



Thisby Thescoop and the Black Mountain

Zac Gorman , Sam Bosma (Illustrations)

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Surrounded by all creatures gruesome and grotesque, Thisby Thespoop, the gamekeeper for the Black Mountain Dungeon, is getting roped into another job—saving the princess's skin—in the debut fantasy-adventure series by Zac Gorman, contributor to the hilarious *Rick and Morty* comic series.

In the absurd land of Nth, Thisby Thespoop can be found within the forlorn walls of Castle Grimstone, down the precarious steps of the Black Mountain dungeon, up to her nose in griffon toenails, gnoll spittle, and troll meat (to give to them, not made of them).

When the prince and princess arrive for a Royal Inspection, the much too good-looking Princess Iphigenia winds up lost in the tunnels of the dungeon—without her guards, her staff, or her younger twin brother—and it's up to Thisby to guide the princess safely past the hoards of minotaurs, wyverns, ghouls, and who-knows-what-else that would love nothing more than to nosh the royal highness for dinner.

Thisby Thespoop and Princess Iphigenia have a dangerous adventure ahead of them. If they're going to a rescue the missing prince, stop a mounting war, and keep safe all the creatures who call the mountain dungeon home, they'll have to learn how to trust each other.

Don't miss the first book in this rollicking new fantasy-adventure series from debut author Zac Gorman!

Thisby Thespoop and the Black Mountain Details

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Author : Zac Gorman , Sam Bosma (Illustrations)
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From Reader Review Thisby Thestoop and the Black Mountain for online ebook

Zayda (Babybibliophile) says

Thisby is a gamekeeper who cares for the demons of the black mountain. Her job is to make sure they don't kill each other...or any humans who come looking for the treasure of the dungeons. This job is no easy task when you are dealing with blood thirsty monsters!

?

I LOVED this book! It was a wild and hilarious adventure with monstrous battles, royal pains in the bum, and the sweetest revenge!

?? Warning, this book was pretty scary at times and included some blood and gore. Also beware of the detailed illustrations.

I'm kind of a scaredy-cat. ?

Erica says

Thisby and Iphigenia couldn't be more different. Iphigenia is the crown princess, raised in the lap of luxury and used to getting her way. She walks with grace and stands tall and poised, confident in her power and beauty. Thisby is an orphan, raised in the Black Mountain. As the gamekeeper she spends most of her days covered in grime, trudging through tunnels and feeding monsters, narrowly avoiding becoming dinner herself. She walks hunched over carrying a huge backpack and her nose looks like a giant triangle. Her best friend is a sentient bit of glowing slime she keeps in a jar attached to her bag. Thisby doesn't have much respect for the pampered royal who comes to visit, and Iphigenia thinks Thisby is beneath her notice. Then disaster strikes and the two are trapped with only each other to rely on. Will they be able to rescue Iphigenia's lost brother? Or will they fall victim to the dungeon, like so many hapless adventurers before them?

This hilarious adventure takes many common fantasy elements and turns them on their head. The Black Mountain is purposefully maintained with monsters and treasures to occupy adventurers and give the common people hope for advancement. There are many funny creatures such as the fearsome spectral goat. Not all the monsters are funny though. They face some serious threats that move the plot along at a fast pace. Fans of fantasy with a sense of humor are sure to enjoy this.

Craig Williams says

A young girl named Thisby Thestoop is the gamekeeper for the dark dungeons of Black Mountain, which is sought after by adventurers from all over the world and contains some of the most dangerous creatures in the kingdom of Nth. Despite the dangers, Thisby loves her job until a tour for a couple of royal twins threatens to unleash an ancient evil that has been living at the bottom of the dungeon for thousands of years.

This was a cute book, but a little too simplistic and juvenile for me. It kind of reminded me of Terry Pratchett lite. Although this book didn't necessarily blow my mind, I would read the next installment with the hopes that the books evolve similar to other young adult books like Harry Potter.

Toya Taylor says

This is a story of Thisby Thestoop who was left on The Black Mountain doors by her parents. They didn't really give her a name just a note that said "This by the stoop". So when she was found everyone just called her Thisby. Thisby grow up learning to the the gamekeeper of the Black Mountain by watching over all the creatures. One day the royal family of the kingdom visits and things are turned upside down. A gate lost the seal of magic that kept some of the evil dark creatures in the Deep Down. One of the royals, Ingo, went missing on the day of the visits. Along with the Princess Iphigenia, Thisby travels throughout the mountain to try and find Ingo, and the reason the magic seal was broken.

