a magical legacy, is as endearing as it is thought-provoking. When *Genuine* learns her legacy as a wish fetcher, it clearly feels like things have changed for the better. She's able to use her gift to help out those in her small town, and also use those wishes to barter for the betterment of her own family.

But even as *Genuine* improves her family's lot one wish at a time, Harkey is careful to show that with great power, comes great responsibility. Through the help of a new friend, *Genuine* endeavors to figure out a way to help those in the town and those around the world who need assistance. But *Genuine* quickly finds herself overwhelmed with the prospect of trying to help everyone who needs a wish, and also stressed with the knowledge that for many, there is a fine line between a want and a need.

Harkey does a fine job of showing that while some of the wishes of people are small and/or will make a true difference in a person's life (e.g. new chicken coops; a father figure for a family), there are many who want things simply for the sake of wanting them - e.g. new horse riding gear. And sometimes, when you've given so much to help others through wishes like *Genuine*, it's those latter wishes that can become both exhausting and make a person slightly resentful.

So it's both gratifying and rewarding when Harkey shows *Genuine* putting her own well-being first, by not granting wishes to everyone who asks, and helping satisfy needs through the introduction of bartering to the town. The self-empowerment extends also to a sub-plot involving a wish healing a generations-long misunderstanding, which truly melted my heart while reading.

While *Genuine* eventually comes to realize that wishes can't solve everything in her life, the lessons that she's learned along the way of responsibility, self-empowerment and community involvement, eventually paves the way for both the wish fetching legacy to live on, while non-magic inclined town members can continue to depend on themselves and each other.

This utterly magical tale is made all the better by Harkey's beautiful, absorbing writing. *Genuine* narrates the tale in a way that's very reminiscent of southern story telling tradition, and had me absolutely enthralled from beginning to end.

Of special note: As Ms. Yingling points out in her review, the book can be very southern at times. While I thought the Southern elements were charming, I can see younger readers becoming slightly confused by those elements. I'd encourage parents and educators to use the book as a great jumping-off point to discuss different regional cultures and traditions.

It should also be noted that there is a significant character death in the book. Younger readers may be upset by the death, but Harkey handles it very well. There are several wonderful reminders that death doesn't always involve pain and suffering, and even those who do leave us, will have left legacies that continue to live on.

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### **Final verdict:**

Genuine Sweet is a wonderful reminder of why I enjoy middle grade fiction so much. Harkey has written an endearing tale on how one girl comes to accept her destiny, while dually learning that magical solutions are wonderful, but it's as equally important to find solutions through ordinary means as well.

While Genuine eventually realizes that wishes aren't necessarily always the answer to everything, her efforts to help her hometown and the world around her, teaches her the value of forgiveness and responsibility, while also empowering her and the town to find ways to work together on their respective futures.

I highly, highly recommend this book for all fans of middle grade fiction, and for fans of magical realism fiction. You won't want to miss this one - trust me.

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### **Gaele says**

A solidly southern, folksy tale follows 12 year old Genuine Sweet in her tiny town of Sass, Georgia. Going in to this story, you need to know three things: Genuine is twelve, she has a gift for granting wishes, and her life is not perfect.

With an alcoholic and unemployed father, a dead mother and an ailing Grandmother that told her of her gift, money is tight in the household, and Genuine has more to worry about than just who needs a wish. Until she shares her story with her new friend Jura, and they decide to barter Genuine's wish granting for staples and basics that they need.

When that goes well, the girls start to grant wishes online, and things are moving along well until the demand starts to explode. With the boy she likes not giving her a second look while the weird boy is seemingly unshakable and her Grandmother starting to recover, Genuine thinks things are looking up. But then, a woman who's wish from Genuine's mother did not work reappears, and things start to get more complicated. With her Grandmother's death, Genuine takes a chance and makes one last wish, and uses it for herself.

A lovely story narrated in Genuine's voice brings magical realism to a story that is laden with difficult moments, but never crosses the line to become maudlin or overwhelming. Genuine is kind and good-hearted, with a steely determination to protect those she loves and use her abilities to improve many lives. Her one misstep, using her own gift for herself brought a new series of complications to her life. Throughout the story, Genuine learns lessons about love, life, responsibility and her own ability to encourage personal

empowerment in others.

A lovely narrative that is easily read while presenting issues and a story that are complex and multi-layered. Suitable for readers ten and older, despite the rather juvenile cover. Magical realism is particularly strong and the wish giving is unexplained until the end, a particularly clever device that brings home the lessons that Genuine learns in a new way.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via Edelweiss for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

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### **Mohit says**

Genuine Sweet is a story about a 12 year old wish fetcher girl who can bring the wishes of the people true. The story is written from Genuine Sweet's point of view. Yepp... that's the name of the girl :) and she is very sweet, well most of the time.

