



Treasure Box

Orson Scott Card

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A shattering childhood tragedy left Quentin Fears devastated and unable to cope with the world and its citizens. It didn't, however, prevent him from making millions through brilliant investments, and now the enigmatic recluse has experienced the extraordinarily unexpected: love at first sight.

But a whirlwind courtship and marriage to Madeleine -- beautiful, witty, and equally ill-at-ease with reality - - is bringing Quentin something other than the bliss he anticipated, for now he must meet his new wife's family.

A bizarre, dysfunctional collection of extreme characters, they are guarding a secret both shocking and terrifying -- as is Madeleine herself. And suddenly Quentin Fears must prevent his dream woman from unleashing an ageless malevolence intent on ruling the world.

Treasure Box Details

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Author : Orson Scott Card

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From Reader Review Treasure Box for online ebook

[Name Redacted] says

Okay. Again I am breaking my review-silence, but only because so many other reviews were evidently written by people who never read this book. Is it great? No. It's only okay. A solid little potboiler, clearly influenced by All Heads Turn When the Hunt Goes By, Ghost Story, and possibly The Stress of Her Regard (which were themselves based on older stories) but nothing more than that. Do I regret reading it? Nope. Would I read it again? Nope. But I keep seeing people accusing the author of using it to preach pre-marital sexual abstinence or anti-homosexuality or traditional gender norms or anti-Witch propaganda... And those people are wrong on every count. Again, they must not have read the book.

Here're a few rebuttals [SPOILERS AHEAD!]:

1) After losing the big sister he idolized to a freak car accident when he was a boy, the protagonist Quentin closes himself off to human relationships -- especially with the opposite sex. He has no friends. He even comments about how sad it is that his "closest friend" is his lawyer, whose "friendship" is openly based on the money Quentin pays him to BE his lawyer. He never marries, he never has children, and he never even goes on a date. He devotes all his time to work and study. And it's REPEATEDLY hammered home that his pre-marital sexual abstinence and naivete are signs of his warped psychological reaction to losing his teenaged sister. It's explicitly stated that he uses morality as an excuse, but even he knows he's just covering up for his own social and sexual dysfunctions. About 1/4 of the way into the book, he even openly admits to himself that he has isolated himself from romance and sex because of his quasi-incestuous obsession with his dead sister. Furthermore, at no point is he proud of his life choices, and he is in fact repeatedly shown to be ASHAMED of his virginity once he allows himself to think about sex at all. The other characters in the book all either pity him or mock him, and the only one who doesn't is actually a con-artist who is using Quentin's psychological issues against him. **THIS BOOK ABSOLUTELY DOES NOT PREACH PRE-MARITAL SEXUAL ABSTINENCE.**

2) There is ONE mention of homosexuality in the entire book. And sorry, folks. It ain't anti-gay. A 34 year-old American male who is childless, has never married, has never had a girlfriend, has never even had a DATE, being asked by his Baby Boomer father if he is gay and then assuring his father that he is not -- that isn't "anti-homosexuality." That's life. That happens. And the scene doesn't even present homosexuality as a bad thing, just something which they both feel awkward discussing. Which makes perfect sense since A) it's a father talking to his potentially-closeted son, and B) this is set in the mid-1990s. Heck, the 1993 "Seinfeld" episode "The Outing" (which famously gave us the catch-phrase "Not that there's anything wrong with that...") had more genuine anti-homosexuality, even though the point of that episode was to criticize American homophobia. **THIS BOOK IS NOT ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY.**

3) This book is emphatically anti-male and pro-female, and pretty much spits on traditional gender norms. But in that reductionist way that 2nd & 3rd Wave Feminism so often encouraged. There is only ONE bad female character in the entire book, and even she is presented as the victim of misunderstanding and deception which led her to believe lies. Women are repeatedly presented as smarter, more interesting, more powerful and more important than men. Women are presented as having agency, while men are merely tossed about by the whims of women. The entire book hinges on male characters being little more than tools for use by powerful women, and even the scene in which the male protagonist "wins" only allows him to "win" because all the women around him told him what to do and then did all the actual work after he'd played his minor part. The ultimate evil in the book? Male. And it and its kind possess human men and turn

them into murderous psychopathic demagogues. The only actual murderer in this book? A man. His victim? A woman. And how does he pay for his crime? Well, he shoots himself in the head and is then riddled with bullets by cops. Furthermore, this book emphatically depicts traditional gender norms as stultifying and outmoded; the primary female protagonist is a strong, smart, powerful, principled career woman, and she has a monologue all about how her contributions are dismissed by her foolishly out-of-date baby-crazy family which only cares about her sisters because they have children. And at no point is that contradicted. The audience is meant to understand that she is right, that her family is wrong, and that the rest of the world needs to get with the program. It's not subtle. **THIS BOOK DOES NOT ENDORSE TRADITIONAL GENDER NORMS.**

