

[PDF] Instructions

Charles Vess, Neil Gaiman - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly "Touch the wooden gate in the wall you never saw before," invites Gaiman's poem, first published in *A Wolf at the Door* (2000), reborn as a lavishly illustrated small-format picture book. A bipedal, bushy-tailed cat, wearing attire befitting Robin Hood, enters a fairy tale landscape filled with subtle and obvious allusions to familiar characters and stories. A cottage door leads him into a hallway of dramatic arches where a cat with an injured paw becomes his companion ("if any creature tells you that it hungers, feed it. If it tells you that it is dirty, clean it"). The wanderers press on, encountering a castle containing three sequestered princesses ("Do not trust the youngest. Walk on"), a ghostly ferryman, and other creatures. Recalling his work on Gaiman's *Blueberry Girl*, Vess's compositions are distinguished by elegant, winding lines--gnarled

vines, plumes of smoke, dragon tails--and intimate frames that evoke moments of gentle wisdom. Young readers should relish the chimerical vision while older Gaiman fans should grasp the underlying suggestion that the compass used to navigate fairy tales can also guide us in the real world. All ages.

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From The flap designates this picture book from the award-winning team of Gaiman and Vess as “all ages,” which is cute but perhaps overly optimistic. Carrying the tagline Everything You’ll Need to Know on Your Journey, it could be described as Gaiman’s answer to Dr. Seuss’ *Oh, the Places You’ll Go* (1990): a catlike creature with a foxlike tail travels through a series of fairy-tale settings, guided by a narrator’s instructions. But where the Seuss book has become a staple graduation gift, its nonsensical language easily translating into simple life lessons, Gaiman’s seems less likely to find that kind of broad, lasting appeal. Some of the instructions pertaining to real life are straightforward enough (“If any creature tells you that it hungers, feed it”), but others seem to pertain to a story that’s not told here—why, for example, should we not trust the youngest of three princesses? References to “Winter’s realm” (drawn as a cold-looking, modern city) and “a worm at the heart of the tower” hint at grown-up concerns best avoided but, again, lack needed context. Certainly this will appeal to grown-ups who like a little magic in their lives, but children may be somewhat puzzled. Yet maybe that’s all right. Vess’ timeless watercolor-and-pencil illustrations, especially those of the cat-fox riding a wise eagle, a silver fish, and a gray wolf, are simply gorgeous and may entice kids to sprawl with the book on the carpet, figuring it all out. And maybe if they imagine their own answers to half-understood questions, then these instructions will have succeeded. Grades K-3. --Keir Graff

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