ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

JUVENILE FICTION

The Adventures of Johnny Ancient: Lost in a Dangerous and Bizarre Forest
Chell Onsig
Marvin Tabacon, illustrator
Trafford Publishing
978-1-4269-9483-8
One Star (out of Five)

A fantastical woods filled with beauty and danger is the backdrop for *The Adventures of Johnny Ancient: Lost in a Dangerous and Bizarre Forest.* Only a few inches tall, Johnny lives in a mushroom house with his grandmother, and he desperately wants to find his missing parents. One day, he and his butterfly friend, Zoe, are blown to an unfamiliar part of the land where they face creepy spiders, hungry magpies, and other dangers. With the help of new friends and a bit of magic, they hope to make their way to safety—and to find Johnny's parents.

Chell Onsig offers some imaginative elements that children may enjoy, including talking insects and magical mushroom dust. Brushes with dangers like hungry spiders and oversize crickets add some excitement to Zoe and Johnny's journey.

Overall, however, Onsig fails to develop a cohesive, engaging story. Grammatical errors throughout the entire book are distracting. Poorly written and awkward sentences make it difficult to follow the plot, which sometimes includes unnecessary, unresolved, and confusing elements.

The dialogue feels unnatural and, because of the poor punctuation, can also be confusing. Furthermore, Johnny and Zoe don't show much depth or development. They are much too passive; neither the adventure nor its resolution require them to make any choices, take any real action, or change in any way.

The four illustrations, though not particularly notable, are a colorful, bright mix of greens, purples, and pinks and the various shades of green making up the page borders evoke a lush magical forest. With the text heavy pages, the book might be better suited to a traditional chapter book design.

The basic story line of *The Adventures of Johnny Ancient: Lost in a Dangerous and Bizarre Forest* absolutely has potential. With further development and editing, it could be an enjoyable adventure story for young readers.

Alicia Sondhi