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Everyone has a story to tell ...

Dirk McDonald's life was almost perfect. He lived with this grandmother, Fifi, in a beautiful gingerbread cottage in Hollywood. He had the beach, and his surfboard, and Fifi's red-and-white 1955 Pontiac convertible.

But Dirk wasn't happy. Inside, he was harboring a deep, dark secret. And he was afraid that if he admitted it to anyone - even Fifi - he would never be accepted again.

Then one night, Dirk's magic lamp came to life. Suddenly, all the stories from Dirk's past came flowing out of it. On that night, his life changed forever. At last, Dirk learned who he really was, and that any love that is love is right.

Baby Be-Bop Details

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Author : Francesca Lia Block , David Díaz (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Baby Be-Bop for online ebook

Alex Mcgonagle says

Book review: Baby Be-Bop

Baby be-bop by Francesca Lia Block is about Dirk McDonald life, he lived with his grandmother fifi in a little gingerbread house in Hollywood. The main characters where Dirk, fifty(grandmother) where the big main characters, there where some smaller main characters to, they are Pup, Duck and Bam-Bam. The plot developed when Dirk meet Pup in a tree,"as Dirk walked home from school he heard a whistle, and he looked up into an olive tree. In the branches sat a boy. He had brown hair with leaves in it, freckles on his turned-up noseand a Cheshire Cat grin."

The book theme was learning to like yourself for who you are. I think the auther did a good job writing the book but there was a lot of changes in the book. The book didn't really affect me in any sort of way. I wouldn't really recommend this book for people because it wasn't that interesting and change a lot in the story.

The rating I'm giving the book is a 3out of 5 because I thought the book wasn't really that interesting to me. Another reason is because it didn't really have any big jumps in the book like I like.

Rory says

Francesca Lia Block is one of my favorite writers of all time--not just as a young adult or children's author but of all genres. She write in a style that is thickly descriptive, flavored for all of the sense and filled with a sense of innocence with darkness of reality twisted in.

It was actually with Block how I figured out why I liked the young adult genre so much--when it comes to most "adult" novels--outside the genres of romance or horror or mystery--there is a world weariness that usually drapes over the characters. The idea of hope and the art of questioning has usually left the story whereas even with the darkest young adult novel there is a sense of hope or idea of time to come and change things. That's something I definitely lock into.

That said--Baby Be-Bop is the 5th book in the Weetzie Bat series but could simply stand on it's own two feet as a single novel. It tells the story Dirk McDonald growing up in a timeless--though 80s in the series timeline--Los Angeles and figuring out who he is, what he wants and how it fits into the history of his family. There are touches of magic and the punk rock scene, dark thoughts and history played off the magic of first love and desire and something very adult in how this is all pursued.

It is the type of book I wish I could write because it blends so much in with such little effort. It seems like a simple story with a simple goal but it is more about the world and becoming an adult than one would imagine.

Melissa says

4.5 stars. Holds up the best out of all of the Weetzie Bat series. Magical realism-infused coming out story. This is the book they should be turning into a movie.

Jessica says

Once again I find myself struggling with the finer points of what is, essentially, a really beautiful book. The imagery is just delicious and the overall message is right on.

But....

The main character's "solution" to finding himself is magic. Not like he learns to be a magician, but an actual magic lamp that shows him things to help him figure himself out. That won't work for the rest of us. If the book wasn't so rooted in the "real world" until that point, I think it would be easier for the reader to take. I am reminded of Alice Hoffman but where Hoffman preps you ahead of time, Block doesn't lay the groundwork for moving into magical realism as deeply as she does.

It's also a little disheartening that as one of the first widely published books for YAs with a gay character and a driving theme that there are no realistic takes on how to come out, come to grips yourself, and be comfortable with who you are.

I was also confused by the tales that lead Dirk to his wholeness. All of them are stories of heterosexuals with identity issues one would not equate to sexuality. The last story is about a young gay man but it is (in this book) someone Dirk doesn't know or identify with in any way.

This is a better read in along with the rest of the Weetzie Bat series as a pre-quel that gives Dirk's story, but as a stand alone touted as the "fearless YA book with a gay theme" it doesn't work.

Kate says

I vaguely remember reading Weetzie Bat when I was in high school...I especially remember one of my friends thinking it was one of the greatest books ever written and I more or less agreed, but I remember absolutely nothing of it now. I don't even think I have it marked as read on GR!

