



Miracle Creek

Angie Kim

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Miracle Creek Angie Kim

A literary courtroom drama about a Korean immigrant family and a young, single mother accused of murdering her eight-year-old autistic son

My husband asked me to lie. Not a big lie. He probably didn't even consider it a lie, and neither did I, at first
...

In the small town of Miracle Creek, Virginia, Young and Pak Yoo run an experimental medical treatment device known as the Miracle Submarine—a pressurized oxygen chamber that patients enter for therapeutic “dives” with the hopes of curing issues like autism or infertility. But when the Miracle Submarine mysteriously explodes, killing two people, a dramatic murder trial upends the Yoos’ small community.

Who or what caused the explosion? Was it the mother of one of the patients, who claimed to be sick that day but was smoking down by the creek? Or was it Young and Pak themselves, hoping to cash in on a big insurance payment and send their daughter to college? The ensuing trial uncovers unimaginable secrets from that night—trysts in the woods, mysterious notes, child-abuse charges—as well as tense rivalries and alliances among a group of people driven to extraordinary degrees of desperation and sacrifice.

Angie Kim’s *Miracle Creek* is a thoroughly contemporary take on the courtroom drama, drawing on the author’s own life as a Korean immigrant, former trial lawyer, and mother of a real-life “submarine” patient. An addictive debut novel for fans of Liane Moriarty and Celeste Ng, *Miracle Creek* is both a twisty page-turner and a deeply moving story about the way inconsequential lies and secrets can add up—with tragic consequences.

Miracle Creek Details

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Author : Angie Kim

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From Reader Review Miracle Creek for online ebook

Sherri Thacker says

This book is one of the better books when it comes to courtroom drama. Some books use language that loses me but this one was very well thought out and made total sense throughout. It had great characters that I was able to connect to and that always makes for a great story! This is my first book by Angie Kim but it will not be my last. I enjoyed it okay. I didn't love it but I didn't dislike it either. Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for providing me this book in exchange for my honest review.

Cari says

So. Good. You must all get this book when it comes out. And then discuss it with me.

I was riveted all the way through this tragic and tightly woven courtroom drama. I can't say I've ever seen a book that blends legal intrigue and character development so seamlessly. I am so hoping the author will be up for a Skype with my library's book group - MIRACLE CREEK is sure to be a favorite! I'm rooting for a LibraryReads pick!

Fran says

It took five years for Pak Yoo to save enough money for a family visa. He finally could emigrate from Korea to the United States following wife, Young and daughter, Mary who were living with a very demanding host family. Moving to Miracle Creek, Virginia, Pak now owned and operated The Miracle Submarine, a 100% pressurized oxygen chamber designed to heal damaged cells through deep penetration of oxygen during sixty minute "dives". As a controversial, experimental treatment, protesters felt that Pak's clients were "guinea pigs". To the parents of children with autism, cerebral palsy and other health issues as well as adults with fertility issues, the Miracle Submarine offered hope, especially to the "double dive" clients who signed up for twice daily treatments for forty days.

This hyperbaric therapy (HBOT) clientele included Matt, a doctor. Matt's in-laws viewed him as having a "defect". Wife Janine insisted on HBOT treatments for his infertility. Elizabeth Ward's devotion to eight year old autistic son Henry could be considered to be "Puppeteer Parenting". Henry was enrolled in numerous therapies throughout the day. Kitt was the mother of TJ, eight years old, autistic and non-verbal. Rosa was a sixteen year old teenager with cerebral palsy. Teresa, Rosa's mother was thrilled that Rosa could now say "mama". Contrast that with Elizabeth's expectations for Henry!

The night dive on August 26, 2008 was fraught with difficulties. Protesters caused a delay in the start time of the dive, the AC and lights were not working and the DVD stopped mid-song. The back oxygen tank then exploded. Elizabeth's son, Henry and TJ's mother, Kitt were killed. Four others were seriously injured. Why is it that Elizabeth chose not to dive with Henry that evening asking Kitt to keep an eye on him? According to the accident reconstruction expert, the fire started outside the chamber, under the oxygen tubing. Whose cigarette and matches started the blaze?

