



The Vengekeep Prophecies

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Forget what you know about prophecies—this epic middle-grade fantasy about a clumsy boy born into a family of thieves is fresh, fun, and anything but predictable! The first in an unforgettable trilogy, this *Kirkus Reviews* Best Children's Book of the Year takes everything you thought you knew about fantasy and spins it into pure magic.

Jaxter Grimjinx is a born thief. At least, he's supposed to be. For generations, the Grimjinx clan has produced the swiftest, cleverest thieves in Vengekeep. The problem is, Jaxter is clumsy. So clumsy that in his first solo heist, he sets the Castellán's house on fire and lands his family in prison. Even Jaxter's talent for breaking magical locks can't get them out of this bind.

Then a suspiciously convenient prophecy emerges, naming the Grimjinx clan as the soon-to-be heroes of Vengekeep. It's good enough to get his family out of jail, but when the doomsday prophecy starts to come true, Jaxter is pretty sure a life behind bars would be a better fate. Now, with the help of his new friend, Callie, Jaxter will have to face down flaming monsters, a bazaar of thieves, and a renegade sorcerer to become the hero he was truly born to be.

Full of twists and turns, friendship and adventure, *The Vengekeep Prophecies* is a "rich fantasy that hits the ground running and never lets up" (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review).

The Vengekeep Prophecies Details

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Author : Brian Farrey

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From Reader Review *The Vengekeep Prophecies* for online ebook

Susan says

This story is rollicking fun! There's never a dull moment in the life of Jaxter Grimjinx who comes from a long line of thieving families. The entire Grimjinx family is charming and the characters that surround them are very real. A solid adventure.

Benji Martin says

I have an international student who always asks me "Is this book fun?" when interested in a title. I always think it's so funny, that she doesn't ask "Is this book good?" or "something like that. It's kind of interesting. There are lots of books I would consider "good" or "moving", but not necessarily "fun" This is one of those that that I would consider "fun" though. I had a good time reading it. I didn't really connect with the characters on a deep level. Farrey could have killed them all off, and I wouldn't have shed a tear, but I did have a "fun" time reading it. I'm afraid this series may be kind of like *The Emerald Atlas* or *Wildwood* for me. I really enjoyed the first one, but I can never find the time or desire to read the sequels, even though I'm pretty sure I would enjoy them. There are too many "new" books for me to read. This world needs more really good stand alone novels.

Claire says

This was an adorable middle-school book. Half the time, it turns out, the characters were lying their [insert body part here] off, but that's what was fun; trying to guess truth from lies. Because, of course, the family is a whole hoard of thieves.

Jaxter Grimjinx is the one failure of the Grimjinx clan. While the others are all awesome with sleight of hand, forgery, burglary, and lotsa other prowess, he's stuck with being good with plants. Yay. For the most current plan, they've switched out the annual prophecy tapestry with one very good forgery proclaiming horrors that only the Grimjinx can ward off. So naturally, they are very, very unpleasantly surprised when various prophecies start to come true. Figuring out that Mommy dearest accidentally wove the fake with fateskin, Jaxter is faced with the monumentous task of finding a lot of ingredients to make a super special potion that can destroy the false tapestry.

And although this is aimed a couple years too low for me to truly fangirl it, it was honestly one of the best reads I've had for laughs. From Jaxter's constant clumsiness to an ending that was wholly satisfactory, this was one quirky book that stole my attention (geddit? Thieves stealing? XD) and granted a couple hours of sheer brain candy.

Reminiscent of Nancy Yi Fan's books, the beginning of every chapter opened with a quote from the long-dead ancestor of Jaxter, the original, famously devious motha' thief of them all, conatining such amusing little tidbits like "Fear is just Bravery's older, wiser brother, leading the charge away from danger", this deserves the title of BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK OF 2012.

And yes, Brian Farrey, I'd love to become an honorary Grimjinx. :D

Jessica says

I just got this book today in the mail after winning it on Goodreads... Can't wait to dig in!

