



The Tower at the End of the World

Brad Strickland , John Bellairs , S.D. Schindler (Illustrations)

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When Lewis, his uncle Jonathan, and their friends Rose Rita Pottinger and Mrs. Zimmermann take a trip to a small town near Lake Superior, they expect a pleasant vacation. Instead, they find themselves facing the ghastly Ishmael Izard, son of the fiendish creator of the Doomsday Clock that was once hidden in the walls of Uncle Jonathan's house. Ishmael himself is a cruel and heartless sorcerer, and he is determined to wreak vengeance upon the entire world. Will Lewis and his friends be strong enough to defeat him, or will their fate be decided by their most formidable foe yet?

The Tower at the End of the World Details

Date : Published August 11th 2003 by Puffin (first published January 1st 2001)

ISBN : 9780142500774

Author : Brad Strickland , John Bellairs , S.D. Schindler (Illustrations)

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Supernatural, Childrens, Fiction, Paranormal

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From Reader Review The Tower at the End of the World for online ebook

Justin K. Rivers says

It's been several decades since *The House With a Clock In Its Walls*, and there's a very good reason for that. Bellairs told all the story he could reasonably tell about Issac Izzard and the Doomsday Clock. It was a simple plot that served to introduce us to likable characters and move them forward in their arcs, which were followed up in two direct sequels. Basically, there doesn't seem to be a very good reason to write another sequel, and if the story doesn't need to be told, that's a red flag that something is wrong. I strongly suspect that the only reason Strickland wrote this book is so the publishers could market it as a sequel to Bellairs' best-known novel. But it doesn't do the final product, or the franchise, any good.

Tower just doesn't make much sense, and the early momentum that Strickland built up when he first took over the series deflates almost completely. There are many minor inconsistencies and problems. Basing a story on events that took place in a book published in the 1970's creates some confusion automatically. And Izzard's son doesn't seem to have much of a motivation besides being a thin facsimile of his father's generic villainy.

The series has grown overly self-referential in several ways. In the preceding Strickland book, there are multiple references to H.P. Lovecraft juxtaposed with direct attempts to insert Lovecraftian mythology into Bellairsia (for lack of a better word). That book also featured a plot that hinged on an even more trivial reference from *The House with a Clock in its Walls*, that of Lewis' inexplicable fear of the demolition of a bridge that featured in one scene. Here, in *Tower*, we get a direct and clumsy reference to M.R. James, one of Bellairs' main influences on the structure and style of his work. It's arch, unnecessary, and confusing. It calls attention to the tiring formula of the plot.

The characters don't seem quite right. Uncle Jonathan now has an ornery streak that seems more like Professor Childermass, from Bellairs' other series. Lewis, our main character, also seems off. His negativity and crippling fear no longer seem rational or character-driven. Instead, these traits are used to try to manufacture suspense. After all this time, you'd think that Lewis would be able to grow as a person. Sure, he's still a kid. But he's become an unpleasant child with meagre complexity and likability.

All of Bellairs' protagonists have similar traits. They're sensitive, socially marginalized young people with geeky obsessions and interests that prevent them from fitting in with the other young people in their small towns. Lewis, Johnny Dixon, and Anthony Monday seek out the companionship of older, educated eccentrics, who ironically have more in common with them. These stories are always about friendship and loneliness and the desire to belong. It's not hard to see how John Bellairs himself must have felt – a literary, educated person in a small town where such interests are not valued, where the society favors extraverts and athletes. It's a common problem. It's hard to be a nerd in a place where not many people share your obscure passions (like John Bellairs novels).

The moral of the story, of all the stories, is ultimately that the protagonists are misfits because of circumstance, that they have worth despite their shyness, despite being bad at baseball. They discover that they can save the world, that they have friends who care about them, that their fears can be conquered. Other kids at school might not like them that much, but it's not because they are unlikable. It's because they're just a bit different. Lewis is no longer a nice person who is misunderstood – he's just annoying. What is happening in these later Strickland books is that the author is losing focus on the core values of the series, and at the same time rehashing tired plot material. Lazy writing saps these books of the warmth of character, the wonder of the unfolding, gothic-magic world, and the consistent sense of jeopardy and suspense.

Cynthia Egbert says

I really wish I had realized that this is considered a true sequel to The House With a Clock In Its Walls and I would have read it as book two in the series rather than #9. But I still enjoyed it. I love this series and the actual ghouls, wizards, witches, and creepies that are its bread and butter.

Drew says

I know John Bellairs. I have read many John Bellairs books. And Mr. Strickland, sir, you are no John Bellairs. Nice try, though; a lot of the right elements are there, and it's a treat to revisit these characters whom I've loved since maybe second grade. Hopefully kids who pick this up will go back to the original books, which are much subtler and richer in character.

Cynthia says

I can't believe I had never read this before! But it came out 2001, when I was busy raising a little baby so it was well off my radar.

It was so good! Just as I remembered John Bellairs' novels to be—Brad Strickland did a fantastic job of imitating his authorial voice and continuing his grand tradition of gothic horror for the middle grade world.

Joanne says

This is a series I used to read to my son many years ago and discovered the series continued- i enjoyed picking it back up where we left off- it takes place in Michigan in the 1950's so interesting to hear about our state!

Erin says

Yes, this a good creepy installment in the series. They brought back some old plot points, and Lewis was just as nervous as always!

Cathleen says

Lewis Barnavelt and his uncle Johnathan are yet on another magical mystery that you cannot put down. I had read this book many years ago and picked it up again because my children are starting to read all the John

bellairs series. We are very happy that Mr. Stickland has added to the wonderful series, any parent who wants their kids to get interested in reading this is the series. Loved it as a kid and am thankful for the series as a parent. I would give it a 100 star rating if I could.

Ken says

This one lost me. I was comfortable with the story, as shallow as it was, up until the final two or three chapters when things just kind of fell apart for me. The flow of the story became very disjointed. In general, I liked the premise. But, the story just felt rushed and lacking.

2 STARS

Jacquelyn says

Parts of this book were really good and other parts seemed to skip around and not flow as well. It was ok.
