



The Death Catchers

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Dear Person-Holding-This,

I guess you must've found my letter. Well, when you read it, keep in mind that passing Mrs. Tweedy's English class is hard enough. But when the fate of the world suddenly rests on your shoulders, it's difficult to focus on school. I wish I'd handled things better, but when I saw my first death-specter foretelling my best friend's death, I freaked out.

Of course, I didn't exactly sign up to be a Hand of Fate or to protect King Arthur's Last Descendant. I know it isn't my fault Vivienne le Mort and Morgan le Faye decided to toy with fate all those centuries ago, but I do blame myself for what happened in Crabapple. Anyway, I hope you'll understand why writing my story was the only way I had even a small chance of saving the world *and* finishing my English assignment.

Sincerely,

Lizzy Mortimer

Death Catcher

The Death Catchers Details

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From Reader Review The Death Catchers for online ebook

Andrews1417 says

I couldn't put this down finished it in two days flat

Janelle says

This book turned out to be a lot more suspenseful and fun than I thought it was going to be! I was worried it was going to be a bit young for me, but I was hooked once I got into it a bit. I also liked how the book reads as a letter from the main character to her teacher.

Emily Craven says

While the book does follow your standard protagonist-discovers-special-ability-must-use-to-save-village formula, it was delightfully fun. Clearly an English teacher (or english major) wrote it, for it follows the conceit of being an assignment of English in which the cornerstones of literacy are broken down and used to from each chapter (tension, alliteration etc etc). It was a bit of fun actually, and probably a great instruction manual for beginner writers and teens.

My favourite part about the book was it's ability to modernise, and rewrite the assumptions we have about the King Arthur story in a really unique way. Plus, the grandmother is by far and away my favourite character I've found in a YA novel for a while, an absolute crack up.

While the chosen geography may annoy the hell out of the sticklers for detail, I found this book to be a very worthwhile, left of field YA fantasy.

Andrea Wall says

Despite that I am now an adult (I guess) I still really enjoy young adult novels. However this one didn't really stand out to me. The idea was original and fun but it was also predictable and anti-climatic. For example, on the back of the book we are told that Drake is the last descendant -- but this is supposed to be a big reveal about 3/4s through the book. I just always felt like I knew what was coming.

I did like the characters. They were exciting and fun. Lizzy's mum was my favourite and deserved way more attention then she got. I enjoyed Bizzy, the grandma, as well. A fun, easy read perfect for summer.

Xx_The_Blocky_Kid_917_xX says

IT SMELLS LIKE THE TEARS OF YOU NOOOOOOBS AFTER YOUR PARENTS DISOWNED YOU!!!!!!!

Annie says

First Look: Arthurian legend? I'm all in. Not many YA/MG books feature it, so I was curious to see how this turned out.

Setting: There wasn't anything particularly memorable about it. I got a good sense of the small-town feeling the author was trying to convey. Other than that, the setting doesn't play a huge role in the story, and it's a bit generic.

Characters: Lizzy was likable enough. Maybe a bit on the generic side, again, but I still cheered for her. She had the typical unnoticed-girl-from-the-sidelines thing going on, but she was written in an honest and real way.

Bizzy annoyed me more than anything else. I understand that she was supposed to be eccentric, but she came off as too eccentric to seem realistic. I couldn't take her seriously. I didn't really understand any of her motivations.

Drake was an interesting love interest. Again, a little on the generic side, this time with the Troy Bolton-style popular-athletic-guy-with-secret-artsy-passion thing. Still, I liked him, and I could see why Lizzy was attracted to him.

Plot: More of a 3.5 star plot. It was interesting, but it just didn't grab me like I wanted it to. Lizzy didn't actually do much in terms of being a Death Catcher--she only used the ability twice, as far as I can tell. Also, Arthurian legend didn't play into it as much as I had hoped. It was definitely there, but only one aspect of it. Then again, I was kind of hoping that Bradley James-style Arthur would come waltzing in, which he did not. I had no logical reason to expect that, but it might've been fun.

Uniqueness: The part about the Death Catchers was unique, but the romance aspect was very generic and followed a much-overused storyline.

Writing: This whole book was written as a letter from Lizzy to her teacher. This worked sometimes, but not others. Each chapter began with an explanation of a literary term, like metaphor, trope, etc. They were supposed to fit with the chapter, but many times the connection felt like a stretch. Also, most of the readers of this book have enough education to know what these words mean. It felt a bit condescending, actually.

