



The Near Witch

Victoria Schwab , V.E. Schwab

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Brand new edition of Victoria Schwab's long out-of-print, stunning debut

All-new deluxe edition of an out-of-print gem, containing in-universe short story "The Ash-Born Boy" and a never-before-seen introduction from V.E. Schwab.

The Near Witch is only an old story told to frighten children.

If the wind calls at night, you must not listen. The wind is lonely, and always looking for company.

There are no strangers in the town of Near.

These are the truths that Lexi has heard all her life.

But when an actual stranger, a boy who seems to fade like smoke, appears outside her home on the moor at night, she knows that at least one of these sayings is no longer true.

The next night, the children of Near start disappearing from their beds, and the mysterious boy falls under suspicion.

As the hunt for the children intensifies, so does Lexi's need to know about the witch that just might be more than a bedtime story, about the wind that seems to speak through the walls at night, and about the history of this nameless boy.

The Near Witch Details

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Author : Victoria Schwab , V.E. Schwab

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Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Paranormal, Witches, Romance, Magic, Mystery, Fiction, Supernatural,
Young Adult Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Near Witch for online ebook

Kai says

"Funny how when we start to tell a secret, we can't stop. Something falls open in us, and the sheer momentum of letting go pushes us on."

A dark and magical tale, that reminded me of *The Woman in Black*.

I'm a huge fan of Victoria Schwab because her writing and her stories are amazing and unique. An expert in world-building, character-depth and originality, all set in a thrilling and mysterious mood like no other.

The Near Witch is one of the author's earlier works. While it'll never be as good as *Vicious* or *A Darker Shade of Magic* (since they're both mindblowing), reading it was just as captivating as any other Schwab book.

Find more of my books on Instagram

♥Madison♥ says

"My father used to say that change is like a garden. It doesn't come up overnight unless, you are a witch. Things have to be planted and tended to and most of all the ground has to be right. He said the people of Near had the wrong dirt. He said if you could just break through, there was good soil there, down deep."

I'm so glad this is back in print! It's such a beautiful and a tad bit eerie fairy tale!! Victoria Schwab never fails to amaze me with her stories. I've read all of her books and reading this, her first one, I can see all the improvements and how parts of *The Near Witch* brought about and inspired her other novels. I can't believe this is her first book its soooo amazing! The writing is wonderful, the story and characters captivating! It also has beautiful themes and messages. I felt so cozy reading this, maybe because it takes place during fall. I loved Cole, Lexi and Wren so much. I LOVED everything about this, I'm not surprised I did though because this happens with every one of Victoria's books I ever read <3

Patry Fernandez says

Reseña completa -> <https://thewordsofbooks.blogspot.com/...>

«El viento del páramo siempre será engañoso. Tuerce su voz y le da infinitas formas, largas y finas, como para deslizarse debajo de la puerta, tan gruesas como para parecer de carne y hueso. A veces, el viento susurra nombres tan claramente que, cuando estás a punto de conciliar el sueño, puedes imaginar que escuchas el tuyo. Y nunca sabes si ese sonido debajo de tu puerta es solo el aullido del viento cantándole a las colinas para hacerlas dormir.»

Como todo lo que escribe Victoria, me ha gustado muchísimo. Durante todo el libro prácticamente nos mantiene con esa intriga de que es lo que está ocurriendo con los niños y la búsqueda de respuestas.

Me encanta que se entremezcla en la historia pequeños relatos y canciones sobre el pasado haciendo mas misterioso todo lo relacionado con La bruja de Near.

Además al final del libro trae un relato extra sobre uno de los protagonistas y me encantó leerlo porque así podemos conocer su pasado y el porqué de su comportamiento.

Iris says

WOW! I cannot believe this is Schwab's debut! **This was, in my opinion, one of her strongest works!** I mean, maybe not *quite* Monsters of Verity or Shades of Magic good, but close! It was a stronger book than The Archived, and I liked it better than Vicious.

Because wow, **this book was spectacular!** Everything about it was just wonderful!