Hal Schrieve says

This fast-paced, action-packed fantasy novel for ages 8-12 follows in the footsteps of many a tongue-in-cheek precedent. Set in a gruesome dungeon filled with monsters and starring a practical, mousy girl raised by goblins, Thisby Thestoop is a fresh and well-written take on the genre that comes bearing an enormous backpack, lots of notes, a sentient blob of slime, and plenty of horse meat to spare.

Thisby Thestoop takes her name from a note left with her when she is abandoned near the opening to the Black Mountain's dungeon. Originally reading "found this by the stoop, keep for later", the note is left by a Minotaur intending to eat the baby as a snack. The goblins who live in the black mountain interpret the note as a request to keep the baby safe, and so Thisby grows up a gamekeeper and janitor in the vast prison that contains a range of terrifying beasts.

The Black Mountain is not only a vast mountain with plenty of teeth. It is also a part of a larger kingdom. As a regular ritual, the king inspects the dungeon to affirm that it is both terrifying and also not a military threat to his power. This year, though, the king sends his twin children to do the inspection: teenage Crown Princess Iphigenia and Prince Ingo. In the course of the inspection, a poorly managed monster goes on rampage and Ingo disappears. Iphigenia requests that Thisby help her find him—but in the course of searching, both get lost in the deep caves below the dungeon.

At the same time, a wicked plot is brewing at the bottom of the mountain to unleash the worst terrors imaginable upon the kingdom and the world at large. Only Thisby, her slime friend Mingus, a giant cat named Catface, and Iphigenia can stop it.

Readers of *The Graveyard Book*, *The Wee Free Men*, *Dealing With Dragons*, *The Princess Bride* or *The Dark Lord of Derkholm* will appreciate this witty, self-aware book.

Richard Burchett says

I loved this right after I finished the prologue. The novel follows a young dungeon keeper by the name of Thisby Thestoop, who by accident becomes a part of the staff due to a hungry minotaur's poor penmanship. She becomes "Game Keeper" of the dungeon and ensures it is deadly and well stocked with monsters to guard its treasures. This book is in my vote for one of the best fantasy novels of 2018. It does numerous

things wonderfully.

The setting of Thisby Thespoop is an intriguing one I haven't seen in middle grade fantasy. I'm completely enamored with all of the creatures, monsters, and beasts Thisby deftly navigates and cares for. It harkens me back to nights of tabletop RPGs or co-op all nighters with friends. We see the usual fare of D&D derivative monsters, and some new things dwelling far below spawned out of pure nightmare fuel. While I may know what to expect from some of the usuals, Gorman portrayed the dungeon as if I were there. Brilliant descriptive writing made even the creatures typical of a D&D setting seem new and evoked the same sense of wonder I experienced when I encountered them for the first time. The last time I enjoyed a setting this much was Bond & Rowe's Supernormal Sleuthing Service. Absolutely brilliant setting brought wholly to life by Gorman's writing and Bosma's illustrations.

This gets me into what I enjoyed the most about the book: The Characters. Every character is fleshed out to the perfect amount. We see each motivation in the apt characterizations the entire cast has. From Thisby all the way down to Gregory. But the Characterization (although brilliant) isn't the most important thing Gorman does with the characters here. I believe that the most important function of children's literature is promoting and creating empathy within the reader. This function is performed in a myriad of ways; escaping into the lives of other characters is the primary vehicle. Literature is also a wonderful bastion of our own escapist culture (which is recursively creating empathy through the characters. I understand it can get quite cyclical here). I bring this up for a sole purpose. Thisby Thespoop is the best novel I've read that creates empathy this well in this subtle of a package. Through the characterizations of even the most minor cast member, your feelings for just about everyone is dynamic. We think of Roquat as this evil taskmaster (which he is), but when we hear of the extinction of his people and his desire to take back their birthright; we feel for him. The crown princess seems to be cold, apathetic and wholly unlikeable, while her twin brother seems to be a gregarious paragon. Then these roles seem dynamic internally in the reader. The citizens of the Deep Dark are absolute Cronenberg nightmares, but when we hear them rallying for freedom, we can't help but want them to attain it. This is where this book is magical to me. The depth of every dynamic character spinning around primarily in the reader's head is some of the best character writing I've seen in fiction. Bravo, Zac Gorman, Bravo. An excellent novel I would highly recommend to any age fantasy reader (provided they are old enough to follow the plot).

