



Stonebird

Mike Revell

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When eleven-year-old Liam moves house to be closer to his grandma, he's thrown into an unfamiliar place, with a family that seems to be falling apart.

Liam doesn't remember what Grandma was like before she became ill with dementia. He only knows the witch-like old woman who snaps and snarls and eats her birthday cards. He desperately wants to make everything better, but he can't.

Escaping the house one evening, Liam discovers an old stone gargoyle in a rundown church, and his life changes in impossible ways.

The gargoyle is alive. It moves unseen in the night, acting out Liam's stories. And stories can be dangerous things . . .

But Grandma's illness is getting worse, Liam's mum isn't coping, and his sister is skipping school.

What if the gargoyle is the only thing that can save Liam's family?

Stonebird Details

Date : Published June 2nd 2015 by Quercus (first published February 5th 2015)

ISBN : 9781623654627

Author : Mike Revell

Format : Hardcover 308 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Childrens, Middle Grade, Mystery, Fiction, Magical Realism

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From Reader Review Stonebird for online ebook

Shannon says

Link to this review on my blog here!

My Review:

A big thank you to Quercus for sending me this copy in exchange for a full and honest review. My review has been in no way impacted by receiving this copy for review.

This book can be described in a single word Magic.

The magical and fantastical element of the story really revolves around the gargoyle and his connection to Danny. I really enjoyed reading about the gargoyle and his abilities in this novel. The gargoyle lent a fairy tale sort of atmosphere to the novel which I found very enjoyable.

Danny, our protagonist, is a young man going through many changes. He is growing up, moving house, trying to fit in at school, visit his sick grandmother and also try and deal with a magic gargoyle following him! Danny has so much on his plate I was surprised he didn't go crazy! Danny provided an incredibly fresh, young and innocent voice to the story. I loved reading about this novel through Danny's eyes.

Danny's sister Jess was also a good character but I did think she was a little selfish at times, which annoyed me as I would always put y siblings first if need be. I wasn't the biggest fan of Danny's mother but came to warm a little more to her later in the novel, although I still think she was not a great mother for Danny.

I also loved Danny's relationships with the other characters. Danny's bond witty his dog, Daisy, was beautiful to read about. The bond Daisy and Danny have is so lovely. Daisy is Danny's best friend and is always there for him.

I wasn't the biggest fan of Matt, or his father, but grew to not dislike them by the end of the novel all that much. Danny's new teacher at his new school was also great to read about as she was a really good teacher who connected with her pupils.

One of my favourite things about this novel was just how realistic it is. Yes, i know you're probably thinking "how can a gargoyle be in a realistic book?" and yes you're quite right that the gargoyle is unrealistic but it is more along the lines of the themes of the novel I am referring to. From Danny's bullying, moving schools, alcoholism or living with / knowing someone with dementia, Stonebird covers a vast amount of serious topics in such a small amount of pages that it really packs a punch and leaves a connection wit the reader.

Overall Stonebird is a great debut novel. Full of fantastical fairy tale elements, the novel also is laced with realistic problems. I would recommend this novel for 10+ .

^-^ Lucy says

This book is a bit sad but really waste your time for this book

Darren Hartwell says

This review first appeared on The Book Zone (For Boys) blog

I've said this before, but one of the best things about being a book blogger is the way you quite often end up reading truly amazing books that may otherwise have slipped by the wayside. I'm not sure whether Stonebird by Mike Revell would have suffered this fate as the cover artwork by Frances Castle is stunning and grabs your attention immediately, but I am still really grateful to those fab people at Quercus for sending me a copy as my reading life is all the better for it.

Stonebird is one of those magical books that has true crossover potential, with something special to offer for children, teens and adults. In my mind it falls into the same category as books like Wonder by RJ Palacio, Smart by Kim Slater, A Boy Called Hope by Lara Williamson and Brilliant by Roddy Doyle. These are all books that deal with real world issues that often get overlooked in children's literature, including disability, family break-up, depression and mental health. Stonebird joins this stellar list with its gentle and touching exploration of dementia and how a family copes, or doesn't, when a loved one is slipping away from them.