This book stands alone though, which is good because I don't remember anything about Dirk. I'll probably pick up Weetzie Bat again, because I like Block's style of writing. It's like if an optimistic hippie designed the world while high, and you were listening to them describe while also being high. Everything is twee and zen and smells of patchouli. All of the main characters are pretty and well-meaning and have absolutely fabulous names. I wouldn't necessarily want to live there...I'm glad the book was short because it is rather precious. It was the perfect length to live in Block's cutesy world.

And of course I love a story about a gay kid.

J. d'Artagnan says

A story of healing, coming out, turning in, magic, tears, and fireflies. I cannot get enough of these stories.

Qi Wen says

The book take place during the late civil rights movement. Dirk the boy who try to find his own identity. Which he grow up with his grandmother and her grandma's best friend. I feel like Dirk has been influence by her grandma's best friends, who are gay. He want to find out who his father and mother are. He did so will in school. The one who can stand out in school and favor by many people. But he also find out himself is gay too. He knew that society can not except the fact but he can not help himself. He is in love with his best friend, since they grew up together and share everything together, as time goes by the can not stop from caring and love on another. Bout of them were in the stay of depression. And one time he did not want to live no more and hurt himself and after he fainted thing fall in place and led to solution. I feel that this book is promoting that people can not control their feelings toward things and people that are around them. It was natural that different people have different feelings because of where they grow up and how they were raised. People should respect one's thought and his feelings you might not agree but you can not control their own choice.

Greta is Erikasbuddy says

WHat a fantastic book!!

And guess what?!!!

This is NOT the last Weetzie Bat book like I thought. THere's a 6th one out there and a Pre-quel in the works. (I saw it is supposed to be released next August)

Baby Be-Bop is Dirk's story. We met Dirk in the 1st book. I originally thought that Dirk was going to be Weetzie's love interest. I think Weetzie thought that too. But no.. Dirk was meant for Duck :)

This was a very unique story. It was very very Francesca Lia Block!! I've read a few of her books and it seems like every chapter is a different story and they all mesh and mold in the end to become one.

THE Weetzie books have been a tad different. They were all pretty much about the main character.

In Baby Be-Bop we not only hear about Dirk's childhood, but we also hear about his mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa. We even catch a glimpse of Duck. Oh... and what about that lamp we heard about in the first book? Yup! We get its story too.

I adored this book and am now totally stoked that I have not read them all and that there are more (at least one lolz) in the works.

The one line that stuck with me in this story was about Dirk's Dad -DIRBY- he said:

"I wrote poetry from the time I could write. That was the only way I could begin to express who I was but the poems didn't make sense to my teachers. They didn't rhyme. They were about the wind sounds, the planets' motions, never about who I was or how I felt. I didn't think I felt anything. I was this mind more than a body or a heart. My mind photographing the stars, hearing the wind." — Francesca Lia Block

It made me think back to my days in high school. I never followed the rules either.

Here's the front of my reason:

<http://www.goodreads.com/photo/user/3...>

And here's the back: <http://photo.goodreads.com/photos/128...>

LMAO!! It says:

Excellent Design

So dramatic - This bothers me

Is it supposed to?

*It just made me giggle and think of that story.

Hope you guys check out these books! They tuely are fab ;)

Bella says

Absolutely poetic book! Some lines in this book really knocked me out of my seat, they were so beautiful. I'm a sucker for authors who write nature really well, and Francesca Lia Block transported me into the perfect California evenings where her book takes place. The story was very much secondary to the prose, and it lagged in places, particularly right at the end of Part 1. However, if you like your Gay YA with a side of poetry, this is very much the book for you!

Chance Lee says

Beautiful book. Lyrical prose with a powerful economy of words that had me weeping numerous times.

The story is both of the time it was published (late 90s) and also timeless. I do wish that Dirk's story wasn't sidelined in the second half of the book, but the story's theme of learning about your past to accept your present and plan your future is a strong one.

Marie says

Just like with the first four Weetzie Bat books, Baby Be-Bop is short, so my review will be too. And just like the other Weetzie Bat books, this one is written in a lyrical, dream-like style. I read the first five Weetzie Bat books back-to-back-to-back, so by the time I reached Baby Be-Bop I was totally used to the language.

