



Apprentice Needed

Obert Skye

Shadow Mountain Publishing (Apr 2, 2019)

Hardcover \$17.99 (416pp)

978-1-62972-529-1

There are two kinds of people in the moody, magical world of *Apprentice Needed*: those who are opposed to imagination, and those who understand what a powerful force it can be. The second novel in the *Wizard for Hire* series revisits the adventures of Ozzy Toffy, the wizard Rin, and a mechanical bird named Clark as they try to uncover the origins of a mysterious mind-control serum. They're joined by Rin's daughter, Sigi, and a few villains, too. Obert Skye, who also wrote the bestselling book *Leven Thumps*, has created a believable, lively world of magic and make-believe.

Ozzy, the child of two kidnapped scientists, was the final test case for their mind-control drug. The "discipline serum" they invented has Ozzy by the neck: one night, without realizing it, he walks straight into the ocean. Seeking help for his condition, Ozzy reaches out to Rin, the plaid pants-wearing wizard who helped him find his parents. Rin's actual magical skills seem limited: he's more likely to launch into mansplaining or sententious suppositions than to produce functional enchantment. However, he's the best Ozzy's got, and together they set out to find an antidote for the serum.

Whatever Rin's shortcomings, he has one great strength: he believes in Ozzy and magic, and is willing to power through whatever wild goose chase lies ahead. Sigi, Rin's daughter, is especially well-drawn, and her droll adolescent attitude is a nice foil for her dad's aggressive optimism.

This main plot would be sufficient to support the entire novel, but a second story is Turduckened inside it: Rin wants Ozzy to become his apprentice so that he can move on to the next level of wizardry. Both of these plots are well-developed, if they crowd one another throughout the novel.

Apprentice Needed is an ambitious second book that is full of wonderful, transporting exposition and realistic characters who pursue better-than-realistic adventures.

CLAIRE FOSTER (March/April 2019)

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