



Bernie and the Wizards

Steve LeBel

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Gods vs. Wizards ~ an epic struggle for survival

Bernie fixes broken universes for a living. Unlike other gods, who tend to take a hell-fire-and-brimstone approach to problem-solving, Bernie prefers a more gentle approach.

Bernie's job is to restore production on the planet Photox, but he soon discovers a world caught up in a civil war. With a hard-to-please boss breathing down his neck and a personal life in desperate need of relationship advice, Bernie's chances of success are dwindling fast. The gods on Bernie's world are no help. If he fails to restore production, they will destroy Photox's entire population.

Bernie is desperate to keep this from happening, even if the murderous wizard causing all the problems is powerful enough to hurt a god...

All books in The Universe Builders series are standalone and can be read in any order. The first book, Bernie and the Putty, won 16 national and international awards for excellence.

Advance Review Copies available: <http://argonpress.com/request/>

Bernie and the Wizards Details

Date : Published June 15th 2017 by Argon Press

ISBN :

Author : Steve LeBel

Format : Paperback 350 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade

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From Reader Review Bernie and the Wizards for online ebook

Faith Jones says

Bernie and the Wizards is an amiable tale that lets us know what it is like to build and run the ultimate train set – a planet and its native forms of life. This enticing idea is shown to us through the eyes of the space-faring race that creates and operates the architecture, then pops down and interacts with it; the gods. If suitably advanced technology becomes indivisible from magic (Arthur C Clarke), then an entity with suitably unlimited power becomes effectively a god when seen from a less capable perspective. It's a place on the scale from amoeba to goldfish to our race to them, the world builders of this novel. Could we get closer to their end of the scale one day? Incrementally? Do goldfish mistake us for gods, all positions on the ability scale being relative?

There's another scale though, the scale of decency, fairness and good manners. Perhaps most of us have overtaken the old gods on that one. Being able to do anything you want with no consequences can turn a god into a louse.

Power is proportionate, in the context of other power, just as a heavy weight crossing an event horizon loses even its information, so it is also revealed to us that gods within a domestic community of gods behave just like ordinary people. They go to school, do jobs they get stressed from, are impressed by fashion and hang out with friends. All good so far. They also carry out commercial enterprises (why bother?), are very vain and get in a huff when one of their planets doesn't work properly or fails to produce whatever commodity they need from it. Elder gods leave the community behind and set forth on their own indefatigable odysseys, probably because when you reach a high enough vantage point most of the other gods' activity looks immature. Are gods herd animals or antisocial loners? Or both, depending on their exposure to endless boredom.

When a planet managed by his employer goes offline, in the product supply sense, that's where Bernie comes in as a kind of toga-wearing corporate trouble shooter who then has to infiltrate the native species of the client's world and find out whatever went wrong. It's like the landlord's rental agent checking out the state of the cooker in a student share. To do that, he needs to talk to people on the ground and absolutely not do what gods always do, which is to treat mortals like disposable dots on the landscape. Bernie is a pleasant god who doesn't think mortal lives are meaningless and, therefore, he becomes the humanitarian hero of the piece. This attitude appears to be a generational change, so the young will see in this metaphor their own chance to feel superior to their parents and enlightened. Then again, I've felt like that since the age of seven.

I'm unconvinced by the cover, which looks like the kind of thing they stick on the windows of shops selling Warhammer. I know it represents the disruptive types that have stirred things up in the story but it doesn't sum up the feeling I had from this book, which included a lot of adorable creative growth and beauty. Luminous plants with floating seeds are cooler than this. It wasn't just about anger and metal hats or I wouldn't have read it.

This is a good book suitable for all the family and it is based on an attractive fantasy of inoffensive divinity (as it isn't Earth) and, hey, it's fun. Although the plot does venture into frailty, it doesn't explore the human condition as much as it could (see Hamlet), so it's as if the author set up a vehicle to tell us something meaningful about ourselves and our treatment of lower life forms but then doesn't push the message through. The fantasy is sweet though. It makes the reader dream of what it would be like if their own family were gods with the power of life and death over other species, squabbling, childish, spiteful, needy, polluting, bearing grudges, breaking up and being as selfish as hell. Hang hubris, we're farther up the scale to godhood than we thought! Lucky us. Okay, okay, don't smite me, I'm done.

Karissa says

In this third installment of the Universe Builders series, Bernie has finished school, won a Universe Award, and is working for The Business. His first official assignment comes from one of The Business' customers who is complaining that a universe built for him, Photox, has ceased functioning as he requires. You see, the traders have stopped bringing one of the crops, guid-peppers, to the trading posts. Bernie is tasked with finding out what happened and who is at fault.

