

WILLIAM AND THE WITCH'S RIDDLE: 4 REVIEWS

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WILLIAM AND THE WITCH'S RIDDLE

Author: Shutta Crum

Illustrator: Lee Wildish

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There is more to the tale of "Sleeping Beauty" than has been told through the centuries. William's mother, Lirian, has been mysteriously gone for months. His father, Heldor, went for supplies days ago but did not return to their mountain home, leaving him alone with his little brother, Pinch. When Morga, the wicked, 13th witch of the familiar story, announces his father's death and makes demands and threats, William is faced with a terrifying dilemma. In order to keep Pinch safe and find their mother, he must accomplish three tasks that Morga sets forth in a convoluted riddle, with the goal of getting a missing item that will give her ultimate power. But he is brave and determined, and he finds help along the way in the form of a guardian appointed by Morga's 12 good sisters, a surprisingly astute mule, and Tuli, a size-shifting creature with a pet miniature dragon named Squarmy. William and readers both learn that Lirian is really Princess Bree, who married Heldor to live a simple life in hiding from Morga. William is a prince whose heroism will restore the right order of things. The characters are fully developed and are completely believable within the rules set by the genre. There is humor, heart-stopping action, magic of many sorts, and tender emotions of sacrifice, love, and loss. Crum draws readers into this evidently white fairy-tale world with detailed, descriptive language and inventive syntax. An exciting, neatly crafted adventure. (Fantasy. 8-12)

Booklist Review: July 7, 2016 by Stacey Comfort

WILLIAM AND THE WITCH'S RIDDLE

Crum, Shutta (Author) , Wildish, Lee (Illustrator)

Sep 2016. 288 p. Knopf, hardcover, \$16.99. (9781101932698).

Knopf, library edition, \$19.99. (9781101932704).

Knopf, e-book, \$16.99. (9781101932711).

William and his little brother, Pinch, are abandoned in the cold winter when their father leaves to search for their missing mother. Left alone, they run into trouble when La Grande Morga, the witch of the faery folk, comes to tell the boys of their father's untimely death. Their father, she says, also made her a

promise, and she insists that William keep it. When Morga threatens Pinch's life in exchange for the favor she feels she is owed, William knows he must find three magical items to please the witch, and help her locate an heirloom prize for her daughter, all while fending off the cold weather and dangers of his mountain home. Veteran author Crum is in fine form here, giving an adventure story that has just enough magic and scares to excite middle-grade readers. Morga is the quintessential wicked witch, and her story is woven into William's, making this novel twisty and original. A fast-paced story excellent for adventure lovers.

BCCB Review: July 2017 by [April Spisak](#)

Crum, Shutta William and the Witch's Riddle; illus. by Lee Wildish. Knopf, 2016 [288p]

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Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

Right away, this book shows its fairy-tale colors with a "once upon a time" and a reference to a pricked finger. This spinoff of "Sleeping Beauty" doesn't start with the princess, however, but instead her son William, who is in a bind—he's trying to protect his little brother, Pinch, but both of his parents are missing and now there's a dangerous woman, Morga, who informs him he must solve riddles and return a lost spindle to her or she'll take Pinch. William's thrown into an adventure that is sometimes exciting but mostly terrifying, though he manages to gain powerful allies along the way. The happy ending is probable from the start, but there are some genuine perils as William dangerously angers Morga. Since the princess is already sleeping before the book starts, it's understandable that she can't be the star here, but it is a shame that once again she's relegated to dozing until some male, in this case her older son, saves her. This is a minor quibble, however, and the book as a whole feels rich and timeless. William's allies are nicely varied, and they encourage and guide rather than outright assist, allowing him room to grow in both confidence and ability. Older fans of fairy tales will likely appreciate this deeper look at a classic favorite. Final illustrations not seen. Copyright © 2016 The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

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". . . The characters' engaging, well-developed personalities easily pull readers into William's world. . . .
VERDICT This "Sleeping Beauty" retelling is a good addition for most middle grade collections.-Kira
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