



Gilm! Everybody's Saying It!

Brian Corley

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In Brian Corley's novel *Gilm!*, a high school student attempts to woo a girl by conjuring a spell with unfortunate ramifications.

After moving from Houston to dreary Portland and leaving his friends and bandmates behind, Geoff feels adrift, wondering how "part of him [could] believe that he could do something as great as writing the perfect song or touring the country, when another part of him couldn't stop criticizing himself." But then he learns that his father's shop contains real supernatural objects. Further, a glimmer of social connection comes to him via the flirtatious ribbing dished out by a new classmate, Corrine.

When Geoff asks Corrine out, she counters with an unusual request: write a song using a word that rhymes with "film" by midnight. With time ticking down, Geoff makes a rushed decision to invoke magic in the hopes of winning Corrine over. Thus, he turns to his father's collection of esoteric magical books. A spell within one of them grants him the creation of the word "gilm" and a catchy tune that sweeps through the school. Then the word begins burrowing into everyone's vocabulary, replacing word after word until only "Gilm!" remains.

Geoff's plight to find a place to belong is endearing, and his dynamics with others are the highlight of the book. Geoff and his single father tease each other and bounce puns back and forth with obvious love and respect. Elsewhere, Geoff and Corrine manifest a relationship that's rooted in humor and wit, and in which they respect each other as real, complex people. Insights abound in their relationship; its charm transcends age.

In the magical novel *Gilm!*, a displaced teenager finds refuge in his relationship with his father—and in a new romance.

JOHN M. MURRAY (March / April 2024)

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