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Half A Creature From The Sea



Synopsis

David Almond says of this unique collection, "Stories on the page are so beautifully neat. All that lovely black print; those lovely straight lines and paragraphs and pages. But stories are living things, creatures that move and grow in the imaginations of writer and reader. They must be solid and touchable, like the land, and must have fluid half-known depths, like the sea. These stories take place in a real world — but in fiction, real worlds merge with dreamed worlds. Real people walk with ghosts and figments. Earthly truth goes hand-in-hand with watery lies." Stories include: "The Missing Link", "Joe Quinn's Poltergeist", "Harry Miller's Run", "Slog's Dad", "Klaus Vogel and the Bad Lads", "May Malone", "Half a Creature from the Sea" and "When God Came to Cathleen's Garden".

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Customer Reviews

Author David Almond grew up in the northeastern English town of Felling-on-Tyne. It was there he attended school and church, played football and played with friends, there that the stories of his

family, community and religion became the foundation of his many highly acclaimed and much beloved books. In HALF A CREATURE FROM THE SEA, he collects eight short stories set in and around Felling, many quite autobiographical, and explains the truths behind the mysteries they often contain. The result is a book that finely balances the real and the possible, memory and myth, believing and understanding. The first story, "Slog's Dad," sets the scene with its blend of heart-breaking realism and hopeful fantasy. In it, the young narrator Davie and his friend Slog are walking through town when they see a poor and worn man sitting on a bench. Immediately, Slog claims it's his father, Joe Mickley, though he died of an illness a series of amputations couldn't stall. Joe's last words to his son were "watch for me in the spring," and so Slog is convinced the man on the bench, even though he looks different, must be him, come to visit his boy one last time. Davie is rightly skeptical, but when the man on the bench seems to know about Slog's family and claims to be "transfigured," the truth of his identity seems more uncertain. Most important, though, is Slog's total belief and joy at having talked with his father once again. Faith and magic are also found in "When God Came to Cathleen's Garden." On a winter day, Davie finds himself bored and without the company of his best friends. Then two of his sisters pull him outside to share a secret with him: God is sitting by the fish pond in Cathleen Kelly's garden. The three siblings join Cathleen, who asks a strange man sitting in the snow to return her dead dog, Jasper, to her. Whether or not the man proves to be God, the story does offer Cathleen, and readers, a miracle to ponder. Many of the tales in HALF A CREATURE FROM THE SEA have similar elements: death, ghosts, local eccentrics, the shadow of the Catholic church. "May Malone" combines all those elements as it introduces Norman Trench, "ten or eleven at the time," who comes to know the town's most notorious woman, May Malone, who is rumored to live with a monster, possibly the son of her union with Satan. "Harry Miller's Run" is the melancholy and wonderful story of a dying man sharing the memory of his best day. In "Half a Creature from the Sea," Almond gives readers the story of a young girl trying to understand her origins and uniqueness. Her mother offers her the idea that her father was a beautiful sea creature who came to land but had to return, leaving his daughter with some of his mysterious and fantastical qualities. Each story is a treasure. Each explores powerful ideas but is written in Almond's strange, evocative and lovely style, employing the vernacular of his hometown. In the introduction he writes of "the geography of my imagination" and those terms exemplify the types of stories to be found here: rooted in the rich lives of real

people but peppered with a beautiful and thoughtful other-worldliness. Reviewed by Sarah Rachel Egelman

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