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After an unthinkable tragedy happens, an unbelievable miracle begins. . .

Three-year-old Sherry is the adored only child of Simon and Karen Barrett. When Sherry is critically injured in a hit-and-run accident, the fault lines in the Barretts's marriage begin to show. As her parents' marriage falls apart, it is discovered that Sherry--in her coma-like state--has miraculous healing powers.

Meanwhile, the guilt-stricken driver of the truck attempts suicide--but is unable to die. Henry Denton instead finds himself in a place of darkness, somewhere between this world and the next, invisible to all but a group of mysterious and downtrodden men. Haunted by his shame, Henry struggles to understand this mysterious limbo, and what he must do to free himself.

As word of Sherry's powers spread, her parents must decide how best to shelter their daughter and help the many sick and dying who are drawn to her side. At the same time, a larger battle is brewing--one that has been raging for close to two-thousand years, and one that might yet claim the lives of Sherry and her family.

## **Before I Wake Details**

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## From Reader Review Before I Wake for online ebook

### Mary says

I continued reading this book even though I really didn't like it. That is the only reason I gave it two stars instead of one. The author kept me turning the pages with the suspense of what was going to happen next but the book was completely unbelievable. I never quite figured out what was going on with the people in the library and who really was Father Pete. I'm assuming it was all about the devil and saints but I'm not sure. And what ever happened to Henry and why did the little girl die after Henry came to visit her. The whole thing was pretty much a confusing mess to me. Don't bother with this book.

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### Tracey Allen at Carpe Librum says

Before I Wake from Canadian author Robert J. Wiersema is a story about young Sherry, a 3 year old girl who is seriously injured when she is involved in a hit and run accident on a traffic crossing by a pickup truck driver.

Sherry's parents Karen and Simon Barrett face their worst fears when their only child won't wake from her coma and unfortunately their marriage fractures under the pressure. Karen takes Sherry home, hires a nurse and settles into a steady routine with daily visits from Simon.

The plot really starts to pick up pace when Sherry's nurse Ruth begins to suspect that Sherry has had a role in curing the painful arthritis in her hands. Ruth's sister is dying of cancer so she brings her to Sherry's bedside and places the comatose little girl's hand on her chest in an attempt to heal her.

Before long, news crews, journalists and pilgrims are outside the front of Karen's house asking for statements about the reported miracle healings and asking to see Sherry. However, along with them come religious protestors led by a shadowy figure, Father Peter who claims Sherry is a false idol.

He threatens the Barrett family and is never far away when bad things start to happen. Father Peter travels all around the world, following reports of miracle healings, and shuts them down by whatever needs necessary. Father Peter believes he's doing God's work and clearing the way for the return of Jesus. However as one character put it, "how do you know you haven't already met Him?" Wiersema has given us an interesting look here at religion, in terms of the Church, faith and miracles.

Meanwhile the driver of the truck is consumed with guilt, but when he decides to take his own life, he jumps from a cliff only to find a mysterious hand pulling him back. The driver finds himself living in the 'in between' and must find himself and his purpose. I enjoyed the supernatural/fantasy element to this novel and the so-called true identities of the truck driver's mentor Tim, and Father Peter.

Before I Wake isn't a sunny, bright story. This is a 'what would you do' story, and a thought provoking tale that makes you think about bigger issues. I especially liked the identity twist and the men living in the 'in between' at the library. I was really curious to know their stories and to be left wanting more at the end of a book is certainly the mark of a great read.

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## Ruth says

I forgot about this book...I don't know how I could have. This is a fabulous story... touching and thought provoking. A Christmas gift that I inhaled even faster than the festive bonbons I received.

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## Andrew says

“And what have you done?”

“Many things, Henry,” he said. “Time is long and old men forget...”

“That’s not an answer.”

“No, it’s Shakespeare.”