Elizabeth Ward was on trial for the murder of son, Henry. She had mentioned that life would be easier if she wasn't a round-the-clock caregiver. Was this a recipe for murder? The ensuing court trial was very engrossing. Defense lawyer Shannon Haug was determined to deflect the blame. Who might stand to gain from Elizabeth's conviction? Pak and Young want to collect the insurance money from the fire and jump start their lives. "The story Pak has invented to protect them had, with time and repetition, become the truth...". Pak and Young were not the only ones speaking half truths. A perfect storm of lies and deception was created that could affect the outcome of the case.

"Miracle Creek" by Angie Kim is an absolutely riveting read. Each primary/secondary character was thoroughly fleshed out. This reader was able to sympathize with Mary Yoo's feelings of isolation and loneliness as a teenage immigrant. The exclusion felt by the parents of special needs children and the need of support from an insular community of parents with similar experiences cannot be understated. The courtroom trial was fascinating, the twists and turns made this reader continue to question Elizabeth's culpability. "Miracle Creek" by Angie Kim is a debut novel of the finest caliber. A must read!

Thank you Sarah Crichton Books, Farrar, Straus and Giroux and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "Miracle Creek".

Beata says

Review to follow close to the publication date.

marilyn says

Miracle Creek, by Angie Kim, was a book that I didn't want to put down because the author made me care about these people who are nothing like me. It's the story of Korean immigrants, Young and Pak Yoo, who run the Miracle Submarine, a pressurized oxygen chamber that is used by young patients with a variety of health issues. It's also being used, unwillingly, by an adult doctor, Matt, whose Korean wife railroads him into being the first adult to go through the treatments, in an effort to cure his infertility. Although there are other treatments each day, the book focuses on a group that is undergoing twice a day treatments, for 40 days.

One of the patients is Henry, an 8 year old autistic boy, son of Elizabeth, who has tailored very hour of their day, full of treatments, therapies, camp, and very restrictive eating and sensory input, to give her son the best chance of being a "normal" boy. When there is a fire that kills Henry and Kitt, the mother of TJ, and severely injures Matt and Mary, the daughter of Young and Pak Yoo, Elizabeth is charged with the crime of starting the fire and murdering Henry and Kitt. Pak loses the use of his legs as he run in and out of the chamber, trying to save the lives of all the people under his care, people who he feels he is responsible for and is willing to give his life to save.

This book is about lies, big lies, little lies, and the belief that it's ok to lie because telling the truth can't bring back the dead, that maybe the person accused of murder might not have murdered anyone but she had thoughts of wishing her son dead at times, as might other full time caretakers, with no relief in sight from care taking a helpless "forever" child that will outlive them. Even though each of the characters had secrets, most of them also had my sympathy. The Yoos were weighed down by traditions from their homeland that

didn't allow them to "discuss" things with each other, that kept them trying to protect the pride of the father, even though some of those archaic ways caused the daughter to dislike her mother for not fighting against those traditions.

The many lies of the story started long before the day of the fire and so many of the people involved, once they start telling tiny bits of the truth, continue to lie, hold back information, allowing others to believe things that are false. A large part of the book is in the courtroom and I really enjoyed the courtroom drama. Both lawyers are willing to do anything to either get their client acquitted or get the accused convicted, even if they find out or know truths that make what they are doing extremely wrong and unethical. At any time, many of the characters could have told what they knew and turned the entire case around, inside out, and shed light on what really happened but they didn't, even when they had moments where telling the truth would have been the easiest thing to do.

The hardships that the Yoos endure in the years before they begin their chamber business are overwhelming but even once they are together again, after years of being apart while waiting for their family visa, the family is not happy. The mothers of the children using the chamber had a lifetime of hardship ahead of them and each mother fights with the guilt of sometimes wishing they could have a minute to themselves, dreaming of a 'normal' life, a life so many of us take for granted because we aren't full time caretakers, for life. There seems to be no relief in sight for most of these people and it's clear that once this is all "over", that no one will really be able to let go of the fact that they lied...their lies will always be with them.

