



The Breedling and the City in the Garden

Kimberlee Ann Bastian

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Absolute obedience, servitude, neutrality.

These were the laws that once governed Bartholomew, an immortal soulcatcher, until one ill-fated night when he was forced to make a choice: rebel against his masters or reveal an ancient, dangerous secret.

He chose defiance.

Imprisoned for centuries as punishment for his decision, Bartholomew wastes away—until he creates an opportunity to escape. By a stroke of chance, Bartholomew finds himself in the human world and soon learns that breaking his bonds does not come without a price. Cut off from the grace that once ruled him, he must discover a new magic in 1930s Chicago.

Armed with only a cryptic message to give him direction, Bartholomew desperately tries to resume the mission he had started so long ago. Relying on the unlikely guidance of the streetwise orphan Charlie Reese, Bartholomew must navigate the depressed streets of the City in the Garden. But in order to solve this riddle, he must first discover if choice and fate are one in the same.

The Breedling and the City in the Garden Details

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Author : Kimberlee Ann Bastian

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From Reader Review *The Breedling* and the City in the Garden for online ebook

Evelina | AvalinahsBooks says

"So, **writer**, what sort of tale will you tell me tonight?"

"Well, **reader**, get yourself some strong tea and a nightlight, because I have a warm retro tale about street urchins in the 1930's and... magic."

"My my, **writer**, that sure sounds swell!"

"Brace yourself, **reader**, it truly is, even despite the somewhat cheesy dialogue."

You can read this review on my blog or keep reading here.

Okay. So you might be wondering why I'm starting it like that. I just wanted to give you a taste of the dialogues in this book. But really, apart from the slightly weird tone and the fact that everyone uses everyone's name in, like, every sentence, the book was good! ***It was that warm mixture of sepia photos, old coke ads, Chicago orphanages in the 30's, smart-aleck minority gangsters in pinstripe suits and immortal magical cats that change face color when they feel emotions.*** And hey, with all that vintage feel going on, maybe even the dialogue makes sense? We can all think of that tone of voice in a mock-pre-war radio ad.

So the story goes something like this. Bartholomew is an ageless being, made for god knows what, downcast from god knows where (not in a bad way, though.)

Really, the mythology in this book is quite complicated, but done quite well. It comes across like American Gods - loads of different things, the pantheon and the rules of the world vast and mighty, but somehow still connected with the thing here or there you might have heard it, perhaps in an old Irish nursery tale. Yes, it is complicated, but it makes you feel like this isn't the end and you'll find out more in the coming books. Which is all fine.

Another thing I found truly refreshing was that our ***two main characters are young boys*** - teens, but not YA teens (I mean the tone). They are not girls (95% of the books right now seem to be about girls. It's good that we're reversing history, but... you know. I haven't read about boys in *soooooo* long!). They are also not grown women, nor are they grown men or superheroes. They are two lost orphan boys, not too special, just shabby, and ***I like*** reading about that. It was something I've forgotten people wrote about! (Is it just me..?)

The story does fumble sometimes, sometimes it drags. The immortal being is clearly denser than you and me, because he can't see through things we can clearly see are going to happen in the story. The gangsters and thugs happen to unluckily be of my nationality, but hey. ***These flaws are mostly debut-related*** (apart from the gangsters, of course) and they don't get in the way of enjoying your reading experience. ***This is a quick good fantasy, moreover - a strong start to a series.*** Which is why I know that I'll be looking forward to the sequel as soon as it shows up. And if you're a fantasy fan, especially retro - go for it. I'm sure you'll

enjoy.

My thanks to W.I. Creative Publishing and NetGalley for giving me a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Lisa Stelmach says

Well done Kim! I'm hoping the wait for book 2 isn't long!

Cheryl says

I wanted to check this book out because it sounded like it was in the steampunk genre. A genre that I enjoy reading. When I saw the author's picture, I knew that she shared the same love. This book turned out better than I had hoped. Always, a bonus. In addition, it was surprising to read that this is the author's debut novel. This book reads like it comes from a seasoned professional.