About book, this was a good read but I didn't find any high point during the story. Though story was told by a 12 years old motherless girl who has a drunkard father (who didn't do anything except sleeping throughout the book), a gram (grandmother who was strength of the girl), few friends and who brings the peoples' wishes true - there could have been many wow moments. There were a few moment like Bowl date with Travis, Fetching wish for Penny Welton, Kissing to Travis, Death of Gram, Breaking the first rule of wish fetching where story could have touched the heart but book missed them all.

This book is gentle breeze and is rich in language and could be a good read for the kids as well. I didn't love the book, i liked it though.

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### **Brianna says**

Genuine Sweet is a cute story in a universe full of laughter! The story focuses on Genuine, a sweet country girl gifted with magic powerful enough to change the world. She learns about her power in a difficult time in life, when her father has just been laid off and survival for her family is in question. But, as even more issues around her come to a head, Genuine decides to break the cardinal rule: That she can't use her power for herself.

Faith Harkey does wonderful job with character building and universe forming, and little Sass doesn't seem to far from just outside your front door. I didn't find any paper-thin character or pretentious personas, a pet peeve of mine in novels. This book is a light read, something to ease your mind and carry you somewhere that, while being new, you'll find isn't so different from the world outside. This book drives the reader back to the pages with curiosity and even a little heartbreak, as we see an incredibly honest character wrought through the irons, if you will. While Genuine is adorable, and her young attitude accurate, her drive comes from a darker place than what you'll spy in most children's books. All in all, I recommend this book and hope that you enjoy Genuine just as much as I did.

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### **Linda Johnson says**

I rec'd this little gem of a book from Goodreads First Reads. It is more so intended for a middle school age child so I will now pass it along to my niece Lydia.

Meet 12 year old Genuine Sweet, a 4th generation wish fetcher from Sass, GA population 523. Genuine lives with her drunk, unemployed father, Dangerous Dale, and her sweet grandmother who has desperately been trying to hold the family together ever since Genuine's mother died during childbirth. Things are never easy in the Sweet household, they often run out of food and are always in danger of the electricity being cut off. Genuine and her family could definitely use a wish or two for themselves, but unfortunately they can only be used to help others.

With the help of friends, Genuine figures out a way to not only help her neighbors but also a way to help her own family by bartering wishes for food and work on their dilapidated house. Soon Genuine's gift becomes global and she is well on her way to solving world hunger when tragedy strikes again...

Genuine is a girl that I won't soon forget it. It's not just her magical talent that makes her special, it's also her big heart. This was a sweet little book with a big powerful message that I would highly recommend for children ages 9-12.

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### **Isabella Bloom says**

A sweet and charming book.

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### **Liz Friend says**

The story: Genuine Sweet is a wish-fetcher, although she can only grant OTHER peoples' wishes--which is a problem, since her life so frequently kind of stinks: her mom is dead and her dad's an alcoholic, her grandma is going downhill, and the boy she likes doesn't notice her while a semi-weird one does. Things seem to take a turn for the better when Jura--new girl and possible best friend--moves into her small town, but when Genuine breaks the #1 rule of wish fetching (i.e., you can't get wishes for yourself) her magic deserts her just when she needs it most.

June Cleaver's ratings: Language PG; Violence G; Sexual content G; Nudity G; substance abuse PG; magic and the occult PG; GLBT content G; adult themes (parental alcoholism, death) PG; overall rating PG.

Liz's comments: I thought this one was charming! Genuine's observations about life in a small town in the south are just right, as is her wish to join in doing good on a broader scale--and her discovery that using your powers to benefit yourself rather than others will always have unexpected consequences is something we all have to learn at some point. Too bad the cover art makes it look like a book for 4th graders--even 7th grade girls would probably like this one if it had a slightly more mature look to it.

Kirkus Reviews February 1, 2015 summary: A coming-of-age story starring 12-year-old Genuine

(pronounced Gen-u-wine) Sweet, fourth-generation wish-fetcher from the very small town of Sass, Georgia. Since her alcoholic father lost his job, Genuine has begun to worry a lot about how the family will stay warm and fed through the winter. She breathes a big sigh of relief when she discovers that she can grant wishes by whistling down starlight and baking it up into wish biscuits--until she learns that the only wishes she can't grant are her own. No matter. Genuine and her new, creative friend, Jura, create a barter system to help Gen's family and then begin taking online wish requests from groups battling hunger around the world. All is well until requests for wish biscuits explode, some old family drama comes home to roost, romantic complications ensue, and then, the final straw, Genuine loses her beloved grandmother. Devastated, Gen breaks the cardinal rule of wish-fetching and loses her power just when she needs it most, but she deals with this problem too in her own style. Through it all, Genuine learns about forgiveness, responsibility and empowering others while remaining true to the humble, spunky girl at her core. A folksy first-person narration combined with a thought-provoking storyline makes this a good pick for solo enjoyment or book club discussion.

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### **Adriana says**

Genuine Sweet is a poor girl who wants nothing more but a full belly. One day, her grandma tells her a secret of sorts. A magic she has in her for she is a fourth generation wish fetcher. The thing is that she can only grant wishes for other people, not herself. Genuine's life turns upside down as she starts granting wishes and learns a thing or two about her mother and life. I liked the storyline. Genuine was fun to follow around. I didn't like the way she talked at times because it just didn't seem... genuine. And I'm still iffy about how everything turned out in the end.