Betsy Israelson says

When can I read the next one?

Jesse (JesseTheReader) says

Even though I had one of those weird reading experiences where I read chunks of this book every few months, I thoroughly enjoyed it! It's a fun middle grade fantasy story with excellent characters and I hope I'm able to pick up the second book soon!

Kris Patrick says

Just. couldn't. do. it. To all of you who have been suffering through my Young Hoosier book award nominee reviews, I'm done for now.

Karlan says

This is an action packed adventure which is highly entertaining. Youngsters and we adults who enjoy children's books will relish the originality of the scary fantasy elements and the humor of the story.

Barb Middleton says

Generations of klutzes run in my family. Grandma is infamous for throwing chicken grease into the furnace and causing an explosion that fried off her eyebrows, eyelashes, and bangs. I am not sure my infamy. Maybe when I set 16 boxes of cereal on fire preheating the oven as a teenager (mom quit storing them in there after that incident). Or maybe when I melted the microwave with a stove-top grease fire. Or maybe when I torched the bamboo steamer basket while making Chinese dumplings. In this book, Jaxter is a kindred spirit - a clod who is finding it difficult to follow the family business of thieving. When his first burglary attempt results in him burning down the house and getting caught... well, you can see why I'd be hooked. But it isn't just the great characters, fast pace, humor, unpredictable plot, and terrific world building that kept me tooling through this book, I also liked the themes of having courage, making friends and discovering what you love to do and pursuing it.

Jaxter Grimjinx comes from a family of famous thieves that spans generations. Da's a master burglar, while Ma's forgeries are second to none. His sister can pick a pocket unseen while Jaxter can break low-level spells using non-magic. When the family plots the big heist, things go "zoc" when the fake prophecy that Ma has weaved into a tapestry that tells Vengekeep its futures comes true bringing natural disasters and monsters bent on destroying the town. Only Jaxter can save them by finding the means to break the tapestry's enchantment.

The twist on prophecies was a whole lotta fun. Here a fake prophecy comes true and the Grimjinx family watches in horror as their heist backfires and an unpredictable and interesting quest ensues with Jaxter making friends with a strong-willed girl and a cowardly mage. The supporting characters are well-rounded and their motivations are clear. Every time I would have a question it was answered in this well-crafted story. The only loose end involves Jaxter's sister and even that question is asked, but the sister doesn't answer, suggesting a sequel.

The madeup words are a hoot along with the delicious humor. Rick Riordan is one of few fantasy writers who makes me laugh steady through his stories. I can add Farrey to that list. I also appreciated that Jaxter and Callie, his friend, are 12-years-old. Callie's wit, attitude, and search for independence and Jaxter's intelligence and search to find something he is good at are spot on. Too often I read a book with a 9-year-old who sounds like a teenager.

I'm not sure how Farrey manages to make a family of thieves so likeable and noble, but he does. The parents have morals and are more like Robin Hood taking from the rich and never the poor. When the townspeople need help, they are there to rescue them. When Jaxter struggles with his future, they give wise, loving advice. The entire family looks on the positive side of a situation no matter how grim. There are some great lines in this book, particularly when the parents don't like Jaxter's comments. Da says, "Sorry, Son, what was that? I was too busy ignoring you." And mom several paragraphs later, "Sorry Son, I missed that... Ignoring you can be a full-time job." Ooh, I'd love to use that on the kids at school. See what I mean? Delicious.

Great read aloud. Great story. "Bangers!" I just can't say enough good things about this novel. Read it!

