



Evil within Yourselfes

Bill Hiatt

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Past-life experiences, magical items, divine intervention, and a healthy dose of sheer teen chutzpah level the playing field as these young humans do battle.

Bill Hiatt's *Evil within Yourselfes*, the fourth book in the Spell Weaver series, finds heroic teen Taliesin and his circle of friends in more danger than ever before. Besieged by dark forces strong enough to turn their sunny Southern California hometown into a land of ice and shadow, Tal and each of his companions confront villains new and old in an effort to restore peace to their lives.

As in previous Spell Weaver novels, memories and wisdom gained from past-life experiences, magical items, divine intervention, and a healthy dose of sheer teen chutzpah level the playing field as these young humans battle with fairies, deities, and evil entities in this action-packed contemporary fantasy novel.

Stunning cover art foreshadows one of Tal's trickiest new enemies. Nicknamed "New Dark Me," he is the physical manifestation of the dark alter ego Tal has battled internally in previous books, and just one of the entities causing chaos in Tal's world. As in the previous books, the boundaries of this world are vast. Tal and his friends travel and communicate between planes of being that draw upon Celtic traditions, Arthurian legend, Greek mythology, the works of Shakespeare, and tenets and figures from Christianity. Hiatt displays impeccable world-building skills with thoughtfully created parameters for travel, telepathic communication, and spells of concealment that remain consistent and relevant across the series.

Tal is separated from most of his companions for much of the book. Chapters told from the viewpoints of multiple characters keep the separate plot threads engaging, as well as offering insight into the thoughts and motivations of characters other than Tal. Seeing the teenagers from the point of view of middle-aged Vanora, who is frustrated with their impulsive behavior, and getting a peek into the mind of hedonistic, lawless "New Dark Me," who refers to Tal as "Boy Scout," creates the kind of rich character development that will keep up interest in the series.

While it is an action-packed page-turner, this novel is lengthy. At this point in the series, there is a high level of complexity to the character relationships. Fans will easily slip back into Tal's tumultuous magical adventures. Hiatt provides a prelude that brings readers new to the series up to speed, and does an exceptional job of integrating background information about character relationships and history into his narrative. Still, this may be a challenging read for teens new to the series.

Hiatt clearly has his finger on the pulse of contemporary teens. Teen-friendly writing features snappy dialogue and imagery that will resonate with adolescents. Tal's circle of friends reflects a diversity of age, sex, and religion, and is welcoming in its inclusivity. Theological discussions between characters and religious representatives stress the similarities between different belief systems, which proves timely given the present political climate.

This engaging fantasy series tackles big issues while simultaneously delivering scenes of intense physical battle,

tricky magical manipulation, and romantic, sometimes bawdy physical attraction. An impressive offering for YA audiences.

CAROLYN BAILEY (January 6, 2016)

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