



Pure Dead Magic

Debi Gliori

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Things are not right at the Strega-Borgia castle. Signor Luciano Strega-Borgia has been kidnapped. Signora Baci Strega-Borgia is struggling with her spells at the Advanced Witchcraft Institute. Titus and Pandora don't like their suspiciously cheerful and fearless new nanny. Baby Damp has been accidentally shrunk, e-mailed, and lost on the World Wide Web. And to top it off, there's a gangster in a bunny suit lurking about. . . .

This seriously over-the-top, gothic romp is sure to have readers clamoring for the next Strega-Borgia adventure.

From the Hardcover edition.

Pure Dead Magic Details

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Author : Debi Gliori

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From Reader Review Pure Dead Magic for online ebook

Sally Allerton says

I read this series of books with my children some years ago (they are all adults now) and we all absolutely loved them. We enjoyed them so much that after buying the first book in paperback I brought it again in hardback to be kept as a beautiful set. If I was reading them on my own as an adult maybe I wouldn't have given five stars, but I would definitely recommend them to be read out loud to be enjoyed with children. They are funny, sad, exciting and just a little bit naughty.

Dorcas says

This book was an unexpected mix of cyber, goth, and a Mary Poppin's nanny set on the fringes of an Italian mafia family. There's a moat with a hungry crocodile, lumbering pet guardians that munch on stray visitors, unwanted nannies and intruders, and three children desperate to keep the family together. Technology and magic work together in this book with sometimes interesting, sometimes awkward results. In the end, however, I find myself interested in learning more, just to see what other wacky stuff may happen.

Katie says

It's hard to write a review on a kid's book because the writing has to be so much more simplistic than an adult or even a teen novel. However, I will try my best to be fair and address everything necessary.

Characters:

I found the characterization to be pretty great. Each character had not only a specific voice, but distinct characteristics as well. Since there were quite a few characters for such a small book, I consider this to be a great feat. Each character was easy to distinguish and they were all really enjoyable. I especially liked that the animals and pets had voices and personalities as well.

Setting:

The story mostly takes place in Scotland and Italy. These two places, while exotic and described with some detail, were not as fleshed out as I had hoped. The Strega-Schloss manor was described well when this did occur, but not enough. Since most kids won't stick around for a lot of detail, this is understandable, but as a mature reader, I would have liked to see more. (mature reader, ha)

Plot:

Well-developed and juvenile. The story was humorous at points which was cute, but it was sometimes overdone. Again, this is entirely based on intended audience versus me reading it. Obviously, most of the kids reading it would love all the crude and sometimes gross humor, but I found it juvenile. As for originality, it was interesting. Magic meets mafia. For such a small book, the story went along at an acceptable pace. It followed the basic structure of the story and I can't complain.

For the moment, I think this is all I have to discuss. It was an enjoyable quick read and I will be reading the others in the series.

Patricia (theinfophile) says

I got through a little over half of it and could no longer continue. Too many lame tongue-in-cheek jokes. The plot isn't easily followed, the whole thing seems really scattered. The characters are silly (and not in the good way.) I would not waste a child's time with this book when there are so many well-written stories out there.

Joy says

This book was a strange mix. I love the idea of magic coexisting with modern technology and this book was full of that, and full of jokes and puns. It was over the top and mad, but I did enjoy it. At times it was hard to follow due to the amount of characters and plots, but this would all have been appealing to child me, and I am clearly no longer the target age for this series.

A chaotic but enjoyable read.

Carin says

My friend K loaned this to me a year ago, promising it was cute and fun, which it was. A little bit derivative, but not in a way most kids would pick up on. To me, it was basically like a Lemony Snicket book, but with computers. Three kids, the youngest still crawling and not talking with a funny name (Damp), get into some trouble, have parents who aren't much help, a funny nanny, and a lot of odd monsters as pets/guard dogs. They all (including the mother) think their father has left when in fact he's been kidnapped by his brother, a mafia don. The end result of the mobsters sent to kill the family was quite amusing, the nanny is excellent but unfortunately not used enough (in my opinion) and it's nice for once to have a fantasy book for middle readers where the protagonist children aren't orphans. The addition of computers might make this book a little more palatable for boys, although it's also aging the book quickly - a CD-rom drive figures significantly.