As we meet the various people involved in what happened that day and as we go through the trial, we are flooded with the extent of the lies that have led to the fire. So many things had to come together to allow the fire to happen and any one of those things could have happened differently or not at all and then this tragedy would not have happened. In the end, this book is about facing one's role in what has happened, acknowledging one's part in the tragedy, big or little, taking responsibility in how we hurt others even if we did not mean to at the time and how we continue to hurt others by holding back the truth.

So much that happened, could never be "fixed" but I do like how the story is handled at the end. I think the ending has a realness to it that we sometimes don't find in crime stories. The ending doesn't make what happened disappear but instead plays out in a realistic way that allows the characters of the book to make amends and have room to breathe in a life that could seem unbearable otherwise. I can see a way for these people to heal and move on, even if they never forget the past and even though their lives are changed forever.

Thank you to Farrar, Straus and Giroux and NetGalley for this Advance Read Copy.

erica says

Miracle Creek is a gripping, psychologically complex novel about the unintended consequences of a person's mistakes.

I could not put this book down.

Miracle Creek, Virginia is an idyllic D.C. suburb where a family of recent Korean immigrants have founded a small business in the family barn: Miracle Submarine, which offers hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) to

patients seeking relief from diverse ailments such as infertility and autism.

"'This,' Pak said, looking proud, 'is Miracle Submarine. Pure oxygen. Deep pressure. Healing. Together.'"

I had never heard of HBOT before reading this book; it's a treatment for decompression sickness that nowadays is also used as a controversial alternative treatment for autism, chronic pain, migraines, etc. (You can read more about HBOT [here](#)). The central event that this book turns around is a devastating fire during a "dive" (the patients' term for a treatment session) that resulted in two deaths and several injuries. We know *what* happened that night, but not *why*. The rest of the book answers that question by untangling the complex relationships, inner thoughts, lies, and secrets of the characters. I'm usually pretty good at figuring out "who done it," but not this time - I did not see the ending coming!

Kim frames the narrative around the trial itself, filling in the gaps with flashback scenes in between witnesses. Kim treats her readers like jurors: we are introduced to the characters and learn the "facts" of the case in the claustrophobic, humid courtroom. And like jurors, we are ultimately forced to judge and evaluate the characters' actions in black-and-white legal terms, despite the human complexity of their actions and inactions.

The best part of this book are the characters. Young, Pak, and Mary are recent immigrants from South Korea, struggling to start a business and reconcile how their family dynamic has changed since moving to the United States. The other main characters are a close-knit group of patients who visit Miracle Submarine twice a day for a "double dive." We are introduced to Matt first because he is called as the first witness at trial. Matt is a M.D. whose wife, a medical adviser for Miracle Submarine, has pressured (no pun intended) him into trying HBOT as a possible cure for infertility. And then there are three mother/child pairs - Elizabeth and Henry, Kitt and TJ, and Teresa and Rosa. Henry and TJ both have autism, although the severity is drastically different; Rosa has cerebral palsy and mental retardation. The mothers are trying HBOT as an alternative cure. This group spends hours a day, every day, stuck together in Miracle Submarine, and are consequently very close.

Something that really stands out is how well Kim describes autism and the autism community. The mothers are oddly competitive, constantly rearranging their hierarchy based on whose child has the most severe form of autism, whose child has "improved" the most, who follows the meticulous diets (i.e. gluten free and casein free) the best, who tries the most therapies and treatments. Despite the constant competition, members of this exclusive group are the only people who can really understand the experience of parenting a child with autism. *"Autism was different. There was a stigma to it."* Autism isn't like cancer, which elicits sympathy from others. Autism makes people stare and then turn away with shame and embarrassment, *"as if Henry's behavior were so deviant that they had to cover it up."* The kids in this book stand out - Henry rocks and stares up at the ceiling, and TJ bangs his head when overwhelmed. The descriptions of these kids' behavior is heart-wrenching and true. Elizabeth and Kitt have rearranged their lives to devote themselves as full-time caretakers, losing friends, even their spouses, in the process. It's devastating, and Kim highlights what's wrong with how society views autism and how both the children and the parents are isolated as a result.