Let's do a list of things I liked, shall we? Because I like lists, and also because **there was literally nothing I disliked!** (Except for the fact that it was so so good, and a fairly short book, and therefore not long enough. Or maybe I'm just mourning the fact that I have now read all of Schwab's published works (except for the middle grade series about angels that I still can't quite believe she wrote...))

- **The GORGEOUS writing!** I mean, it was by Schwab. What did you expect? But still, it's worth mentioning, because **it was AMAZING!!!**

- I sort of love her writing style.

- Okay, maybe more than sort of.

- **The creepy, atmospheric, amazingness!**

- This book was soooooo creepy! I finished it late at night, and well. That went well for my sleep. (Not.)

- I swear, **it was SO creepily written. It gave me shivers**, and terrified me out of my wits, but in the very best way.

- Seriously. So creepy. **Deliciously creepy.** And I LOVED THE CREEPINESS OF IT SO MUCH!

- The world building! **It was unique and eerie and atmospheric, and lovely.**

- And by lovely I mean the world was terrible, but it was amazingly done.

- Because that's what lovely means, right?

- The CHARACTERS!!

- **I sort of adored Lexi. She wasn't necessarily the *most* unique YA heroine out there, but she was likeable**, and she was memorable.

- Lexi was a bit of a rebel. She didn't like being told not to do something, and so she had a tendency to do it anyways. She was bright and fun, and a caring older sister.

- Cole was also awesome. **He was a sweetie with a tragic past** (which, let's face it, is a wayyyy better trope than a bad boy with a tragic past), and I adored him. He was sweet. **He was really, really sweet.** But he also had a lot to him. His backstory was super sad, and also really interesting!

- **I loved Cole. A lot.**

- Like, a lot a lot.

- Wren was adorable. Seriously, **she was SUCH a sweet, hilarious child.** She was a very no-nonsense five year old, who couldn't be tricked by silly stories.

- She was the absolute cutest.

- **And the sibling relationship was beautiful!**

- Then there was the romance.
- Okay, I have to say, **it was SO insta-lovey. Ridiculously insta-lovey.**
- But you know what? I don't care. **The romance was sweet and cute and I shipped it REALLY HARD.**

AHHHHHHHHHHH!!! There's so much I'm missing, but OH MY GOSH, I JUST LOVED THIS BOOK SO MUCH!!! You should DEFINITELY go read it! Right away. Just don't be dumb like me and read it late at night.

*****Initial reaction, July 11, 2018*****

It is midnight. I am incredibly creeped out. I'm not going to be able to sleep for hours. It was worth it. RTC.

oliviasbooks says

It's really easy to see how much time and thought debut author Victoria Schwab has successfully invested into the wording of her witchy kidnapping tale. Each sentence has been set carefully into the mosaic of legends, winds that have a soul and everyday life inside of the small town of Near, which is located within an endless stretch of moor and forest, far away from the rest of the pre-industrial civilization.

Although the description did not interest me at all, when I first encountered an announcement of its publication, enthusiastic reviews of fellow readers whose opinion I value high, made me change my mind: The language skill, the fairytale-like atmosphere, the notions of horror and suspense and a sweet supernatural romance with an unpredictable boy convinced me that I had dismissed a probable future favorite too carelessly.

I bought the book and I moved it up the waiting line. I started reading - and although I truly admired the style, and although I can understand how talking winds, buried witch bones from centuries before and boys that fade in the air lead to fairy-tale comparisons and how the disappearance of one child per night in a tiny, inaccessible community can be labeled "thrilling", I felt neither noteworthyly thrilled or bespelled or horrified. On the contrary: Apart from being angry at sexist and mulish uncle Otto, his side-kick Bo and occasionally heroine Lexi herself, I just felt disappointed ... and rather **bored**. The title of the book gives a lot away, so I practically knew what caused the disastrous deduction of the town's number of inhabitants even before Lexi, who was only convinced of mysterious Cole *not* being the culprit and who wanted to track and play detective just like her deceased father, who - in contrast to Otto and chauvi childhood buddy Taylor (in search of an obedient little wife among the handful of maidens) - did not look down on his daughter for wanting to do men's work. In addition the rather slim volume turned out to contain a lot of repetitive scenes (looking for clues in the village, listening to the wind, trying to steal out of the house etc., etc.)