There is always room on the shelf for a brief, amusing, middle grade book with a good lesson (don't fight with your siblings, don't try to feed every prospective nanny to the crocodile), decent action, and a happy family.

Viju says

Wacky funny read for a lazy afternoon adventure

Samm says

This book makes me want to reread all the books I loved when I was little so that I can catch all the sarcastic jokes included for parents that may be reading them.

Amy says

Wild, crazy and over the top wacky!

Debi Gliori must be a blast to know, if I base my opinion on this series anyway!

What a cast of characters, it's a good thing there is a guide at the beginning of the book. I loved getting to know the Strega-Borgia clan; 10 year old Pandora, her 12 year old computer genius brother Titus and the baby, Damp; along with their parents Signor Luciano and Signora Baci Strega-Borgia.

Oh, but don't forget the list of creatures that also call Castle Strega-Schloss home: My favorite - teenage dragon Ffup; Mythical Dungeon Beasts Sab and Knot; a rather large lipstick wielding tarantula Tarentella; an illiterate rat Multitudina, the mother to multitudes. There is even a many-great Grandmother Strega-Nonna who is wrapped in tinfoil, stored in the freezer, awaiting a cure for old age.

And that's just the start of it.

If you dare to pass the gate that reads, "Warning! Trespassers will be (a) served for breakfast,(via Tock, the guard crocodile) (b) turned into frogs, (courtesy of Signora Strega-Borgia, a witch in training)(c) forced to eat Brussels sprouts. (complements of Marie Bain, a most horrendous cook)", you will surely find yourself pulled into a rollicking adventure where the villains are truly over the top and nasty and where magic often goes awry.

I believe the cover blurb says these books are a bit like mixing Harry Potter with The Series of Unfortunate Events. Place it all in Scotland and you've about got it.

Melki says

For some reason I'm in the mood to reread this series that I read aloud to my kids, oh, about fifteen years ago. At the time, we LOVED it. Both boys squealed with glee every time I was forced to haltingly pronounce the town's name - Auchenlochtermuchty. In a few of the later volumes, my husband was even called upon to read some of the dialogue in his best Mike-Myers-as-Shrek-Scottish-Accent. I would say a good time was had by all.

I didn't enjoy it quite as much this time around, but there are still delights to be had for those who enjoy crude humor, and silly characters indulging in bizarre behavior. Gliori borrows liberally from popular culture, and in particular, the Addams Family.

She puts Granny in a freezer (in a desperate attempt to stave off old age), renames the butler Latch, replaces Uncle Fester with pets - a dragon, a yeti, a griffin, and a moat-dwelling crocodile, adds a remarkably tech-savvy nanny, AND a smelly-diapered baby named Damp.

The plot involves the baby being accidentally miniaturized, and zapped off to surf the worldwide web. Meanwhile, Dad has been kidnapped by an evil relation who has one of the best villain names EVER - **Don di S'Embowelli Borgia** - in an attempt to steal son Pugsly's Titus's fortune. Even though Dad agrees to cooperate, an elite group of "terminators" (including one killer who insists on dressing in a bunny suit), is dispatched to assassinate the boy. Seriously disgusting hijinks ensue, and heads will roll. Literally. This is my way of saying that this book is not for ALL children.

BUT, it was indeed for MY children. And me. It loses a star this time around, as I was more able to notice plot-holes, and general silliness when I didn't have to concentrate on pronunciation, but it was still a blast. I'm looking forward to another visit to Auchenlochtermuchty. (Yes, yes . . . even though my boys are grown, I can still hear those little squeals. Sniff, sniff.)

