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The Chancer Chronicles

Three stories of second chances and hope for a boy and his dog.

- **"My Invisible World"**
by Morasha Winokur
- **"Wounded in the Womb" and "Nuzzle"**
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reader
views
reviews, by kids, for kids

Book Review

My Invisible World

Life with my brother, his disability and his service dog

ISBN 9780984200702 Reviewed by Evan Weldon (age 7) for Reader Views (11/09)

"My Invisible World: Life with My Brother, His Disability and His Service Dog" by eleven-year-old Morasha R. Winokur is an excellent book about what it is like for the author to live with her disabled brother and his service dog.

Morasha and her brother Iyal are both the same age. They were adopted from Russia. When Iyal was still in his mother's womb, his birth mother drank some alcohol. What the mother eats and drinks is what the baby eats and drinks, too. Alcohol damages the developing brain in the baby, destroying some of the brain cells that help control behavior, thinking, learning and remembering things. This kind of disability is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Life is hard for Iyal. Sometimes, if he is even thinking of Morasha, he will scream out her name for a really long time. Iyal needs a lot of attention from his parents, so sometimes Morasha feels like she doesn't get any attention. Sometimes Iyal embarrasses her in front of her friends, and sometimes keeps her from being able to do things she wants to do. Iyal can be really annoying, but Morasha still loves him a lot.

When they finally get a service dog named Chancer, it helps the whole family immensely. Chancer gives Iyal (and everybody else, too) lots of love. When Iyal is having a tantrum, Chancer will lie on him to calm him down. Chancer can keep Iyal from wandering away with strangers or running into the street.

The book has fifteen pages of photos of Morasha, Iyal, Chancer and their family. They are extremely good and help you to get to know the family.

If I could give "My Invisible World: Life with My Brother, His Disability and His Service Dog" by Morasha R. Winokur more than five stars, I would! It is probably the best book I have ever reviewed. Everybody should read this book. I think that there are three things that everyone should learn from this book. First, women should never drink any alcohol if they could possibly be pregnant. Second, everyone should treat people with disabilities and their families nicely. Finally, everyone should respect working dogs.

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Book Reviews - My Invisible World (continued)

Morasha Rael Winokur rocks. She's authentic. Morasha knows that her brother's constant babbling isn't his fault, but sometimes she just wishes she could be a regular eleven-year-old girl. Not exactly possible, when brother Iyal, born with FASD, is unpredictable and emotional no matter where he is. At times, part of her wishes he would just shut up, while another part says, "But deep inside, I love him so much."

There are plenty of "That's not fair" times for Morasha, but also amazing amounts of family love, insight, and support. And an FASD service dog named Chancer for Iyal. With Chancer, Morasha says, she has a chance for a life of her own.

Read this book and I guarantee you'll never think the same about the outcome of drinking while pregnant. But it's much more. It's an opportunity to meet a delightful family that advocates for children with FASD.

Morasha's book is the "must have" of the 2009 holiday season and the coming year. A perfect gift, regardless of whether the reader has family or friends with special needs."

Judith Vorfeld

My Invisible World is a wonderful book. It provides a caring and thoughtful perspective on living with a sibling who has developmental challenges. Morasha is a very insightful, honest and intelligent author.

When you realize how old she is it is absolutely incredible. I think this is a "must-read" for families, young people, professionals and anyone who wants to read about a remarkable family, a remarkable young lady, and living with someone who has FASD. It is really a great read! For the professionals....it does provide an invaluable perspective on how siblings affect each other.

Eve Bogan

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Book Reviews - My Invisible World (continued)

Young Author Delivers Important Message About Living With Her Brother Affected by FASD

Morasha Winokur's compelling book, "My Invisible World" shares with tween-humor and bitter-sweet honesty her young life as a sibling of a brother with special needs. Adopted internationally, both Morasha and her non-biological brother, Iyal, leave Russia together as fourteen-month-old infants when their new parents bring them home to Roswell, Georgia. A few years later, the family is informed that Iyal had been exposed to prenatal alcohol resulting in fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). This life long birth defect leaves an individual with cognitive, physical, neurological and behavioral impairment. FASDs (fetal alcohol spectrum disorders) are the leading known preventable cause of intellectually disability. It may be the most undiagnosed or misdiagnosed developmental disability of our time, as up to 1 out of 100 newborns, "tens of thousands of babies each year" in the U.S. are affected by prenatal alcohol exposure. And yet 1 out of 8 pregnant women still consume alcohol. (CDC 2009)

Morasha clearly explains to kids and adults alike, through anecdotes and philosophy, how down right "annoying" it can be to navigate her seemingly impossible world. FASDs are 100% preventable, but 0% curable. She asks, "When will it stop? Not soon enough as far as I'm concerned." With alcohol attached to this diagnosis... shame and blame build barriers to compassion and understanding for both the birth mother and the baby born to her. Reading Morasha's book may provide a breakthrough to greater understanding and acceptance of this cultural undertow. Shakespeare said, "Age is counted not by calendar years but by wisdom." An eleven-year makes clear how we must support the individual and the family dealing with the unimaginable disability we don't want to see.

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Book Reviews - My Invisible World (continued)

"I found the message and deliverance of this book so powerful and heartfelt. The unconditional sibling love and respect displayed by this young lady reminds us that love truly has no boundaries. Whether you are learning to cope with a disability in your own family, or simply interested in reading a great book that shows immeasurable strength and courage, this is a must read! Great for children and parents, alike."

Melissa Lacquement

An honest and sensitive assessment of life for the sibling of a special needs child. Eleven year-old Morasha puts into words the burdens faced growing up with a brother affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The reader learns how the whole family embraces the challenges of living with an FASD child and finds support in a specially trained service dog, named Chancer. This book provides insight, and is an appropriate read, for any parent or sibling of a of special needs child - not limited to only FASD affected families.

J. Michael Williams

Morasha has written a difficult and heartfelt story about her life and the affects of her brother's illness on her and her family. She shares her feelings very openly and candidly. This is a great book to share with others, especially children. This book should be in every elementary and middle school library in the county. Morasha tells it like it is!

Richard Liebman

Heartfelt voice of a young sister's love and her own internal struggle of acceptance with her sibling's disability. Wonderful read for inspiring authors, siblings and parents. Wish elementary schools would use this book for their student's curriculum and writer's workshops. There are so many lessons embedded in this 11 year old Morasha's story: embracing diversity, empathy, self-acceptance, siblings, growing up, being an agent of change, and the importance of prevention. My son read it to me as his homework, but the lessons have only begun to start to take root.

Gailynn Gluth

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