Liam struggles to cope with understanding his gran's illness, his mother's inability to cope and her use of alcohol to dull the anguish she feels, and his sister's seemingly selfish indifference to everything that is going on around her. As the new boy at school he is also an instant target for the resident bullies, so all in all life seems pretty grim for him right now. Add all this together and Stonebird really was not at all what I expected when I picked it up. From the cover I expected it to have a much greater fantasy element, a story about a boy striking up a friendship with a magical gargoyle, with a shared love of stories. Sort of a modern day Neverending Story type book. However, the gargoyle makes very few appearances, and the 'relationship' Liam has with it is not at all fluffy and friendly. Ultimately, Stonebird is actually a contemporary story with a fantasy thread woven through it. It was also a lot darker than I expected, but it is a darkness that is needed given the themes it covers, and the story is all for better for it.

Stonebird would be a great read for any 10+ child, but especially one who is experiencing similar issues at home. It is the kind of book that would make a great class reader, enabling children to be involved in discussion about dementia, bereavement, and depression leading to alcoholism. I know I'm not alone in loving this book and many of my fellow bloggers have mentioned to me their love for it too, and I really hope that it is finding its way into the hands of young readers as well.

Liwayway says

Another beautiful, magical, all-the-feels story to add to my middle grade reads! Liam is a rather put-together 11-year-old boy trying to understand his sick grandmother's dementia. Are the things she says real? Did she actually take someone's life when she was not much older than he? Does she know the gargoyle he met just

the other night?

Liam's had to leave his friends behind so that his family can be closer to his grandmother. He encounters bullies at school, a kind teacher with a magical egg that seems to make his stories come to life, and a protective gargoyle in the church graveyard. While rummaging through his grandmother's things, he finds her diary where she speaks of the gargoyle, Stonebird, and how he protected her and might have followed her all the way from Paris.

I flip-flopped between being certain Stonebird was real and not real. Sometimes the strange occurrences of this gargoyle in Liam's life sent shivers down my spine, but he is a brave little boy, determined to fix his broken family as long as he can understand how wonderful and how dangerous Stonebird is. The writing flows effortlessly and almost whimsically from page one and somehow made its way into my favorites list.

Adele Broadbent says

Liam isn't keen about starting a new school after moving to a new town with his mum and elder sister Jess. They have moved into his grandma's house as she has worsening dementia and is in a care home nearby. Lying awake one night, Liam sees a dark winged shape outside. What could it be?

Liam is missing his mates and wondering what he can do in the new town. Following his escaped dog from their garden, he explores a little and finds a run-down church nearby, surrounded by scaffolding. It all looks as if deserted years before, and Liam explores further. He finds a small room and when he looks inside, he sees the same shape he saw at night above his new house. But how can that be? It's a concrete gargoyle – it can't move?

When they begin tidying Grandma's home to settle in themselves, Liam finds a diary. It has a picture of the same gargoyle on the front, and it belonged to Grandma when she was 13. Did she know about the Gargoyle? Did she see it too?

Liam is soon surrounded by mysteries. Is the Gargoyle alive? What does Grandma mean when she rambles one day about killing someone? Why is the school bully at the care home too?

This story reminded me a little of my favourite tween novel ever – 'A Monster Calls' by Patrick Ness.

Liam has to deal with bullying, his mother spiralling down into sadness over her own mother's illness, and a creature that is somehow connected to his family. Told in first person, talking directly to the reader, Liam pulled me into his plight and confusion about what is happening around him, and the touch of magic around a stone gargoyle was fantastic.

Great Read.

Laura says

Originally posted on:> <http://lauraslittlebookblog.blogspot....>

What a beautiful story Stonebird was. Although a middle-grade novel, I think I took more out of this than I have of any other story that I have read.

The cover of Stonebird really reels you in with the phrase: "Believe in the magic of stories". Once you open up this story, it does not let you go until you have turned the last page.

