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Danny Fahey

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One day the orphan Catalina is taken home by her lone surviving relative, Aunt Griselda. Unfortunately for Catalina, all does not quite go as expected. Her aunt hates her and makes her life miserable. She learns she is to be sold to Stefano the Knife-thrower and used as a human target. To escape a certain death, Catalina leaps through a mysterious crossover point and ends up in a new land called Arboroth. There, she encounters a wolf-boy and a talking rat. She is beset by a cruel and inhospitable landscape, and all the while hunted by a pack of relentless hounds. Then Catalina discovers her aunt is also in Arboroth. And Griselda isn't happy.

This is a fantasy tale of magic, of an evil witch and a little girl who just wants to know who she is.

Catalina Details

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Author : Danny Fahey

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From Reader Review Catalina for online ebook

Lyn Battersby says

Lyn is a judge for the Aurealis Awards. This review is the personal opinion of Lyn herself, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of any judging panel, the judging coordinator or the Aurealis Awards management team.

I will be rating this once the AAs are announced.

Anastacia says

One day the orphan Catalina is taken home by her lone surviving relative, Aunt Griselda. Unfortunately for Catalina, all does not quite go as expected. Her aunt hates her and makes her life miserable. She learns she is to be sold to Stefano the Knife-thrower and used as a human target. To escape a certain death, Catalina leaps through a mysterious crossover point and ends up in a new land called Arboroth. There, she encounters a wolf-boy and a talking rat. She is beset by a cruel and inhospitable landscape, and all the while hunted by a pack of relentless hounds. Then Catalina discovers her aunt is also in Arboroth. And Griselda isn't happy.

Catalina reminds me of a fairy tale, good versus evil, complete with an evil aunt who also happens to be a witch. Catalina is a very strong female lead and I think makes a great role model, which is one of the reasons why I did like the book.

The story is well written & grabs you from the first page, but unfortunately, the tale (for me) slows down a lot for most of the middle. I didn't really feel like the story was anything original - and yes, I know, everything's been done before & nothing is truly original anymore! But you just knew everything was going to work out in the end, and worse yet, I felt like I knew what was going to happen in every scene before it happened. I liked the story, I liked the characters, I liked the writing - I just didn't love any part of it. I do, however, strongly think that the intended audience (young adult) would like the book a lot more than me. This comes up occasionally - I love young adult books, but sometimes they are just a little too young for me, and that's to me actually a sign of a very well written book.

Alysa H. says

I received this book through Goodreads First Reads.

I enjoyed this twisted fairytale, which is old-school in that it doesn't shy away from the dark and gruesome. I especially loved the long section where young Catalina is stuck for a few years in her evil Aunt Griselda's house. A lot of creepy things go down, and some awful child abuse, yet Catalina gets through it and hangs on to her sense of self. While a little unrealistic to think she'll grow up completely unscathed, it does make for a character that a wide variety of younger readers might better relate to and admire.

I had some issues with the structure; I think the opening chapters went on a bit too long and could perhaps have been condensed into a prologue, as I didn't really get into the story until the chapter where we find

young Catalina in the orphanage. There are also a few things in the first half of the book that never really get the expected closure later on (e.g. Peter's parents and what happens to his kingdom, such as it is; Merilee and Lisbeth not knowing what becomes of Catalina), and a few things in the second half that seem to come out of nowhere (the red-haired elf man on the dream-path; Griselda all-of-a-sudden forthcoming with exposition; the talking rat -- even though the latter is mentioned in the book description!). I suppose one could argue that all of this is part of the fairy-tale quality of the book, but personally I think it detracted.

I must say, there was a neat twist that I didn't see coming at all. One thinks one knows who's who in this tale, but perhaps one doesn't!

I also appreciated the fact that there was no romance, only friendship, because Catalina is still just 12 by the end of the book. (In another author's hands, she might have ended in an epilogue as a teenage queen married to Peter or something, and I would have been very unhappy!)

