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The Evil Wizard Smallbone



Synopsis

In a hilarious tale reminiscent of T. H. White, a lost boy finds himself an unlikely apprentice to the very old, vaguely evil, mostly just grumpy Wizard Smallbone. When twelve-year-old Nick runs away from his uncle's in the middle of a blizzard, he stumbles onto a very opinionated bookstore. He also meets its guardian, the self-proclaimed Evil Wizard Smallbone, who calls Nick his apprentice and won't let him leave, but won't teach him magic, either. It's a good thing the bookstore takes Nick's magical education in hand, because Smallbone's nemesis—the Evil Wizard Fidelou and his pack of shape-shifting bikers are howling at the borders. Smallbone might call himself evil, but compared to Fidelou, he's practically a puppy. And he can't handle Fidelou alone. Wildly funny and cozily heartfelt, Delia Sherman's latest is an eccentric fantasy adventure featuring dueling wizards, enchanted animals, and one stray boy with a surprising knack for magic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this book aloud to my eight-year-old son, and both of us were enthralled by the story. It's such a joy to find something we both love! The plot is engaging and full of surprising twists that I never saw coming. The characters avoid falling into any stereotypes while still being excellent fantasy characters. My favorite thing about this book was the true-to-life portrayal of emotions. My son felt like he could really relate to Nick's outbursts of temper and his difficulties with the concentration and control required to cast spells. All in all, a great book. He's already asking if there's a sequel!

I bought this book for my 10yr & 8yr old kids. They haven't had a chance to read it yet; so I read it. I enjoyed the whole book. It is well written and interesting. A quick, easy read as its target audience is younger but still enjoyable for older readers.

Good book. Very imaginative. I loved the fact this emotionally scared boy was able to overcome his fears. He became what he wanted to become

I thought this was going to be creepy when I first started reading it but I ended up loving it. Especially the way it turns out in the end. But no spoilers from me...you'll have to read it to find out!

This book starts slowly, with what seems a rather old set-up - kid fleeing his abusive uncle is taken in by a magical person in a strange house, and can't leave. But soon the pace picks up, and mysteries develop that orphan Nick wants answers for. Why does The Evil Wizard seem more grumpy than evil? What happened to all the previous apprentices that disappeared, and is Nick going the same way? What's with Smallbone Cove, the perfect little town that time forgot - and the townies can't leave? (Read the book, I don't want to leave spoilers here!) And can Nick stop the shapeshifter Fidelou and his gang of coyotes from eating them for breakfast? Even with a magical education managed by the bookstore? Great book for readers who enjoyed the Sword in the Stone or Harry Potter or Diane Duane.

An excellent, well written, fantasy tale that will really hold your interest from beginning to end.

Great book.

On its face this looks and feels like it's going to be a pretty standard wizard-apprentice tale. Runaway headstrong kid ends up as a wizard's apprentice and has adventures. Been there; done

that. Well, allow me to apologize in advance for being a crank. This book often zags when a zig is expected, and it is loaded with prickly, sharp bits that set it apart. We start off conventionally. Twelve year old orphan Nick runs away from his abusive uncle and finds himself wandering around in the woods. He comes across a creepy bookstore in the middle of nowhere and figures he can con the owner, stay and warm up, and maybe even steal a few necessities on his way out. Wrong. The proprietor is The Evil Wizard Smallbone, who is a wizard and is evil. He basically traps Nick on the property and sets him to work. Now, your hero kid isn't usually quite so much a streetwise crook. Your wizard isn't usually evil. And your setting isn't usually a claustrophobic bookstore in which the hero kid has to slave away for fear of being turned into a spider. At this point, which is still fairly early on in the book, you wonder if it's going to open up or lighten up, or is this some psychological hostage/captor thriller. Then it gets weirder. The Evil Wizard Smallbone is engaged in a battle to the death with another, even more evil, neighboring wizard. And Smallbone controls a little village that he keeps isolated from the rest of the world and that feels like something out of "Children of the Corn". No spoilers, except to promise that if you read the entire book everything will become clear, characters' true natures will be revealed, and mysteries will be solved and questions answered. There will also be small magic and big magic, small action and big action. Lots will be going on. But here's the really good part. This is exceptionally well written. Nick grows up in a convincing and satisfying fashion, and even given the whole magicky angle his growth feels authentic. Smallbone is a great and complex character, and his dry humor, casual evil, and long game make him a fascinating focus of the action throughout. Minor characters, villagers, the other evil wizard, henchmen, and various were-animals all command the page when present. There is a lot of humor here - dry throwaway lines, prickly observations, clever bits of dialogue. This is not by the numbers stuff. So, I was a little doubtful about this as I started, but quickly became a convert. There is much that is original, edgy, clever, and unexpected here. It was a nice find. (Please note that I received a free copy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

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