4) The "Witches" in this book are presented as people who are part of a morally neutral bloodline which grants them supernatural powers, more like Marvel Comics' X-Men. Most of them are positive figures, flawed and human, but good and dedicated to stopping evil supernatural entities from intruding into the mortal realm. In fact, the book goes into detail about how ignorant Christians and Jews and Muslims (and Nazis) have been wrongfully persecuting these innocent witches over the centuries. And how persecution of (female) witches is actually a tool of demonic (male) entities who twist human (male) leaders to their dark ends in a quest to destroy the powerful (female) witches who oppose them. The human (male) protagonist is only there as a pawn in a struggle between powerful (female) witches, all of whom know more and know better than him. Witches = good. Humans = weak. Witch-burning = demonic. **THIS BOOK IS NOT ANTI-WITCH PROPAGANDA.**

But you wouldn't know any of that if you read many of the reviews on Goodreads.

twitch

Emily says

Card makes his political leanings a little more overt in this book, probably because it's set in the year 1996, but he can be forgiven because he's given us such a riveting story. As a young boy, Quentin Fears wrestled with his parent's decision to pull the plug on his teenage sister after a car accident left her brain dead, and he's never really recovered. Now a millionaire with no real purpose, he is searching for some meaning in life. He meets Madeleine, who seems like the perfect woman, and very reminiscent of the deceased Lizzy, and quickly marries her. Unfortunately, Madeleine is on a quest for power that will take Quentin places he is not prepared to go, with a very supernatural twist, as it's not just political power the woman who seeks to control him is after.

I thought the character of Quentin was very well-developed, even though Quentin himself is not a very well-developed person. However, he does a lot of growing throughout the tale and becomes very dynamic. When the novel begins it's turn from rather ordinary tale of grief and loss into the realm of the metaphysical, it really gets intriguing. I ended up not being able to do anything but finish this book, ignoring friends at the bar, and my husband on a road trip until I reached the end.

Rick says

Treasure Box is a love story gone incredibly wrong. If you are a fan of OSC then be prepared for a novel unlike anything he has written. Treasure Box is not Card's usual science fiction or fantasy offering, but here

he takes on a bit of ghost story or maybe paranormal would be a better designation. Card creates an antagonist that you really will despise but could have given a bit more to the protagonist. All in all a really good story.

Misha says

I've really liked other works by Card, but *Treasure Box* was a dreadful disappointment. I rarely don't finish a book, but I came extremely close to doing so mid-way through. On the surface, it has a good plot. Between the covers, it slugs along slowly before eventually speeding up to a climax, and not a very good one at that. The writing falls short of what I've come to like about Card's writing. It's considered horror-fantasy, but it's more like fiction with a few horror and fantasy elements. What humor exists was akin to poor delivery of bad jokes.

The story comes off as a soapbox for Card to preach, more so than in anything else I've read, including his Biblical fiction *Rebekah*. Among the anti-homosexuality remarks, Quentin swears to his father he's not gay. He also makes a big deal about saving sex for when he's married to the right woman. Adding to the holier-than-thou attitude, while driving during a severe snowstorm, Quentin sees a beacon of light, a brilliantly lit Mormon temple. By the way, Card is a very devout Mormon. That's fine, but the topper is the ignorant attitude towards Paganism. Not only does he group Satanists and Witches together, Card also compares those who Witches hold in their hearts to Hitler. When mentioning the Wicked Witch of the West, there's no mention of Glenda because there couldn't possibly be anything good about Witches.

Treasure Box left behind such a rancid taste. I usually have a hard time parting with books, but I dumped the preacher's box as soon as possible. I'll stick to Card's older sci-fi works. I might also just finish the Ender series and call it quits on Card.

Emma says

OK, not all of my books will be from Orson Scott Card but damn I loved this book. It is about this guy who got fairly suddenly rich through stocks or tech or something and then he goes around seeding other business ventures and basically being uber wealthy but in a geeky way which is fun to read about. But of course, being sci-fi he is haunted and crap and other stuff happens but I liked it mostly from a purely capitalistic angle. =)

Kaylie says

Orson Scott Card is one of my father's favorite authors. I liked the film adaption of his Ender's Game. Before immersing myself in that series, I wanted to test the waters with one of Card's only standalone novels, *Treasure Box*. Interestingly, when I asked my dad what he remembered from this particular novel, his words were few. After reading it, I'm not too surprised. *Treasure Box* is more horrific in genre, compared to the science-fiction Card is best known for. With this in mind, it's difficult writing a review. Worse, I had mixed feelings about it.