Pop Bop says

Four, Count 'Em Four, Great Books in One

This is a buddy-comedy-fantasy-adventure featuring two very appealing heroines. It has suspense, action, humor, careful plotting, magic, imaginative world building, and great atmosphere.

Here's the overall setup. The evil castle run by the vaguely evil magical master sits on top of the mountain, which sits on top of a vast dungeon filled with all sorts of monsters and dangerous creatures. That all sits on top of the Dark Deep, where truly evil, (like mythical and legendary evil), creatures lurk. There's a portal between the everyday bad dungeon and the evil Dark Deep. The portal is guarded by a physical barrier and by deep ancient magic. And by a sarcastic and menacing giant cat with a really deep voice.

Our first heroine is Thisby Thespoop. (A minotaur guard found her as a baby abandoned outside the castle door. He decided to wait until later to eat her and left her in the castle kitchen with a note - "I found this by

the stoop." The kitchen goblins read this as - "I found Thisby Thesstoop" and kept her and raised her.) Thisby is the smart, lonely, good-hearted, clear-eyed assistant dungeon keeper, (a/k/a gamekeeper), who cares for all of the monsters and creatures in the dungeon.

Now, for the four books. (MILD PREMISE AND PLOT SPOILERS.) The first quarter of the book follows Thisby as she travels the dungeon feeding, tending, and caring for the monsters, who all roam freely throughout the vast dungeon. It's like a safari park of fantasy creatures and is the most fully realized and atmospheric and carefully imagined cryptozoology tour I've ever read.

But we need some action. In the second quarter of the book two visiting young royals are attacked in the dungeon. The prince is kidnapped and the princess and Thisby end up the only remaining survivors. Thisby and Princess Iphigenia have to escape the dungeon, which was heavily damaged during the attack on them. This ends up being a suspenseful and danger filled dungeon crawl populated by loads more menacing, (or sometimes helpful), creatures.

In the third quarter of the book, Thisby and Iphigenia find that the castle has been sealed off from the dungeon, some sort of insurrection is afoot, and no one is coming to save them or the prince. So, the two of them have to take matters into their own hands and enter the Deep Dark to rescue the Prince. (It's sort of like "The African Queen", but with spectral were-goats.) The final book is the battle of the evil Deep Dark creatures to breach the portal and, basically, take over the world, and then the tying up of lose plot threads.

So, you get a creative dungeon crawl, a survival tale, a dark and dangerous quest, and a less evil versus greater evil battle to save everything. But here's the best part. Thisby and Iphigenia are funny, touching, gutsy, and one of the best action/adventure/comedy double-acts in middle grade lit. We watch Thisby blossom from a shy and lonely little grubby nobody into the heroine she was meant to be. And, we watch Iphigenia shed her spoiled rotten mean girl ways to become the authentic, trusty, reliable friend she was meant to be. From opposite directions they both grow up and become their best selves. Along the way they are cranky, sarcastic, snarky, insightful, witty, and silly. They also learn how to connect with and appreciate other people, (and monsters and creatures).

The book is just lovely. We move from laugh out loud funny to suspenseful, to twistily plotted, to a whole host of plot and character surprises and unexpected twists and turns. Here and there you'll note a bit of edge, and there are some sly and ironic throwaway lines in the narration. The book is just filled with dozens of unique and often appealing or compelling characters, and many of them get some funny or touching lines while on the scene. The upshot was that this book amused and entertained on many levels, not least of which was the bonus of two quality heroines.

(Please note that I received a free advance ecopy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

Jenny O'Neill says

Okay, I'm gonna keep this short. This was a good book that I do recommend, but the last third of the book was disappointing. The pros are that Thisby is a fantastic character (even if she's a little too mature for a 12 year old) and Iphigenia's character development is worth the read. The monsters and the world were interesting, horrifying, and fun to learn about. Secondary characters really shine here and the humor is good

in parts. The cons, as I mentioned above, take place in the final third of the book. While I wouldn't call the story "creative," it did seem like it was distinguishing itself from other stories with the heavy focus on the monsters and the knowledge Thisby had of them. Then, in the final third, not only does it turn into a generic "war between oppressed people vs. the more privileged," the plot twist destroys any originality the story had and the final battle is so anti-climatically resolved that it really disappointed me. All that being said, I did have fun reading this novel and do recommend it to others. Just don't go in assuming this is going to blow you away with originality.