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My introduction to Wiersema’s work came earlier this year when, after being introduced to the CZP catalogue, I found a copy of *The World More Full of Weeping* at my local White Rock Indigo. A mildly traumatic story about a boy lost in the woods behind his home in much the same way that his father had gotten lost in them many years earlier, *The World More Full of Weeping* is a sucker punch of a novella: it strikes unexpectedly, and over the course of a mere 70 or so pages, leaves you breathless and distraught. Now with his latest book, *Bedtime Stories*, on the market (which I hope to have a chance to read in the next few weeks), I wanted to go back and see where Wiersema’s career as a writer began.

First published back in 2006, *Before I Wake* tells the story of Sherry Barrett and the single moment in time that changes not only her world, but the worlds of her parents, her parents friends and family, even the entire country. The book opens with Sherry being struck and abandoned in a hit and run accident that leaves her comatose. Accepting that she has experienced brain death, her parents Simon and Karen decide to remove her from life support. Just as they do, she begins to breathe on her own, and their little miracle of a child becomes one in the literal, spiritual and religious definitions of the word.

A couple things to note right off the bat: though it is nearly 400 pages, this is a one-sitting read. Make no mistake about that. The writing is tight, intelligent, and oozes realism without ever resorting to extremes or overtly dramatic moments and gestures.

Speaking of realism, the characters are some of the most genuinely mature I’ve ever had the pleasure of reading. The broken marriage slowly facing redefinition, the other woman that never once feels like the stereotypical “other”, the religious zealots with a disturbing (and potentially supernatural) depth to them that is not so easily explained away—especially not when one considers the physical nature of certain characters to some, and the total lack of physical presence those same characters might have when placed in the sights of others.

*Before I Wake* is a book of miracles that doesn’t rely on the reader being a believer in any way, shape or form. Its weight is transcribed through the completely down-to-earth rationality and actions of its leads, and that weight is what not only grounds the spirituality and supernatural elements to the very real Victoria, BC setting of the book, but also allows for those elements to enhance the story in very unexpected ways.

Wiersema writes with a sincerity that cannot be forced. There isn’t an instance where the tone is betrayed or

subverted for the means of addressing something that the characters wouldn't be addressing themselves. The questions we would ask are the ones they are asking—a critical conceit seemingly absent in most books that attempt to marry the real and the spiritual.

What matters most though with a story like this is whether or not it was able to sink its teeth into me. So here it is: one sitting, and by the end my eyes were watering and it certainly wasn't from staring at the pages for too long. This is a book that shouldn't be missed by anyone. My anticipation for Bedtime Stories is now through the roof.

Before I Wake is one of my notable experiences of the year. I can't recommend it enough.

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### **Veronica Mckenna says**

An emotional read, but couldn't get

Over Simon and Mary, both selfish people, no matter how 'guilty' they felt! Wished Karen had been less civil and apologetic and never took back Simon! He would definitely cheat again!

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### **Bxrlover says**

It started off really well, but as the story progressed things totally fell apart for me.

I think the premise was good, but the author just seemed to get too lazy to bother filling the story lines out in a believable fashion. Karen's lack of emotion over her husband's affair just didn't ring true and when she ended up befriending Mary, the author lost all credibility with me. She was just a little too calm, cool and collected for a woman whose husband just left her for another women on the heel of her child's tragedy.

Simon's supposed deep feelings for Mary seemed to end abruptly too and Mary was awfully mature about being dumped so quickly.

Also, Karen and Simon's refusal to call the police while their house was under seige was completely ridiculous, as was a doctor and lawyer losing their jobs after a simple article in a local newspaper.

Oh yeah and if I never read the word " Pilgrim" again it will be too soon.

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### **Lori Johnston says**

I must admit, I didn't realize that this book was going to have such a religious storyline. I am not a fan of starting a story to have it turn into a Christianity plug. Aside from that I also felt that the characters were flat, the husband was easily flitting between wide and lover, the wife easily fell right back into him, Leo followed Father Peter without question. I didn't feel like there was enough realism in this miraculous novel.