Baby Be-Bop is told from Dirk's point of view. What makes it unique is that it's a flashback; it's Dirk's memories; instead of stream-of-consciousness in-the-moment like the other books. This one tells of Dirk growing up scared of his love for other boys, and his journey to meeting Duck. Because most of this is told as a memory, there's not actually much romance until near the end. It's more a coming-of-age story.

I think that you could read this by itself, but you would need to read it as part of the series to get the maximum enjoyment out of it. I would recommend this book to someone who had already read most of the series.

Zachary Doss says

Another of my favorite books, for which there are simply not enough stars. A moving prose poem full of beautiful images and truly human pain and hope, a book about finding yourself, losing love, and holding fast to family. A story about how everyone has a story. Just lovely. Can't recommend it enough.

Rachel Fellows says

Touching prequel that focuses on Dirk and Duck.

Kim says

Please note: this book appears to be unavailable as a standalone version. However, it has been collected with all the Weetzie Bat books in Block's *Dangerous Angels*, which is still in print.

"Our stories can set us free, Dirk thought. When we set them free."

Dirk McDonald has a secret, a dark secret that he thinks will destroy him if he tells the world. Yet others can sense what he's trying to hide, and one night their hatred erupts into violence, leaving Dirk brutally beaten and taking him on a magical journey into the stories of his family's past.

Baby Be-Bop is a work of magical realism and a coming out story, written in poetic and descriptive language. It's actually the prequel to the rest of the Weetzie Bat series, showing us how Weetzie's best friend Dirk comes to terms with his sexuality before the two of them meet. Dirk is a sensitive soul who turns to punk rock because he thinks it will give him strength to stand against the homophobes and against his own fears. However, the punk rock scene leads to his encounter with the skinheads who ultimately beat him to a pulp. This scene is brutal, but not graphic, and is essential both in fulfilling Dirk's worst fears and showing that he can survive them, and in introducing to his family's stories. By learning about his past, Dirk learns not to fear his future, and that everybody has a story to tell.

J. says

5Q 3P (my codes)

Electric language, shimmering imagery, and fantastical optimism. Francesca's prose glitters and pulses with the energy of the raves frequented by Dirk. There's a rhythm to her sentences that captivates the reader, in this heartbreaking story of unaccepted love and desperate longing for acceptance and love. Dirk is a teenage boy who lives with his ethereal grandmother "in her cottage with the steep chocolate frosting roof, the birdbath held by a nymph, and the seven stone dwarfs in the garden" (p. 9). Dirk loves Pup, Pup is afraid to love anyone but girls. And so Dirk hides and reshapes himself and goes on long drives out into the night. Magic crackles in the background of most of the book, with occasional flares of realization and illumination. When an act of horrific violence brings Dirk low, he learns the importance of story--the difference between "de-story" and "re-story." Life might just be better now. Teens might need a little push to get into the book, but those that stick with it will yearn for more.

Bitsy says

With the three deaths that have happened recently, young people driven beyond the brink from being bullied due to their homosexuality, I was glad when I picked up the final book in the Dangerous Angels series. It gave me some hope.

Baby Be-Bop is a prequel of sorts to Weetzie Bat and tells the story of Dirk McDonald throughout his childhood and entering into adolescence. This is a coming out story of the first order. Dirk realizes from a very young age that he is different and later realizes that he is gay and the ramifications that is going to have for himself and his family.

He agonizes over telling his grandmother Fifi who he worries it will hurt. He struggles with his feelings for his best friend Pup and worries about the effect it will have on their friendship. He gets into trouble, smokes weed, gets a fake ID and sneaks into clubs, dresses as a punk rocker so that no one will mess with him, falls in love and deals with heart break. Baby Be-Bop pulls no punches as Dirk deals with everything from friends that are too afraid to come out of the closet, to finding out that others that are out were not careful and are now suffering from HIV or AIDS.

Finally Dirk ends up struggling with thoughts of suicide and has to find a reason to live, a story that will make him want to live. That's when the magic that is in all of the Dangerous Angels books comes to life and the genie in the lamp appears to give Dirk hope. Baby Be-Bop can be read as a standalone book and if you want to read a magical, fantastical GLBT story then I recommend you read this one. It's short, but to the point. It shows someone being driven to the brink by hatred and being saved by love, hope and understanding.

