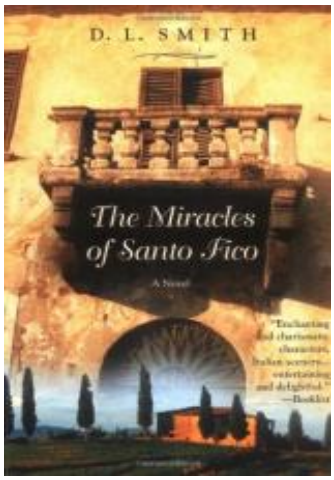
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The Miracles of Santo Fico

by D. L. Smith



About the Book

After twenty years, Leo Pizzola has come back to his native village of Santo Fico, still single and still looking for a way to get rich. Sitting high above the sea in a remote part of Tuscany, the town is as poor as it was on the day Leo left. No tourist buses stop there. No guidebooks mention the Miracle and the Mystery of their blessed little church, which once held so much promise as a tourist attraction. Instead the broken fountain in the center of the small piazza is as dried up as the town's hopes.

Yet some things have changed. Of Leo's childhood companions, only one, little Guido, whom everyone calls "Topo," embraces him. His best friend Franco is long dead. And Marta, whose beauty has haunted his dreams, inexplicably refuses to talk to him at all. Worst of all, the town's kindly old priest, Father Elio, seems to have lost his faith. What Santo Fico needs is a miracle...a miracle to help them overcome the disaster threatening to destroy what little hope is left in this tiny village that the world has overlooked. Yes, a miracle would do the trick-even if Leo and Topo, scheming together, have to manufacture one themselves.

Now, as new loves and old passions sweep into Santo Fico, Leo's quixotic schemes to restore the spirit of the town and, not incidentally, fill his own pockets will unravel with unforeseen results. Long-kept secrets surface, baffling mysteries are resolved, and the overwhelming beauty of life itself emerges when wonders indeed begin to happen in this Italian town by the sea, including the greatest miracle of all?

Discussion Guide

1. The "miracles" of Santo Fico are hard to define. Which of the events in this book would you truly consider a miracle? Do true miracles occur without human intervention-or because of it? List each of the events that might be considered miraculous, and decide a) if the event actually occurred or it was a figment of the villagers'-or readers'-imagination and b) which of the miracles was most important in saving the village.

2. Regret and forgiveness are two of the main themes running throughout the novel. Is there a central character who has no regrets? Which character does the best job of rectifying his or her regrets? Why? Do the characters tend to have more trouble forgiving themselves than others?

3. Does Father Elio's secret undercut his ability to heal his village? His power as a priest? Do you think he was right or wrong to have held on to his secret for so long? If you lived in the village, what would be your reaction to this secret?

4. Marta is clearly a woman who has had difficulty with love. Who do you think she actually loved more, Franco or Leo? What do you imagine would have happened had Leo not left that fateful day? Is Marta justified in her antipathy toward Leo? Can you pinpoint the moment when her feelings start to turn?

5. When Leo and Topo set out to orchestrate miracles, do you think they were justified in tampering with the lives of their fellow townspeople? Are any of the characters worse off for their efforts?

6. Marta and Carmen are a wonderful example of the troubles mothers and daughters can go through. Should Marta have granted Carmen more leverage in making her own mistakes, or was she obliged to stop history from repeating itself? Can you think of a parallel in your family life? How did/would you handle it?

7. Was Leo justified in orchestrating Carmen's attack on the beach, considering the danger he put her in? What else might he have done to bring Carmen and Paolo together and eliminate Solly in one stroke?

8. Santo Fico started out a sleepy little village, plagued by a collective loss of faith. How would you describe the village at the book's end? Try to imagine each character's future. Can you predict where each of the central characters will be in five years?

Author Bio

D. L. Smith is an award-winning playwright and professor in the Theater Arts Department of Southern Oregon University. **The Miracles of Santo Fico** is his first novel. He lives in Oregon with his wife and two sons.

Critical Praise

"**The Miracles of Santo Fico** is a sweet and charming tale of ancient deceptions, diverted passions, and the regenerative power of love."

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