Here's a line that made no sense: "*I pressed my elbows against my chest...*" I tried that. It doesn't work. All I end up doing is slamming my upper arm into a place a girl would rather not be hit.

Likes: The Arthurian aspect was interesting, but I just wish we could've seen more of it.

Not-so-great: How are there 17th century gravestones in northern California? Also, how are there gravestones with Arthurian legend names on them, and nobody notices? How is Lizzy in high school and has never heard of any of these legends before?

Overall: It had some decent points: likable characters (for the most part, and if not a bit generic), a dash of Arthurian legend, and a unique premise. The author felt the need to define literary terms that most readers

would already know, though, and some parts were quite generic. The plot didn't compel me like I hoped it would. 3.5 stars, but I'll round it up to 4.

Similar Books: It's a modern-world story with classic mythology like the *Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel* series, connects modern teens with old legends like *Endymion Spring* and *Dreaming Anastasia*, and is a bit reminiscent in tone and humor of the *Children of the Red King* series. It features a teenager with the ability to stop/prevent death like *Thirteen Days to Midnight*.

Siew Ee says

As a teacher, I certainly wouldn't mind receiving such voluminous excuse letters, especially if the letter is as interesting as Lizzy Mortimer's! This unique narrative style, coupled with Kogler's ability to take the overtold story of King Arthur and present it into something imaginatively different made it easy for me to dive into this story right from the start.

Cleverly told, thoroughly entertaining. Will not reveal more for fear of spoilers.

The story wraps up nicely but leaves it open for a possible sequel. Hope there's more to come. [Checked out this book for my younger daughter Lyn. I'm sure she will like it!]

Avalovesbooks says

I loved this book! It was assigned in my language arts class because of all the literary terms, and I'm so glad it was. The setting, Crabapple, California, was friendly and quirky, with just the right amount of creepy. It was a perfect place for Lizzy Mortimer, who has the power to predict, and prevent, the deaths of people she cares about. I was captivated by the Hands of Fate in the beginning, but I had so much fun with the Arthurian twist. Overall, I thought this book was interesting, mysterious, and outright brilliant.

Laura says

Please please please let this not be the start of a series - it's so enjoyable just the way it is! Whoda thunk that using all those terms one learns in English class (trope, allegory, metaphor, aphorism, etc.) could be strung together to make for an interesting Arthurian story? Sometimes it's a slightly strained use of the term, and sometimes the chapter veers a little further from the description than it should, but more often the device succeeds than fails.

In short, on her 14th Hallowe'en, Lizzie discovers that she's a "Hand of Fate" with the ability to see - and possibly prevent - the deaths of those she cares about. Luckily for Lizzie, her grandmother is also a Hand and has much advice to pass along. Then there's also the question of Agatha, Morgan and Vivienne, three of the Seven Sisters of Avalon... and the Last Descendant of Arthur. Not to mention her BFF Jodi and her crush (ok, everyone's crush) Drake. The story unfolds as a letter written to Mrs. Tweedy, Lizzie's English teacher, explaining why Lizzie should be allowed to pass English. The terms are all part of Lizzie's defense, illustrating her adventures as she starts her career as a Hand (redubbed Death Catcher) and tries to save Drake from his Fate.

Confusing? It all makes sense by the end (and if the epilogue isn't intended to send up the ones at the end of *Harry Potter* and *Mockingjay*, I'll be surprised). Oh, and then there's Mom, a librarian after my own heart.

ARC provided by publisher.

Lisa Mandina says

Oh my gosh, I don't know if I can say just how much I loved this book! The story was really good, but besides that, with it being my first year teaching 7th grade English, specifically about plots and narrative writing, I loved the titles of the chapters, and how the protagonist or main character explained what they meant and how she was doing that with that part of the story. I could totally see using this with my class some year when I'm teaching this in the future.

Check out the full review on my blog, [Lisa Loves Literature](#)

Josie Funk says

Good premise. Horrible execution.

Elizabeth "Lizzy" Mortimer is an ordinary girl with an extraordinary talent; she sees "Death Specters," or visions, when her loved ones are about to die. Her first death specter comes to her on Halloween, as the newspaper she's reading goes blank and retypes itself as a future news article, an obituary of her best friend Jodi.