Betsy says

Let's talk lazy fantasy writing. It exists. It's out there. And when you find yourself reading some 30+ middle grade fantasies in a given year there are certain tropes and themes that appear so often they wear a rut in your frontal lobe. Most of them are innocuous enough, but there's one that really sets fire to my dander; prophecies. Ugh. I cannot STAND prophecies. Essentially they're just a way for the author to provide foreshadowing in as annoying a way as possible. Further points are detracted if the doggone prophecy rhymes. There are very few ways to upset the prophecy conundrum. You might be able to get away with one if you're as good as Harry Potter but I'm not surprising anyone when I say that most just sorta slap `em in there willy-nilly. Which is perhaps part of the reason Brian Farrey's *The Vengekeep Prophecies* is as much of a relief as it is. You want prophecies? Fine. Then let's come up with a concept that sort of turns the whole idea behind them on its head from a book that says with perfect simplicity, "Fate is a lazy man's excuse for avoiding curiosity." With great humor and dexterity Farrey creates a new fantasy world where magic is kept in check, only popping up once in a while to bite our heroes on the bum. Fast and funny, this is one of those rare 400-page novels where I wouldn't cut so much as a sentence or a paragraph if it meant making the story any shorter.

It's tough being the black sheep in a family OF black sheep, but such is the lot of Jaxter Grimjinx. It's certainly an honor to be next in a long line of thieves, con artists, forgers, fleet-fingered pilferers, etc. It's significantly less of an honor to be a clumsy klutz unable to pick even the simplest lock. But what he lacks in dexterity Jaxter more than makes up for with his love of herbs capable of undoing every protective magic they come across. Then it happens. In the village of Vengekeep it is customary to reveal once a year a tapestry that will predict the coming year. Produced hundreds of years ago by prophetic twins, Vengekeep relies on these prophecies. So imagine the horror of the townspeople when they discover that this year a horrific series of plagues and disasters will be visited upon them and their saviors will be those no good Grimjinxes. Of course they will be. The Grimjinxes found a way to fake the tapestry this year and they envision it as brilliant cover for their daring exploits. But that's all before the stories on the fake tapestry start coming true. Suddenly, it's up to the least reputable citizens in town to save everyone. And it's up to Jaxter to ultimately undo the damage his family has wrought.

When I think of the great comen of fantasy literature I tend to draw a blank. I know they're out there in droves in the adult literary sphere, but on the children's side they're a touch harder to come by. Sure there was *The Thief* by Megan Whalen Turner and *Fly by Night* by Frances Hardinge but those were individuals. Whole families of shysters, tricksters, and con artists? That's an original notion that gives a person pause. And though admittedly there were times when the Grimjinx clan resembled nothing so much as a mildly moderated Addams Family (it's the feisty grandma that does it), in the end they're a nicely fleshed out family unit.

In fact, that's one of the nicest things about Farrey. No matter how small a character or how bit a part, he fleshes out even the most minor of supporting characters. And Jaxter, as the main character, is even more beautifully created. He could easily come off as some medieval Batman with his pouches standing in for a utility belt, or maybe a slightly grimier Sherlock Holmes with his ability to notice hundreds of details about a person in a single glance. Instead, there's a nice complexity to his character. He loves his family (who are admittedly very lovable) but he's torn. He's been raised to believe in this great grand heritage of cons and yet his heart really lies with research. He tries to tell himself otherwise and nearly succeeds until the moment much later at the end of the book where he says, "I was much better at fooling myself than I was at fooling everyone else." Best of all, I always appreciate those writers that create heroes with special skills or interests that help to save themselves or the ones they love in the end. Jaxter has those very skills tenfold and save people he does.

Funny book too, come to think of it. Lots of fantasies try to weave in a little humor here and there, but so few actually succeed in being funny. That's probably partly because humor is so subjective. What I find hilarious you might find gauche or gross. But I think it's fair to say that a good large swath of kids reading this book would find it honestly amusing. How can you not like a book (or characters) where wise warnings are purposefully waved off with a pointed, "Sorry, Son, what was that? I was too busy ignoring you." I also admit to loving the little Grimjinx words of wisdom that pepper the chapters. They're fairly spot on some of the time, putting a wry twist on lessons we've heard before but not in this particular light. "If you must steal from a wise man or a foolish one, steal from the wise. You'll leave him with something he'll value: a lessen." "Keep your enemies close, your friends closer, and let them fight it out." "Accusations are merely the envy of the unenlightened given form." Good stuff.

