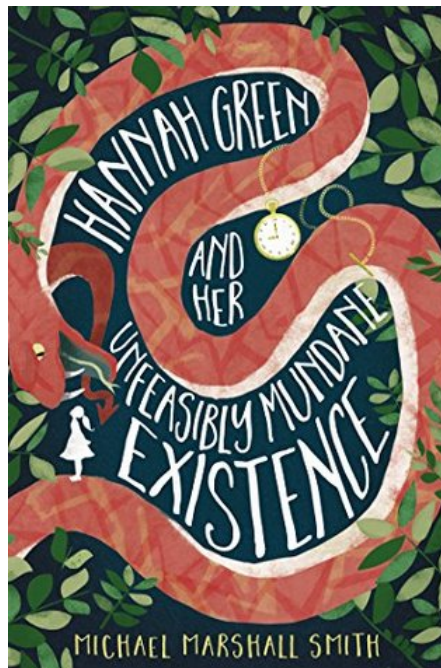




Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence

Michael Marshall Smith

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An unpredictable, poignant, and captivating tale for readers of all ages, by the critically acclaimed author of Only Forward.

There are a million stories in the world. Most are perfectly ordinary.

This one... isn't.

Hannah Green actually thinks her story is more mundane than most. But she's about to discover that the shadows in her life have been hiding a world where nothing is as it seems: that there's an ancient and secret machine that converts evil deeds into energy, that some mushrooms can talk — and that her grandfather has been friends with the Devil for over a hundred and fifty years, and now they need her help.

Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence Details

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From Reader Review Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence for online ebook

Sara says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. I went into it not quite knowing what to expect, but the result was a brilliant little quest into Hell with Hannah, her family, and a very funny little mushroom.

Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence opens, eventually, on Hannah - an eleven year old girl who has been sent to live with her nomadic grandfather while her parents begin the process of separating. Hannah thinks that although a little 'different' with his lifestyle choices, there's nothing especially exciting about her grandfather, until the sudden appearance of a mysterious man in black who appears to call himself The Devil comes calling asking for help from an old friend.

This reminded me a lot of Good Omens, and in a good way. It was funny, well written and the story flowed well, with some great characters. I liked the relationship between Hannah and her grandfather, and the relationship she starts to build with The Devil. However, the star character in this has got to be Vaneclaw the accident demon. From the moment he is literally peeled off an innocent bystander, Vaneclaw lights up the story. He's funny, and stupid, and offsets the deadpan quality of the Devil. The scene with Vaneclaw and the squirrel in particular stands out, and had me actually laughing aloud.

The story itself was also good. It was fast paced and well developed but not complicated. Everything made sense, and fitted well within the context of the story. There was also scope for any possible sequels within this world (more Vaneclaw!) although the ending was satisfactory as a stand alone.

It wasn't perfect however. I would have liked to have seen a little more character development from the rest of Hannah's family - her parents and Aunt Zoe. I felt they were a little lacking in personality compared to the other players in the story, especially Aunt Zoe, who only really comes into her own near the end of the story, and by this point I'd lost interest in her.

All round, an excellent story.

Britta says

I picked this up because Neil Gaiman wrote a recommendation tweet about it and it was on sale! It was really clever and engaging. Hannah Green is 11, so, on the 'the book is written for the reader of the age of the protagonist' I wondered if it was a middle school book. For a short time. I found bits of it quite dark, but middle schoolers are pretty tough. Perfectly readable for an adult, though. And I really liked the way he would counter some of that darkness with well-placed humor. I'll read more from this author.

Nkisha says

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for a review.

For me this book is DNF which don't happen often for me, the problem is the story has just not held my attention or interest. I don't think that the story is terrible I think that maybe I shouldn't have requested it as it is not something that I am particularly interested. The story centres around Hannah whose parents are going through a divorce so she is sent to stay with her Grandad for a while. Whilst Hannah is there she finds out that her Grandad has made a deal with the devil and they go on an adventure with him. Now whilst all that sounds very interesting the pace is far too slow and it feels like you are constantly waiting for something to happen. In addition to this I failed to make a connection to any of the characters and didn't really care what happened to them. I am going to give this book 1 star and I'll probably be one of the only person who does, but I have to go with how I felt.

Caroline Mersey says

Michael Marshall Smith gives the familiar subject of marital breakdown a new twist in his novel *Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence* (review copy from Harper Voyager). The titular Hannah Green is a young girl dealing with the break up of her parents' marriage. Her mother has left her father for a work colleague, and has moved from the West Coast of the USA to London.

The marriage break up is the unfeasibly mundane part of Hannah's life. So common a set of experiences and so frequently covered in fiction as to be unremarkable. This is a well-trodden emotional journey for all the participants in it.

