



FBS Quick Take

highly recommend this for bedside reading or out-loud classroom reading

Amber Ambrosia picks up the story of Sophie and Wil at the beginning of their summer vacation following the end of their school semester from *The Serpent's Spell*. This time the trouble brewing has to do with sick honeybees and magical honey. I would not recommend reading this one without having already read *The Serpent's Spell* as Ambrosia relies upon the first book for all of its background. You may be left wondering who is who and why are they doing what they are doing if you skip the first and go directly to the second.

In this second installment of the series I could almost hear the author spreading her wings and having fun. Wil and Sophie are more real as characters. Their Aunts Rue and Violet are also fleshed out much more realistically. While some of the other adults are still somewhat dafter than those in reality this doesn't take away from the story so much as validate it. Since this is a story for children told from a child's perspective, one would expect that their perceptions would be different from those of the adult readers. After all, when we were children we thought we knew it all and that the adults around us were completely clueless. How many of you have discovered that something you did as a child that you thought was a complete secret, was also known by all adults in your periphery?

Not only have the characters grown, but Bridgman's prose has also changed into something more. At one point in the story the cousins are transformed into bees. I think the author created a particularly effective sequence because as people transformed into bees, they only retain small amounts of their 'people selves' and have mostly become their 'bee selves' which seems to lend believability to the story. Here is a short excerpt from the book where the author seems to use the bee 'extras' as a vessel to give the reader some additional information:

The rosy fingers of dawn were just beginning to curl over the horizon. The thunderstorm seemed to have grudgingly given way to a dark grey drizzle of rain, as if refusing to relinquish its hold on MiddleGate entirely. Thunder rumbled in

the distance and there were puddles everywhere. The bees were just beginning to stir inside the belly of the stone gargoyle atop Gruffud's.

The new Shift of Sentries shivered by the Entrance to the City of Wax, conferring with those just coming off the Night Shift.

"Hail. Night's End, Long Live the Queen, Long Reign She O'er Us", buzzed one of the Sentries from the new Shift. All the Sentries buzzed in Chorus. "One-for-All-and-All-for-One."

One of the Night Shift Sentries ran down the Checklist quickly, as if impatient to leave and get some Wing-Rest. Not Sweet Rain all Night. Nest Safe. Queen Safe. Sweet Safe. Nothing New to report other than four Visitors. They brought Gifts of Sweet. Permitted Entry. One Visitor (Crazy Bee) left. Three remained.

I found this book to have more depth and meaning than *The Serpent's Spell*; it was a more satisfying read in all respects. The story itself was also more complex though the two main characters go about making mistakes, meeting new friends, foiling evil magical plots and having fun with the same enthusiasm as before. I highly recommend this for bedside reading or out-loud classroom reading and I give it an 8 on my scale.

A review by Amberdrake for FantasyBookspot – fantasy book reviews and fantasy book authors interviews

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