Maybe the love story will be grand, I still hoped after a third of the story had been ingested with some drag to the spoon. Well. You have seen my rating. You know how *this* story ends: Looking leads to wanting to meet, meeting leads to hand-holding, hand-holding leads to kissing and to blind trusting and to secrets being revealed and so on: Instant attraction - or "cabin lust" - for a raven-eyed, silent stranger, because all the other boys are like brothers. Besides, all the time Lexi has no problem at all finding Cole when she wants to, although the angry mob of the whole male population is out for his blood.

Both the dark, restrictive, claustrophobic community and the relationship the heroine had with the boy everybody expects her to wed reminded me strongly of "The Forest of Hands and Teeth", although the latter is a post-apocalyptic zombie story and develops a completely different story-line. If you got the same vibe and know why, please tell me.

I do not want to persuade anybody against reading or buying this **beautifully** written story with its fitting cover. But if you are still undecided and on the verge of being pushed over the brim by infatuated reviewers, I do advise you to wait a little longer: For more reviews balancing things out and making things clearer - or simply for the paperback.

Alyssa says

This book could have been a 5 star read for me. It had a few things going for it: beautiful, poetic writing, an interesting idea revolving around witchcraft, magic and mystery, and raving reviews from fellow Goodread reviewers before the book's publication date.

But here's why it ended up a 2 star read instead.

The book is written in the first person, narrated through the protagonist, Lexi. I generally find that first person narration usually works if the voice is witty, engaging and gives the reader insight about the person's character, their thought process, and how they feel about other characters. With Lexi's voice, I found no depth or personality other than a stubborn, single-minded determination to protect a stranger she barely knew. She never internalised how she felt about the stranger, no mention of her sense of attraction or intrigue towards him other than her strong conviction of his innocence, which was why the romance part that came out of nowhere at the end felt contrived.

The mystery aspect seemed really obvious and boring. One child after another disappears in the middle of the night from their bedroom with no signs of forced entry. Lexi witnessed her younger sister trying to open the bedroom window late at night in a trance like state but made nothing of it nor told anyone about it. Instead, she goes hunting for physical clues by aimlessly running around at night as if expecting to trip over the culprit when it seemed obvious to the reader that there is something deep rooted in magic going on.

I'm not altogether convinced that Lexi had her sister's best interest in mind when she went out at night looking for clues considering she has no clear direction or plan of what she intended to do or find. Wouldn't a better plan be for her to bait the culprit by staying up at night and see who might come for her sister rather than leaving her sister alone at night, unprotected?

This book just ended up being a boring and unsatisfying read.

Vinaya says

*"Of every aspect of the moor, the earth and stone and rain and fire, the wind is the strongest one in Near. Here on the outskirts of the village, the wind is always pressing close, making windows groan. It whispers and it howls and it sings. It can bend its voice and cast into any shape, long and thin enough to slide beneath the door, stout enough to seem a thing of weight and breath and bone." **

There are books I like that most people hate. There are books everyone loved, which never appealed to me. And then there is That Book. The one that manages to draw you in from the very first line, and keep you captive. The one that takes simple words and weaves them into a seamless tapestry of colour and feeling. The Near Witch is That Book.

If I haven't gotten the message across yet, I **loved** *The Near Witch*. I've said it before, and I'll say it again, YA fantasy deserves more attention. This book is a beautifully-written, magical fairy tale that keeps you enchanted from the very first line, right up to the last. And, it gets an extra invisible star (yeah, thanks a lot, Goodreads!) for being a stand-alone.

The story starts off vivid and lyrical, redolent of the mystery and isolation of the moors. Victoria Schwab, who has the kind of talent I envy, manages to draw a clear and eerie picture of the village of Near, edging the moors, set in stone and steeped in dogma. "*There are no strangers in the town of Near,*" Lexi says.

