



# Transcendent

*Katelyn Detweiler*

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**Transcendent** Katelyn Detweiler

*What would you do if the world was crumbling to pieces...and everyone believed you were the only person who could put it back together?*

Terrorists have just bombed Disney World. A thousand miles away, a stranger shows up on Iris Spero's stoop in Brooklyn. He brings with him a shocking secret about Iris's birth, throwing her entire identity into question.

Suddenly, the press is confronting Iris with the wild notion that she might be the miracle the world now so desperately needs. Families all across the grieving nation are pinning their hopes on her as if she is some kind of saint or savior. She's no longer sure whom she can trust—except for Zane, a homeless boy who long ago abandoned any kind of hope.

When no one knows her but everyone wants a piece of her, who is Iris Spero now? And how can she—one teenage girl—possibly heal a broken world?

## Transcendent Details

Date : Published October 4th 2016 by Viking Books for Young Readers

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Author : Katelyn Detweiler

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## From Reader Review *Transcendent* for online ebook

### Holly says

So, the writing was easy to fall into, but the problem is that I just found this story ridiculous. I just don't believe that main character is this fucking special. I could not understand what was so brilliant about her character that separated her from everyone in the world, that stuck her on a pedestal and made everything about the bombing at Disney World better for some of those affected by it. Also, she spent the first 250 pages HIDING from life because she needed time to accept this. Like I get why; obviously everything about how she was born is enough to make any person run away for a bit. But the book was more about Iris and her new "responsibility" and her figuring out who she is than it's about the people who were destroyed by the bombing. Like I was kind of expecting more from this in that regard because Kirkus said something about the "the chilling plausibility of the actions and reactions of an America dealing with the murders of thousands of children," but I didn't see that? There was hardly any focus on anything other than Iris' past and secret. I did love the messages of forgiveness and hope, of overcoming grief and pain. And I do believe that some people have this innate charisma and compassion that can turn others' days around. But like I said, I didn't believe that Iris was special enough to cause all of this happiness. The book also didn't pack a super emotional punch for me, but that's probably because I didn't feel much for Iris, even though she wasn't a terrible character. *Transcendent* definitely had some good points to it, but the overall storyline just did not work for me. I couldn't really suspend my disbelief to appreciate it.

**Rating: 2.5 Paw Prints!**

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### Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

DNF @ page 130

This book is not for me. I don't know what I thought it was going to be but this is definitely not it. I am 130 pages into the book and nothing has happened except for discussion regarding the unbelievable story of Iris's birth. I just can't make myself want to pick this one up again.

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### Kimberly says

I received this as part of the First to Read! program with Penguin Random House.

This book surprised me after I was a few chapters in and started realizing what the subject matter was focused on. From the book description, I was expecting another young adult dystopian leader and it was far from that. The settings are places everyone recognizes: Disney World and New York City. A group of people called The Judges, bomb the happiest place on Earth. They leave behind many victims. Those that are physically hurt from the explosion, those that are mentally traumatized by what they lived through, relatives and friends who are now mourning the loss of their loved ones and a nation that is simply confused and baffled by such a hateful act. Sound familiar?

Our main character is Iris Spero who up until now has just been a happy seventeen year old girl who loves

her family, hanging out with her group of close friends and music. She lives for music!! At the beginning of the story, she quickly realizes that her parents have been keeping a really big secret about her. Her mother was apparently a virgin when she conceived Iris. She went through her own ridicule before running away, recreating her identity and hiding the speculation that would surround Iris's birth. When someone from her mother's past reveals the truth, the true story begins. We follow along as Iris goes through denial, mixed feelings regarding her parents and finally acceptance. The media soon gets hold of this story and the public reacts in various ways.

Even though this story touches on the familiar Christian birth, it doesn't follow one set religion. The author does an amazing job of excepting different beliefs and focusing more on the characters just being more open minded to the impossible happening.

"and a lot of people ended up regretting the way they'd treated her. Regretted that they'd been so closed-minded about the impossible being possible - about actual, real-life miracles happening, here and now, in this world."