All told, I would give this 3.5 stars. I look forward to sharing this book with my daughter when she's old enough for such things. She's got a few more years yet... :)

D.J. Daniels says

It's a curious mix: a fairy story in which you think you know all the characters, but which still surprises you. The protagonist, Catalina, is an orphan who needs to discover her true identity and her own abilities. So far, so familiar? There's also an evil witch aunt, a knife-throwing villain, a transformed rat, defeated wizards and a lonely prince who has been turned into a wolf-boy. Fahey mixes it all up into his own insightful blend. This is an ageless book for lovers of fairy tales.

Samantha Cutler says

I received a copy of this book from the author via firstreads. I found the story intriguing and a fast read. The characters fascinated me and I was sad at the end since their tale was over. If you are looking for an imaginative tale you will enjoy this one.

Sarah says

I won this in a GR giveaway. This has not impacted on my ability to write a critical and honest review.

29/10 - This is an engaging fantasy with what looks to be a very strong female lead, Catalina. I like the way she attracts everyone around her (kind of pied piperish), but doesn't abuse the power she wields over not only the other orphans, but the nuns who run the orphanage where she has grown up. I wouldn't really say that it should be tagged as for YA (or even children) only, it doesn't read like a YA. It may have teenage/child characters, but it appeals across the board. This is a fantasy for young and old. To be continued...

30/10 - At the moment I'm enjoying this so much I don't want it to end, but obviously it will end eventually so I'm hoping for a series following Catalina for many years to come. Catalina's aunt, Griselda, is a great (in a horrible way) villain and Catalina's forced existence with her is heart-wrenching to read. At the moment everyone's past is shrouded in mystery and I desperately want to know where Catalina's powers come from,

what really happened to her parents and how Catalina is going to defeat Griselda. To be continued...

31/10 - In a couple of scenes I can't help but favourably compare the writing and, maybe, some of the themes (I might be imagining these themes) to The Chronicles of Narnia. The main theme I may or may not be imagining has to do with the 'path' that Wolf-boy leads Catalina to and the way Fahey seems to be saying that if you stay true to the 'path' then it will take you where you want to go, but if you stray from the path you may never be able to get back on it again. As with The Chronicles of Narnia I got the feeling that there were some religious undertones to this idea of staying on the right path and it leading you in the right direction, but as I said, it might all be in my head. In a few scenes I find Griselda not as evil as I think she should be or was earlier in the book, occasionally giving Catalina, surprisingly, almost tender looks. Now, maybe this is a clue to Griselda's true nature that I didn't quite get, and we are to learn by the end of the book or (hopefully) in one of many following books. If this is the case Fahey and other readers should ignore my thought that Fahey could have continued Griselda's apparent evilness and contempt for Catalina, which she showed quite clearly when she first picked Catalina up from the orphanage and imposed such cruel restrictions on her life. To be continued...

1/11 - I've finished Catalina and I definitely feel as if there is more to write/read. I want to read about Catalina as she and Peter and Sherwood and all the wizards clean up Arboroth, I want to read about her becoming the true ruler of Arboroth, maybe battling a few more evil witches (or something even more dangerous) in the meantime. Following on from yesterday's review and the mention of some similar themes with The Chronicles of Narnia, I would like to note that Sherwood the rat who wears clothes and talks reminded me of Reepicheep, the sword-wielding mouse from The Chronicles of Narnia. Obviously Reepicheep was courageous and always ready for a fight with anything, and Sherwood is terrified of confronting the witch (or anyone), but as I was reading that was the first thought I had when Catalina met Sherwood. So anyway, I really enjoyed this fairytale and hope to hear more from Catalina and all her friends.