With the help of her grandmother, Bizzy--from whom she inherited her powers--Lizzy is able to prevent her best friend's fate. But soon after, she's smacked in the face with another premonition, and another potential death, that won't be so easily averted...

Sounds like an interesting book, right? I thought so, at least, when I picked it off the library shelves. But the writing itself was lackluster at best and insulting at worst.

The book tries to sell itself as a thriller and a mystery, but there is nothing thrilling or mysterious about it. For a good half of the book, it seems, nothing happens. The book's main premise, the Death Specters? There are a grand total of two of them. Two. And one, Jodi's, is over in a matter of pages. The second Death Specter belongs to a popular boy at school named Drake, and it absorbs most of the plot and Lizzy's thoughts. Thoughts that are mainly of the cliche "Why If I Fail" variety with a little "Why me?" thrown in for

flavor.

The Mystery would've been interesting if the story wasn't so miserably redundant. That's the book's main sin: it talks down to its readers. No book, even one aimed to elementary kids or to middlegrade, should spell every tiny bit out to the reader. It ~might've~ been interesting to discover that the whole book was based on Arthurian legend, or that Drake Westfall was Arthur's descendant, if the book had not all-but-told-us these facts in the very first part of the book.

Lizzy also does not go about ~solving~ the mystery so much as she's just ~there~ when things happen around her. She rarely, if ever, takes initiative to do anything productive on her own or make her own discoveries - she is always following orders from either Bizzy, Jodi, or her visions. Other than noticing the Hot Wheels magazine, it seems like the information is almost always just straight up told to her.

"Oh yeah, I have a lighter and carry it with me wherever I go," says Drake, who's destined to die in a fire.

"Oh Drake punched someone at school?" asks Jodi, "Oh we better find out why before we--whoops, never mind, I asked around for you so you don't have to do any heavy lifting."

"Man, we should hurry up and get to the Cannery and go over our plans to rob the convenience store that's connected to it," says Drake's brother, unprompted, within earshot of Lizzy who is trying to discover why the cannery is so important. "I know the robbery isn't for another three weeks but I feel confident in conveniently discussing all the plan's details Right Now."

...In short, the only thing Lizzy does is Show Up & Pay Attention and the mystery gets solved around her.

Other things bother me about this book. The characters are so busy being So Unique that they don't actually feel like, well, people. The dialogue, by extension, felt quirky and stilted at times. The plot, especially at the end, made little sense - Vivvienne can't kill Drake directly, because affecting fate is Against the Rules, but she can threaten to push Bizzy off a cliff? Banshees show up any time a fated death is averted, so why didn't Lizzy or Bizzy bring a mirror to banish the banshee? Why did Vivvienne, immortal and wise woman of Fate, not know that the women she was trying to kill had a method to get rid of banshees? Why did she even ~need~ Drake dead before raising an army of undead legions? Like, wtf?

...moving on.

The text sometimes went out of its way to be Super Dramatic about Revelations that were relatively small, or not new revelations at all, and every time the text went:

"Then it got much worse."

...on its own line, like the author thought she was dropping a bomb on us or something, I fought the urge to roll my eyes. Because literally, it happens a *lot*, even when "much worse" means "...kind of exactly what I experienced before."

There's also the fact that the text is written like a letter or a school assignment, detailing all the secrets of visions and fates to her teacher so she could pass a class. After the book's heavy emphasis of "no one must know this secret", writing the story in letter-format makes Lizzy seem either colossally stupid or woefully out of character. Using the format as a teaching skill to inject literary terms into the story did nothing for the plot, either. The terms were either misapplied ('Revision' had nothing to do with revising, 'Personification' is supposed to be giving an inanimate object human traits, not... whatever the author thinks that word means) irrelevant (Lizzy takes a moment in chapter Point of View to lament that the book is written in first person,

and if only she'd been an omniscient narrator, "I could have saved her." and then... never brings point of view up again.) or obvious (there is a chapter called "the antagonist" and, quite frankly, if you have to spell out who your villain is you are not doing a good job as an author, sweetie.) Even the ones used correctly could've been used better--Suspension of Disbelief, in my humble opinion, should've been during the first third of the book, when Lizzy was whining about death and fate and disbelief... and not at the near end, when Lizzy was 3 days before the fated death and had already taken multiple steps to accept the powers her ancestors had given her and had taken MULTIPLE STEPS to avert said doom.