But there *is* a stranger in Near, and suddenly, everything Lexi ever knew is turned on its head. The stranger belongs to the dark and windy night, and despite all of Lexi's efforts, she cannot find him at first, even when she knows he's there, and can hear him breathe. But the very next day, a child goes missing from his bed, and the already suspicious village of Near points a finger at the stranger. Lexi knows he is not the one, with an instinct she trusts. She can hear the wind calling in the night, if she listens from the corner of her ear. Her little sister tells her that the missing children are calling her to come out and play. And with every missing child, the people of Near get more frantic and look harder for someone to blame. But will they believe Lexi when she discovers who the real culprit is?

It's not just the pretty prose that makes *The Near Witch* such a compelling read. The story is tightly-plotted and the pace of story-telling gradually increases from a mysterious, measured tread to a quick, breathless run to a rousing, pulse-pounding finish. This is children's fantasy at its finest, with a dash of mystery, a dash of magic and a side serving of romance.

Victoria Schwab's talent lies in her ability to draw an entire portrait with a few words. She never goes into detailed descriptions of any characters, save the two sisters, Magda and Dreska, and the stranger, Cole. The rest are quick sketches of a few words, but those words convey a wealth of impressions. There is Lexi's mother, struggling through a fog of grief, but there when her daughters *really* need her. Her uncle Otto, fumbling to find the best way to keep his word to his dead brother and protect Lexi and Wren. Otto was one of my favourite characters in the book; it would be so easy to hate him for being such an over-protective, macho fool, but one can see, in brief flashes, his genuine concern for his nieces and his desire to do the right thing for his village. Then there is Bo, cool and somehow evil, lurking on the periphery of this story, but still managing to capture the reader's attention.

To be honest, I could just go on about every character in this book—including the dead ones!—each of whom gave me a different vibe. I'm a person who was reared on fantasy, and this book was like my very own gummy bear factory. (Random fact: I don't like chocolate, but I **DO** like gummy bears!!) The only thing that didn't really wow me the way it was supposed to was the romance. At least at first. Don't get me wrong, I loved Lexi and I loved Cole, and I thought they made a great team, but I was so busy worrying about the villagers targeting Cole and the hunt for the children and the fate of the two sisters, I simply didn't have the emotional energy to spare for true love.

Also, I've been told that the cover for this book has not been finalized, but I would like to add my own plea: Please, pretty please, Disney-Hyperion, **DO NOT** market this awesome fabulous book with this unbelievably hideous cover. It is **WRONG** and it doesn't convey any sense of the beauty of this book.

All in all, my friends, it is time for you to groan and shudder because you know I have found a new book to beat you over the head with. I loved *The Near Witch*, and as per SoP, it is time for me to zealously ensure that everyone around me does as well!

* All quotes in this review are from the ARC and will be checked against a final print edition.

Disclosure: I received this ARC from the publishers via Net Galley. No external considerations affected this

review.

destiny ??? [howling libraries] says

‘There are no strangers in the town of Near.’ Lexi’s heard this all of her life, so her home becomes an unusual place when a very odd stranger appears—and events turn darker still when his new presence coincides with the nightly disappearances of young children.

Long, long ago, the Near Witch lived in a small house on the farthest edge of the village, and she used to sing the hills to sleep.

It’s probably pretty evident by now that I am trash for Victoria Schwab’s stories. I think she’s one of the most masterful, brilliant creative minds I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting, and frankly, *she could publish grocery lists and I would pay good money for them.* All of that is to say that, when I learned her long out of print debut novel was being re-released, I was beside myself with glee, but also a little bit nervous, because it can be hard to go back to a beloved author’s roots—after all, not everyone starts out a pro, right?

If the moor wind ever sings, you mustn’t listen, not with all of your ears. Use only the edges.