Right from the beginning, I was along for the journey. From the time period to the characters, and the plot. Charlie and Bartholomew or Buck were great together. Buck's inquisitive mind was refreshing. I saw things as he saw them (in some cases for the first time). Charlie was so patient and a good friend to Buck. Buck's ability to communicate with animals was great. It was kind of like Harry Potter. I can't wait to read the next book in this series.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

Bartholomew is a Breedling- an immortal spirit that guides the souls of the mortal dead to their eternal homes. He is tasked by his masters, the Fates, to find the Creators of the world, who have gone missing. Bartholomew finds the ones he's seeking, but then refuses to reveal their location and as punishment, he is sealed in a prison until he changes his mind or the end of time, whichever comes first. But, magically, Bartholomew escapes and finds himself in 19th century Chicago in the company of two boys who are named Charlie and Jimmy. Bartholomew must find a certain mortal to bind his spirit to this world or he will end up back in his timeless prison. He also must complete his original quest- to find the Eden Wanderer. But, he must accomplish all of this without the mortals knowing who he really is or what he is really seeking. Will he succeed?

I have some serious reservations about this book. First of all, the plot isn't nearly as straight forward as my description. The mythology of Bastian's world is very complex and I felt like I wasn't given enough background before I was thrown into the thick of it. Multiple characters are mentioned, but never make an appearance and, there was so much implied but not stated, that at times I felt as if I was reading the second book in the series instead of the first. Fantasy is a tricky genre because there's a fine line between mysteriousness and utter confusion and, unfortunately, I spent much of my time in *The Breedling and the City in the Garden* trying to understand how everyone was connected.

On the other hand, there is much to enjoy in this debut novel beyond the complex/confusing world building. The young man, Charlie, has a big heart and spends much of his time trying to keep his cousin, Jimmy, safe

from the gangs that rove the streets. He was my favorite character: *"Are you prepared for the meeting tomorrow?" he asked, referring to the gang dispute Charlie had been asked to mediate, which was a nicer way of saying he was forced. "As ready as I can be, I suppose," said Charlie. "It's not as though they gave me a say in the matter."* loc 159, ebook.

Bastian paints a pretty picture of Chicago: *"For miles, rooftops stretched in every direction. Smokestacks stood proudly as a testament to the modern age of industry. The calls of trains answered each other from east to west. To the north, the distant shrills of tugboats and barges floating along the river thundered through the air. The dark sky above blanketed every inch as far as the eye could see, the city lights hiding the stars."* loc 476, ebook

There is certainly a feeling of danger throughout the story- both for the success of the Breedling's quest but also for the souls of the mortals who travel with him: *"If Charlie were to uncover his secret, it would lift the veil of ignorance that blinded him to the truth about the supernatural elements in Eden (Earth). And for enlightened mortals, it never ended well. Their souls earmarked in the afterlife by the Mistress of Heaven or the Master of Hell."* loc 1321, ebook. "The Mistress of Heaven" is a tantalizing name for a character but Bastian never really gives the backstory for her- I wish she had.

I also liked the personal responsibility theme that cropped up again and again in this story: *"...a man who runs has no life at all. He merely survives on the fringes and finds only regret. You leave here, now, like this, I swear to you there will be nowhere far enough for you to run. You will become miserable and reckless and in the end you'll die alone, a world away, wishing you could take this moment back."* loc 3069. I'm a big believer in taking responsibility for one's life rather than blaming it on fate or destiny. It seems like Bastian is too.

Recommended for readers who can tolerate a lot of unknown elements in the story and for people who enjoy urban fantasy. I think that Bastian shows a lot of promise and this series is only going to improve as she reveals more of the complex world she has created. Other fantasy debut recommendations: The Interminables, Funeral Games, or Chasing Embers.

Thank you to NetGalley and Wise Ink Creative Publishing for a free digital copy of this book.