Elizabeth, Henry's mother, is arguably the best written character in the book: she's on trial for allegedly setting the fire at Miracle Submarine. Kim slowly unpacks her character and causes the reader to second-guess her guilt, which seemed so sure at the beginning of the book. Before the fire, she spent so much time driving her son, Henry, to various therapies, meticulously following his special diets, researching and

planning her next steps. In the book, Henry *gets better* (touching on a controversy in the autism community - is autism really a disease that we are trying to cure? Or are these kids just different, and therefore there is nothing wrong to fix?). Regardless, Henry gets better as a result of these therapies and diets, but Elizabeth is so focused on the day-to-day efforts of Henry's care, that she misses the big picture. She gets frustrated by her son, but she loves him. Elizabeth and Henry's relationship is heartbreaking and complicated, and Kim takes the entire book to fully develop the picture of this relationship. I was in tears by the end.

All of the relationships in this book are tightly wound and tense in the presence of lies. Kim takes her time resolving these issues, and I was left breathless by the time I finished the book, marveling at the complexity of human behavior. This book is about causal chains - how "the fates conspired to manipulate that day's events in just such a way... So many pieces had to fit." Ultimately, because the legal system is involved, the resolution is black and white, which leaves the reader reeling at the conclusion.

"But that was the way life worked. Every human being was the result of a million different factors mixing together - one of a million sperm arriving at the egg at exactly a certain time; even a millisecond off, and another entirely different person would result. Good things and bad - every friendship and romance formed, every accident, every illness - resulted from the conspiracy of hundreds of little things, in and of themselves inconsequential."

I cannot recommend this book highly enough! Release date April 16, 2019, available for pre-order now.

ARC provided by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in exchange for an honest review.

The quotes above were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

Come to my blog!

Aimee (Book It Forward) says

Miracle Creek is the story of struggle which as we know, comes in many forms. Immigration, integration, fertility challenges, inter-racial marriage, special needs parenting, loss, financial struggles, and marital issues. These issues are all explored and part of the big picture in Miracle Creek. My favorite aspect of this book is the courtroom drama which we see unfold one year after the tragedy at Miracle Submarine. The lawyers are fiery, and the secrets they reveal are explosive. The characters in this book all have secrets which makes it so much fun to read even when you are reading about tragic events.

I loved this book so much, that when I finished it at 2am, I sent Angie Kim a message to tell her how amazing it was. I don't give my 5 Star ratings out too often, but Miracle Creek deserves every one of those stars.

* I loved how each character had their own back story.

*I loved how the courtroom drama writing was intelligently written and kept me wanting more.

*I loved how I couldn't figure out what the heck actually happened the entire time I was reading so that FINALLY a book ending surprised me.

*I loved how Angie Kim wove details about the struggles immigrants face and the reasons that they choose to come here in spite of the challenges they know they will face. It really puts into perspective just how tough it must be to uproot your life and move somewhere when you can't even speak the native language.

*I loved how rich of a story this was. I was hooked from the beginning, and never felt let down.

Thank you to NetGalley and the Publisher for giving me an advanced readers copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

See this and other book reviews at www.BookItForward.blog

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Sisc Johnson says

I received an ARC of Miracle Submarine on Sunday and finished it on Monday. I could not put it down. This legal thriller kept me guessing (and second-guessing) with every page turn. She writes beautifully, and with great suspense. I could not get to the next chapter fast enough. The characters are relatable, and the storyline is fascinating. I am already looking forward to her next novel.

sylvie says

A superior crime novel/courtroom drama.

I was pleasantly surprised by this crime novel. The narrative is exceptional, the subject matter, Autism, well handled.

From beginning to end the narrative held my attention. Nothing appears as it seems, the author handles the courtroom drama extraordinarily well in this respect.

If you are looking for a crime novel which will have you sit on the edge of your seat, Miracle Submarine will not disappoint.

Highly recommended

Thank you to Farrar, STRAUS and Giroux for this advance copy.