Well, *ha.* I worried for nothing, because I opened this gorgeous book, read the first paragraph, and, friends, I’m not exaggerating when I tell you I gave the loudest, most wistful sigh. I was *home.* Victoria’s writing was just as gorgeous then as it is now, and frankly, if you don’t like rambling “gush” reviews, you might as well close this now, because I just want to get emotional and cry at you all a little over how much this story meant to me.

The wind is lonely, love, and always looking for company.

First, this setting? *Flawlessly atmospheric.* Never once does the plot or character development suffer for the sake of setting, but I felt so sucked into the town of Near that I could practically smell and feel and hear the moor, right here. I adored every moment well-spent on the grassy hills, the rain, the stones under Lexi’s feet, the old hut the Sisters lived in; it was all so wonderful and poetic.

“They are closer to nature than any human, because it is a part of them. But most people think witches are cursed.”

But when I say this story **meant something to me personally**, friends, I’m talking about the incredible care Victoria took while crafting these witches. If you ask any pagan or craft-practicing person, they’ll tell you that we’re not used to being painted in such a nuanced light, but here, that’s what I got, and it was wonderful.

“Now her blood is made of moor rain.”

“Now her voice is made of moor wind.”

Now, I won't spoil the story by saying if the witches are good or bad, or both, but what I'll say is that there's a pair of characters—two elderly sisters, who the town is convinced are old witches with no access to the powers of their youth—and they meant everything to me. I'm a sucker for the elderly mentor characters, regardless, but these women, despite being spurned by the town of Near for simply *existing*, spend their time crafting wards and blessings for the people who abuse them, and something about that just made me downright emotional. The idea that they could be so complex, and that **they would continue to take care of people who didn't deserve their empathy**—that's everything I didn't know I needed from Magda and Dreska.

“Fear is a strange thing. It has the power to make people close their eyes, turn away. Nothing good grows out of fear.”

The witches weren't the only characters I adored, though; Lexi and Cole are both incredible in their own rights, but there were quiet, secret, ordinary heroes, too, in Lexi's mother and her late father. I loved the stories from her dad, and I was cheering every time her mother stepped up to help her or protect her.

I just fell so ridiculously in love with so many of the citizens of Near, just like I always do with V's characters, and I never wanted to leave them. I feel like *The Near Witch* is the sort of story I'm going to reach for over and over again, for years to come. It is the most gorgeous kind of fairytale, yet it feels like the kind of thing that's just odd enough to be real, and I mean it when I tell you that **this was easily one of the best books I've read all year, and will undoubtedly go down as one of my favorite books, period.**

Thank you so much to Titan Books for providing me with this finished review copy in exchange for an honest review!

Katie says

I stopped at page 82, roughly one-third of the way through.

I am at a loss when it comes to all of the rabid fans of this novel. I found it as dull and drab as the grey skies of moor country.

The writing is stilted. The narrator is boringly typical. The author named the little sister "Wren", which is so nauseatingly whimsical and twee, in the YA world of, missing a parent, girls.

It did, indeed, feel familiar, as the jacket promised, but not in a comfortable, favorite hoodie, kind of way - more like, "Have I read this before?" It reads like a poorly done mash-up of other, better, supernatural YA books, and episodes of WB monster of the week programming.

It's hard to make witches uninteresting to me, but Victoria Schwab manages to do so. Their names? Magda and Dreska Thorne. Oh, boy.

This is paint-by-numbers YA with a large kool-aid drinking fan base (I don't know how else to explain the gushing reviews). I'm so glad I checked it out of the library as opposed to paying for it.

If I sound super harsh, I'm sorry. I'm critical; I've been on a losing streak with books lately, and it's frustrating, to say the least.

Proceed with caution.

Ellie (faerieontheshelf) says

Schwab herself calls this book “quiet and strange”, and it is true. There isn't a clear place in the market for it. Perhaps because of that, it feels more like a whimsical, timeless story than any of her others. It could just as easily be written ten years ago or fifty years ago.