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## Angelique Simonsen says

a good easy read

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## Tiffany says

I vacillated when reading this book, between loving the story for what it was and thinking the book was an excuse to push dogma. In the end I decided I was simply caught off guard by the surrealistic nature of the book, as I don't usually read anything resembling magic realism.

I was first sucked in by the more "human" aspects of the book: Simon's affair with Mary, Henry's stifling guilt, the action surrounding the first moments after Sherry's accident. Then things started to take a turn for the weird, and I wavered a bit before settling into the story. Instead of the weird taking over and transforming the book into the ramblings of a religious fanatic, Wiersema does a fantastic job of using the spiritual nature of the book to increase the intensity of the book's personal appeal. What I found particularly well done is the way in which Sherry's healing abilities not only cure people physically, but also emotionally, as demonstrated by the slow rebuilding of her own parents' relationship. I also loved just how *human* everyone seemed; even Mary, who could have easily been portrayed as a one-dimensional, villainous mistress had an incredible depth to her that I enjoyed very much.

I also liked that Sherry's abilities were kept separate from religion, and really had more to do with spirituality. Wiersema obviously couldn't ignore the religious implications of the "miracle", however, and this is addressed through characters like Father Peter and Leo. This particular plot point really does address the question of good vs. evil, and I was relieved to find out that, in the end, the answer in the book isn't quite as simplistic as I was fearing it would be. I thought it was a little corny that the two "enemies" at the end turned out to be the two biblical characters they did, but I suppose I can also say this isn't completely misplaced, either.

I hope Wiersema keeps writing, because this was a great debut.

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## Heather says

I was at the library just perusing the shelves, not intending to take a book out, when this gem caught my eye. I loved this book! It took me just over a week to read which is quick for me, meaning I couldn't put it down. I loved the layout of the book defined by the character. I had read a review of this book & it almost turned me off. I'm glad I didn't listen. I felt the complete opposite to that person's review. I think after your child is in a terrible accident & left in a coma anything else that happens is peanuts. You've already been through the worst possible thing.

I can't say I'm a believer in purgatory or miracles but this book does has an interesting take on what purgatory would be like & how just the idea of a miracle brings hope to those that need it most. Not to mention the redemption that sets you free.

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## Teena in Toronto says

I liked the writing style. And it was interesting to read each person's point of view.

And I didn't mind the story of Karen, Simon and Sherry ... though I found Karen rather pathetic and bland.

I wasn't buying into Sherry being a healer ... or that Henry was visual to some but not to others ... or the battle that has been brewing for thousands of years ... and there was way too much religion in it.

So would I recommend it? If you are looking for something different and buy into some of this stuff, then yes.

But it wasn't my kind of story.

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### **Shelley says**

I loved this book! I'm not sure why it hit such a chord with me, but it did. It combines a story about family, faith, forgiveness, and the supernatural. The characters are ones that you hate one minute and love the next.

When a little girl, Sherry, is involved in a hit and run she doesn't die but rather slips into an odd coma that her doctors can not understand. She should be dead on hospital acquired pneumonia and infection. This entire event fractures the fragile relationship of her parents Simon and Karen Barret who had problems in their marriage even before this event. Their world is then turned upside down again as they try to cope in their own way when people begin to claim that Sherry had healing powers. Some begin to say she is a saint. Is this real?? What of the strange priest Father Peter? He is threatening or trying to help them? In the meantime, strange things are happening to Henry Denton, the man that hit Sherry. Why can no one see him? Why can't he die?

It was a bittersweet book that kept me hooked until the end. Not really in Catholicism but an interesting tale in fiction.

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### **Sherri Thacker says**

DNF this book. It started off good but as the book went on, i was getting all the characters confused.

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### **Julian Lees says**

3.5 stars.

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### **Cheryl says**

This book is a quick easy read with an interesting topic. It does have some interesting concepts and ideas to think about but much of the story is weak and on the surface. The dad having the affair thing and what happens throughout the book is so far fetched and makes Karen so weak although I think the author is trying to make her out as a hero.

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