

### 3 Magic Dreams

**Matt Bolton Art**

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*3 Magic Dreams is an offbeat trio of stories paired with inventive illustrations.*

Matt Bolton Art's *3 Magic Dreams* is comprised of three short stories in rhyming verse with surrealist illustrations.

In "Gilby," a boy lives on an island with a dinosaur and a seal. All of his food smells like stinky feet. He is eaten and spat out by a sea monster; he lands on a different, colorful island that is lush with delicious fruit. He's given magic seeds to take home; they bring color and delightful tastes to his own island.

The second story is set in 2050, when twins receive a time machine for their birthday. They travel to an age of dinosaurs, where they give candy to baby dinosaurs before a Tyrannosaurus Rex attacks them; they travel to a time that is dominated by cavepeople, too. Though they hope to have future adventures, they realize that they did not follow the time machine's instructions (they've put themselves in unnecessary danger); they vow to hide their missteps from their parents.

In "Dara's Dreams," the cacophonous sounds of a boy's noisy neighborhood infiltrate his dreams, resulting in odd, imaginative parallels between real and dream-world events: a loud toilet flush translates to a wave that Dara surfs on, with his bed as a surfboard. The entry's ending is abrupt, though: while the other endings emphasize their themes and include a sense of catharsis, this entry is without either, leaving it, and the book as a whole, feeling unfinished.

Though the tales are not made to connect with one another, they're individually inventive. Each is written in rhyming verses, resulting in creative turns of phrase, as with "So the twins, hand in hand, ran as fast as they could / Fleeing the monster on whom sweets were no good." There are deviations from this format, though, as with a two-page spread in the second story that is rhyme-free, disrupting the entry's flow. And there are anachronisms in the entries, as with Neanderthals who are shown to be present during the time of Stonehenge, that make them less believable.

The book's illustrations are innovative, though. While they have unnerving features, these choices are purposeful and end up being endearing: there are characters whose feet are oversized, and animals with humanlike facial features. A dreamlike atmosphere dominates. However, the illustrations in "Gilby" are more derivative; they include a mustachioed being and colorful windmill-like trees that evoke Dr. Seuss. The book's muted color scheme has a vintage feel that bolsters the book's wacky mood.

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AIMEE JODOIN (January 11, 2022)

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