Yes, religion is a theme present throughout the entire book. However, the focus is more about acceptance, watching a young girl work through some major issues and finally watching her take charge of her life and determine that she needs to live her life in a way that will make her happy regardless of others expectations.

I love that this book makes you think of you own values and beliefs, regardless of what they are. What if, we lived everyday putting those first. Found ways to volunteer or brighten someone's dark days with our unique talents. Focused on forgiveness instead of resentment and hate. Tried to spread a moment of joy each and every day. Those moments could also be considered miracles to some.

This is an unique young adult book that definitely intrigues the reader to do a little self evaluation and reminds us not to be so quick to judge. This was a sequel to the author's first book, Immaculate. That book follows the story of Iris's mother once she discovered she was expecting. I have not read that story yet, but I had no problem following along with one.

I rated this a solid three because the writing was simple at times, but keep in mind who the target audience is! I also thought the ending was rather rushed. We didn't find out about Zane's mysterious disappearances until the final few paragraphs. I almost would have liked an epilogue showing some time passed and how the characters were still making a difference. Just a heads up, there was a lot of curse words throughout the book in case that offends you.

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## **Naiya says**

I got this book through Penguin's First to Read program. This is a what-if story. Teenage Iris discovers that she might be divinely chosen to save the world. And knowing that, the book explores the choices Iris makes and how her friends and family support her as she makes her way in the newly chaotic and unfamiliar world full of desperate people hungry for salvation.

Iris is definitely something special, but even with a few mystical happenings here and there, the story is careful to keep the possibilities open. Perhaps Iris has powers. Or perhaps faith and hope is what makes the difference, and there is no magic.

I initially thought the book would be adventure and suspense, and while there is some of that, a lot of the story is about relationships and an inward journey of self-discovery and reflection. Throughout, as Iris deals

with teenage issues like first love, new and old friendships, parental boundaries and the consequences of actions, she carries herself with grace and compassion rarely seen in people thrice her age. From her volunteer work in the soup kitchens to the way she draws the misfits in her school under her wing, she instinctively stands up for what's right and, reaching deep into herself and doing and saying all the right things.

Less about adventure, this story is about free will, family and the transformative power of hope and forgiveness. Definitely not my cup of tea, but the story is a well-written yarn with an intriguing mystery of whether Iris is (or is not) the messiah.

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## Drew says

I hugely admire Ms. Detweiler as an author for coming up with and tackling difficult plots. That's partly the reason I was such a huge fan of her first book, *Immaculate*, about a teenage girl who is a virgin and pregnant.

*Transcendent* had another heavy plot - it begins with the bombing of Disney World and news reports about terrorists called "the Judges" killing so many innocent people. I can only imagine how hard it must have been to write about children being killed in bombings and it greatly affected me as a reader, especially with all of the terrorist attacks happening in the world right now. It's a scary, real thing and I thought the author captured the weight of this topic well.

"Because our fairy tale ended that day. Our castles were covered in blood."

It's true that Detweiler came up with a strong, unique plot... but then it seemed like she didn't know what to do with it. The story follows seventeen year old Iris as she wonders, **What kind of sick people would bomb Disney World?** Iris feels guilty because the bombings didn't touch her or her family and she wants to help those who are suffering. When her mother tells her a secret about herself, her world is turned upside down.

Iris runs away from home and tries to come to terms with this new information that has changed her whole view of herself. Unlike Detweiler's first book, this one didn't have a driven plot. Iris wandered around Brooklyn for most of the book, running into people who were deeply affected by the bombings. The sentimentalities were nice, but after a while **I started wondering when the pace would pick up**. By the end I didn't even know what point the author was trying to make.

After the prologue about Disney World being bombed, **nothing much happened for the rest of the book**. The plot was very much driven by emotion - but, sadly, the emotion wasn't enough to carry the entire story. Combine the dull plot with an unnecessary, instalove romance and you get a mediocre young adult book.