I found myself thinking it would make an excellent movie, something gothic by Guillermo del Toro perhaps. Because this book has so much ATMOSPHERE. Schwab's writing style is a bit more florid than usual, and I'm a big fan of it. It evokes the desolate but powerful beauty of the British moors, which is something I've never seen in any book (beside the Bronte novels), and I loved it.

On the flip side, there were some things that rubbed me the wrong way. One of the reasons it's so hard to pin down genre-wise is because I *assume* it's fantasy, but it could also be British magical fabulism set in a timeless era in the past. Yet the names felt too contemporary for it to be a historical novel, or even a fantasy, which led me assume it was a contemporary fantasy at first. It could still be, who knows. Names such as Lexi and Cole and Tyler didn't seem to fit the story as in my mind they're too ... new. (But then again, I have problems with Schwab's naming in all of her very first books until Vicious, lol.) The romance was very quickly developed, but one could argue for a book less than 300 pages, it's to be expected. I also don't think it should have been sold as YA originally either; the characters are teens, but it really doesn't feel like any standard YA novel, in my opinion. It's too whimsical and fairytale-esque for that, and those books fare better sold generically as “adult” fantasy.

Really though, I loved it. It has the strange, magical, gothic feel I prize as a reader and enjoy seeing in books.

Thank you Titan Books for an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review!

prag ? says

IT'S TIME FOR MY VICTORIA SCHWAB BINGE.

Remember when I said I'd read *all* her books? Well, I'm finally doing it. Fingers crossed it's good.

-- MY STATUS --

1. The Archived: **Read**
2. This Savage Song: **Read**
3. The Unbound: **Read**
4. Leave the Window Open: **Read**

5. A Darker Shade of Magic: **Read**
6. A Gathering of Shadows: **Read**
7. A Conjuring of Light: **Read**
8. Vicious: **Read**

9. The Near Witch: **Currently Reading**

10. New Beginnings: **To Read**
11. Second Chances: **To Read**
12. Last Wishes: **To Read**
13. The Ash-Born Boy: **To Read**
14. Warm Up: **To Read**
15. Broken Ground: **To Read**

16. The Invisible Life Of Addie La Rue: **To Be Released**
17. Vengeful: **To Be Released**
18. Our Dark Duet: **To Be Released**
19. The Returned: **To Be Released**

~~OH MY GOD THERE ARE NINETEEN BOOKS.~~

nicklein says

This is so underrated I want to punch someone.

The Near Witch was Victoria Schwab's debut novel, yes, the same author of *Shades of Magic series*. It's actually one of the first yafs I've ever read and loved. I had the pleasure of reading this right after it was released 5 years ago and I still read it from time to time. I read it whenever I feel a slump looming in the background. I reach for it whenever I want something ya but not romance-centered. It's like my go-to book to be honest.

It reads like a fairytale. The writing was beautiful and lyrical and captivating. The vivid descriptions sucked me right in with the first few pages. The story was eerie and had a creep factor. It was eerily and creepily enough to haunt you right after you put it down. I cannot talk about this book without going into full fangirl mode. I can't believe how overlooked this is when it's positively one of the best books ever. Sigh.

If you loved **Vicious** and/or **A Darker Shade of Magic** but haven't read this one yet, why the f not? You have no idea what you're missing out. This one here is timeless and breathtaking, an infallible classic.

Patricia Riley says

I was lucky enough to get a ARC of *The Near Witch* and it turned out to be, by a mile, my favorite of the (many) books I read in 2010! Within two weeks of getting it, I read it twice! As I read it again today to celebrate it's release it will be the 6th time I've read it! Suffice to say this book managed to do two things that I have not had a book do in a very, very long time:

- 1) It so completely drew me in and entangled me in the world of the story that if someone had jumped out in

front of me while I was reading and shouted "Quick! Tell me where you are?" it would have taken me a good minute or two to come back to reality and read adjust my brain to the point where I could answer correctly; and

2) at LEAST twice book had a moment so emotionally tense that I literally jumped up from my seat and didn't realize I was standing until the tense moment had passed.

