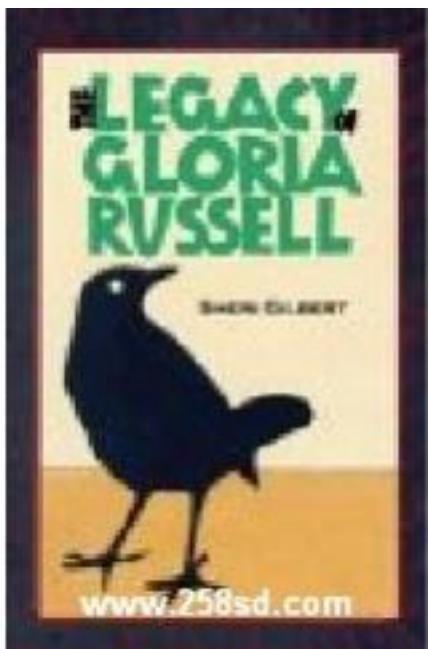


# The Legacy of Gloria Russell



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From School Library Journal Grade 6-9-Three weeks after his best friend dies of an aneurysm, 12-year-old Billy James Wilkins tries to assuage his grief by understanding Gloria's recent friendship with the town hermit and the resulting change in her. Is Josef Satan, shunned by the people in Kelseyville, MO, in some way responsible for her death? Children are warned to ignore him, and especially warned not to touch him. Spunky, curious Gloria did just that, and even befriended him. Three months later she is dead. When the hill that Satan's cabin sits on begins slipping in the rain, the men in the community refuse to help him. Billy, with his knack for fixing things, offers his aid. Together they build a wall and a friendship. When Satan's cabin is burned to the ground, Billy convinces some people to help rebuild it. In return, the nonjudgmental Satan spends time with the fatherless Billy, teaching him to carve

figures in wood and to realize the strength of one's individuality, the power of community, and the need to accept others. Billy not only matures in the course of this novel, but also has a spiritual awakening, realizing that he has had the help of a hand greater than his own in fixing things. This lyrically written debut novel is reminiscent of Ruth White's novels of Appalachia.-Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Gr. 4-7. "Stay clear of Satan, " warn the adults in 12-year-old Billy James' small Ozarks town. They aren't referring to the biblical figure but rather to a recluse with an unfortunate eastern European last name. When Billy James' best friend, Gloria, dies not long after befriending the ostracized Satan, Billy James himself is drawn to the hermit, as much in tribute to his friend as out of morbid curiosity: Have the rumors of Satan's cursed touch been true all along? A family crisis converges with Billy James' deepening relationship with Satan--who turns out to be a talented woodcarver with the soul of a philosopher--to bring the town's prejudices to a head. It's up to Billy James to unravel the tangle of secrets and half-truths about Satan that have been allowed to fester for decades. While Gilbert's characters and situations feel a bit familiar, Billy James' grief over the loss of his friend is palpable, and young readers will admire his determination to honor the memory of the "freckle-faced girl with a crooked grin and a fierce spirit." Jennifer MattsonCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved See all Editorial Reviews

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