R.j. Ashby says

Danny Fahey's Catalina is a fresh look at the fairytale genre, suitable for both old and young alike. His story is full of interesting characters, all well-developed and three dimensional. While Catalina does include some of the classic elements of fairy tales- evil witches and wicked step-mothers (or aunts), it's cross-dimensional aspect provides a fresh look at this genre, and allows plenty of future opportunities for the author to expand his worlds. Though it is a fast read, this novel is original, very complex and intricate. I particularly liked the knife-throwing Stefano, a disturbing character. Catalina herself is an interesting and very well-developed character, with a complex psychological aspect that authors rarely seem to achieve realistically. She shows Fahey's insight into the human character, and her quiet defiance in the face of the odds that confront her is very believable. On the whole, she is an excellent heroine, to whom both children and adults will relate.

Fahey's work skips fluidly from realm to realm as the story progresses, without ever losing the reader, and comes to a well-tailored and enjoyable ending.

I recommend this novel for lovers of fairytale-type stories, young and old.

Kayla says

I love fairy tales! Catalina is told in the story of all of the tales that we love, with an evil witch, an innocent girl who has the potential to change everything, and of course a boy. But Catalina is also unconventional and original. The girl does not come into her own power easily and she does not know that the wolf-boy might be the way through which she can save both herself and the world she has never had the chance to know. This book is both a whirlwind adventure and a tale that seems inherently familiar in that it speaks with the same sort of voice used in well-known fairy tales.

The evil entity of Catalina fixates on the witch and Stefano. I like how each of them is complicated in their own right while neither is all-powerful, though Griselda has been able to accomplish much through her black magic. Stefano is her minion and while both aim to hurt Catalina, Griselda cannot hurt her directly, which explains why this tale can be told in the first place and doesn't end halfway through the narrative.

I loved all of the magical and mystical elements of the novel and how they are different from everything that I've ever read before. Just like in any fairy tale, not everything is explained fully, which can be frustrating, but I like how this fits into the mold.

Peter was such a lovely character! I feel terrible for what happened to him and Catalina and readers will be rooting for them from the beginning. Even if they are young, they can no longer afford to be naive, and it is this strength which really drives the book and brings it to its wonderful conclusion.

I give Catalina 5/5 stars. It was wonderful, and I know many people will enjoy it as much as I did!

Pam Bugbee says

I received this book for free through a Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

This is a great fairy tale story for young adults and adults themselves. I love Danny Fahey's writing style; he makes it effortless to visualize the characters and scenery, and also makes it difficult to put the book down.

There are four realms in this fantasy and each of the thirty-one chapters is broken down by realm. This makes it easy to become familiar with the characters and plots in each of the different places.

It's a story about the heartaches and challenges that an orphan named Catalina overcomes, as she is forced to leave her life in a loving orphanage and move in with her wicked Aunt Griselda. There are some unexpected turns and magical moments in this story. If you're looking for a captivating fantasy fairy tale, this book won't disappoint.

Devina says

The twist is interesting, because it's there until the end of the story, which I didn't expect.

I want to see the teenage Catalina!

Mary Clark says

loved the Tree Singer so was really looking forward to reading this author's next book. I wasn't disappointed, it is an amazing fantasy / fairytale and once again beautifully written.

Glenda Fralin says

Catalina pairs a young girl with a hateful aunt whose soul purpose for taking the girl seems to make the girl suffer. In the mean time a young boy Peter lives as a wolf cub at the hands of a witch. They see each other through an enchanted room and overcome a fear of each other to join forces in an attempt to escape their tormentors.

Catalina brings worlds together yet separates them through difference; a metaphor for today's world in my view.

Catalina, by Danny Fahey, gets five stars from me. I recommend it highly.

Almas says

This is an interesting book that I feel would appeal to certain people, it has a fairytale feel to it, but isn't the typical retelling of a fairytale. The book has certain parts that are very original and stop the book from becoming boring and obvious. Although I felt when reading it some parts were slightly simple - in the sense in order for it to reach the next part that was added, a sort of filler. All in all it was a very good read and I did want to read it all in one go as it isn't a typical plotline - though if expanded it could be even better such as a deeper back story - though the simplicity kept it as a light and easy, enjoyable read. Personally I would recommend this to 10-13 year olds.