It's too bad this remarkable idea was squandered on an overly angsty main character and a plot that seemed to be going in circles. I would highly recommend Detweiler's powerful, exciting first book, *Immaculate*, but skip this one.

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## Jenn says

How would you react to finding out you were born to help cure the world? And how would the world react? *TRANSCENDENT* stays grounded in the totally plausible here and now, an ordinary teen grappling with the fact that the circumstances of her birth have made her extraordinary, with a backdrop of tragedy that packs a huge punch. Lovely and lyrical and frighteningly believable. This book will stay with me for a good long time.

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## Amy says

I tried so hard to read this, but I just can't keep going. I had so many issues with this book that I'm not sure I can summarize them all. The first, and hardest to get around, is the writing style. The writing was so heavy-handed and overdone it was hard to get through one page without rolling my eyes, and the dialogue was even more ridiculous. As a person very close in age to the main character of this book, I feel comfortable saying that no teenager talks like Iris does. I have never met a single teenager that talks in such stilted and ridiculous sentences. The dialogue was one of the main contributors to why I disliked Iris so much, but it definitely wasn't the only reason. This might just be me, but I find it really annoying when characters in books act like people that they've just met are their best friends. This was how Iris acted with pretty much every person she met in the first 200 pages. At some point, I just couldn't handle her treating a random woman that she met on the street like she was her grandmother, or treating this guy she kind of knows from school like he's her best friend when they run into each other. It just got ridiculous. The premise of this book was interesting, a girl finds out that she was born to save the world after Disney World is bombed, but the execution was a little bizarre. It's possible that this would have been explained better had I continued reading, but I found the entire bombing of Disney World to be completely implausible. Overall, I just could get past the little things that irritated me about this book.

I received a free eARC in exchange for my honest review.

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## Max Baker says

*Immaculate* was one of my favorite books of 2015 and one that I thought stood pretty well on its own, but when I realized there was a sequel days before it was scheduled to publish, I knew I needed to read it. While not necessarily a sequel or spin-off of *Immaculate* it does contain a few of the characters from *Immaculate* but you don't need to read that book to understand this one.

However, I will be reviewing this book, as well as *Immaculate* in a more...analytical sense because there's a lot in this series that needs to be uncovered. So, quick recap. In the first book, Mina finds herself pregnant after a mysterious encounter with an old woman named Iris despite never having sex. Shit hits the fan when word gets out and people don't believe her. Here's my review for more information.

*Transcendent* follows Iris, Mina's seventeen year old immaculately conceived child, a month after a bombing at Disney World killed and injured thousands of people. It's important to note that these books don't necessarily take a religious stand point nor do they decisively condemn religion. These books are about belief, more so in the first then the second but I'll get to that in a moment, and how belief can influence a persons life.

My favorite thing about the first book was how it handled belief. Mina was telling the truth, yet no one believed her because they couldn't, or wouldn't, let themselves believe her. Now, this works because it plays off the notion that the truth isn't necessarily what IS true, but what people believe is true. Hence the ending of *Immaculate* (view spoiler).

This book takes belief and looks at it not as the Truth, but as Hope and how if you believe in something enough it can give you the strength to move forward. After a national tragedy, millions of people are looking for a sign that something good can happen, and that something just so happens to Iris. The people latch onto her not because they DON'T believe she was immaculate conceived, but because they need SOMETHING to give them hope. And that's beautifully illustrated.

So, why did I give *Immaculate* a much higher rating than *Transcendent*? Well...it's because the idea Belief as Hope doesn't necessarily work with Iris as a character. Her internal struggle doesn't match her external one.

Let's look at *Immaculate* again. There Mina has to deal with the whole Belief is the Truth bullshit, but she also had to come to terms with the unexpected. Mina had to deal with something that completely came out of left field and accept it as a reality, which was something the people around her refused to do. Except something unexpected as reality instead of hating or denying it. Mina's internal struggle was the same as her external one, yet was handled differently and in a way that merges the two story lines. *Transcendent* doesn't do this.

