



Death Spiral

Janie Chodosh

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Life is tough when you have a junkie for a mom. But when sixteen-year-old Faith Flores—scientist wannabe, loner, new girl in town—finds her mom dead on the bathroom floor, she refuses to believe her mom really OD'd. But the cops have closed the case and her Aunt T, with whom she now lives in the Philly 'burbs, wants Faith to let go and move on.

But a note from Melinda, her mom's junkie friend, leads Faith to a seedy downtown methadone clinic. Were her mom and Melinda trying to get clean?

When Melinda dies of an overdose, Faith tracks down the scientists behind the trial running at the methadone clinic. Soon she's cutting school and lying to everyone—her aunt, her best friend, even the cops. Everyone, that is, except the strangely alluring Jesse, who believes the “real” education's on the street and whose in-your-face honesty threatens to invade Faith's self-imposed “no-dating” rule. A drug-dealer named Rat-Catcher warns Faith to back off, but it doesn't stop Faith from confronting a genetics professor with a guilty conscience. When the medical examiner's body winds up in the Schuylkill River, Faith realizes if she doesn't act fast, she may be the next body in the morgue. Can Faith stop this deal gone bad from taking a sharp turn for the worse?

Death Spiral is a smart, surprising novel featuring an in-your-face heroine sure to appeal to teens and adults alike.

Death Spiral Details

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Author : Janie Chodosh

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From Reader Review Death Spiral for online ebook

Sarah says

Faith Flores finds her mother dead in their apartment. The autopsy report says the cause of death was a heroine overdose. Faith's mother had been an addict for years, but Faith says was clean before her death. She will not believe what the examiner report says the cause of death is. Faith begins to research, dig, and weasel her way to find the truth of her mothers death. She encounters people who want to help, and people who want to keep her in the dark about the truth. what Faith finds will surprise her.

The book has a fast pace plot, which is great. I love the book because the reading is fast. the information in the book is accurate to an addict's life. To me Faith became too whiny and throws herself too much of a pity party, but i loved the other characters and the story line was great.

Alicia says

Janie Chodosh's Death Spiral is a gripping young adult novel that deals with death and grief and the strength to fight for what you believe. Her story follows 16 year old Faith Flores whose mother seemingly died of a heroin overdose and who against all odds, seeks to find the truth. Chodosh engages the reader with a world of mystery and intrigue. Faith is a likable and relatable character whose struggle is very real and her journey towards healing is inspiring.

Chodosh understands the way teenagers interact and has a firm grasp on emotions and emotional turmoil. Though the plot is dark Chodosh's writing is mesmerizing with a subtle splash of humor to keep things interesting. The entire book keeps you on your toes with twists and turns around every corner.

I am eager to read the next Faith Flores Science Mystery.

Amy Rogers says

ScienceThrillers.com Review: Because science-themed YA fiction is so rare, Death Spiral: A Faith Flores Science Mystery made my day when I heard about it, and I was not disappointed in the reading. Set in Philadelphia, Death Spiral features a tortured but believable protagonist, sixteen-year-old Faith Flores, whose dogged pursuit of the truth about her mother's death puts her on somebody's hit list. I'm not a regular reader of YA fiction, but this novel seems to do a good job with teen dialogue (not hitting you over the head with slang). The usual teen-centric themes of 'belonging' and 'becoming' run strong in the story.

Author Janie Chodosh passes the science test. Death Spiral is a mystery that can only be solved by getting answers to the science questions. I love that. Chodosh handles the science gently but accurately so readers should not be put off by tech. The science revolves around a clinical trial for treating heroin addiction. Antisense RNA, gene therapy, and genome sequencing are all relevant. In a nice touch, the author brings up issues related to genetic testing. What happens if you know you're at risk for a genetic disease? Would you want to know?

The story's climax is set in the most delightfully unconventional place: the ballroom of a major science conference during a keynote address. I loved that this seemingly dull setting was charged with excitement. In this scene, the sharing of scientific information takes on paramount importance. The scientific logic of the criminal, as it is finally revealed, makes sense on paper so I was satisfied. But in practice, the scheme would be needlessly complex and impractical to achieve the bad guy's goals...

