



Strange Metamorphosis

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When a boy is faced with a choice between two tracks for his future, an unlikely source sends him on an expedition across a meadow...as a bug. Forced to trust his instincts and follow his heart, he must complete his quest before it is too late to return to the land of humans.

Marcel is at a crossroads. He has been offered an apprenticeship at Villeneuve, the neighboring country manor, which would allow him to follow in his late father's footsteps. At the same time, he has won a scholarship at a renowned technical college in Paris, a move that would require him to face the unknown with no guarantee of success. His friend Julia, a city girl through and through, is encouraging him to take a chance and go to Paris. Unknown to Marcel, she has her own reasons to recommend this as well. As the machinations of Marcel's world and that of Villeneuve unfold, Marcel finds help in the most unlikely source imaginable: an ancient oak tree.

Progressively turned into a bug, Marcel must go on a quest across the meadow to feast on the royal jelly in order to return to his human form. Forced to carve his own path and follow his heart, he sets off and quickly finds himself teaming up with a wonderful group of insects, each of which has their own agenda. And with time running out and his existence in peril, Marcel must fight to the finish, or die a bug.

Strange Metamorphosis Details

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From Reader Review Strange Metamorphosis for online ebook

Kara Alicia says

What a great idea for a story, I see this rising up to be a classic. A great coming of age/journey story where Marcel takes form as an insect and has to navigate his way through the meadow. It really reminded me of books I read to death as a kid, like Alice and Wonderland, or James and the Giant Peach. Cleverly written, engaging characters, whimsical language. I loved all the elements.

I would recommend this to those readers that are a little outside the norm, and who appreciate wonder and fantasy, because this book is full of both.

Morhib says

'd like to describe this book as a coming-of-age type novel where the main character initially starts off as being indecisive and lost and through various hardships/adventures the character grows and develops as a person.

Coming back to the title - Strange Metamorphosis - seems apt as Marcel does undergo a transformation but not just physically but emotionally/mentally as well.

The story starts of a bit slow and only really kicks off when Marcel transforms into a tiny person. He is then told by a oak tree that he must eat some royal jelly honey in order to get back to normal size. Along the way, Marcel picks up insect friends who help him on his mission. What I really enjoyed whilst reading the book was the different bugs that appear and their unique character. Monk has done well in creating individual personalities to each bug and my favourite has to be Miss Bea, the honeybee. The author has a clear affinity towards insects and that's shown throughout the book.

This book is definitely one to read whilst sitting in your garden on a warm, sunny day, sipping a cool drink.

'A summer book' - That is what I would label it as.

As for editing goes, I didn't find any typos or grammatical errors. It's really well written.

At 200 odd pages I would say that the author had definitely got his story length right. Any longer and it would have ran the risk of dragging but by keeping it relatively short the story flowed at the right pace.

Conclusion

I would wholeheartedly recommend Strange Metamorphosis to those who enjoyed 'James And The Giant Peach' and the film, 'A Bug's Life'.

Note - I received a copy of this book in return for an impartial and honest review. I am in no way affiliated with the author.

Literary Classics Book Awards & Reviews says

When P.C.R. Monk set out to write his debut novel, he did so with the flourish and finesse of an established author. His book, *Strange Metamorphosis*, is as rich and layered as a buttery croissant and just as gratifying to devour. Seasoned with sage tidbits of choice life lessons throughout, steeped in adventure and sprinkled with just a touch of romance, this book is perfectly balanced to provide an enticing read that is destined to become a treasured piece of literature for the young and young at heart.

Marcel Dassaud is a boy of exceptional talent who is at a stage in life where he must decide between two paths, both of which have the potential for completely divergent outcomes. Reflecting upon his options, he finds himself uttering his contemplation to an ancient oak tree which, according to legend, possesses magical powers to impart great wisdom. Moments later he finds himself shrunk to the size of the bugs he once collected for sport. It is soon revealed to him by a gallfly that in order to return to his former state, he must embark on a quest to gather some of the royal jelly which is heavily guarded by bees. He must do this within three days, or his metamorphosis into a bug will be complete and he will never return to his human state.