Instead, Iris' internal struggle is coming to terms with the expectations the world suddenly has for her. For Iris' struggles to match up, she either needed to find hope in herself and believe that yes, she could save the world if she believed she could (Which never happens. Yes Iris sets off on a mission, but she doesn't believe that she can fix the world. She does it because the world around her believes she can, so she does it. There's a few hints that maybe, *maybe* Iris believes she could do it, but nothing too concrete) or if Iris convinced the world that she's just a seventeen year old girl and asking so much of her was not only damaging, but counter productive to what they wanted. If you want change, if you want hope, you have to find it and not rely on someone else to give it to you. That would have been a stronger moral of the book and tie the stories together.

As it stands, *Transcendent* didn't need to exist, but I can appreciate what Detweiler tried to do with this story. *Immaculate* is still one of my favorite books and I look forward to what Detweiler has in store for us next.

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**TL says**

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**Mathieu Mazza says**

Ma chronique 4/5 : <http://enjoybooksaddict.blogspot.fr/2...>

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## Marla says

I thought this story was okay. From the description, I thought it was going to be placed in the magical, supernatural genre but nope, didn't happen, which to me was disappointing. Iris isn't a bad character and I liked Zane and Zoey, but I didn't feel like the characters had too much depth in them. I didn't care for the characters. The "magical" part fell flat. I did like the way the author showed a little of how people react if there is a modern "virgin" birth and if that baby is from God. It was just an okay story that didn't make want to keep reading except that I got it free and I knew it was going to expire off my Ipad, so I wanted to finish before it disappeared. I really had high hopes for this book too.

I received this book through Penguin Random House First to Read program.

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## Dana says

I got a preview of this book through [firststoread.com](http://firststoread.com).

*Transcendent* explores the life of a teenage girl who is caught between the desire to be normal and the desire to help the world around her.

Iris lives in a world in which Disneyworld has been bombed. Hope is in short supply as families were torn apart and children are hospitalized with serious injuries from the explosion.

One day a strange man shows up at Iris' house and turns her world upside down. Iris learns the truth of her birth and is faced with a decision to make on how to handle the truth.

While I enjoyed the writing and the characters, I was a bit underwhelmed with the story itself. I felt as though it could have been a story of more magic and a little more explanation for why Iris was the special child that she was.

The brief love story is nice but it felt uncomplete. It just felt like it needed more. In 440 pages, I expected the story to be a bit more exciting and eventful. Some of the characters never got developed and I was sad not to learn more about certain characters.

I look forward to what the author may come up with in the future as her writing has promise. A more developed story, however, would be ideal.

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## Jen Ryland says

I remember reading about *Immaculate*, this author's debut book. As soon as I began reading **Transcendent** I wondered if it might be a sequel to that book, which was about a high school student who finds herself pregnant by immaculate conception.

Yes, it is. **Transcendent** follows Iris, that immaculately conceived baby. Iris has grown up in a seemingly normal Brooklyn family, with two parents and a younger brother. But after a terrible tragedy strikes, Iris is shocked to learn about the strange circumstances surrounding her birth.



I wish I'd read *Immaculate* first, but I certainly felt that **Transcendent** does a good job of filling the reader in on the events of that book. And though I liked **Transcendent** overall, it's a book of more subtlety and less plot than I was expecting. I went in thinking that this would be a dystopian or post-apocalyptic story but it was something quite different. The story opens with a bombing in Disney World that kills tens of thousands. That's a pretty dramatic event, but I soon realized that the book wasn't really going to be about that. Those events are described only briefly and are more of an inciting event -- the reason Iris gets outed as the Miracle Baby.

After that, there's a media frenzy and Iris and her family are besieged by people who have all kinds of expectations of her. They think she might be a holy figure, the sign of some sort of Second Coming. I did like the way the book dealt with the whole "pressure of expectations" thing, which is something all of us can relate to even a) if we aren't religious and b) don't have the expectations of the entire world on us.