Taylor Coon says

I received an ARC of this book from a giveaway and was so excited after reading the synopsis to read it. I read it right away and found myself "lost" in the story as you could say. It really held my attention. There were parts of the book where I had to reread it to be sure I understood what it was saying but overall I really enjoyed this book. I would definitely recommend this book.

Amy Layton says

This was such a fun book, on so many levels. The illustrations were amazing, Thisby was a wonderful character, and Gorman certainly knows how to create well-rounded characters. I'm still pretty new when it comes to the fantasy genre, but this was something that I hadn't seen as often--where a young girl must traverse the ghastly and the ghoulish, stumble through cages, and help protect the princess all the while making sure neither of them die.

And of course, who could forget Thisby's slime friend who glows in the dark? The addition of her best friend allows for some humorous moments which certainly alleviate some of the horror and tension happening underground, and more than anything helps Thisby discover some of the secrets about the dungeon and why it's no longer holding up as well as it used to...

Overall, this book was just amazing and wonderful, it was light-hearted at all the right moment, and serious at all the right moments. It was fun, and satisfying, and Gorman and Bosma leave just the right amount left to the imagination. This was probably one of the best books I'd read this spring, and I'd definitely recommend it if you're a fan of fantasy or adventures!

Review cross-listed here!

Sarah says

3.5*s? 3.75*?

I really enjoyed this one, but there was a bit of a rough start to it. Once past that initial bit of rockiness the story smoothed out and really had me turning the pages. Some MG I can read, no real worries about how or where the story is going. This actually had me a bit concerned! I had was very amused to find that when I put the book down I was worrying over it. The illustrations as well were adorable, especially some of the later ones.

I'm very happy I got this one for my niece for Christmas, I think she'll love it.

Young At Heart Reader says

From the moment I saw this cover, I knew I was going to like it. A cute, awesome art style with neat illustrations, oh yeah. Girl in a dungeon taking care of a whole bunch of different beasties, that makes it even better. I love how the premise is basically, you know all those dungeons heroes and adventurers go through in stories? Here's a story about the girl who takes care of all the monsters in them. It's a great adventure full of imaginative creatures.

While a lot of plot elements seem familiar, it in no way makes the book feel unoriginal or terribly predictable. It's just a lot of fun from beginning to end. It's really cool that even though this the author's first book, he's worked on storyboards for cartoons and written for graphic novels. I just find it nice when an author is capable of telling a story not only through words but also with visuals as a main focus. I can't wait for the sequel to come out.

Jessica F says

Have you ever had to babysit before? Try looking after a mountain full of monsters! Thanks to a minotaur's messy handwriting, Thisby Thestoop gets raised by goblins to become The Black Mountain's gamekeeper (instead of dinner). Looking after a dangerous dungeon and managing wayward adventurers is no easy task, especially when a royal Inspection goes dangerously wrong...

Super fun and fast! Loved the wry humorous tone. Can't wait for the next installment!

Sarah says

I received this through Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Thisby Thestoop is the lowly game keeper of Black Mountain. Even though she knows the most about this dungeon and the creatures in it, she still works for a jerky boss and an absent supervisor. Thisby has lived and worked in Black Mountain ever since she can remember. Her only friend is an animated slime creature. The monsters in the dungeon become threatened by more terrible monsters below it when the prince and princess from the neighboring kingdom visit Black Mountain. Thisby will need to use everything she has learned about her home to save it and maybe along the way she will make a few new friends.

It is a quirky funny story. I liked the slime creature that didn't like to leave his jar, he was a fun addition. I never truly warmed up to any of the characters beyond Thisby and the slime creature. This does have some violence and some pretty scary scenes for the younger readers...people are killed during this quest. Ultimately though, I can see myself giving this to readers.

Hailey Chappell says

Adorable, charming and ABSOLUTELY Chock full of dungeon monsters ! If you want a fun read about being true to yourself and becoming the best you can be, this book is for you! I adored Thisby and found a lot of things I could relate to with this character - and their adventures through the dungeon. It was humorous and many times the book made fun of itself (being set in a dungeon and all). Seriously, this is the cutest kids book I've read since Furthermore that had me absolutely hooked.