Along the way, Marcel discovers much about himself, his friends, and the bugs he encounters while seeking the royal jelly. *Strange Metamorphosis*, is an exciting and whimsical adventure, written with great aplomb and a style which many authors can only hope to achieve within their lifetime.

Kimberly says

I am so glad I stepped out of my normal reading genre and stepped into an enchanted world of talking insects. I absolutely loved every minute of *Strange Metamorphosis*. The characters come alive and the vivid descriptions make you feel like you're part of Marcel's journey of self discovery. The story and writing brought me back to the classics I read as I child. I'll definitely be passing *Strange Metamorphosis* down to my own son to read and recommending to others.

Meg Bortin says

Franz Kafka or Lewis Carroll? When the hero of this charming coming-of-age story finds himself transformed into a bug, he enters a parallel reality in which he must negotiate the perilous world of insects in order to turn himself back into a young man who knows what he wants out of life. Along the way, the reader is led by P.C.R. Monk, an amateur entomologist, to consider the universe we inhabit from an insect point of view. The result is a startling and strangely gripping tale, written for the young adult audience but with resonance for grown-ups, too.

I must admit that I shed a tear at the end when Marcel finally comes to terms with who he is. In the process he has faced danger and possible death at the hands - no, mouths, appendages and stingers - of grasshoppers, dragonflies, snakes, voles, giant hornets and assorted other creatures, while making friends with an inchworm, a rhinoceros beetle and a bee who accompany him on his quest.

The only Kafkaesque element of this book is in the boy's actual metamorphosis, which provides the context for his philosophical musings about where he's going in life. But there is definitely an Alice-in-Wonderland quality as the hapless Marcel shrinks, then grows, sprouts wings and learns to fly. His tiny size allows him to observe the world of humans - especially his heartthrob, Julia - without being noticed. The insights gleaned from this bug-eyed perspective not only help him to mature, but provide the reader with a new way of thinking about our strange world - and a new respect for our insect cohabitants.

My 13-year-old daughter's comment when I told her about the book? "Too cool!" It's next on her reading list.

Kara says

Paralyzed with indecision about his future, fourteen year old Marcel heads to his favorite oak tree to sit and think. Since the tree is rumored to be magic, Marcel asks the tree to help him make a decision? Should he stay or take the scholarship to school. Instead of a replying, the magic tree turns him into a bug!

The magic tree has given him a quest—Marcel must find the magic jelly to return to his normal size and his normal life. Accompanied by an inchworm for a guide, Marcel sets off on his quest through the fields. Along the way he is forced to make new friends, defeat enemies, and learn a lot about himself during the journey.

Inventive and quirky, *Strange Metamorphosis* is a fabulous adventure that readers of all ages can enjoy. Well written, with strong characters, vivid language, and great description. Even the cover art is amazing!

I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves fantasy novels but wants something a little bit different.

All of the typical fantasy elements are absent here—which helps makes *Strange Metamorphosis* so distinctive and fresh.

All fans of the fantasy genre should check out this book. You won't be disappointed.

Jalyn says

I picked this up because the boy turning into a bug idea sounded somewhat interesting. I wasn't so sure about the coming-of-age themes, because those had the potential to be too preachy or theme-y.

Marcel was fun. He was absent-minded, frequently oblivious, and not very good at making decisions for himself. He was also way, way too trusting, to the point of being gullible, which got on my nerves every once in a while. Sometimes I just wanted to yell, "haven't you learned yet?" He was still very fun, though, especially as his journey made him step up and take charge of his own life.

The whole story was excellent. The main plot is Marcel trying to survive life as a bug and get to the royal jelly in time. That involved a super-fun cast of bug characters, including a flighty bee, a pessimistic beetle, and a very quirky inchworm – plus a bunch of bugs who want to stop or hinder Marcel for some reason or another. There was also a minor romance plot: Henriette's father wants Marcel to marry Henriette, but Marcel likes Julia who doesn't seem to like him. It was all brilliantly done, light-hearted, and interesting.