After taking a day to try to absorb *Treasure Box* in its entirety, I have decided it is best understood as a book

of thirds. Each third tells an individual story, culminating to an incomplete package. The first section is about Quentin Fears and his increasingly quarantined life. Within the first pages of Treasure Box, his sister Lizzy dies, due to reckless driving. It's unclear whether her friend or her is driving, but this detail isn't particularly important - it's that his sister, his best friend, counselor, and fellow reader, is suddenly gone.

Until Lizzy speaks to him. Lizzy urges Quentin to continue living, reading, and enjoying life, as it's better than the alternative. His adolescence and young adulthood is breezed through, from his turn to books for comfort, to his successes in college, to his quick millionaire status. This first section was paced quickly, as many physical things happen. Card doesn't give too many details about Quentin's emotional turmoil, which is surprising, as Lizzy and Quentin were (are) best friends. Instead, Lizzy plays a role throughout the novel, as Quentin learns who she really is.

The next and last sections show Quentin getting older. In his thirties, he has plenty of money from investments and his quick career as an IT professional. Though he has seemingly everything, he longs for Lizzy, as he thinks it's the only love he's ever known. He begins seeing her everywhere, until he's introduced to a beautiful, witty woman named Madeleine. Within two weeks of meeting, they are engaged. However, she's not everything she seems. She's on a quest for power through politics yet remains homeless and unemployed, she won't let Quentin meet her family, and when she walks, she doesn't leave footprints. Upon meeting her family, even more questions arise. Who is Madeleine? Lizzy? And what becomes of Quentin?

Naturally, Orson Scott Card's Treasure Box holds some surprises, but the climax was tame, despite Quentin's depth. Additionally, each female character serves a singular purpose, helping or hurting a man, so that was frustrating. The revelation of Madeleine's identity was revolting and even insulting. As such, Card gets preachy when mixing religion and magic. Is it worth opening this treasure box? Honestly, I'm not sure.

Luke says

The story is quick. There are 100 pgs. of [actual] setup. The story isn't wondrously original, nor is it painfully cliché. It's a solid, fantastic read with no chance of being life changing - the way all horror is.

Christopher Smith says

Orson Scott Card's Treasure Box is a fascinating supernatural thriller about a naive millionaire who meets and marries the love of his life, only to find that she is not what she seems. I won't spoil the plot for you, but suffice to say that this novel is full of twists and turns, with plenty of richly textured characters to keep things interesting. Definitely the best of Card's thrillers. My only complaint about the writing is that virtually every character seemed to constantly quote from English literature, even when it made no sense for them to be able to do so. Evidently Card had English literature on the brain when he was writing this.

As a side note, some readers may be interested to learn that some of the ideas in the book come from Card's Mormon faith. I refer especially to the idea that disembodied spirits are less powerful than embodied ones, because they can't directly affect the physical world. One of the foundational teachings of Mormonism is that we came to this earth to receive physical bodies so that we could eventually become deified. Another Mormon concept in the novel is that summoning the dead requires use of the person's true name. Mormons

believe that husbands will call their wives forth from the dead on the day of resurrection by invoking their sacred temple names.

Hal Brodsky says

It's hard to write a review of one of Card's books without bringing up his politics, so I'll say upfront that I've met him and I've heard him speak and, yes, he is an egotistical hypocritical Ass. He has also been one of the better science fiction/fantasy writers we have had over the past few decades, producing a number of classic works.

"The Treasure Box" is not one of them.

Aside from some preaching about pre-marital sex, it is difficult for me to believe Card even wrote this uneven and, frankly, boring story. The plot just plods along, every single character is at once both unrealistic and unlikable.... no easy task.

If you want to read a good fantasy book by Card, read "Enchantment". Don't bother to open "The Treasure Box".

John says

I'm not sure what I expected from this book, but what I got wasn't at all it.

Really good book, really well done though. Interesting ideas (though some seemed like ones I'd seen in books before. No idea if those would have been written before or after this one) and a well written protagonists.

If that sort of thing could happen it would totally make you wonder about what was real for the rest of your life though. That would be so hard to deal with.

Well worth a read.

Grace says

Orson Scott Card's books are so easy for me to love. Treasure Box is best gone into blind, and while the tone and even genre switch unexpectedly throughout the entire book, it's not necessarily unwelcome. It encompasses suspense, psychological, and romance, as well as a bit of a detective story. I find it intriguing, which is why I read it in three days, though judging by some other reviews, it's not for everyone. I would suggest picking up some of Card's other, more universally liked works beforehand if you're skeptical

Kevin Xu says

This book felt so predictable to be like Pandora's Box all over again.