Kel (Faerie-bookworm) says

Title: The Breedling and the City in the Garden

Author: Kimberlee Ann Bastian

Genre: YA Historical Fantasy

Format: Ebook

Pages: 233

Rating: 5

Heat: 0

Thoughts: Very interesting story. I enjoyed the history of it, and the characters were great. So many different personalities that fit so well within the story and era. Great writing that made it seem so real, at times I wondered if I was reading a non-fiction book. Very descriptive yet not overly so. And with so many surprises it made for a fun read. I look forward to reading the next book just to see where it goes, what adventure it will take me on. There's just enough magic/fantasy that it's obvious that this is fiction but so

much history that at times it's makes you wonder "is this real?". The story is about Bartholomew but is focused mostly on Charlie, so we know Charlie has a big part to play in this. I can't wait to read the next book!

Please note that I received a complimentary copy of this work and chose to write a review.

Haddie Harper says

DISCLAIMER: I received a copy of this book as part of a tour.

First of all, this book is different. I have mixed feelings about this book. Although the story is very interesting, I kept finding myself weighing it in my hands. Like there were just some things that didn't sit too well with me. The concept of the story is great; the characters were easy to like. I do feel that the book was dragging at the start, but it picked up towards the end. I like that the plot follows historical patterns, mixed with fantasy elements. That's something I've wanted to get into, but maybe this wasn't the book for that.

I think I might have had set my standards a bit too high. Overall, the author does have a great concept going. For a debut, I think it is pulled off fairly well. 1930s is a time in history that I and my younger sister always 'Oooh' and 'Aaah' about. I've never been to Chicago, so it was kind of nice to visit it through reading.

My Rating: 4 of 5 Stars.

I was a bit confused with some stuff. And though there were answers for majority of the details, I did still get a bit lost. The supernatural aspect is . . . interesting, to say the least. I think this book falls into the category of "whatever floats your boat" kind of thing.

Nov. 10th

Rukhsana Sukhan says

Review pending.

Lonna | FLYL?F says

IN HER DEBUT novel, *The Breedling and the City in the Garden (The Element Odysseys 1)*, Kimberlee Ann Bastian thrusts readers into a historical fiction with memorable characters and a thoroughly developed new fantasy world.

Imprisoned for centuries by the three Fates for his defiance, Bartholomew manages to escape into the human world to fulfill his mission. But he can't do it alone. Armed with only a cryptic message, Bartholomew seeks the help of Charlie Reese, a street-wise orphan.

Ms. Bastian taps into myriad elements to architect this new world. Influences from Greek mythology,

Christianity, and even novel concepts of her own fertile mind, combine to build a unique historical setting of the 1930s Chicago era, otherwise known as The City in the Garden.

Perhaps even more intriguing than the setting are the characters that inhabit this world. Ms. Bastian's precise diction not only portrays Bartholomew's character as a centuries old soulcatcher embodied in a simple teenage mortal shell, she also uses his bond with Charlie to enrich both of their characters' development. Charlie is intuitive and nurturing, and is one of the most compassionate characters I've had the pleasure to read. He quickly takes Bartholomew under his wings, and finds himself caught up in being a pawn in Bartholomew's world.

Yet, I also found the prose to be heavily descriptive, with very meticulous attention devoted to describing banal, everyday tasks between Bartholomew and Charlie that contributed to a slower pace. As a consequence, my initial intrigue for Bartholomew's cryptic mission lessened, but not before realizing that there will be many questions left unanswered in this series opener.

The Breedling and the City in the Garden seems to capture Ms. Bastian's love affair for American nostalgia and mythology very well. Personally, I didn't feel that this love for her impassioned new world quite carried to me, nor did the climax end with satisfactory answers. However, Ms. Bastian's heartfelt characters did resonate with me. I think this is a commendable introduction and the start of a potential series that I look forward to returning to in *The Element Odysseys 2*.

{Thank you to the author or publisher for kindly giving me this book free of charge, which does not influence my review.}

Jill Swanson-Diaz says

I will be part of Kimberlee's virtual tour starting June 1st!
The blog tour is hosted by Young Adult Novel Reader Blog Tours.
Look for my upcoming review and interview with the author on June 14th!
<http://littlehyuts.blogspot.com>

Blog Tour Info:
http://www.yanovelfreader.com/?page_id...

Anali says

"This is the way things are in the big city. People here do plenty of things they don't want to do."

"But why?" asked Bartholomew.

"Because, Buck, you do things you don't want to do to survive, pure and simple. So, you ain't got a choice in the matter."