Stonebird tells the story of Liam, who has had to move home to be closer to his Grandma who is suffering from dementia. He has left all his friends behind and his Mum and sister aren't coping very well trying to deal with the fact that his Grandma sometimes isn't like their Grandma any more. By accident one day, Liam discovers a stone gargoyle in a church and the gargoyle is alive! At storytelling time in class, Liam tells the story of the gargoyle who in turn acts out Liam's stories, and Liam wants to save himself and his family, but stories can be dangerous things.

I really could not get enough of Stonebird, it was one of those rare books that you get through so quickly because it is just so effortless to read but in a way that you become so easily hooked.

At time I found this truly heartbreaking, especially because Liam is so young and yet has to deal with so many grown up things that kids of his age shouldn't have to deal with but so many do. I loved the storytelling part in Liam's class where each of the children pass a marble egg around to tell their story. Liam's teacher is a brilliant character and I wish there were more teachers like her in schools.

I think my only small criticism about this is that I would have liked it to have been a bit longer and have more of a focus on the gargoyle, but it was still enjoyable.

There was one quote in here that I absolutely loved and thought it was so true and it was this: "We are all weird in different ways." I thought this was spot on! And made me think that none of us are normal, we all have our strange ways. There are brilliant little sayings like this throughout the book that just make it so special and unique. What I also think Stonebird is brilliant for is letting children who are reading this know that's it's ok if they are dealing with similar things; they are not the only ones and there will be someone that can help.

A beautifully heart-warming yet heartbreaking and poignant magical novel from Mike Revell.

SHANE ELLIS says

Great book. Loved the writing.

Katy Noyes says

3.5 stars

I'm not usually a fan of magical realism stories, I mostly feel frustrated with them and find them neither one nor the other.

This, however, did keep my interest, mostly because of the Grandmother.

Liam has had to move house and schools so his family can be near his grandma, suffering from dementia. Bullied at school, Liam discovers a diary written by his grandmother when she was a girl, during World War II, and finds a connection that exists between them - a gargoyle at the nearby church that seems to come to

life... A substitute teacher encourages the class to start to tell stories, and Liam uses the diaries as a basis for his, but starts to find things he talks about seem to be happening in the real world. Is it a coincidence?

The supernatural element of the plot was quite nicely done, I liked the connection between grandmother and grandson. The scenes with Liam visiting the nursing home are quite affecting, well done for children reading. The bullying (and its conclusion) I didn't find realistic, but a reader of the right age probably wouldn't see it the same way as me. The reasons for bullying are eventually revealed, though Liam is incredibly understanding about it all.

Liam I found quite naive, but this worked in scenes with his mother and sister, which saddened me in their 'wine o'clock' references. A moving portrait of a family suffering grief and mental illness.

This has a lot of themes for discussion with classes, and would make a good class reader, though it really does pack it in - the war, dementia, depression, alcohol, bullying, supernatural, revenge, family.

I would say this would be best appreciated by ages 10-13. I listened to the audio version, which was well read by an appropriate young-sounding voice.

Denise Pulis says

I really wanted to give this book more stars, but in the end I can't because...

This review contains spoilers

- The way the blurb is written suggests that a lot is going to happen with the gargoyle, and that this is mostly a magical tale. In reality, the book is 99% realism and 1% magic, with the gargoyle featuring in very subtle, the-protagonist-doesn't-even-ever-see-him-move way.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the above, but I hate misleading blurbs.

-While the part of the book delving into the protagonist's grandmother having dementia is brilliant, the rest of the book is about a not-so-original bullying plot line. Again, the bully in the story hates the protagonist instantly without any particular reason.

-Finally, the hook of the book ****spoilers*** ...

...the protagonist hears his grandmother yell, 'I'll kill you, I've killed before!' and continues to investigate who this might be throughout the book. Only it turns out his grandmother didn't kill anyone, and just said that because she has dementia. To me, again, that is false tension.

On the plus side, the book is beautifully written, and if you never read the blurb at the back, it does tell an interesting story with a touch of magic.