I think the thing that surprised me most about the book was that for a story about a national tragedy and a (possible) religious second coming, the plot and tone of the book was measured. Even summarizing the plot isn't a spoiler because there are no dramatic events or shocking twists. Iris hides out from the media circus and tries to come to terms with how she can (or can't) help others. That's really about it. While I admired the way the book refused to be more dramatic, at times I was frustrated. Again, I didn't read the first book, but it seemed to me that if the first book described a miracle, **Transcendent** seemed almost to refute that miracles exist. Or perhaps to argue that miracles are not really religious events but mundane and earthly ones.

I'll be curious to see what other readers think, especially those who have read the first book. Even though this book wasn't entirely what I expected, I did enjoy it.

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*I received a free advance copy of this book to review.*

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## Ashley says

I want to preface this review with two things. First, I received this book in exchange for a fair review through Penguin's First To Read program. Second, I did not finish this book. I couldn't...it just wasn't very good. But it's my policy to read more than half of a book before I review it, so take that for what it's worth.

To be perfectly blunt: I didn't like this book. In the most damning of faint praise, I thought the premise had promise but the execution fell very, very short.

Some commenters call out the marketing blurb for being misleading, and to be fair, it is. It positions this book as magical realism, and outside of some virgin birth stuff, it has little in the way of either. But the blurb *\*has\** to pull the wool over readers' eyes--if you told me *Transcendent* would be a long, meandering narrative about a girl born of a virgin, there's no way I'd pick it up. It's just not interesting. And that's the problem here, at its core: this book just **isn't interesting**.

There's a litany of issues permeating this book in everything from plot conceptualization to characterization. There are so many, in my opinion, that they're not actually worth getting into here. What I would like to call out is the editorial work, which totally fails both the writer and the novel. The pacing issues, the shallow character development, the deus ex machina that starts the story (killing 10,000 people in DisneyWorld?

HOW DO YOU EVEN SMUGGLE THAT MUCH EXPLOSIVE MATTER INTO THE PARK? The fact that this bothered me in a story about VIRGIN BIRTH should say worlds about execution)...those are all issues that should have been caught and addressed during the editing process. So while the author is at fault for some of these things, she was failed by her editorial team. So I don't think the blame for every misstep in this book should fall squarely on the author's shoulders here. Were I Penguin, I'd be making some changes to the team responsible for *Transcendent*.

I will say this: not every YA novel needs to be John Green, nor do they need to be dystopian coming-of-age novels. I appreciate this book's willingness to move in a different direction. But unfortunately, it just doesn't work. This book wants to be a thoughtful exploration of what faith, belief, and hope mean in a world punctuated by tragedy and fear. What it turns out to be is a largely directionless, 200-pages-too-long slog.

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## **i fall in love book blog says**

### 3.5 Stars

This book is extremely hard to review. It's definitely not what I expected when I started reading it, and that affected my feelings on it somewhat. **This book shouldn't be marketed as fantasy**, because hearing that its a fantasy and then reading the blurb creates certain expectations as to how this book will play out. **I do think it is a good book**, but I also feel hoodwinked. If I had known what the book was *really* about then I probably wouldn't have requested/read it. This reads more like general YA fiction which isn't my *cuppa*.

Honestly speaking, I do think *Transcendent* is a good book, and I do think it has its audience, but they did themselves a disservice by marketing it the way they have. **It shouldn't be getting as low of reviews as it is getting.** I found Iris to be an honest, believable character that I could relate to. She's getting through life the best way she knows how given what she finds out. She handles it with poise and grace after taking some time to herself to process the information. She handles everything better than I think most people would. Zane and Zoey were really important characters to include. They added some dimension and helped tie things together. They helped to put a face on tragedy, and not just the tragedy of Disney. They also portrayed the real struggles of homelessness and poverty while exemplifying the strength of sibling love.

This book makes you think. It has a large focus on belief and faith, as well as acceptance. It isn't a religious book, and the main character doesn't practice any sort of religion but she is forced to try to reconcile what she has known to be true her whole life with what the world and her parents are now saying about her. It's a tough pill to swallow, but she manages.

I received a copy of this book from Penguins First to read program in exchange for an honest review.

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