The Breedling and the City in the Garden es una novela que tiene como protagonista a Bartholomew, Master

Breeding, un cazador de almas inmortal que ha estado encerrado durante mucho tiempo por un castigo. Ahora él ha llegado al mundo de los mortales y tiene que terminar una misión que comenzó tiempo atrás. Para esto, conocerá a Charlie, un joven huérfano, que lo ayudará a adaptarse a este nuevo mundo y lo guiará hasta su destino.

Ok, tengo que admitir que cuanto comencé a leer el libro no tenía ni la más mínima idea de que iba. Había leído la trama, pero no podía entender que mismo era lo que sucedía. Ni siquiera estaba segura de en que generó catalogarla.

Sin embargo, tres capítulos después del inicio, ya me había formado una mejor idea, entendía, y me di cuenta de que la historia es, de hecho, muy buena e interesante. Y podría decir que esta novela es una mezcla de fantasía con ficción histórica.

Hay dos puntos que considero más relevantes (positivos) en la novela: el escenario y los personajes.

- El escenario: La autora hace un maravilloso trabajo describiendo el ambiente de la ciudad de Chicago de 1930s, también conocida como the City in the Garden. Es simplemente genial como describe a las personas, los objetos y los lugares. El escenario es propio para el desarrollo de la trama de fantasía.

- Los personajes: Me parece que son lo mejor. Tienen una facilidad de hacerte quererlos desde la primera vez que los conoces. Nuestros protagonistas principales son Buck y Charlie. Ambos son personajes increíbles y muy bien desarrollados.

Buck y Charlie forman un vínculo, pero su relación es bastante compleja. Hay muchos secretos que Buck esconde, verdades demasiado oscuras para ser reveladas, y Charlie ha sufrido y perdido mucho en su vida. Ambos cambian a lo largo de la historia, sobretodo Charlie, mientras intenta comprender la verdad.

Considero que la trama también es otro punto bueno, pero es un poco lenta y hay que tenerle paciencia. Al inicio es un poco confusa porque menciona diferentes mundos, aparecen o son mencionados muchos personajes sobrenaturales. Todo esto envuelto en un aire de misterio y secretismo que puede resultar muy complejo.

Otro detalle es el final. No está a medias, pero queda abierto para dar paso al segundo libro. No estoy segura de cuantos libros sean en total de la saga, pero me he quedado un poco triste e impaciente luego de ese final. Necesito leer el segundo libro para saber que sucederá con Charlie y la misión de Buck.

*Recibí esta novela gratis a través de NetGalley, pero eso no ha afectado mi opinión sobre ella. Muchas gracias a la editorial.

Lara says

I reviewed a free copy for review through NetGalley and found this book was different than I expected. The story is about a supernatural being who has bucked his destiny and begun to act independently. He finds himself in 1930s Chicago, following a 17-year old orphan around Bridgeport.

While the story is about ancient supernatural beings and the protagonist is special, it is apparently this world in which he is living. It's just that they normally interact with us in ways we don't perceive. Bartholomew,

who becomes Buck, has only observed the world before, and hasn't seen it for some 200 years. Much has changed and his efforts to be polite or to fit in end up making him more conspicuous. This is a time with immigrant gangs, poverty, and speakeasies and the author clearly did a lot of research on the history of those times.

And that is the basis for part of the reason I didn't give this book more stars. The strong and realistic historical setting was at odds with the supernatural aspects of the story and they didn't mesh well for me. The background stories of the human characters sounded real, but the supernatural world wasn't fleshed out as well.

The other issue I had was that when the book began I had the feeling that I had come in on the middle of the story and I checked to see what book this is in the series (the first). While some issues were explained later in the book, they weren't described enough for me to fully comprehend their importance. Combined with the lighter world building for the supernatural it took me a while to get into the story. Overall, I think the author should focus on writing historical fiction, as that was strong in this book.

Yzabel Ginsberg says

[I received a copy of this book through NetGalley.]