Thank you NetGalley

Kathleen says

MIRACLE CREEK left me totally gutted. Angie Kim is a beautiful writer, and has crafted a novel that is equal parts courtroom drama, taut mystery, and heartbreaking story about hope—hope for medical miracles, hope for a better future, hope for your children. This one will haunt me for a while.

Carl says

My favorite book of the year, and I think the best courtroom drama I've ever read. I got this book 24 hours ago and stayed up most of the night to finish it. This is a powerful book. The murder trial draws you in and keeps you turning the pages, but the writing is absolutely marvelous. There are many insights about immigration and parenting, and although I don't have experience with either, it made me very sympathetic and helped me to understand that perspective. Wow. And the voices were very different from each other, which is an achievement because there are something like 6 different characters. The chapters written from the male characters' viewpoints in particular were really well done, which, as a guy, was a little bit surprising to me. And the whodunit mystery was very clever and supremely satisfying once we got the answer. I read a bookseller's tweet comparing this to Agatha Christie, and that's completely true. Absolutely first-rate.

The above is a copy of my Netgalley review. (By the way, I'm new to Netgalley, and how awesome is it that you can get free copies before the book comes out? Mind blown.) Anyway, coming here to Goodreads and seeing the recommended books pop up for me, it reminded me. Miracle Creek reminds me a lot of Secret History. That's not a courtroom drama, but both are women authors that have a really convincing male voice. And also the murder mystery and the really amazing writing.

Thank you to FSG and Netgalley for an advance digital copy of the book.

Davada says

I have never cried reading a book as much as I cried reading this one. Not cute, single tear drop down my face cry, but full on ugly-snot-whining cry (at the 80%+ mark of reading I was an entire emotional wreck).

This book starts out kind of slow, you slowly get introduced to the characters and their backgrounds. Can I drop in and say that Angie Kim does PERFECT characterization in this story. You don't understand... I officially stan her and her writing for the rest of my life solely based on the characterization in this book.

These characters felt and acted human. Not the factitious how we *want* humans to act, but how we *really do act* behind closed doors. With every single character in this book I could relate their characteristics, the good & the bad & the slightly sadistic, back to real people I knew and also back to myself.

I love authors who don't shy away from every human's (yes even the "good" humans) sadistic thoughts. We've all had them at varying degrees, and Angie Kim's incorporation that it doesn't make us *bad* people was actually beautiful and a reminder I really needed to hear.

This was like a therapy session & a good ass story all wrapped into one for me.

Not only did I finish this book with a lot of self reflection to do, but I also left the story with a lot of new knowledge on my plate. The incorporation of Korean culture was riveting for me, and honestly a fresh new perspective to the family roles that were key in every aspect of this story.

And the mentally disabled children, who were the stars of this book, were also very educational in a sense that Angie didn't become victim of political correctness. Yes, she made clear that the moms loved their children, but she also made very clear the emotional and physical toll that the mothers went through. The darker thoughts, the darker moments where they aren't in control, they were educational to me. I was able to feel not only the love & dedication but also just the burden they carried on their shoulders because they loved their children. It made the story so much richer and more complex.

I could honestly go on and on about all the complicated human interactions and relationships that happen within this enthralling murder mystery. Matt & Janine's wedding and biracial relationship, Mary & Matt, Pak & Young, Elizabeth & Henry, Teresa & Rosa, Elizabeth & Kitt...but I'll summarize by saying this; Angie knows what the fuck she's doing. These were real people in my head; these were real, unfiltered relationships going on. And they were all perfectly weaved into a kick ass murder mystery that'll have you saying "Who the fuck lit that fire" the entire time.

I loved this book. It's an all time favorite of mine. If I could give it 50000 stars out of 5 I would. Pick it up, read it. You won't be disappointed.

Dorie says

Miracle Creek
(previously 'Miracle Submarine')
by Angie Kim
due April 2019
Farrar, Straus, Giroux
Sarah Crichton Books

On the 29th day of August 2008, in the small town of Miracle Creek, Va, the 'Miracle Submarine' oxygen tank caught fire, and the submarine exploded. Inside were 6 people. 2 died and 4 were left severely and permanently injured.