Kat Hooper says

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

Titus and his sister Pandora have another new nanny. It's hard to keep nannies around the Strega-Borgia mansion, but despite the siblings' best efforts to scare off the latest applicant, Mrs. McLachlan is undaunted. She'll be taking care of the kids and their scary pets because their dad, Signor Luciano Strega-Borgia, has abandoned the family and their mom, Signora Baci Strega-Borgia, has started witch school.

The Strega-Borgia kids soon turn their attention to more difficult issues when their baby sister Damp is accidentally shrunken and uploaded into the World Wide Web. Soon after, a group of assassins hired by the mafia shows up at their house. Can Titus and Pandora get Damp back and defeat the killers, too?

Pure Dead Magic is the first in a series of children's fantasy novels by Debi Gliori. It's dark, zany, and over the top. Inside you'll find a tarantula who wears lipstick, a dragon with diarrhea, an assassin who wears a bunny suit, a crocodile who eats nannies, a grandmother in the freezer, and a smelly baby whose diaper always needs changing. It's all rather dark and silly in the vein of the Home Alone movies.

Pure Dead Magic is fun, but if you insist on your plots making sense or your villains being smart, don't bother. The nonsensical plot was fine with me until the villain ordered his captive to spend hours unattended fixing a room full of computers with Internet access. I would have preferred a little more care with the plotting.

Debi Gliori's writing style is often clever, but self-consciously so. Its constant attempts to be funny will probably weary some readers, but it worked pretty well in the audio version I listened to by Recorded Books (please note that there is more than one audio version). The way that Ron Keith's uppercrust accent acted as a foil for the perpetual silliness actually added to the whimsy. If you're going to read Pure Dead Magic, audio is definitely the way to go. It's a quick fun read for kids who like a silly plot with a streak of black humor.

Liz says

In the opening pages of this book, I thought it was a rich-kids-get-rid-of-the-nanny story. I couldn't have

been more wrong. Sure, it features unruly kids (and their pet rats and spiders!), an ancient house, a hapless mother, a butler, and a nanny, but it also features a dragon, a yeti, a gargoyle, a talking spider with a penchant for lipstick, various wizardly gadgets and people with magical abilities (or lack of!).

It's also got some hilarious family scenes, and a great chase to rescue their missing father that literally runs through the World Wide Web. And it's set in modern-day Scotland.

Seriously, what is not to love about this book? It's so tongue-in-cheek.

Sensitivemuse says

Chaotic is one word to really describe this book. Although it was fun to read what they all go through I think this book would have made a very interesting movie (should it ever go that way). Think of The Addams Family and their kookiness, mixed with a bit of style of Lemony Snicket and add in a bit of Mary Poppins and you get Pure Dead Magic. I enjoyed reading this book! it was a fun light read and there were particular parts of the book that actually got me laughing out loud. It is quirky and kooky and you could say even rather strange at first to read but once you get engaged into the storyline then the reading experience is quite fun.

The plot was certainly engaging, and by reading the first page it actually takes you into the book head first so be prepared. I liked it, yet on the other hand, I found it a little too engaging. It just seems like there's just way too much going on and you have a hard time figuring out what's happening, and it also feels like you need to take a real big deep breath right after each chapter. Sometimes it helps if there's a small part in the book where everything just take a breather, and the action takes a break while we as readers sort things out with the storyline. The characters are likable and fun, no need for development, or any heavy duty stuff here. Like mentioned before, it's a light read to take a break from the heavy duty ones.

Overall, a fast, light read, with a lot of room left at the end for several more books ahead. I'll be picking them up whenever I need the urge to laugh or when I need to take a break from the heavier deeper books. Sometimes it's good to read childrens novels just to take a break from the serious books and to enjoy the quirky kooky funny ones as well.

Destinee Sutton says

A librarian at the Wallingford branch recommended this to me, so I had high hopes, but it wasn't great. There's a strange mix of computers and magic, which seems like a good idea in theory, but on the page it just doesn't make sense.