One of the problems I had with the book was that the bugs called Marcel "a marcel," like it was a species. That wouldn't have bugged (no pun intended) me so much if the narration hadn't started calling him "the marcel" on occasion, like it really was his species. I looked up "marcel" in the dictionary, and Miriam-Webster told me it was a female hairstyle characterized by a certain type of curl. It might mean something different in French, but every time I read that, it made me think of curly hair.

The whole book had the feel of a French classic, or a very old (yet still good) children's story. There were a few phrasings that were a little modern and seemed out of place, but for the most part, I could easily imagine it being written in 1911, when it's set.

I'm glad I gave *Strange Metamorphosis* a chance. It was light-hearted, yet there was plenty of danger. It was fun, but there were strong emotional and coming-of-age plots worked in. In general, a great pick-me-up read.

I received a free review copy of Strange Metamorphosis from the author. His generosity in no way influenced, or sought to influence, this review.

Brett says

I wouldn't usually read this type of book but the cover drew me in...and what a read, a hard book to put down....thank god had a sunny day to sit in the garden and read while the kids play, at time I had to read the pages twice as my children would ask what was so funny as laughed out loud at some of the quirky comments of the inchworm.

your endeared to all the main characters as it transforms you from now and whisks you away to a place never thought of in any book I have ever read "the insect world".

as an older 30 something year old "Marcel" the main character reminds me of decisions I had to make as a younger man, and my son will soon have to make for himself which is why I have had to order another copy for him because I will be reading this again and look forward to a holiday reading this by the pool.....

A great read very enjoyable

Jill Swanson-Diaz says

First off, I have to gush about how much I love this cover. It reminds me of my favorite children's author, Sharon Creech. The story, Strange Metamorphosis is reminiscent of her writing style as well. Needless to say I went into this tale with high hopes, and I was not disappointed. For the most part this is a strong coming of age novel. Our main character, Marcel, is transformed from boy to bug. He then embarks on a quirky journey in a parallel realm, in search of who he truly is. Along the way he meets friend and foe alike and gains a valuable new perspective on life. I truly enjoyed experiencing this story from the perspective of an insect. The author did a superb job on creating this world. I am not sure exactly what age range I would target this book for. It can definitely be read and enjoyed by a YA audience as well as adults, although at first glance it seems it might fit better into MG. Regardless, if you are looking for somewhat of a different read, I would recommend picking this up! Strange Metamorphosis is alive and fun, quite an exciting read.

Cheryl M-M says

To be able to see the world from the perspective of an insect isn't exactly as easy as it may look. Marcel finds that out the hard way.

You have the moral issue of the main character being a collector of bugs/specimens now having to rely on them to survive. The hunter becomes the hunted.

During that time he learns to assert himself and realises he has the strength to make his own decisions. The more he learns about life amongst the insects the more he can relate to their problems. He has to make life or death choices in a matter of seconds.

They do say that each person goes through life phases. Each phase represents a change in thinking and the way we reflect upon our actions and life. We often emerge from the change slightly wiser than before. In a sense those life cycles are comparable to that of an insect.

It is suitable for advanced readers, YA and older readers. It is well written with beautiful prose.

I would call it a philosophical fantasy adventure that combines the fun of shrinking with the wisdom of self-reflection and a boy who learns to make his own choices.

I received a free copy of this book for my review.

Anne says

Like a cross between Alice in Wonderland and James and the Giant Peach this novel is clearly for young people yet is enjoyable for children and adults alike. It starts like a historical novel and the fantasy element is quite sudden. It doesn't have the cleverness of Alice nor the pathos of James.

It is based clearly on Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis and at times tries too hard to be more than it is. Still if it inspires kids to read Kafka maybe it's a good read anyway.

Paul Monk says

I like to take this opportunity to give a BIG THANK YOU to those the reviewers that have taken the time to leave comments about Strange Metamorphosis. Some people have asked me why the book is set in the south of France.

Well, in fact it is set in a place where I used to live with my French wife. A great rambling house that had been left uninhabited since her grandmother died in the seventies. That said, once you get onto the part where Marcel begins his strange metamorphosis into a bug, you will find it have been set anywhere where the summers are hot and long and where you will easily find bugs galore like the ones in the book, Brim the inchworm, the rhino beetle, the cicada, great green grasshoppers and all sorts.