This task becomes so much more than a simple who did what and why. Rather, Bernie embarks on a journey that reveals how he feels about himself and the other gods, created beings, his father, and even how his choices affect others. He is slowly meandering to adulthood, growing up by making mistakes and learning from them. He forms ethical stances and faces the challenges of fame. He gets his first kiss and realizes the importance of his friends. How Bernie solves his guid-pepper production problem in this story is perfect, poetic justice at its' finest, and fitting for his beliefs and for the client and Photox's needs. This is Bernie's step into adulthood, and I cannot wait to see what he does next.

I have always been drawn to Bernie. He thinks outside of the box, approaching things in such unique and interesting ways. I admire his courage and commitment to his beliefs. I love that he gets so attached to his assignments. I agree with how he feels about what he creates and love his curious and adventuresome nature in broadening his knowledge of them. That he is slightly dorky, awkward, and frequently gets himself in trouble either by accident or attachment only makes him more relatable.

I loved every moment of this story, reading through it more than once and enjoying it just as much, if not more, the second time. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND this story to everyone who likes a good adventure story with a pinch of fantasy thrown in for good measure.

I received a free copy of this book and voluntarily chose to review it.

Dawn says

I chose to read this book after receiving a free advanced review copy from the author. All opinions in this review are my own and completely unbiased. I had read Bernie and the Putty and Bernie and the Lost Girl and I've been patiently waiting for this book to be ready.

I love the world that Steve LeBel has created in which gods create universes. Unfortunately, most of the gods believe that their creations have no feelings so they have no qualms about destroying a universe if it didn't turn out the way they wanted. Bernie believes that all life forms, especially higher life forms that have intelligence, should be preserved if at all possible. He suspects that they may even have souls. This is causing Bernie problems in his new job in which he is a troubleshooter. His boss is ready to wipe out the farmers on the planet Photox that Bernie is working on but Bernie is working hard to save them. With a final deadline approaching, Bernie is running out of time.

The characters are well developed and have mostly human characteristics. Bernie, the main character, is a young god, famous because of winning an award for a universe he created. His best friends are Suzie and Lenny and they try to help him figure out ways to save Photox.

I like Steve LeBel's writing style. He brings the characters and the planets alive. I'm sure Bernie and the Wizards will be winning awards like Bernie and the Putty did. Now if I could only fast forward time long enough to grab a copy of Steve's next book...

Kat Mandu says

Kat Mandu says...

In Bernie's world, everyone (including him) he knows are gods and goddesses capable of designing unique worlds for business, trade, and pleasure. Now he's got to fix a "broken" one for his boss – and save the beings within the world before it's destroyed. IF he can beat the bad guys inside.

This is actually really a unique concept in the world of fantasy. Not often do you get to hear from an actual god as a narrator. Sure, I've read demi-gods (cough, cough Percy Jackson for example) but none with as much power as Bernie has. The world-building is really nice; basically, you have all these gods in control of everything, who are also able to create their own worlds or pay someone else to do so. "Builders" bring these worlds to life and then you have people like Bernie who are able to fix things in the world.

Bernie's assignment is to discover why a certain world – Photox – is not delivering a certain good to the god who purchased it (in this case, weird peppers). The more he investigates, the more involved he gets with figuring out what happened to the farming race within Photox. Turns out there's some nasty bad guys rampaging and destroying the villages and killing the residents. Bernie teams up with a village and its temporary shamanic leader, Reva to stop the bad guys – only it'll be harder than he thinks, because these marauders are powerful enough to strike back even against Bernie.

I really love that Bernie is a good guy at heart, confounded by the way other gods treat the sentient beings they create, carelessly destroying the world despite what's within it. I also like that his friends sometimes oppose his views, and don't just go along with whatever he says. Overall, he's a great character to read, caring deeply for the evolved humans he works with and the technical details of his assignment.

Another thing I love about this is the clear amount of research that went into some of the technical details you read. The author has spent a lot of time reading about genetics and farming and geography, etc. and you can clearly see that as the story continues.

My one complaint is that some of said technical details seem to draw out the story, making it even longer than it already is. I don't mind lengthy books at all, but some of the descriptions make the reading slow down quite a bit, so it was hard for me to sit down and read it for long amounts of time.

But besides that, I liked it, so it gets a four from me!

Andrea Stoeckel says

By Steve Lebel

[I am voluntarily reviewing this book after receiving it as a gift from the author.]

"The only thing I can think of is how hard you worked to save your world. I've never seen anyone who cares

as much as you do about created life. I think it has to do with that.”

