Wizard for Hire

Obert Skye
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Wizard for Hire’s irresistible pages celebrate the irrepressible magic of being authentic and unique.

Incidental misfits and intrepid survivors gather for a singularly important quest in Obert Skye’s *Wizard for Hire*, a captivating novel that straddles the line between fantasy and reality.

Ozzy’s family moves from New York to the deep Oregon woods when he is seven. The peace of their new life is shattered, though, when men descend on their cabin and spirit Ozzy’s parents away. For the next seven years, Ozzy survives in seclusion, subsisting on the family’s stock of canned goods and his parents’ stores of literature. He grows into a young man who may be at odds with the world’s expectations but whose honesty, sincerity, and imagination hold undeniable appeal.

When he is fourteen, a chance encounter with a beautiful girl—Sigi—on a nearby beach moves Ozzy to reenter the world. He does so with the help of his father’s droll mechanical bird, Clark, and Labyrinth—also known as Rin—a fast-talking, breakfast-loving maybe-wizard whom he hires from a local ad.

The true extent of Rin’s powers is always in question, but the immediate wisdom and purpose that he brings to Ozzy’s life are never in doubt. He often forgoes spells in favor of enchanting truths:

> Ordinary things ... might actually be magic ... There is magic in the force of gravity [just as there is] magic in the mail system.

Skye’s pages rollick with charm and exciting encounters. Phrasing plays entrancingly with truisms; of Sigi, Ozzy reflects that he is “more or less in awe of her. Who was he kidding—he couldn’t be more.” Characterizations tackle the casual racism of small-town America with frank sensitivity.

The story’s twists hold at their fore one important thought: the truest kind of magic may come from honoring our individuality. Indeed, the villains whom Ozzy, Clark, Sigi, and Rin find themselves battling have one vile goal in mind: control, uniformity, and the erasure of chance.

“The world is filled with so many souls and each one of us has a catalog of stories to tell,” marvels Rin to his teenage accomplices. That sense of wonder permeates *Wizard for Hire*’s irresistible pages, which celebrate the irrepressible magic of being authentic and unique.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Children’s SIP 2017)

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