Kirsty says

I really enjoyed this book. It is about a boy and a magical gargoyle. The gargoyle protects Liam and whenever Liam tells stories the gargoyle makes them come true. Liam uses the gargoyle to help his sick Grandma.

I liked the way that this was written, it was very easy and quick to read. This dealt with many themes such as family and how families have to cope in difficult times. The Grandma has dementia and I thought that this was dealt with very well. It also dealt with bullying as well, Liam found it difficult because he couldn't tell his mother as she was dealing with the grandmother.

Overall I really enjoyed this book. Although it is aimed at middle grades the story was still very enjoyable and didn't seem too young.

Book Bazaar says

Our junior book club read this and blew me away with their insightful comments on a book that held more complex issues than I had originally anticipated. They enjoyed the book, were understanding of the issues faced by the characters and participated in a great round table discussion.

They gave great marks:

8/9/10/7.5/8/8/8

Buchdoktor says

Der 11-jährige Liam fühlt sich, als hätte man ihn 1000 Meilen von seinen Freunden weg verpflanzt. Weil seine Großmutter nicht mehr allein leben kann und ins Heim kommt, zieht Liams Mutter mit ihm und seiner Schwester nach Swanbury/England ins Haus der Großmutter. Der Vater hat die Familie schon vor Jahren verlassen. Verständlich, dass Liam seinen Vater vermisst und sich in der belastenden Familiensituation von der Mutter vernachlässigt fühlt. Als einziger Mann im Haus spürt er den Druck, sich in seinem Alter nicht mehr zu fürchten. In der Schule wird er Ziel von Mobbing, weil er sich zu gut mit seiner Lehrerin versteht. Für einen Elfjährigen mit so vielen eigenen Problemen wirkt Liams Einfühlung in die Sorgen seiner Mutter da beinahe übermenschlich. Als im Umkreis einer baufälligen, mit Brettern vernagelten Kirche Liam ein riesiger Gargoyle entgegen schwebt, ist das der Beginn eines spannenden, unheimlichen Abenteuers.

Während die zunehmende Demenz der Oma deutlich als Last zu spüren ist, kommt Liam im Tagebuch seiner Großmutter einem Geheimnis aus dem Jahr 1941 auf die Spur. Der Gargoyle als traditionelle Beschützerfigur stellt eine Verbindung her zwischen Enkel Liam und Großmutter Margaret Williams, die als Kind in Paris lebte. Die Zeit des Zweiten Weltkriegs und des Nationalismus ist gerade Unterrichtsstoff in Liams Klasse. Als Hausaufgabe seine demente Großmutter zu interviewen, kann der Junge sich nicht vorstellen. Glücklicherweise gibt es im Ort ehemalige Schülerinnen von Margaret, die sich an sie erinnern. Auch Liams Lehrerin, Mrs Culpepper, war Schülerin von Margaret Williams. Leider macht Liam sich bei den Jungen seiner Klasse mit seinen Unterrichtsbeiträgen keine Freunde. Dass Steinvogel früher seiner Großmutter Halt und Trost vermittelte und auch ihm besondere Fähigkeiten verleiht, wird immer deutlicher.

Mike Revell zeigt sich als temperamentvoller Erzähler, der meine Geduld mit Logiklöchern jedoch stark strapaziert hat. Dass ein 11-Jähriger eine 86-jährige Großmutter mütterlicherseits hat, scheint mir weit hergeholt. Die Enkel dieser Frauengeneration wären heute vermutlich eher um die 30 Jahre alt. Wie die Familie der Großmutter aus Paris über ein Exil in Spanien 1941 wieder nach England gelangt ist, bleibt

offen. Unrealistisch finde ich bei einer Demenzkranken auch, dass ihre ungewöhnliche Kindheit in Frankreich nicht zur Sprache kommt, obwohl Demenzkranke ihre Kindheit im Alter häufig nacherleben.