Bernie is now working as a sort of a low level trouble shooter for The Business. Even though he's won an exceptional award for his last Universe, it hadn't really affected him ..much. That is, until he is singled out by a returning older god for his work.

That even makes his father who hasn't contacted him since his parents split up years before sit up and take notice. Bernie has always wanted some recognition from the "great Simeon", only god to ever win three Universe Awards. He is warned by just about everyone close that that there might be some hidden agenda that his father has to be trying to connect with him now. Is Bernie mature enough to see that?

While this is going on in Godtown, Bernie is trying to find out the problems in a Universe still under warranty but showing some definite problems. It was made specifically to supply guid peppers and mangaroons for another owner, however the farmers on the planet are under some kind of threat, and Bernie needs to find the threat and "fix" it. Then the farmers can go back to growing and supplying the owner with the product. The owner sees only his bottom line even if Bernie sees beyond that to the communities themselves. Something has happened to change things, and Bernie wants to find the problem and offer a solution instead of "blinking them out" and starting again.

While working on this situation, Bernie is also tiptoeing around young adulthood and new attractions---girls. His parents were no example, so he turns to the ever present Lenny and Suzi to try and get some answers. And together, the three friends work on restructuring not only their lives, but the lives of those on the "broken Universe" before everything falls apart.

Steve Lebel again draws you into a world you can quickly come to love. Imagine an ethical basis for creating a world in a business that makes them and gets rid of them just as quickly, with no thought as to what/who they have created. What does Bernie learn from both his life and his world's life. What can he teach his teachers and learn from those he teaches as well as his growing maturity within. When I first (literally) stumbled upon the first Universe Builders book, I told everyone it would make a great ethics lesson for a Confirmation Class. I stand behind that statement as I review this third book in the series. Well done Bernie! Well done Steve Lebel! 5 stars.

Beverly Laude says

Bernie gets his first major work assignment after winning his big award. He is tasked with finding out what is wrong with a Universe that seems to be going haywire. Along the way, Bernie meets an ancient god who says that he is special, finds out that his friend Suzie wants to be more than friends, and becomes a celebrity with his own fan club.

I love the way that Mr. LeBel writes; his character & world development are wonderful & the story is very engaging. A group of gods make universes, then when they become problematic, the gods can just blink a species out of existence. The fact that Bernie does not agree with this mindset is great. His boss just wants him to finish the job, while Bernie wants to fix the problem in a gentle fashion without hurting anyone.

I also like the addition of Bernie's chaos cloud, which continues to add humor to these stories. Add in new species, philosophical discussions about what life really is, and a little sweet romance & you have an entertaining story.

I received a copy of this book from the author & chose to review it.

Lori says

A lot of imagination went into this book.

Steve again does not disappoint.

Bernie is just as complicated as he's always been. Different because he won't blink anyone out.

This book Bernie has to make a really tough choice .

He's given a troubled universe to fix.

But after cones into the picture and as much as Bernie is warned to how bad a man is father is he can't seem to find a fault in the man with high hopes of finally getting to know him. But that all changes. He finds out just what kind of man he really is.

There's so much that went into this book all I can say is it's a must read if you love Bernie and the universe builders.

Bernie's growing up. Learning about girls and relationships . plus the wizards that are highly interested in him.

It just keeps getting better and better.

There's a lot left open so I'm sure we haven't seen the last of Bernie's.

It's a fun ,interesting read. You'll get all the answers you were looking for from the first book and many for questions .

I highly recommended it.

I just love Bernie and a couple new characters introduced into the book.

I'll be looking forward to another book release.

Bonnie Dale Keck says

Not on KU, one of those free hope you review it things, should go without saying that all my reviews are my own opinion, obviously have a lot and share them whether anyone wants them or not. The writer gives a blurb, the other reviewers give half the plot, more or less. Just read them already, there's a list of the titles out below. I'm helpful like that. Be nice to writers and they write more. *results may vary in your area/state/country Unlike 1 & 2 this one was ARC {advanced reader copy}, available on amazon and others. The start of a whole new universe...literally, in 3 parts, so far at least.

The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Putty (The Universe Builders Series Book 1)

The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Lost Girl (The Universe Builders Series Book 2)

COMING SOON TO A UNIVERSE-AL BOOKSTORE NEAR YOU June 15, 2017* EXACT TIME
DEPENDS ON YOUR UNIVERSE/TIME ZONE/PLANETARY CYCLES

The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Wizards

Bernie graduated God School, and he fixes universes for a living, but not the old school way of hellfire and brimstone, a gentler approach. Now if his boss would quit breathing down his neck, his personal life would get on track, and he could sort out how to save the civilization on a damaged world...oh and make sure the murderous wizard who is causing all the problems and is powerful enough to hurt a god is stopped.