Day Sibley says

The story opens up with Dirk as a child playing with his toys, and telling his grandmother Fifi, that all the men were taking showers. And that's when he knew that he liked boys romantically, much to his grandmothers' worries. Then it moves on to tell how Dirk is a big fan of James Dean, likes working-out, getting A's in school, and keeping to himself in case someone got suspicious about his sexuality. The story

speaks of Dirk's home life with Fifi, and her cottage house with a chocolate frosting roof with gnome statues and flowers, along with his pets Kit—the healing cat and Kaboodle—the winking dog. But everything changes when he come across Pup Lambert.

On his way home from school Dirk comes across a boy in a tree by the name of Pup, who has red hair and freckles. The two became inseparably ever since, hanging out day after day skate-boarding or on somebody else lawn who they don't know. Then one day out-of-the-bloom after surfing, Pup suggest that they hitch-hike their way back home, they are then picked up by Nancy and Tracey—who happens to go to their school. Everything changes when the duos get invited back to Tracey place to go in the Jacuzzi, leaving Dirk feeling anguished when he sees Pup kissing Tracey. Feeling like he has to come clean, Dirk thinks its only right if he told Pup how he felt, but soon becomes regretful after Pup leaves without even a “goodbye”.

Now that Pup ended their friendship, Dirk is left as a loner who takes on a new identity of transforming himself into a black mohawk-haired punk. Going out to night clubs in his red and white 1955 convertible, even bring Kaboodle to tag along for the ride sometimes. During these events he encounters a number a people ranging from crazy nutcases to the homeless, but one night out bad after he gets jumped by a group neo-nazi skinheads after calling one of them “fucking fascist skinhead shit” leaving him for dead. Luckily, he makes it back home safe after the beating, making his way to his room and falling into a dream-like state after he takes the lamp Fifi gave him the moment he received his car.

When he wakes up, Dirk sees a young woman in his bedroom whose name is Gazelle. She tells him that her childhood wasn't so grand, especially falling under the ill-treatment of her aunt who made her sew under the harshest conditions. One day a man comes to the door and asks Gazelle to make a dress. After Gazelle makes it, the mysterious man tells her that the dress was for her, and gives her a lamp were she could tell her stories into it. She later finds out that she's pregnant, with Fifi, and right before her due date is up her aunt dies. Right before she disappears she says “any love that is love is right.” The next one to appear is Derby McDonald, Dirks father who died in a car crash when he was little, who tells him how he enjoyed his life as a poet and with his mother Just Silver—I know, that's a unique name.

The only words I can describe Francesca Blocks writing is uniquely-eccentric; she uses metaphorical and simplified words that can be easily conveyed to the reader. But their were times when the dialogue got lost, and your not sure which character is saying what, and the quotation marks weren't put in place all the time. The last portion of the page confused me when it got to Durks' part of the story, because I didn't know how it fit in to the plot at all, and Francesca writing can be confusing at times. But the moral is when you tell your story, you learn to appreciate life more by getting you voice out and being yourself.

Lauren says

Fantastic queer ya lit

Caitlin says

Baby Be-Bop is the story of Dirk McDonald, a young man in L.A. who has always known that he was gay but has to hide that part of himself. Having been orphaned at a young age, he lives with his grandmother Fifi

but fears that she will judge him for loving boys if he ever revealed his secret. Dirk arms himself by adopting the punk culture. When he shaves his hair into a blue mohawk, dons the leather jacket and hits the clubs, he looks too tough to mess with, even if someone did guess his secret. But even the punk culture isn't safe and a run-in with some Aryan boys with swastikas lands Dirk in trouble he doesn't know how to deal with. Tied in with all this harsh reality is some of the best magic realism I've ever read. Block breathes magic into everything, whether it's descriptions of Dirk's grandmothers garden, her pets Kit and Kaboodle or even in its most obvious sense, with the family heirloom, a lamp with its very own genie. Whether the reader chooses to believe them hallucinations or an actual magical journey, Dirk comes to reexamine himself and his world through the stories of his family. Dirk's voice feels so raw and real that I couldn't help but enjoy seeing the way he viewed the world and I loved the ending. It's a story of hope and acceptance and magic throughout. I very much enjoyed it and I think that fans of young adult lit who are more interested in urban culture in L.A. will love it!

Pandora says

This is one of top five books. Of all the Weetzie Bat books this one was my favorite. It has one of the best ending I ever read in a book. It one of the books I turn to when I need comfort. The style of the author is not for everyone but, I love it.