Hannah's family story becomes interwoven with that of the Devil, when she is sent to stay with her grandfather for a while. The Devil is trying to deal with a coup aimed at unseating him, and enlists the assistance of that same grandfather. This allows Marshall Smith to take the domestic story on an abrupt jink to the side. Introducing these supernatural elements lets him explore the family's crisis in an allegorical manner, focusing on humanity's ability to cause harm to family and friends. It lacks no less of the emotional punch and impact of a traditional literary fiction treatment of these issues, but is delivered with a wry, sideways smile.

This is a heart-warming book that uses traditional genre tools to tackle a traditional literary fiction topic.

Robin Carter says

Review:

This book is the first time i have read Michael Marshall Smith and i honestly didn't know what to expect. What i found was such a surprise, the prose/ narrative seemed to match the plot, in that Hannah thought she was living a mundane existence until she found out her Grandfather had been friends with the devil for over 250 years.

Full review: <https://parmenionbooks.wordpress.com/...>

Kazima says

I seldom wish that Goodreads had a half point rating system, but this is one case where I wish I could give the book 3.5 stars. To put it this way, I enjoyed it more than I liked it, if that makes any sense.

Alex Sarll says

Much like Jeff Noon, whose new book I also recently had from Netgalley, Michael Marshall Smith was an SF writer I read a lot when I first came to London. And then, like Noon, he vanished – though in this case it was hiding in plain sight, dropping the ‘Smith’ and turning to thrillers. To which I never followed him, because I don’t really get thrillers, and the plots had generally been the thing I liked least about his books anyway. Apparently the Smith returned once before, for a 2007 novel I missed, but here it is again, attached to a title which seems distinctly YA. I mean, a title like that, you expect a rather whimsical story about some kid dealing with everyday issues, don’t you? Say, an eleven-year-old living in Santa Cruz whose parents’ marriage is falling apart?

And funnily enough, that’s exactly what this is. Except that there’s also another plot strand about how the Devil has been having a nap, and certain things have got away from him in the meantime, and it’s probably not giving too much away to say that this will dovetail with the story of Hannah and her parents. The whole is told in something of the same fabulist, self-aware tone as Valente’s Fairyland books (though this is not quite such strong wine) - but then Smith always did have a gift for hilarious descriptions, he’s just tilting it a little more fantasy and a bit less SF here (not that he was ever too scrupulous a respecter of that boundary anyhow). I was particularly keen on the description of Big Sur, though I don’t really want to spoil that; also this one: "The house was silent. Oddly, noticeably, ostentatiously silent, in the way houses are when you catch them unawares, as if they’ve recently stopped doing something secretive and weird, and the furniture has only just got back into its usual positions." Or how about "She was even more tired when they eventually landed at the other end, but tired in that wide-eyed, brittle way that feels like you’re completely not tired and will never be tired again but on the other hand if someone is rude to you you are likely to bash them over the head with a brick until they are completely flat." You get the idea. The sort of thing whose appeal depends a lot less on the age of a reader than their sharing a certain wry sensibility. Though I suspect the recurring image of everyone’s life as an act of writing will always read more melancholy to those of us with more pages already irretrievably filled in.

Not at all what I would have expected, in summary. But recognisably the same writer, and still a lot of fun. Especially when it concerns the Devil and his sidekick (himself part of a whole intriguing and barely-glimpsed Infernal ecology).

Hannah Rodgman says

Overall rating: 3 stars

Idk guys. This book just felt like it was trying too hard to be Gaiman or Murakami and it failed.

The start of the book had me hooked, however the plot seemed to fall flat and the characters had no depth. The setting was great and tied in well to the story and the language the author used was whimsical and bizarre (which I loved).

Overall it was an average read, nothing too special, and I probably will not be picking it up again.

Happy reading!!

Hannah xoxo

Dan says

It's great to see Michael Marshall donning the Smith part of his name again. The SF novels he published under that byline are among my very favourites, funny, sassy, imaginative and clever. This new book carries on that tradition, although it's not really SF, more a tale of higher powers interfering with mortal(ish) lives. Hannah Green is a young girl living in Santa Cruz who takes refuge from the breakup of her parents' marriage in staying with her eccentric grandfather. In another strand of the plot, there's a guy walking round who seems to be locating evildoers and then out-evilling them. What's he up to? What's his connection with Hannah's grandfather?

