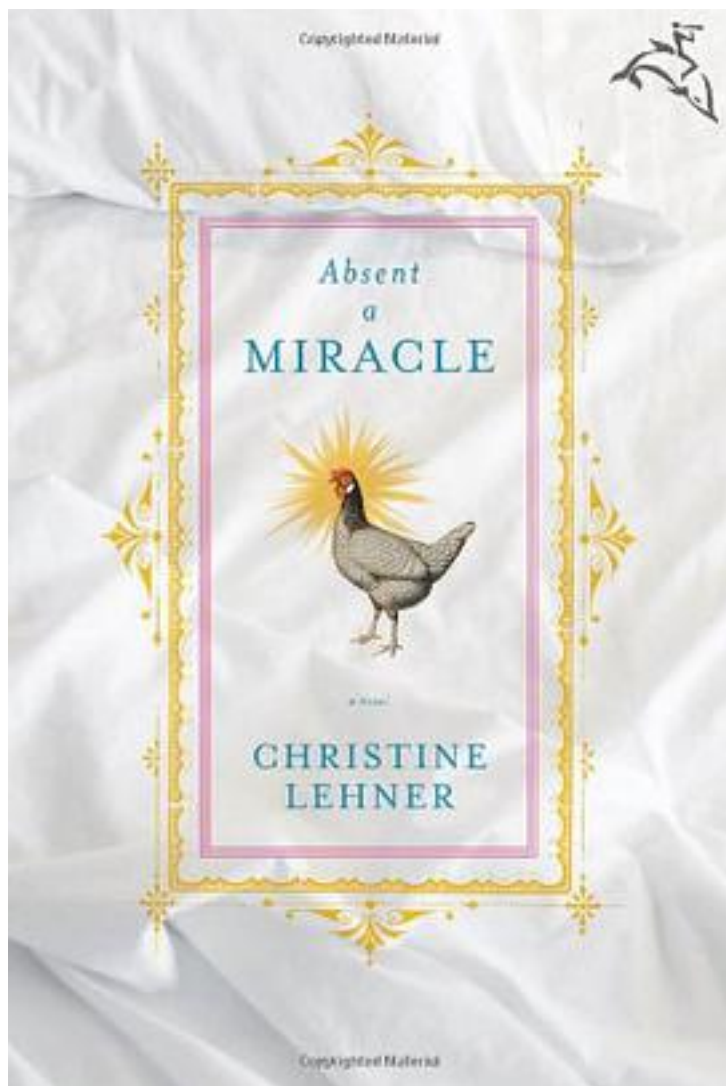


# Absent a Miracle



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Alice Fairweather, a lapsed Catholic who lives in upstate New York with her two sons and philandering husband (whom she loves to distraction), has just lost her dream job as a radio talk show hostess. When one of the family dogs suddenly becomes gravely ill, Alice opts out of a family spelunking vacation to nurse the pooch. Unexpectedly, her husband's charismatic Nicaraguan Harvard roommate, Abelardo--coffee planter, failed seminarian, and scion of an old Nicaraguan family--comes to visit as part of his quest to have his aunt canonized as the first Nicaraguan saint. Through a variety of somewhat bizarre and miraculous events, Abelardo must return home to his village before his canonization work is complete. But Alice, with time on her hands and a void to fill, adopts Abelardo's mission and becomes obsessed with helping him find the path to sanctify his ancestor. Not only does she befriend Hubert, the eccentric man in charge of New York's hagiography club, she becomes somewhat of an expert on the various women who have achieved the distinction of sainthood, and soon finds herself on a plane destined for Nicaragua. Abelardo's quest to canonize his aunt, together with Alice's quest to save her marriage, makes for a miraculous story of love, loss, and faith.

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