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### **Heather says**

Genuine (Gen-u-wine) Sweet is a fourth generation wish fetcher, which essentially gives her the ability to grant everyone's wishes but her own. Seeing as how she's in a pretty desperate need of some wish fulfillment herself, she orchestrates a barter system exchanging wishes for basics like food and home repairs. At the urging of her new friend Jura, Genuine looks beyond the borders of her small town Sass, Georgia, to see what her talent can do for the larger problems of the world. Before they know it, "Wish to End Hunger" has gone viral, and Genuine discovers that everything has a cost, even wishes. Harkey's first novel is a folksy exploration of both giving and receiving help. Though the down home narrative voice threatens to overwhelm the story at times, it's hard not to fall in love with the main character. Like her name, Genuine is the real thing—honest and big hearted, with the weight of her family, community—and world hunger—on her shoulders. There's no real villain here, though many get caught up in greed and self-centered thinking. Fans of Ingrid Law's Savvy series or *A Tangle of Knots* by Lisa Graff will enjoy this heartfelt story.

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### **Jaina Rose says**

This review is also available on my blog, Read Till Dawn.

I needed this book. Neck-deep in studying for my AP exams, my brain was fried and my patience thin. I had the sinking sensation that only comes when my stock of reviews has bled dry and I've got a week of reviews in my backlog before I'm plumb out of content. I had a couple of books on my review pile, but none that

really caught my eye and made me pour out a heartfelt review for. The TBR pile at the foot of my bed was full of appealing titles, but they had been sitting there waiting for so long that they already felt cliche and already done.

And that's where Genuine Sweet came in. I'd seen a review of it somewhere and requested it on a whim, and the day I hit my all-time low this new, shiny book popped into my hands screaming "I'm fun! I'm unique! I'll make you smile!" And it sure was. And did. Out of all the small-town-quirky-magic books I've read in my life, this one has carved its own spot. Where many "uniquely quirky" books fail in their use of the same old outside-the-box tropes, Genuine Sweet manages to take a lonely girl with negligent/dead parents, a loving/wise grandmother, and a new best friend, and actually make something new out of it.

The idea of wish-fetching is a very neat one, and I love that Harkey uses it to dig deep into the selfishness of human nature, through the people who harass Genuine for wishes, and the true potential of wish fetching - saving people in third-world countries. The fact that Geniune and Jura are so concerned about making the world a better place was just awesome.

However, I would be leery of recommending Genuine Sweet as a Middle Grade book. Harkey crafts a great story, but she includes enough mature themes that I know I for one won't be handing this off to my middle-school aged brother. For example, Genuine has an extremely sweet and touching slow-bloom relationship with a boy (whom I won't name for fear of spoilers) that I absolutely adored for as long as I could forget the fact that they were in middle school. Then I remembered, and I liked it a whole lot less. It's just weird when they're that age!

Actually, that's probably the biggest issue with this book: Genuine's age. If only she were seventeen, and then I could adore the book to pieces without feeling uncomfortable! As it is, I can still adore it, but I can't figure out who to recommend it to. I guess I'd offer it to fans of books like Savvy, Scumble, Drizzle, and Remarkable. It ranks right up there by the best of this sub-genre of quirky small-town magic, and would be absolutely perfect if Genuine were just five years older.

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### **Bluerose's Heart says**

In this story, we meet Genuine Sweet. Don't forget to add in the southern accent, and pronounce her name correctly! Gen-u-wine. She lives in the tiny town of Sass, Georgia (population 523) with her Pa and Grandma. Her Pa lives his days in a drunken stupor, and jobs are rare, so she's hungry. There's just not enough money to stretch where it needs to go, like for that unpaid power bill. When Genuine discovers she's a 4th generation wish fetcher, things start looking up, until she discovers she can't use her abilities for herself. How will that put food in her belly?

This is a precious "magical realism" kind of story. The fantasy element is mild, but still there. I couldn't help but think of it as a Sarah Addison Allen type of book, except for children. The story is written as if Genuine is writing a letter to you, or even telling you about her life while sharing a cup of tea. It's filled with quirkiness and southern charm. There's plenty of corny southern phrases to bring a smile to your face throughout.

While the book is sweet, and mostly upbeat, there's still plenty of heartache inside, too. Even though Genuine has a tough life, it was fun to see new friendships being made and creative wheels being turned.

I enjoyed reading *Genuine Sweet*, and I can't wait to see what other stories Harkey brings us!

Content:

Romance in middle grade books is usually super mild, so I'll mention that *Genuine* dates within this book. There's kissing and hand holding and all that. That element made the book seem a bit older than if it wasn't in there, but in the grand scheme of things, it's still mild.

Religious expletives

\*I was provided an ARC, in exchange for my honest opinion.

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### **Sandra Waugh says**

Sun-drenched, star-filled. The language is rich, the story lovely.

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