Anything more would be too spoilery, but you can be assured that this lives up to the reputation of the earlier MMS books. If I had to grumble, I'd say that tonally it can be a bit weird - there are long stretches where I was thinking that my bookworm nine year old daughter would really love this, and then there's a sudden burst of casual violence that drives those thoughts right out. Nevertheless, it's a fine read. It's funny, inventive, and reads like a modern fairytale. It also does a good job of making a good guy out of possibly the least likely candidate ever for such a role. If the lead character of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's Good Omens had been an eleven year old Californian girl, it might have turned out a bit like this, and that's pretty high praise where I'm concerned

imyril says

Hannah's world is turned upside down when her parents split up - just as the Devil wakes from a long sleep to discover someone is stealing the evil deeds of humanity. And Hannah and her family will be central to putting this right. For various definitions of right. He is the Devil, after all.

This is a book that's perfectly fine, but I can't help but be a little disappointed after many years waiting for a new outing from MMS.

While this is charming and exhibits Smith's trademark humour and ability to home in on the heart, I mostly found it a little bit too young for my taste - perhaps more young adult than adult with its eleven year old heroine and clean lines. That said, it's oddly jarring in some of its juxtapositions of tone; in places perhaps bordering on too grown up for an 11 year old like Hannah. Consequently, I'm not sure who it's intended for but I hope it finds an audience to bring a new generation to MMS and his dark worlds. I also hope there's a more grown up book in his future.

I received a free copy from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Mariela says

Is it a horror story, a morality tale, an insight into the state of the world or all of the above? Never mind. It works wonderfully. It is the kind of book you read slowly, savouring every word. Some people can really tell a story.

Sofia Teixeira says

Se há uns anos lia toneladas de literatura fantástica, a verdade é que nos últimos três/quatro anos me tem dado para explorar o romance e a não-ficção. Não o romance romântico, mas aqueles mais estranhos, que quase não sei como classificar. Será da idade? Não faço ideia. Do que eu também não fazia ideia é que o bichinho pelo fantástico/ficção científica podia ser encontrado num livro que me chega de surpresa, mas que boa surpresa! O Diabo, o Relojoeiro e a Máquina dos Sacrifícios, de Michael Marshal Smith, editado pela Topseller, ganha logo uma série de pontos pela capa. Eu sei, não devemos julgar um livro pela sua cara porque o interior pode ser sempre uma surpresa, para o bem ou para o mal. Aqui a questão é que estamos perante o "casamento" perfeito. O título, um pouco distante da tradução literal do original, é está muito bem conseguido, a capa aguça o suficiente a curiosidade e a história vai fazendo as delícias de quem lê.

Estamos perante um livro que consegue tocar em várias estéticas literárias e ainda consegue explorar várias texturas, desde cénicas às personalidades dos seus protagonistas. Em cada personagem encontramos características únicas que nos dão diferentes perspectivas sobre as mesmas situações. Nunca tinha lido nada deste autor, mas gostei do ritmo que impôs à narrativa, da forma cénica com que foi descrevendo cada momento e acima de tudo gostei do equilíbrio no confronto entre a perspectiva mais inocente de Hannah com a suposta malevolência do Diabo.

Os primeiros capítulos foram fundamentais para me prender a esta leitura. O mistério crescente, a tentativa de associar quem era quem até tal nos ser revelado, viram depois em Hannah o momento de revelação. Esta pequena adolescente vive num ambiente familiar delicado, com os pais a separarem-se. É precisamente esse atrito e o facto de o pai se ver algo perdido - o pai é um escritor de séries que não atravessa uma boa fase na sua carreira - que Hannah é "recambiada" para passar algum tempo com o avô. Hannah, que sempre gostou muito dele, aceita de pronto e é aqui que a verdadeira aventura começa. É difícil escolher uma personagem preferido. Consigo dizer que o pentáculo que mais me agradou foi Hannah, o avô, o Diabo, o demónio Vaneclaw e a tia Zoe. Estes dois últimos acabarão por desempenhar papéis bastante cruciais em certos pontos da trama, provocando em nós sentimentos de grande empatia.

Hannah é a verdadeira aventureira, capaz de fazer tudo pelos pais. O que não estava bem à espera era de vir a ter uma relação especial com o Diabo e até de vir a ter um papel preponderante no desfecho da Máquina dos Sacrifícios. Até lá, terá de viver inúmeras aventuras que servirão para expor medos e fragilidades do ser humano, e também de nos fazer questionar porque é que o mal existe e em que medida é necessário para haver equilíbrio no universo. Este livro, mais do que passarmos um bom tempo a ler, serve para nos levar um pouco ao tempo em que éramos mais inocentes, ao mesmo tempo que nos incita a olharmos para o mundo com um renovado fascínio. Gostei.

