

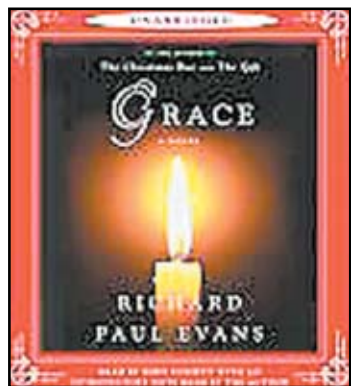
# 'Grace' deals with harsh reality sensitively

## Regional Reads

By Charlene Hirschi



"Grace" by Richard Paul Evans (Simon & Schuster, 2008)



Richard Paul Evans

by her step-father and has run away from home to remove herself from the abusive environment and because she is pregnant with his child. By chance, one of her classmates, Eric, finds her dumpster-diving at his place of work. Grace writes in her diary that night, "A boy found me tonight as I was looking for food in a Dumpster. He acted like he didn't know why I was there, which makes me think he's either dumb or good." Eric takes pity on her and offers her the clubhouse he and his brother have built in a secluded area of their backyard. It is October and snow is already on the ground in Utah, but, having no other options, she agrees to spend the night there — sans heat and plumbing. The only functional parts of the clubhouse, in the dead of winter, are a naked light bulb hanging from the ceiling, a "water spigot . . . one of the old orange hand-lever types" and an outdoor privy a few yards away.

The single night soon becomes three months of hiding in the shack, with 15-year-old Eric sneaking her food, blankets and falling deeply in love with her. Eventually he buys her a small space heater with his earnings from his part-time job at the McBurger Queen. Determined to protect Grace at all costs, he eventually finds himself more and more deeply involved and completely overwhelmed by the circumstances — until one night in December he comes home to find a patrol car in his driveway.

him truth, and he still loved me. . . . The truest grace is not to forgive, but to have never found fault." Like Eric, the reader falls in love with her and wants this book to have a happy ending — for her sake and Eric's. It is impossible not to relate to this story and recognize that these are circumstances that many young men and women are facing at this very minute. Abuse is real. Fear and desperation are being faced by those who don't have the maturity to extricate themselves from the daily torture they must endure — always at the threat of "don't tell or I'll . . ."

In a letter from the author, Evans writes: "While the story you've just read is fiction, at this moment there are thousands of stories like Grace's happening in real life . . . With the release of this book we have launched an exciting new and massive project called The Christmas Box Initiative. Our goal is to help every youth in America who is aging out of foster care. Right now these youths face serious

challenges including crime, drug addiction, teen pregnancy, poverty and suicide. With no one to help them, many of them return to abusive home situations or end up homeless and on the streets." Known for his philanthropic work, Evans gives readers information on how to join in this fight for abused kids.

This book deals with a harsh reality in a responsible way, and I strongly recommend it for all age groups older than 15. The message is one that all will benefit from and perhaps someone who is struggling with these issues will recognize themselves and talk to a responsible adult to get the help they need. If just one adult or teenager recognizes the signs of abuse and reaches out, the price of the book will more than pay for itself.

Charlene Hirschi is among a number of freelance writers whose columns appear in The Herald Journal. Authors, readers and editors can e-mail charlene.hirschi@yahoo.com.

## \* This week's New York Times Bestseller List \*

### HARDCOVER FICTION

1. "Handle With Care" by Jodi Picoult
2. "The Associate" by John Grisham
3. "Promises in Death" by J. D. Robb
4. "Run for Your Life" by James Patterson and Michael Ledwidge
5. "One Day at a Time" by Danielle Steel

### HARDCOVER NONFICTION

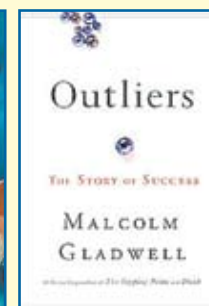
1. "Outliers" by Malcolm Gladwell
2. "The Yankee Years" by Joe Torre and Tom Verducci
3. "Out of Captivity" by Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, Tom Howes and Gary Brozek
4. "The Lost City of Oz" by David Grann
5. "Dewey" by Vicki Myron with Bret Witter

### HARDCOVER ADVICE

1. "Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man" by Steve Harvey with Denene Millner
2. "The Power of Soul" by Zhi Gang Sha
3. "The Last Lecture" by Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow
4. "The Secret" by Rhonda Byrne
5. "Flat Belly Diet!" by Liz Vaccariello and Cynthia Sass

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

1. "The House in the Night" by Susan Marie Swanson
2. "Listen to the Wind" by Greg Mortenson and Susan L. Roth
3. "The Composer is Dead" by Lemony Snicket
4. "Cat" by Matthew Van Fleet and Brian Stanton
5. "Big Words for Little People" by Jamie Lee Curtis



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