A few minor complaints: One of Faith's defining characteristics is the way she shuts down her feelings and locks other people out. While this makes sense given her past, it does become grating at times; the reader wants to shake some sense into her as she self-inflicts wounds on her relationships. A minor character experiences an unbelievable recovery toward the end of the story, but this didn't matter much. I also think the title doesn't do this book any favors. It's bland.

Clinical trials are experiments, but I wouldn't describe enrollees as being "experimented on." But this is a thriller/mystery novel so no surprise to find some big bad pharma and a "mad" scientist. The scientist and physician characters, of which there are several, are, as in real life, a diverse bunch of people, good, bad, well-intentioned, conflicted, and everything in between.

Faith Flores would fit right in. This reader was touched by Faith's solid sense of self and is rooting for her and for millions of real-life teens to take the plunge and pursue the study of science.

A lovely quote from the text: "Sadness, with an atomic mass heavier than plutonium, settles in my chest."

Catherine Winn says

With everything this main character, Faith Flores, has been through in her short life would have me curled up in a fetal position hiding from the world, but this amazing character has strength reserves that sees her through hurts, dangers, internal growth in relating to others, and facing herself. She's not a super hero but she is totally amazing and believable and I liked her. The plot kept me turning the pages and Faith and her friends kept me caring about them and the outcome.

The science mystery that drives the character to find out the truth made me want to hit the internet and investigate and learn more about gene science...huh? Me? Who always found science a big snooze and concentrated on the fine arts? Oh, my, I hope that young adults who read this amazing book become ignited by the future possibilities in the sciences.

Janie Chodosh is an author to be added to your must read list!

Laura says

Faith Flores on the surface is an angry, angst filled high school student. In reality, she is so much more. She recently moved in with her aunt after her mother's apparent drug over dose death. For the first time in her life she lives in a home without roaches or drug paraphernalia, has good food instead of junk purchased from street vendors and a chance for a stable life with her aunt. How could this bright young woman possibly not see the opportunities now available to her?

Everyone knows her mother was a heroin addict. Faith would bet her life that her mother was clean at the time of her death. She was in an experimental program that was helping her kick the habit. Why did the police find drugs at their apartment after her death? Faith is convinced it had something to do with the program her mom was on and is determined to prove that she did not die of a drug overdose, but from something gone terribly wrong with the treatments they were giving her.

She grudgingly goes to school, even though she is bright and extraordinarily gifted in science, but has trouble focusing because she cannot help going over the events of her mother's death. She makes a few unlikely friends. Anj , a very together girl that seems to do everything right. Her clothes, makeup, studies all scream college bound preppie, but she has taken a reluctant Faith under her wing. Then there is the new boy, Jesse. Under the grunge exterior is a smart, quick-witted doctor's son who is predestined to follow his father's footsteps.

Unexpected Faith gets a call from, Melinda, one of her mom's junkie friends who is in the same experimental program that her mom was in. When Melinda turns up dead, Faith will risk her own life to expose the clinic's responsibility in the two deaths. Afraid for the safety of her aunt and her two newfound friends, she pushes them away from her as she descends deeper into the illegal activities and the cover-up that she is discovering with her research. People involved with the clinic are turning up dead and Faith might be next.

Death Spiral is Janie Chodosh's first novel and the first in her Faith Flores Science Mystery Series. Not only does this book appeal to the YA crowd, but adults will also enjoy the underlying tension as Faith tries to adjust to her new life without the mother she truly loved and how close she spirals away from all of the good aspects of her life forsaking them to go up against something much bigger than she imagined.

This wonderfully written, fast paced mystery does not shove boring facts at the reader, but mixes them masterfully in. Chodosh takes on the genetics of addiction much like her characters would, it is obvious she has done her homework . Her author notes state she has ...”strived to be scientifically accurate” as well as lists the things that are fiction. I love that she does that because readers are often left wondering which part, if any, is accurate. She also suggests learning more by visiting the Genetic Science Learning Center and their website.

Faith could have easily been a character that the readers do not like. That is far from true. Her rough edges are merely there to keep herself and others from getting hurt. She is smart, tenacious and loyal. She will stand up well in the next books in Chodosh's series.

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DISCLOSURE OF MATERIAL CONNECTION: I have a material connection because I received a review copy that I can keep for consideration in preparing to write this content. I was not expected to return this item after my review.