The Miracle Submarine oxygen tank was an experimental and controversial treatment device run by Young and Pak Yoo. Patients enter a pressurized oxygen chamber that is submerged in water. It claims to help with infertility and autism.

No one say for sure who is at fault for what happened or why it happened, but there are plenty of theories. It depends who you ask,

It might be Young and Pak Yoo themselves, hoping to cash in on the insurance money to help pay for their daughters college education.

It might be the mother of an autistic boy in the submarine that day, she quit smoking but was seem sneaking cigarettes near the tank close to when it exploded.

It might be the Yoo's daughter, who was left with the task of monitoring the tanks...but left her desk to attend to her autistic brother who was banging his head, demanding a 'Barney' dvd.

The trial begins about a year after the accident. Invigorating and enthralling this is one of the many highlights of this book...the courtroom trial and attorneys are absolutely absorbing. Angie Kim has written a novel from her own real life experiences as a Korean immigrant and a trial lawyer. It weaves love, loyalty, experimental medical trials, law and autism together, but she does more than explore just action and consequence, she digs deep to reveal how bound we all are to our own emotions and what we think is right. Pure genius, this debut novel is beautifully written and thought out, and I look forward to more from her. Enchanting!

Nadia says

This is probably one of the best courtroom dramas I've ever read. Having hardly any idea of what the book was about, I found myself totally engrossed after only a few chapters in.

Elizabeth, a mother of an autistic boy is on trial for setting a fire to a hyperbaric oxygen chamber 'Miracle Submarine', causing the death of two people, including her son, and seriously injuring 4 other patients. The miracle submarine clinic is run by a Korean family who moved to the States for a better life. When the tragedy strikes, their wealth is destroyed and the father of the family ends up in a wheelchair. It becomes obvious very quickly that the case is not as straightforward as it first appeared. Each person involved in the fire tragedy is hiding something, protecting their own interests, not realising that the things they are hiding are crucial in uncovering the truth.

The chapters switch between different POVs slowly revealing new bits of information to gradually piece together the events preceding the tragedy. This is done in such a clever way that with each chapter I thought I knew who the criminal was, only to completely change my mind a chapter later, and then do it all over again!

I was very impressed with Angie Kim's ability to handle difficult subject matters with so much authenticity. The portrayal of the hardship of a Korean family moving to the States was heartbreaking and felt very real as the author was drawing upon her own experience. Reading about the struggles of the mothers with children with autism was emotional and again it felt very real.

I think this is a great debut novel and I look forward to reading more from Angie Kim.

Many thanks to Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and NetGalley for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Jay -hooked on books says

Young and Pak Yoo are a Korean-American couple based in rural Virginia. They run a medical treatment facility they dub 'Miracle Submarine'. Every day, several residents of the town take 'dives' in the submarine- ie they undergo sixty minute sessions of hyperbaric oxygen therapy. The facility is a dream come true, both for the Yooos and their clients.

That is, until one unfortunate evening, when the chamber explodes, killing two people instantly, and leaving several others injured. Investigators soon zero in on a prime suspect- Elizabeth, whose autistic son was

undergoing treatment in the chamber.

Every shred of evidence they have pinpoints Elizabeth as the arsonist. While she maintains she is innocent, it is clear that every other character is putting on a brave face, whilst guarding secrets of their own. They all seem to have a motive to sabotage *Miracle Submarine*. In the ensuing trial, the truth emerges, piece by piece.

Miracle Submarine is a compelling courtroom thriller. But what makes this book absolutely phenomenal is the way the characters have been written. Without sparing the mystery of the whodunit, Angie Kim has managed to incorporate themes of racism, immigration, displacement, motherhood, the emotional toll of being primary caretakers, truth and justice.

In particular, I loved the interactions between the female characters- they allow themselves to be vulnerable, make mistakes, and confess their darkest thoughts. All of their flaws and imperfections and sacrifices are visible, making them all seem very real.

Thank you to the publishers, the author and Netgalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.