I thought I'd like this novel more. It has an interesting and probably complex mythos, juxtaposing our world and another, Elemental-like creator powers, a Fates triad, soulcatchers, the Devil, and quite a few more—something I wouldn't have minded dive in more. However, the way information was revealed was strange: both an info-dump and confusing, which is an unfortunate mix. I don't doubt that, had it been presented differently, I would've warmed up to it.

I don't mind a book starting in medias res, but here I felt I was thrown into a story without having enough background elements to fully grasp who the characters were, what their roles were, and why they were important. Stingy Jack, the Tales Teller, the Apothecary... After a while, it started to make sense, yet too late into the story for me to have been allowed to care about them, and too little (for instance, the relationship between Buck/Bartholomew and the Shepherdess is only made clearer right at the end; had it been manifest sooner, I may have cared about the Breeding a bit more, I suppose).

Also, some of the decisions the characters made were odd, or at least presented in a way that made them look like they came out of nowhere, or without subtlety. I was particularly unsure about Charlie's 'plan' involving the speakeasy—it made sense in one way, but not considering the kind of people would go there, as if he couldn't have thought about that (hint: precisely the kind of people Charlie didn't want to see near Buck).

The style was the other element that really bothered me. Omniscient point of view isn't my favourite, so when it comes with a prose I don't enjoy, I don't do well with it. Dialogues were often stilted, with characters telling about their past as if they were reading from a book (I never expected Charlie to speak the way he did), and a lot of telling instead of showing. Since there were a lot of heated feelings in the story (grief, tension between gangs, wariness, simmering violence, threats...), this 'telling' was all the more obvious.

Nevertheless, there were good parts in the novel. Charlie especially was a relatable character: not perfect for

sure, torn between his desire to follow his mother's wishes (by helping those younger than him) and his wish to be free to live a life of his own—and yet, his natural tendencies always carry him towards taking care of others. He had to go through a lot, dealing with his grief while trying to follow his sense of duty, and no matter what, I definitely cannot fault a person for accepting their responsibilities.

I don't think I'll pick the second book though. It's more a 1.5/2-star read for me.

Jessica says

Disclaimer: I received an eARC of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

The Breedling and the City in the Garden was about Bartholomew, an immortal soulcatcher, who escaped from his prison and ended up in 1930's Chicago. After the orphanage he arrived in burnt down, Bartholomew was taken under the wing of Charles Reese, an orphan, who helped Bartholomew navigate the dangerous, gang-ridden city. All the while, Bartholomew was trying to find a man who was supposed to help him right a wrong he committed long ago.

I thought the concept was really interesting; I love when characters from other worlds/times/etc. are transported to different ones. I also thought that the mythology introduced in the book was quite interesting, but I think that a more in-depth explanation would have been helpful. However, I had a very difficult time with the narration. *The Breedling and the City in the Garden* was written in third person omniscient. I found jumping between different points of view with each paragraph to be quite disorienting, which had a strong negative impact on how much I enjoyed the book. There were also a number of typos and formatting problems. However, since I read an ARC, those might have been addressed in the final version of the book.

Overall, I had a pretty difficult time making my way through *The Breedling and the City in the Garden* and following the plot. The first 2/3 of the book really dragged for me - I felt like there was too much of a focus on Bartholomew and Charles dealing with problems in Chicago, rather than the otherworldly problems Bartholomew had to contend with. The focus shifted towards the end, and things started to get more interesting, but it was kind of too little too late for me.

In all, the concept of *The Breedling and the City in the Garden* was very unique, but I'm not invested enough in the story and characters to continue on with this series.

K. Lincoln says

3.5 stars, actually.

The cover is gorgeous: It has a design that at first glance evoked for me the same kind of nostalgia that Steampunk stories employ while providing action/adventure. I think that's where my expectations set me up to be a bit disappointed. It's not action/adventure. It's a slow, nostalgic amble through Chicago of the 1930's coupled with a kind of thoughtful, pensive mythic parallel story from a place called Euxinus.

We're dropped into the mythic part of the story, which I appreciated since I love piecing together backstory, and given some crumbs of information to lead us down the trail of who the Breedling is, how he rebelled

against his masters the Fates, and why is is now in search of Stingy jack in order to atone for allowing the Shepherdess to die.