Sarah-Jayne Briggs says

(I received this book for free from Poisoned Pen Press, through NetGalley, in exchange for a review).

(This review may contain spoilers).

I found this book to be a really interesting, well-written read with characters that I really liked.

I could relate really well to the main character, Faith, in this. What she went through with her mother actually mirrors a lot of my relationship with my mother - though I was older than she was at the time. I felt the author did a really good job of portraying the mixed emotions Faith had in a realistic way.

I did like the other characters in the book as well. Although Faith's relationships with Anj and Jesse were really up-and-down, it still came across as really natural - and Jesse was particularly sweet with how hard he worked to be a supportive friend towards Faith. Anj was a really good friend, too. I felt it was really good that Faith had that kind of support from them, no matter how much she tried to keep everyone at arms length.

The science aspects were a bit confusing at times, but I think I understood most of it by the end. I thought it was all really cleverly done and I particularly liked how the whole thing ended, even if I would have liked to see a bit more, 'I told you so'.

The writing was mostly good, though I did notice a few errors. The book was well-written enough to keep me reading on the edge of my seat, though. I would definitely be interested in reading more books in this series in the future. It would be nice to see more of the characters.

Franca Pelaccia says

Death Spiral is the debut novel of Janie Chodosh and book one of the Faith Flores Science Mysteries. The novel introduces Faith Flores the sixteen-year-old protagonist whose mother, a heroin addict, dies from what everyone—her sister, the police, the medical examiner—or, in short, the world assumes is an overdose. Everyone, of course, but Faith. Faith is the only one who believes that her mother was clean at the time of her death and died from some mysterious affliction that left her visibly scarred and emaciated. A visit with one of her mother's junkie friends adds fire to Faith's belief. The woman tells Faith that she is participating in the same experimental clinical drug trial for heroin addiction as her mother was at the time of her death, and is showing the same adverse symptoms. The junkie's sudden death confirms Faith's suspicions and she begins to investigate the clinic, the doctors running it, and the experimental drug being used to cure heroin addiction.

Of course, as a sixteen year old with a junkie mother, no one believes Faith's suspicions. As she digs further in order to clear her mother's name she is thwarted, threatened, and even bribed with a compensation package. When the medical examiner who did the autopsy on her mother and then the doctor who ran the methadone clinic where the trial was being conducted mysteriously die, Faith knows she is getting closer to the truth. Her life may be in danger, she is alienating friends and her aunt, her school work is suffering, but she can't stop. The truth eventually leads her to misguided or crooked doctors, playing with gene therapies, and the multi-million dollar world of pharmaceutical companies.

Brought up by a junkie mother, Faith is beyond her sixteen years of age. She is resilient, smart, hard around the edges, but inside a girl who believes in the truth that was her mother and wants everyone to know that truth. She wants to move forward with her life, and dreams about a career in science, but needs to clear the past first. Her wisecracks and snide remarks are somewhat on the overdone side but don't mask the fact that she is hurting. She is a loner and known as "the junkie's daughter" at school. She prefers to work solo but eventually learns the value of friends.

Death Spiral is tightly written with the emphasis on the development and history of the main character as well as her social development. Most of the action happens in the last quarter and moves quickly to resolution from there on. The mystery is centered in science, more specifically in gene therapies, but it is not

overdone and presented in terms that anyone can grasp. *Death Spiral* was a fun and fast read. I'm curious where Ms. Chodosh will take Faith and her group of allies next.
Reviewed for Bookpleasures.com

John Clark says

Gutsy female protagonist, multiple plot themes well wound together and interesting characters. There's a lot to like here and I would happily suggest it to any school or public library. I've ordered the sequel and am eager to read it.

James Jackson says

So, Janie Chodosh wrote *Death Spiral: A Faith Flores Science Mystery* for young adults and I am an old (old) adult. Who cares? I found the novel well-written, the characters and story engaging and I read it in a couple of large gulps. Who can ask for more?

Faith Flores's mother was a heroin addict. Her death certificate says she died of an overdose, yet Faith is unconvinced. Her pursuit of truth leads her to discover new friendships and a better understanding of who and how to trust in a society filled with both trustworthy and untrustworthy people.

I'll leave it to others to fill in the details; I'll just suggest people pick up the book and give it a read.