Cat says

The first time I learned about this book was with its Portuguese edition. Which has a rather eye-catching title. It can be translated to 'The Devil, the Watchmaker and the Sacrifice Machine'. It's an enumeration, that's true, but it works. So it's obvious that I had a hard time finding the original title to be able to read the book in English. The good thing about a title like 'Hannah Green and Her Unfeasibly Mundane Existence' is that it

doesn't reveal anything about the story. No spoilers in the title. But should it be a sign that the story may not be as good as one may imagine?

For some unfathomable reason I thought Hannah would be older. Not an adult, mind, but older than 11 years of age. There's a lot of satire and irony throughout the story, as most characters are adults (let's consider the Devil an adult for the sake of argument). And then there's this girl who's been dragged along on an adventure and complains about everything. I get it, she wasn't asked; but, had Hannah been older, would she have been able to enjoy herself a little bit more? Because, for me, Hannah being so young was sort of a moment-killer. Imagine you find out that a relative of yours knew a famous, I don't know, scientist, musician, artist, doesn't matter, someone everybody knows, or should know, about. Said relative says the name of said famous person. Your jaw drops because you could never have imagined such a thing, to have met such a person. Well, in this story, our young character doesn't have such a moment, because when she hears the name of the famous person her grandfather knew once, it just doesn't ring a bell. And, it is because of jarring moments such as this, that I felt that Hannah should be older. And also because it's weird to have an eleven year-old main character in a story that is not clearly meant for eleven year olds.

I'm not sure what the age target for this book is, really. I felt it was a mix of adult fiction with something meant for younger readers. And I can't exactly say I liked this.

Another thing that caused me some distaste towards the story was what happened to Hannah's mother. Without going into details, was that really necessary?

What did I like then? I liked that the Devil was a character. Usually that's a promise for mischief. Unfortunately I was a bit let down in this area. This Devil was more prone to random bursts of violence than to some playful misbehaviour. This Devil was evil and I'm still wondering why he gave cancer to this one airport guy that only appears once.

I also like that there was a good amount of "I didn't see that coming" moments. Vaneclaw, the Accident Imp, and other creatures provided some richness the story wouldn't probably have had otherwise. Vaneclaw was awesome!

All in all, I think the premise was quite good, very interesting. However, I'm afraid the story didn't work for me. Because what I wrote regarding Hannah, and also because I stopped feeling that interested from the third part on until the very last chapter that works as an epilogue.

So it's 3 stars for me, because I liked some parts of this story, but it failed in some others.

Madalena says

Admito que não estava à espera da história que acabei de ler. As minhas expectativas estavam bem longe daquilo que este livro é. No entanto, gostei muito de o ler, tenho de admitir. É um tipo de livro que gosto muito: há várias personagens, cada uma com a sua história e com o seu rumo, mas todos os rumos acabam por se encontrar de uma maneira ou outra.

As personagens foram também muito interessantes e bizarras. Gostei especialmente dos da maneira como são os demónios, achei-lhes graça e achei que foi algo verdadeiramente original.

O pormenor que mais gostei na história toda foi o passado do relojoeiro. Fez-me sorrir o tempo todo.

Descobri so quando já ia a meio do livro que o título foi completamente alterado na versão portuguesa.

Embora normalmente seja uma grande defensora de se traduzir o livro o mais à letra possível (quando não soa estúpido, claro) devo dizer que o título da versão portuguesa foi o que me chamou à atenção para este

livro - em conjunto com a capa que é maravilhosa.

Teri says

I must admit that the title and cover did not wow me and I was skeptical, but I am glad I gave it a try. This book was just fantastic and I hope to read much more of what he has written.

For starters, this book is written in an adorably quaint narrative that really reminds me of Pushing Daisies (which I think everyone in the world can agree was the most adorable TV show about resurrecting the dead, ever made). The narrative gives it almost a childish air to the story, which fits since the protagonist is 11, but the story actually hit on more adult topics. I see this book being classified around the web as young adult, but I have to say that so many of the things said here really hit home for an older audience. He had quite the collection of well worded lines along the topics of parenting, settling, regret, compromise, mundanity and fading love. Some definitely well worded enough to be posted on the Quotes pages. Someone should get on that, because I totally dropped the ball there....

The actual story is also pretty fantastic. It's a humorous sort of fantasy story centered around biblical characters. A young girl is sent to stay with her grandfather and finds out he is much more epic than she ever imagined. Through his dealings with the devil, she is pulled into a roller coaster adventure that brings her to hell and back. It is brilliantly told as a grandfather's telling of his granddaughter's experience.

(view spoiler)

Anyway, I recommend it to anyone from the teens onward, but I do think there are some significant lines that are more directed at an older audience.
