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The Wooden Mile: Something Wickedly Weird, Vol. 1



Synopsis

THE WOODEN MILE VOLUME 1: PIRATES& WEREWOLVES& LOST TREASURE AND A SPOOKY HOUSE
Something Wickedly Weird is most definitely here! Crampton Rock seems like a lovely seaside town& at least until dark. When eleven-year-old Stanley Buggles inherits a house from a mysterious uncle he didn't know he had, he also inherits a mystery and some strange and sinister new neighbors. The questions begin to pile up: Why are all the dogs in town three-legged? Why is no one on the streets after dark? Is it true that the man who runs the candy shop is a werewolf? And why do those shoemakers look an awful lot like pirates? With the help of Mrs. Carelli, a housekeeper, and a talking stuffed fish, Stanley begins to unravel the mysteries that haunt his great-uncle's death and have set their sights on him. A thrilling, spooky, and funny read, and the first installment of a kid-pleasing new series.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The blurb on the back of this book describes the series as "darkly humorous", and that is or isn't spot on depending on what you consider "dark". I liked it, but it might be a little macabre for a brand new chapter book reader. There are a lot of dark books that are mostly silly or funny or magical or just tartered up school daze adventures. This one, though, trends more to the Dahl or Gorey side of the scale. (MILD SPOILERS AHEAD.) So, all of the dogs in town have only three legs, because they've each lost their fourth leg escaping from the creature. Skeletons hang from gibbets, Great

Uncle had his head torn off in a fishing accident, and none of the pirates possess a complete set of body parts. Now, again in the Gorey/Dahl style, all of this is presented in a deadpan matter-of-fact sort of way. None of it is actually scary, because it's all just a little too silly and tongue in cheek to be truly threatening. And, our hero, Stanley, is stalwart and steady in the face of danger, so he's bravely there with the reader. Perhaps most importantly, there are dependable and strong adult characters who clearly are watching out for Stanley's well being. The overall feeling you get is the new reader version of learning how to swim while Mom or Dad has a firm grip on you and you're in pretty shallow water. (The upshot is - "Hey, this is fun.") Maybe I'm over thinking this, but it did pop into my head a few times as I read, so I figured it was worth mentioning. In a larger sense, this is a very fun read. Stanley is a good kid, (thoughtful, observant, eager to experience things, enthusiastic), and I like kid heroes who have a level head but then throw themselves into the adventure with gusto. The island setting is properly weird and unsettling.

Since the blazing success of Harry Potter, there has been a slew of fantastic adventure series for children in roughly the same genre. What you're looking at here is yet another. I don't mean by that that they're all bad, but I would give this particular series a pass. As of my writing, there are six volumes in the series, all very handsomely published. In order: 1. The Wooden Mile 2. The Icy Hand 3. The Silver Casket 4. The Darkling Curse 5. The Smugglers' Mine 6. The Treasure Keepers. The tale of "The Wooden Mile," the first installment, concerns the adventures of the young Stanley Buggles as he sets out to discover why a mysterious island is plagued with werewolves and pirates. Mould's stories have a fun look and feel, and Mould is quite able with dialogue. There are in addition many endearing sketches of the people and places around Crampton Rock (whereupon the action of the tale is set). Regrettably, the main character comes off as devoid of any real personality, and events in the book happen so quickly and follow each other so relentlessly that it's difficult for the reader to be emotionally present. I am a huge fan of Chris Mould's artwork, and I have collected every installment in the series so far, merely because of his drawings, which have a compelling and unique style. His abilities as a storywriter, however, are lacking. I find the stories uninteresting and often silly. I wish he would get somebody else to write the stories for him. However, I am not a kid, so maybe kids wouldn't mind. For my part, though, what actually happens to Stanley Buggles is nowhere near as imaginative as Mould's artwork is.

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