~ Jim

Tina Whittle says

I chose *Death Spiral* as the first book in the YA Mystery Reading Club at my daughter's high school -- she and the other students enjoyed every page. We talked about the book's foundation in the sciences, its emotional depth, its realistic characters (Chodosh knows her way around the language and brain workings of teenagers, I'd decided, and the students agreed that her take was spot-on). We hope to see more in this intelligent, well-written, engaging series.

Rich in Color says

Review Copy: Digital ARC from NetGalley

Sixteen-year-old Faith Flores found her mother dead in their apartment. Her mother had been a junkie for years, so the police and everyone except Faith believes that it was an overdose. Her mother had been clean for quite a while though. She is even more puzzled after Melinda, one of her mother's friends, contacts her. Melinda mentions a clinical trial that they had both been in an attempt to get off of the drugs. In spite of the treatment program, it isn't long before Melinda has also died of an overdose. Two deaths so close together has Faith looking for answers and stumbling into a mess of trouble herself.

The storyline is fairly grim as Faith struggles with her grief and wonders if she will follow in her mother's path of addiction, but there are also many passages that made me smile. Faith has a wry sense of humor that pops out often enough to take a little of the edge off. I always appreciate a bit of snappy dialogue and the personalities and friendships in the story allow for plenty of that. *Death Spiral* has a nice balance of friendship, mystery, humor, and danger.

The relationships were what truly kept me involved in the story. Faith grew up in survival mode so she tends to keep herself locked away from people, but there are a few who manage to sneak past the walls she's built. Her relationships take a beating, but it is interesting to see them develop as Faith struggles to know herself and the person she is becoming in the midst of all the turmoil. I look forward to learning more about Faith as this series continues.

Recommendation: Get it soon if you are up for a fast paced mystery.

Review originally published at Rich in Color <http://richincolor.com/2014/04/mini-r...>

Bianca I. says

Despite the underlying scientific nature of the plot (which I often find quite boring and difficult to understand since I'm very bad at anything even remotely related to math/science), I quite enjoyed reading this book.

The plot was well developed and the characters defined enough, and my only main issue with this book were some of the stereotypes it enforces.

Faith, who dresses with steel toed combat boots and a permanent scowl just to scare others off, holds up her facade of tough heroine just to hide the fact that she's been wounded many times by the constant relapsing of her drug-addicted mother and the absence of her father, and I frankly thought it was a little bit too unoriginal for my tastes.

And then we have Jesse, typical kid brought up in a house where everyone has high expectations who struggles to find his true identity, torn between what others want for him and his desire for freedom. They meet, the butt heads at first, but end up together in the end. Can't say I was that impressed with the romantic sub-plot, to be honest.

On the hand, for what concerns the "investigatory" part of the novel, I really enjoyed the mystery of Augustine's death and the way it was handled, and I found myself really invested into finding out the truth

behind it. I have to admit I sometimes got confused between the doctors and by some of the scientific explanations, but aside from that I found the overall construction of the main plot very intriguing albeit simple.

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I was kindly given this copy from Poisoned Pen Press in exchange for my honest review.

C.P. Cabaniss says

I received a copy of this novel from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Overall I really enjoyed reading this. Faith was a likable main character who was dealing with a lot. The death of a mother would be difficult for most people, but the circumstances here made it even harder. It was interesting to see how Faith handled thoughts of her mother, the way love and hate blended together in a complex storm of emotions.

The side characters were a lot of fun. I usually have a thing for characters named Jesse, for some reason, and this one fell right in there. I also really enjoyed Anj and Duncan. I'm hoping that book two has a little more with Aunt T.

Full review coming soon on my blog.

Maryann says

I really enjoyed Death Spiral. Faith is a smart, dedicated young 16 years old. One of the things I really liked about the book was the fact that Faith is Latina. It is so nice to see diversity in this book. We need more positive Latina role models in YA books.

Lance Wright says

This young adult mystery is an excellent introduction to this series, and the central character is the principal reason why. She's independent and has resolve, but she also has all the insecurities that most 16-year-olds have. Also quite impressive is her supporting cast. First-rate in nearly every respect, this series debut title is highly recommended. Read our full review, here: <http://www.mysteriousreviews.com/myst...>