Margaret Lautenschlager says

Bernie's first assignment since graduating is a trouble shooter that God Town depends on for its economy. The universes that are built for the very reason of feeding all of the residents of God Town must be not only created properly to grow the food but also maintained to keep production flowing. This can be tricky with sympathetic morals that Bernie has when it comes to the life forms created for this purpose. But through close examination and observation (and a little help from some friends) Bernie is able to finally resolve the deep seated issue at hand and not a minute too soon! And a very clever solution it is with nobody getting hurt or eliminated thanks to his tender heart and thoughtfulness despite other suggested resolutions. I was pleased to see all of the effort that went into this winning solution and also happy that the super God Claudius was backing Bernie up and going to keep in touch which was an honor no other God had achieved (including his egotistical father)! That can only mean another story about Bernie is on the horizon! If you haven't read this starting series, you are missing out on a thought provoking fun read!

Miriam Davison says

Some time ago I was given a copy of a book to beta read. It was by a first- time author and sent to me by his publishers. That book was The Universe builders (Bernie and the Putty) by Steve LeBel. I was mesmerised completely and couldn't put the book down. It went on to win lots of awards. Since then Steve has brought out Bernie and the Lost Girl, and his latest book; Bernie and the Wizards.

Once again, I could not put the book down. I have read a few books where I feel I am there with the Characters, but Steve goes further. His detail comes from the biggest imagination I know and I can picture things that do not exist in the real world. I went on my journey with Bernie and his friends, Susie, and Lenny, who are three young Gods.

Bernie is asked to find out what is wrong with a universe the business has sold to a collector for its produce of guid peppers and manganoons. Gods will normally just blink out a creation which does not work, but Bernie has empathy for the life forms they create and tries to find a better way. With his boss on his back to hurry up the project, Bernie and his friends enter the universe to help.

I loved where Bernie must deal with his father, Simeon, who left them years before, and his ego. If you only get one book this year, buy this one. You will not be disappointed.

I was also blessed to find one of the Goddesses had my name, Miriam!

Patricia says

This is the third book in the universe builders series . Welcome to the new adventure with Bernie and the gang . In this installment Bernie is charged in finding out what is happening on this planet . On this planet he is working on they are in the middle of a civil war and he has to figure out why this is happening before the whole planet is blinked away . Will he be able to help out the planet and figure out his life before everything blows up .

I love Bernie , he is such a sweet and loving character . He is such a good guy with a heart of gold . He is still naïve in all things girl related but he can fix a planet . He goes through such changes in this book . He has to handle pressure of deadlines and the growing pressure of the fame he has about seeing an elder . He wears the pressure well though . He grows up a lot in this book . He is my all time favourite god . Lenny is back and is just as cool as he was before . He seems to become an even bigger help to Bernie and his sounding board. He is somewhat the comic relief sometimes for Bernie . Suzie is back as well and she is more then his friend . She knows she wants to be Bernie's girlfriend but like Bernie she is a little shy about it

all . You see her get jealous when other girls put designs on Bernie because of his fame . There are some other characters that make an appearance some good and some bad . But as the story comes along you find them all kind of lovable in their own way .

Bernie and the gang is such a fun read . I read this story in an afternoon and loved every moment of it . The author takes us on such a fun ride but there is also a few lessons that we can learn. Like how to handle the fame and also sticking to your guns and doing what you feel is right . This is meant as a young adult book but I honestly believe that anyone would love to read this book . It isn't written down for young kids . It is written in a way that anyone would love it . These are such fun books to read, you never know where Bernie and the gang land up . I can't wait to see where the author takes Bernie in his next book . So if you want a good book for your kids summer reading list or even for your summer reading list . Check out Bernie and the gang . You will not be disappointed in the least .
was given this book by the publishing house for my honest review

Jane McArthur says

In this third episode of The Universe Builders, Bernie has been assigned a project. It is his job to discover why the guid-peppers are not arriving at the trading post on Photox. It falls to Bernie to find and fix the problem in order to restore trading and appease the owner of the planet.

Bernie visits the planet and befriends two of its citizens. Together the three of them, with Lenny and Suzie, investigate to determine the best course of action to resolve the dilemma. Will Bernie be able to find a resolution? Read the book to find out.

I thoroughly enjoyed the story. The Universe Builders series with Bernie just keeps getting better and better. And even though the series is written with the young adult in mind it makes for excellent reading for the older generations as well. I sincerely hope that Mr. Steve LeBel continues writing about Bernie.

S.M. Lowry says

*I received a free copy in exchange for an honest review. However, I also pre-ordered the book.