I ran a bookclub for kids until not too long ago and one thing those smart kiddos loathed was the dreaded number on the spine. For some of them, they couldn't properly enjoy a book if they felt it was just the first in a long series. And *The Vengekeep Prophecies*, truth be told, really is the first in what I believe to be a trilogy. That said, there is only one minor hint that there is more to come when you reach the story's end. By that point every dangling thread has been tied up, every loose plot point woven back into the story's whole. Then

Jaxter's younger sister goes and hints that she'll tell him something in the future. Aside from that (a note that will undoubtedly go by many a young reader) this is a standalone first novel that fulfills its promises and yet leaves you wanting more. In other words, the best kind of fantasy there is. You can bet I'll be reading that sequel someday. Whenever it wants to appear.

For ages 9-12.

Joan says

This was loads of fun to read! It has been awhile since I've read a book with two kids who go on a journey by themselves to save their town with the grownups' approval. I can't think of another family to compare the Grimjinx family to other than the family of Dido created by Joan Aiken in *Black Hearts in Battersea*, with several sequels, written quite a long time ago. This is a family that blithely enjoys the family profession of theft. At least until that enjoyment gets them into big trouble. It is such a change to read of a family that can love and support their kids. If you read enough recent J and YA literature, you would come away with the impression that all kids manage to grow up in spite of absolutely horrendous environment. This book puts the lie to that image. The parents love each other and their kids, one of whom is a klutz at the family trade and the other one who won't talk. Those deficiencies don't bother the parents or the grandmother one bit. The quotes at the beginning of each chapter are hilarious. The storyline itself is excellent as well. It is also rather refreshing to read a book that doesn't scream that it is the first of endless sequels by essentially stopping in the middle of the story. Everything is nicely wrapped up by the story's end. Oh and in case you're getting the image of a book almost sappy in positive images, the spiderbats are enough to shake that image but fast! There are other nasties as well but those definitely are memorable!

This is probably too light a read to win any awards but I wish they would pick such a book for once. Not every book needs to be weighted down with themes and messages to kids. Oh, there are themes in this book. But they are definitely not the important part of the book. I'd say the most important message is that of inclusion and acceptance. This is a terribly important theme that has been in vogue lately but from the other end of the message. Now I agree that telling kids that bullying is wrong and that you should accept the different ones in your environment is an important message. However, I think that this story's casual acceptance of differences is perhaps a healthier approach to give kids. No one is denying that bullying is epidemic and has been accepted for far too long. I was badly bullied as a child myself and still bear the psychological scars. But reading a book approaching differences in a positive way is I argue, in many ways a more effective approach. A final comment: The Harry Potter like glasses on our completely un Harry Potter like main character, is a wonderful touch! To contradict my comment of a few sentences ago, I do hope we hear more from the Grimjinx family!

Polly says

Charming! Definitely worth reading, if you like fairly original kids' fantasy that's also a bit funny.

Rick Stuckwisch says

Wow! What an exciting and excellent book. Fast paced and fun, but enchantingly written. The author certainly has a fantastic imagination and has crafted a marvelous literary setting for his story. Great

characters, well developed with real charm and personality. The story itself was engaging and well told. It moves along quickly without ever feeling rushed. Lots of delicious details along the way. We picked this book up by chance in a library used book sale, but it has exceeded all expectations. Highly recommended for middle school, junior high, and high school readers and listeners, and a great read aloud book for parents with their children.

June says

The Grimjinx family are unapologetic thieves. However, they get in over their heads when they accidentally do a forgery on fateskin and picture themselves as the town's saviors.

A story of Jaxter Grimjinx and his friend, Callie, who go on a journey to save their town...

Interesting to have the main boy character be a klutz and intellectual.

Elevetha says

I thought this was a really fun MG. Also, something different from the YA mind numbing, bang my head against a wall books I'd been getting stuck reading.