Piggie says

This just isn't the best story to come from Card. Nothing compared to his Ender works. That isn't to say that there is no value in reading this book. It has a slower beginning, moving through some needed character establishment before the story really gets started. There are some really interesting characters and some unexpected plot turns. I'm only giving it 3 stars because of the beginning and the ending. Neither are terrible, but they didn't really sing either. The ending seemed a little anti-climatic, too easy for my taste. With all the building up, I simply expected there to be more to the bad guy. Overall, I enjoyed the book. As always, Card has a wonderful writing style that is a pleasure to read.

Amy says

Read this years ago, but did not find it as engaging as other OSC books. I have become used to being thoroughly enthralled by his work since the days of Ender's game, so was disappointed. *

OSC has been one of my favorite authors. But now, I am distressed. A while back, I was confronted by a dilemma with author I had read, and had liked (for that kind of thriller book.) He did something which appalled me, enough so that I swore I would never buy another of his books again (which was not hard as I don't think I'd ever bought one before. My reads were from the library or given to me.) In fact, I went back and even made an entry in ALL my BookCrossing books saying that I have stopped reading this author as I find him morally reprehensible. Shame really, because I did like some of his works. I added, in my journal entry to each book, "Any future books registered to my BookCrossing shelf will be ones given to me to bookcross. I will not put a dime in his pocket ever again." If you're interested the author was Michael Crichton (and yes, I am aware he died last week, but it still doesn't change things for me) and the explanation of why I was upset with him is here.

Well, now, an author who is actually a favorite author of mine is making statements that I also find appalling. And frightening. And somewhat nutso. At least according to Brian Trent of the Independent Examiner. The full commentary is here. (And yes, I realize one of the links points to a 2004 article.)

Orson Scott Card, I am deeply disappointed in you.

* Note added in 2013, probably some 15 years after I read the book: Another goodreader is distressed that I didn't say why I didn't like the book. Frankly, I don't remember. Best guess? It's billed as horror, and I'm not a fan of that genre. But that's a guess, that's all. Had goodreads existed back when I read the book, I would have used it instead of keeping a list of titles in a notebook, with a personal rating system to record my end reaction to each book. When I joined goodreads, I entered in the books in the notebook so I could keep an electronic record of some of my reading. The world is imperfect. Live with it.

Amanda Young says

I was unsure at first if Card could capture me in the same way he did in the Ender universe. As always he

surpassed my expectations with a book equally intricate and emotion-filled. He knows how to pull on the fears and issues of human emotion without sacrificing a wonderfully unique story. With the heart of a lonely man, this story builds into a battle of good vs evil in the most interesting of ways. Can't say much without giving it away, but if you like supernatural stories you will love this!

Donald says

I have read his whole Ender's Game series. But this is so darkly different from all of that. Witches, Dragons, and magic, oh my...

Katrina says

Card is one of my favorite authors but I'd only read his fantasy/sci-fi before; this is a supernatural thriller and was very enjoyable! He always creates interesting characters and it was definitely a page-turner.

Elar says

It seems that collaboration stories are much better for OSC. More action, less repeating and themes are little bit different than usual. I could relate with hero of the story, feel the emotions he felt and that made it above average book. Thanks

Mike says

This book has the most disappointing conclusion I have ever read. It's bad while you read it, but then the ending is stupid and negates the entire story.

I'm going to ruin the ending now, in hope that you never read it:

The story is about a man who gets stuck in a ghost house.

In the end, it turns out that when he was shopping in at a grocery store at the beginning of the novel, the main character was annoyed that a child in line with its mother behind him was screaming and throwing a tantrum.

Well, he shouldn't have been annoyed, because that was a magic child that can read minds. The magic child took offense to his annoyance, and made him go crazy and think that he was in a ghost house.

The end.

Lesson learned: never read Orson Scott Card again.

Zarinah says

my first Orson Scott Card book and I love his writing. In this lovely book the author follows a manname Quintin Fears. I know Mr.Card writes SciFi but I didn't want to dive into a book that was too far out I couldn't get into but when I read the book jacket I knew I would fall for a such a plot. And I did! In this plot the main character has a quarky sense of humor. He is grieved with his sister's death and continues his life lonely and rich. And along comes some witches and his life is shaken up. Really this book slightly comes very close to some very taboo situations but not quite. sort reminds me of in twilight saga how wolf imprint on Bella's daughter. yeah seems a little weird that a grown wolf would be in love with an infant. its just an example of how the book sort of rubs close to a weird situation.

This is a quick page turner mystery with ghost and witches with powers.

Anyway I still loved the writing, the plot, and the characters. I can see the movie being in the twilight zone or Alfred Hitchcock's film.