The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Wizards is a continuation of Bernie's journey of being a young god; however, all of the stories can be read independently without confusion. I found the book engrossing from the start, and I couldn't wait to find out what would happen to the characters. The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Wizards is a fun combination of Medieval-type fantasy and more modern fantasy. The world of the Radolins is a place with only ancient technology, while Bernie's world is a world of gods who create universes but are not all-powerful. Bernie has been trained to view the worlds the gods create as businesses. When something goes wrong on a world, the gods will frequently wipe out the existing races and start over. Bernie, however, is much too compassionate to do that. Instead, he interacts with the worlds and their people in order to fix the problems, which sets him apart as a world builder. I loved Bernie from the beginning because of his compassion for the people the gods create, and because he takes the time to enter their world and become a part of it in order to fix the problem. Bernie's dad is an incredibly selfish person, and he was a character that I loved to hate. The romance between Bernie and Suzie is sweet and added to my enjoyment of the book. It's a light-hearted fantasy novel with characters I easily fell in love with. LeBel has created a world that's fun to get lost in. I highly recommend reading The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Wizards.

Donald Hoffman says

I have been a fan of Steve LeBel and his young friend, Bernie, from the beginning, well before he became a world-famous, award-winning celebrity. LeBel's whimsical approach to his storytelling is especially refreshing. These stories are suitable for young adults but even better for those of us to whom young adulthood is a far distant memory. His great talent is the ability to bring each of the characters, even the minor ones, to a level of importance that causes the readers to actually care what happens to each one. I genuinely smiled at some of the passages describing the young men's discovery of the complexities of the female psyche, remembering many of the same difficulties in my youth a half-century ago. This ability to allow your readers to relate personally to those characters is very rare in writers today. We have all had a "Lenny", a "Suzie"(sigh), or even a "Billy" in our lives if we were lucky. LeBel's marvelous imagination and astute attention to detail allow him to use Bernie's talents and build wonderful places for those characters to populate.

The fact that the "gods" in all of his stories are full of human frailties and weaknesses makes the stories far more interesting and entertaining. Bernie's growth as a young man is also more apparent in this book than it has been in past stories. I am enjoying his coming of age in ways I never expected when I first "met" him. The introduction of new supporting characters, as well as a more in-depth look at the hold-overs, keeps the storyline interesting and makes me anxious for continued adventures for this young god and his "universe" of friends and family. I need only mention Claudius and the Ancient gods as an example.

I do not, as a rule, mention plot lines or story progression in my reviews. The blurbs and the synopsis usually take care of that quite well. I can only state that in my 60+ years of reading, I have found few storytellers as entertaining as Steve LeBel. Not only do I recommend his books to those I know enjoy good reading, I use descriptive passages from his stories to illustrate goals for my students in Adult Basic Education classes. If you ever have the opportunity to meet or correspond with Steve LeBel, ask him to describe his early avocation as a Rocket Scientist. You will see why he is now such a successful author.

Whispering Stories says

Book Reviewed by Clive on www.whisperingstories.com

This is the third book in the Universe Builders series which the author says should all stand alone. As I have not read the two previous volumes I can vouch for that.

Here we have fantasy on a grand scale. Let's face it, you cannot get any bigger than building universes although Steve LeBel has found a new angle with his stories of gods who work for the "The Business".

I enjoyed his comparisons with today's current working practices, especially the theory of destroying and replacing rather than repairing something that is not working correctly. The storyline also raised some interesting ethical arguments including ethnic cleansing and what constitutes life.

The lead character Bernie comes across as a loveable young boffin; what some might call a nerd. He makes a good hero, prepared to adhere to his principles even though they frequently run counter to his colleagues' principles. Most of the support characters are similarly believable especially those from Photox.

LeBel writes good narrative. He generally keeps the story moving although I felt that it could have worked just as well with one or two of the side stories omitted. Maybe they are necessary to keep the Universe Builders series flowing. There were some romantic episodes which I thought bordered on “cheesy” and I definitely do not want to think about the relationship between Sissy and Zephie.

However, I do have an issue with the story and it is one that I personally have with many fantasy books. For any work to be believable I think the reader needs to know what the boundaries are. By definition gods are of course omnipotent but having the knowledge that Bernie could achieve almost everything meant that I was unlikely to be really amazed at the outcome. I therefore found the closing chapters somewhat neat and rather twee.

I understand that the first book in this series has won a number of awards so The Universe Builders are clearly making a mark. Personally I am not convinced but, it was a reasonable read with some novel ideas so I have awarded The Universe Builders: Bernie and the Wizards four stars.