This book is brilliant and you should read it as soon as you possibly can! Fair warning though, you probably want to set aside enough time to read the whole thing... this book will haunt you (in a fabulous OMG-what-is-going-to-happen-next kind of way) if you try to put it down before you finish it!

C.G. Drews says

This book is so so atmospherically CHILLING. Also super slow and like, woah hello to the instalove, mate, but this is also by one of my favourite ever authors so I'm a bit biased to love it despite it being the forgotten middle child who only gets given socks for christmas. Also how weird is to read older books by famous authors?!?? Schwab's style has improved 100 x and like WOW.

Anyway.

+ So the setting, OK???? THE SETTING.

Insert heart eyes here. It's all moors and witches and this like Puritan-like colony and I just ajfdkslad. It reminded me of The Witch of Blackbird Pond so bad. I just really felt *in* the story, and it take quiet powerful writing to do that. TAKE ME AWAY, SCHWAB. I WANT TO LIVE IN THE MOORS WITH THE WITCHES.

+ Also the stakes of the story were entirely tragic.

It's like the Pied Piper is taking smol children from their beds at night and excuse you but hurting smol babies IS A TERRIBLE THING. So I was instantly invested.

+ And I guess the atmospheric writing was the focus but?? It was super slow??

Honestly not a lot happens. It takes place over a week and basically Lexi is just running around defying the patriarchy (but super passively) and kissing a boy who might not even exist (BUT HE'S CUTE SO I GET IT) and trying to find out who is kidnapping the children. Day-um does this girl get some exercise. All she does is run back and forth. **But like nothing got accomplished for so long???** She's saying her dad is this great tracker, SO TRACK THEN, WOMAN.

+ I actually think it'd be 500% more interesting if Cole had narrated.

He's the "stranger" that comes to the town of Near where everyone keeps to themselves and bakes bread and shuns anything different. Lovely town. Definitely raise your kids there. Real estate is great because the occasionally murder local witches to death so you totes live in those empty houses. **The stranger, Cole, is all wispy and thin and seems to melt away.** AKA I LOVED HIM IMMENSELY. His backstory was interesting! He was interesting! He was a m a z i n g. So why the flippity freak freck did we not get the story narrated by *him*????

+ Because Lexi was a little dull.

Not to mention how is she allowed to be called *Lexi* in like this Puritan like commune? The name was way too modern. Anyhow. I appreciated how she didn't care for the patriarchy and punched it (WOOO) one time. But if you asked me her personality I would be like ??? She enjoys ??? um ??? wearing boots instead of

slippers??? DON'T WE FREAKING ALL. **I did appreciate her fierce love for her sister.** And her ability to run all the time and never consume food.

Feed these freaking characters for the love of heck I'm getting hungry here.

+ **So ya know. It was GOOD, but it also felt a bit old.**

Stories have changed a lot in recent years and you can tell when you read slightly older books! The instalove was cute so I'm not mad (LIKE I'M INSTA LOVING COLE) but it was very rushed. I was a bit blank-eyed at the hugely sexist society....not that it's unrealistic. Just that I'm 500% bored of reading that now. And I would've liked some more action. Like totally expecting the witch to bake this kids into a pie and eat them/??? But no. We're not reading Hansel and Gretel and apparently Schwab is nicer a writer than I would be.

Ya. I'll be quiet soon.

+ **I love love love witch stories and moors and wispy soft cinnamon boys.**

So ultimately: YES. This is a solid yes for me. It's the kind of book I'm already thinking fondly of and it was inspiring and beautiful, even with a few puddles of a downside. I SITLL LOVE IT. SCHWAB IS QUEEN.

Trina (Between Chapters) says

DNFing this at page 77. I hope to come back to this at a later time because I want to read as many of Schwab's books as I can, but I am not in the mood for this at the moment. I have skimmed the past few chapters and still find myself incredibly bored. It's very slow paced and has not built a connection to the characters or setting for me. If I power through now, I will rate it low, so I'd rather try to see if it fits my reading mood better at another time.
