

## Review for *The Beautiful Miscellaneous*

*Booklist* (starred review), April 1, 2007

At 17, Nathan Nelson has no idea what he wants to be. His particle-physicist father, however, has already made up his mind: Nathan will be a genius! The boy, who considers himself only slightly above average, has his doubts. “Being less than brilliant with a genius parent,” he notes, “is like being the bum who stares, midwinter, through the restaurant window.” But things change dramatically when—as the result of an accident—Nathan develops synesthesia; he begins seeing, tasting, and feeling words. He also develops an encyclopedic memory. Filled with new hope, Nathan’s father enrolls his son in the Brook-Mills Institute for Talent Development, a research facility that Nathan’s blind pianist roommate calls the “Taj Mahal of weird.” When his father develops a brain tumor, Nathan’s struggles to satisfy the man’s great expectations before it’s too late become increasingly poignant. This unusual, gorgeously written novel is filled with pleasures: among them are richly imagined supporting characters, including Whit, the astronaut and improbable best friend of Nathan’s father, and Teresa, the medical psychic with whom the boy falls in love. Best of all, though, is the book’s invitation to wonder—about the imponderables of life and death, the nature of intelligence, and the ultimately inexplicable relationships of fathers and sons. —*Michael Cart*