

★ **The Legend of the Dream Giants****Dustin Hansen**

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A young giant finds both friendship and duplicity in *The Legend of the Dream Giants*, a beautiful illustrated novel by Dustin Hansen.

Berg is a giant who lives alone, haunted by strange dreams. He survives by stealing food from the nearby townsfolk when they sleep. He's a reluctant thief, and he worries that the humans will confuse him with another giant, their longtime enemy Unhold, who has terrorized the local towns for years. But when Berg meets Anya, he comes to know her and the mayor of the town. Both humans profess friendship; only one is genuine. Soon Berg is imprisoned and Unhold reappears, leading to a desperate, exciting conclusion.

Whimsical and poetic, the book's descriptions of natural settings evince grace and originality. Its metaphors and similes are drawn from Berg's experiences growing up in the wild: when he wakes from an injury, his head is "thick and full of slush" and his arm is wrapped "in a dingy cloth bandage, making the swollen joint look like the gray globe of a wasp's nest." This emphasis on Berg's point of view results in intimacy.

Berg's dreams involve a mother bear and her cub, along with other animals. The dreams are depicted in wonderful, wordless grayscale drawings; they serve as a compelling, independent story within the story, and their relevance to Berg becomes clear as the book progresses. Berg himself is a sympathetic, misunderstood underdog who, despite his size, is very much an innocent.

Elegant throughout, *The Legend of the Dream Giants* is a touching, memorable tale about trust, betrayal, and love.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2022)

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