Der ungewöhnlich reife, selbstlose Liam gibt wenig darauf, welche Rollenzuschreibungen für Jungen gerade gelten. Mit Hilfe des Phantasie-Gargoyles löst er das Rätsel um seine Großmutter auf eine originelle Art. Die Figur eines Gargoyle könnte zunächst ein Fantasybuch vermuten lassen. „Wundervogel“ ist jedoch eher ein Problembuch mit einer männlichen Hauptfigur und ein paar Anfänger-Schwächen im Text. Mit Krieg, Nationalsozialismus, Demenz, der Außenseiterrolle eines Neuen in der Klasse und einem abwesenden Vater lädt Revell in seinem Erstling zehnjährigen Lesern einen Berg an Problemen auf. Der äußere Umfang des Buches wirkt zunächst einschüchternd, im Lesefluss sind kurze Kapitel mit großzügigen Zwischenräumen von der Zielgruppe ab 10 gut zu bewältigen.

Ameya says

Good debut, interesting story.

Liam is eleven years old. His absent father moved out of home for another woman several years ago, and his mother has never coped. Now his maternal grandmother being in a care facility with dementia, has pushed his mum over the edge.

But there are 2 mysteries to distract Liam from these cares. And from Matt, the bully, who uses his 2 henchmen to outnumber Liam like a lily-livered coward. Grandma's diary of her teen years hints to a mysterious disappearance, and also points Liam to the enigma of the gargoyle, Stonebird.

What I liked is the depth of the story, such as the unflinching look at alcoholism and dementia. The exploration of memory, and it's importance to character. The war's effects on France.

From a literary perspective, there was symmetry in the circular motion of the plot, to a satisfying resolution.

The minor quibbles: the voice grated on me at times. It came from some of the analogies, which didn't reflect the voice of an 11-year-old. And the flatness of the emotion, when others' emotions are put up for display, especially Mum's. I'd have expected more visceral anger: at Matt, at his sister, Jess, his mother for copping out on him.

And, who noticed that Claire was actually 12, not 13?

The start was slow, but the story built up momentum to an interesting and magical conclusion, if not, a resounding crescendo.

David J Grimshaw says

Such a good story

Em well it was sad but happy also so good but has swearwords like cr*p and has hell in it but it was so good please read soooooooooooooooooooooo good ??

Bruce Gargoyle says

Ten Second Synopsis:

Liam thinks it unfair that he has to move towns and schools to live nearer his grandmother, who lives in the care home and has dementia. When a new teacher arrives at his school, Liam discovers that he might have more power at his fingertips than he thought.

I must start off by saying that Stonebird is a handsome old brute! Obviously, as a Bookshelf Gargoyle, I am of a different family of stone creature than Stonebird, but I do envy his stately proportions and ability to perch regally on rooftops. That aside, it was wonderful to read another book wherein my kin are central to the story. There are so few around and I'm not sure why, for we provide so much atmosphere and gravitas. But I digress.

Stonebird is of that exciting category of books that feature important and difficult subjects pitched at just the right level for a middle grade audience. In this particular case, Revell touches on dementia and the experience of grief, loss and confusion that can envelop those close to the sufferer even while the sufferer is still alive; bullying, its effects and possible causes; parenting, and the effects of prolonged stress on a parent's ability to relate to their children; among other things. There is a lot going on here besides an exciting fantasy tale about a gargoyle who can protect a boy with the help of a possibly magical egg.

I'm going to mark this one down as magical realism, rather than fantasy, because while there are obviously fantastical elements, the focus of this book is the authentic portrayal of a young lad trying to solve problems that are beyond his age and ken. This could have been a great, engaging and thought-provoking read even without the addition of a (handsome, powerful) member of my species, but the magical elements provide the cherry on top of the icing on a cake of quality reading.

As the main character is male, and there is a significant plotline of boy-to-boy bullying running through Liam's story arc, I am certain this will appeal to young male readers, while young female readers will be drawn in by the inclusion of a storyline relating to Liam's grandmother in her early teen years. As a considerable amount of the story takes place in the classroom, this would also be a fantastically engaging pick as a class read-aloud for around grades five to seven.

If you only read one book featuring a strong, silent, gargoyley type this year, make it this one!