BTW, I have published a short story set around the story world of Strange Metamorphosis called Subterranean Peril. You can buy it on Amazon or you can download it for free right here on Goodreads. Just click on the book cover below :)

BP34 says

A YA fantasy adventure where a young boy, Marcel takes on the form of an insect and has to navigate the world as an insect. His life transforms into an epic adventure that is unlike any other. He learns so much about himself as he makes new friends and takes on new adventures. The descriptions in this book are nothing short of amazing. A great tale that will stir your imagination and make you jump with delight. A wonderful read with a strong plot and captivating characters. I received an advance copy and I voluntarily chose to review it.

Mike says

This was a very unusual book, mostly in a good way, though I will discuss some issues with it first that deprived it of a fourth star from me.

I'm no expert on the (often fairly artificial) marketing and demographic divisions of books, but I couldn't decide what age group it was targeting. The talking insects make it seem more of a children's story, the

theme of a boy becoming a man suggests YA, and the vocabulary (and the large number of character deaths) suggest an older readership again.

Let's talk some more about vocabulary. I generally don't recommend authors go for a "high" style or use uncommon vocabulary, for three main reasons. The first is that it can distance the reader from the characters if they talk in a very formal way. This book avoids that problem; the characters talk in various dialects, about which I'll say more in a moment, and only the narrative tries to be "high" and formal. However, it does have the other two problems.

The second problem is that most people don't have as big a vocabulary as they think they do, and when they try to write a "high" style they use words that aren't quite the right words for what they mean. I spotted a number of instances of this, and so will other readers, thanks to the fact that on a Kindle you can get a definition of the word very easily. Readers, especially young readers, will look up words they don't know, and they'll often find that they don't mean what the author is using them to mean. (I should note that since my review I've heard from the author that he has corrected these and other line-level issues of punctuation, etc.)

The third problem is that most people can't sustain a "high" style consistently, and will drop what I call "clanging colloquialisms" at intervals. This book has that problem too.

While I'm on language, there are a number of very tired cliches in the book as well, especially at moments when someone is giving life advice. This doesn't help to make the life advice sound profound. Rather the opposite.

The dialects serve to distinguish characters from each other, and each character does have a distinctive voice, which is a good thing, but there's not a lot of logic to the dialects, and one of them is broad Californian surfer/stoner, mixed in with (reasonably credible) attempts at British dialects.

There are other, mainly minor, editing issues as well. It's the usual stuff, commas and homonyms and apostrophes, and I won't bore you by detailing it. It's at a level most people would find tolerable if they noticed it at all, and easily fixed (which, as I say, it now has been).

So much for language, which is where most of the book's problems lie. Now, characters. The characters, as I mentioned, have distinct voices, not only because they speak different dialects from each other but because they have different personalities which show through clearly. This isn't easy to do, and congratulations to the author for achieving it. As I also mentioned, there's a bit of a Game of Thrones situation with the characters: you shouldn't get too attached, especially to minor characters encountered in passing, because the body count is brutal.

As far as plot is concerned, this is a straightforward tale of a boy going out and having the adventure that helps him transition into being a man. The physical metamorphosis that accompanies his maturation is a sustained metaphor for his inner transformation. While somewhat obvious and rather literalistic, I think it works. There's certainly always something happening, always fit opposition for the hero and his companions, always danger, and a clear goal with a number of sub-goals and a deadline. It's not groundbreaking, of course; it's been done thousands of times, but I think it's well done here.

Finally, the setting. The turn-of-last-century French setting was believable. The insect part showed that the author knows a lot about insects, how their bodies work and their place in the ecology of a field. If you accept the central conceit of "boy is shrunk, talks to insects, gradually transforms into an insect" (and isn't accepting such things for the duration of a story what speculative fiction is about?), it's a convincing setting, and reminds me a little of *Watership Down* in a way.

I certainly enjoyed it, even though there were elements of the style that I didn't love.

I received a free copy of the book via the Kindle Book Review site, in exchange for an honest review.

Pat Eroh says

Interesting story, excellently told. I could not figure out how this would end but I was pleasantly surprised!