Throughout the story (set mostly in Chicago) Bartholomew (the Breedling, also known as Buck--some people have different names in this story and sometimes it took me a while to catch on) is visited by different iconic associates from Euxinus. And with each visit, I expected either for them to give us more information or a challenge to Bartholomew. I felt that the Chameleon, the Teller of Tales, and the bird messenger really didn't provide much more information than we started out with, which was one of the reasons I never really hooked into Bartholomew. The other reason is that the POV shifted quite a lot between various characters mid-page. I'm used to that in Romance novels, but in fantasy I usually like staying in one POV per chapter so I can get to know a character long enough to identify with them. It was a tad difficult here.

The middle part of the book is a loving, descriptive, excellent meander through Chicago. I loved the street details and the references to 1930's products. The rival Polish vs Lithuanian gangs that Bartholomew's mortal friend, Charlie, has to somehow placate were also cool.

Bartholomew is plopped into Charlie's orphanage just as it is burning to the ground. Charlie saves Bartholomew but at a tragic cost to himself. During this rescue scene, Charlie seems all calm business, part of which is the somewhat reserved tone of the overall book. The writing is often quite beautiful, but even Charlie, orphan street urchin, thinks and talks in the same prose as immortal Breedling Bartholomew.

"They had an eerie feel about them and reminded him of the row houses in Euxinus, which rested like coffins along the streets of igneous black stone that lined the valley from mountain peak to mountain peak."

Sometimes vocabulary was used in slightly different ways than I was accustomed to. For instance, Charlie and Bartholomew go to a pool hall and Charlies says "We'll fancy ourselves with a game." Wherein I'm more used to "fancy myself a pool shark " or "fancy myself a game."

The end of the story is like a philosophical puzzle regarding free will, the ways in which we can tie ourselves by emotional bonds, and to what extent we are responsible for those in our community. Although I was surprised by Charlie's final choice, I love how he was used to change Bartholomew's trajectory on his quest.

In the end, this was a charming chimera of a story, a "boys adventures in Chicago on the breadline and hanging with gangs" coupled with a mythic backstory for Bartholomew that read like a fairy tale. Some of the artistic choices (POV switching, use of language at times) wasn't to my personal taste, but probably wouldn't be an issue with others who started the book with different expectations.

Whitney says

First, the good:

The world building worked for me. It's obvious that the author did her homework.

The main characters were believable, and the protagonists sympathetic.

The plot was interesting enough to keep me reading until the end.

Now, the bad:

I've read a few reviews that say this book reads like it's in the middle of the series instead of the beginning. I think that is a valid criticism.

The way that the story is structured feels clunky to me. The prologue is a cold opening, which then inserts two paragraphs of backstory. Those two paragraphs feel out of place. It makes me wonder if the author wanted it both ways: she wanted a cold opening, but didn't want us to be completely in the dark. (Unless it's a prologue only, IMO, cold openings usually work better in TV and film than they do in books.) You have to choose one: either you fill us in on your backstory/myths/origin, or you don't.

Second, leaving most of the backstory and setup until the end of the book was a mistake. I think I would have been more emotionally invested in Buck's journey if I knew what he was trying to do from the beginning. Not knowing meant that I was less invested than I might have been.

Judging from the way the book reads, I think I know what happened here. I am guessing that the author originally wrote the book in first person singular from Charlie's POV. He would have started out knowing nothing, except for the frustration of dealing with this nutcase of a boy who fell into his care while still mourning the death of his cousin. The story then could have been about how he comes to realize who Buck really is, and what is happening beneath the surface. However, the author wanted Charlie out of the main action before the book ended, so she went back and changed the story from Charlie telling the story in first person, to third person omniscient.

The problem is, if you use a third person omniscient narrator, the narrator has to actually be omniscient. You need to reveal everything, or nearly everything, to the audience while keeping the characters in the dark. This is where starting off with the setup and backstory--i.e. inserting it in the beginning somehow (One Upon A Time prologue, exposition from either the Tales Teller or the Apothecary) would have helped. It also might have added suspense to the story if the audience knew all along who Damek was; we'd be biting our nails, wondering if Buck and Charlie figure it out in time.
