

Kirkus Awards Starred Review to New Transformative, Literary Sci-Fi Novel

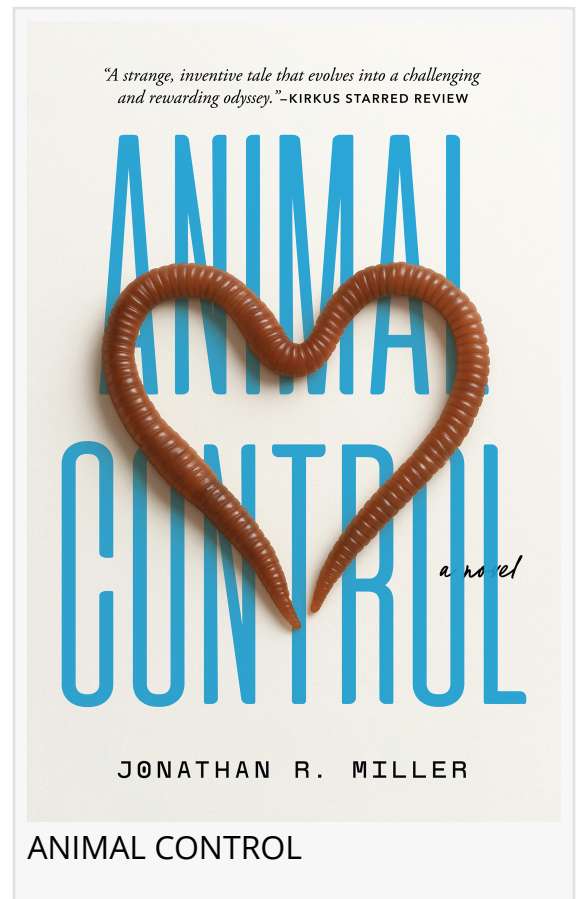
ANIMAL CONTROL by Jonathan R. Miller

SAN JOSE, CA, UNITED STATES, September 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [KIRKUS REVIEWS](#) has awarded a starred review to [ANIMAL CONTROL](#), a daring new literary sci-fi novel by author [Jonathan R. Miller](#). Celebrated as “a strange, inventive tale” that veers “light-years from the typical hero’s journey” into something “challenging and rewarding,” the novel is already being recognized as one of the year’s most thought-provoking speculative works.

Set in contemporary California, the book follows Shay Garner, a 17-year-old navigating an abusive home life, environmental collapse and systemic inequities. Her life changes when she inherits an uncanny ability: she can command animals — and eventually humans — by thought alone.

At first, the power seems mysterious and limitless, gathering beneath her skin without explanation or rules. As Shay tests its reach, discovering what it can touch, dismantle or rearrange, her choices grow heavier, the results stranger. Soon joined by two friends, all young women of color, the three form a movement that begins as survival but builds into something larger, shifting the balance between what is and what could be. The novel maps a state of becoming that’s neither safe nor simple as Shay, alongside her two friends, must confront whether transformation grants freedom or fractures connection.

Miller’s multiracial perspective informs a narrative deeply attuned to today’s fractures, from environmental collapse to entrenched inequity. He doesn’t shy away from the political; he looks directly at the social fractures shaping our present moment. This timeliness, combined with a uniquely inventive storyline, positions the novel as a rare work of speculative fiction that is as intellectually challenging as it is narratively gripping.



With its blend of electric literary prose, timely political relevance and a cast that reflects the realities of modern America, *ANIMAL CONTROL* stands apart from anything else on the shelf. It's speculative fiction that makes you think deeply about power — how it circulates, who wields it and what it costs. For readers ready to confront the question of who we are becoming, Jonathan R. Miller's *ANIMAL CONTROL* is an odyssey unlike any other.

ANIMAL CONTROL is available on Amazon and other popular retail outlets where books are sold.

AUTHOR BIO

Jonathan R. Miller is an author of "magical realism" literary fiction novels, as well as sci-fi thrillers featuring diverse, complex characters.

Miller was born in Illinois, lived in New Mexico for most of his childhood, and then became a California transplant after undergraduate school at Stanford University. He was an 8th-grade teacher for 7 years in the Oakland public school system and has worked as a writer/marketer in the San Francisco Bay Area ever since.



Jonathan R. Miller

“

Though his books are labeled literary thrillers, Miller is most concerned with his characters, who struggle with issues of discrimination, identity, ideological rigidity, and belonging.”

Poets & Writers Magazine

Miller's own multiracial heritage has had a strong influence on his thought processes and writing approach. His novels deftly explore issues of identity while providing storylines that are layered, thought-provoking and moving. Learn more at www.jonathanrmiller.com.

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