[ORPHAN DREAMER AND THE GLASS TATTOO](https://bookshop.org/a/1812/9781942849056/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[From the Orphan Dreamer series , Vol. 2](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-series/orphan-dreamer/)

BY [J. NELL BROWN](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/author/j-nell-brown/)‧ RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2, 2019

An ostracized girl and an abused boy look for acceptance and survival in an eschatological fantasy from Brown (*Orphan Dreamer and the Missing Arrowhead*, 2019, etc.).

Eleven-year-old Daniela Rose “Danny Rose” Cavanaugh lives in Florida and is an “Einstein-level genius.” Her dad believes she’s the next Messiah—his “Orphan Dreamer,” destined to save the world—but Danny is miserable.

Being of mixed race, she is bullied for not being “black” enough. Her one friend, Ethan, is dying of cancer. Animals talk to her. She hears voices in her head and suffers from nosebleeds.

Worst of all, a boy with no eyes haunts her dreams: “oily boy,” whose pain she feels as her own. He is 12-year-old Cillian Finn, who lives in Ireland. A child of rape, he is hated by his own mother. He is the object of beatings (and worse) and is snatched away from anyone who offers him kindness. Branded “Leviathan”—the Antichrist—Cillian is abused and despised, with his only respite coming when Daniela prays for him and sends him an angel. But Danny Rose has her own problems.

Now 13 years old, she has been given a diamond, and it has transformed into a snowflake tattoo on her palm. Through this, she and Ethan travel out of their bodies to the biblical town of Gibeah in the year 1018 B.C.E. When they return, Ethan dies. Danny thinks it’s her fault.

Self-harm lands her in the hospital, where she is diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, depressive type, and to save Cillian, first she must understand and accept herself. Brown has crafted a dense and rather abstruse novel, tackling themes of belonging and deprivation within a sprawling nonlinear narrative.

The second episode in a series, it lacks closure and the solid pacing of a self-contained story. The dialogue, however, resonates strongly; and though the book is not tightly focused, Brown has steeped its pages in a religiosity and portent that add weight to the difficult subject matter. Danny Rose and Cillian lead deeply unhappy lives. Their childhoods make for an uncomfortable telling, but they stick in the mind. For these two characters alone, readers may take a leap of faith.

A challenging exploration of otherness and self-belief.