The introductions to each chapter feel like they're there to fill up space and nothing else. Other reviews I've read argue this is a good teaching device, but it's not - but what would've been a good teaching device: leaving the chapter names as themselves and then letting the readers see how they fit in the box. Without spelling it out for them.

(Of course, many times the title/literary term being used is only brought up by Lizzy because she wants you to know her own story was Nothing Like That, Miss Tweedy. Teaching by example simply won't work if the example isn't actually a friggin' example.)

In short, I'm glad this book is over, because it was a slog to read through. I don't recommend this, and please don't make your kids or students read it either--there are better "Chosen by Destiny" books out there.

Hannah Woupio says

This book was a pleasant surprise for me, I thought it was going to be pretty much like all of the other ya fantasy I'd read recently; stilted dialogue, shallow characters, and teenage drama used as a crutch for a story that couldn't stand on its own. I'll be the first to admit I was wrong. The story is based on Arthurian legend, and I thought it was done very well. It was original, and the characters had *different personalities!*

applause (Lizzy's mom was my favorite.)

I may have to read it again to see if it's as good as I thought it was. You know, when something surpasses your prejudiced expectations it can seem better than it actually is, but for now, this rating/review stands.

1/13/15: Found this book for \$3.49 at Hastings and had to buy it for myself!! It was a book that helped me out of a horrible reading rut that almost ended my recreational reading....Still haven't reread, but it has a special place in my heart!

Lucy King says

Absolutely amazing middle grade fantasy. The first scene reminded me of the School for Good and Evil :D cemetery, Agatha, it gave me some really positive feelings because of that and yes, it was really amazing, nothing to do with that retelling but a retelling on its own of King Arthur, Avalon, Lady of the Lake, in a modern world where a 14 years old Lizzy can see that someone is about to die and she can stop it, all that connected to a profecy of old times of King Arhur...I loved it! It was funny, interesting, the characters were so cool, I loved Lizzy's grandma Bizzy :D I would like to meet this lady and the ladies of lake, wow, it gave to a modern world seen by the eyes of a teenage girl a spooky, fantasy atmosphere. I highly recommend it to everyone who loves middle grade/YA fantasies with a touch of old legends and grim repeats - even though here it is a total oposite of a grim repeat :D

Regina says

I abandoned this book quite a while ago and the fact that I didn't bother to update its status up till this point is a testament to how much I don't care about this book.

And why don't I care? I find this book to be cheap and insultingly stupid. The main premise is that it's written by the main character of the story, a young girl, as a school essay that's meant to keep her from failing the class. She uses literally terms to introduce each chapter but that's about the only thing that connects to that base idea. It doesn't read like an essay and I largely blame the dialogue for it. No way she recalls conversation and minor details this clearly. No way she writes this long of a story and this story for an essay. I know that this seems like a nitpick and it probably is but I still don't feel bad about complaining about it because that premise wasn't necessary to begin with and it was still introduced only to add a gimmick.

The reason why that pissed me off was that there was nothing to distract me from it. The story sounded inventive, but it wasn't. It was the same old "teenage girl finds out about magic and about how special she is and she has to use it to save the love interest who just happens to be the most popular guy at school" story. Sure it brought in something new in the form of the Arthurian mythology but even with that it kept referring to other, probably more interesting books.

That's why I never finished it. I abandoned it around the middle of it and skimmed through the second half and I decided that I could read better stories. I could even read better versions of the aforementioned story type.

Nick says

A few things felt odd. The setting was one of them. The author put a lot of effort into describing the setting, but to me it just presented too many difficulties. Most of those would have gone away had the setting been New England instead of northern California.

Example: there are very old tombstones in the local cemetery, ones which locals assume were from the 17th century, early in the town's existence. That's great, but there are NO towns in California which are that old. Really. The Spaniards with their missions didn't wander up this way until the 1760s. Since it's a plot point, it stood out rather sharply. There were other details which gave the same feeling of a misplacement of the story, including the very important Arthurian elements. I'm sorry, but sailing west from Britain just doesn't get you to California in a very natural fashion...there's this big blob of land in the way, often called North America. The editor should have pointed these things out, and nudged the author toward better geography, or toward a better explanation, which is lacking.

Otherwise, the story was a lot of fun, although the mechanics of the death predictions seem to be quite awkward, and crumpled aluminum foil is just not that shiny...

Still, I very much enjoyed the characters, and the story certainly left some interesting openings for the intended sequel.
