



Juvenile fantasy novel combats new pandemic

12-year-old gains special power in 'The Antidote'

Seattle author and doctor Susan McCormick steps away from her “Fog Ladies” cozy murder mystery series with her latest release, “The Antidote.” Although McCormick wrote this work of juvenile fantasy fiction prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the book is a timely entry into the market because it deals with the threat of an impending pandemic — and one boy’s efforts to stop that from happening.

This week’s book

‘The Antidote’ by Susan McCormick
 Wild Rose Press — 300 pages — \$16.99
 paperback; \$4.99 e-book

Alex Revelstoke is a 12-year-old loner. With two doctors as parents, he’s a brainy kid, often left to his own devices. Alex peruses the *New England Journal of Medicine* for entertainment. Consequently, he knows a lot more than any of his middle school classmates, and probably most of his teachers, about a variety of medical conditions.

But in the school lunchroom one day, when a classmate chokes on a hot dog, Alex’s reactions go way beyond textbook learning. He has an unnerving vision of seeing the kid turn translucent — the boy’s skin melts away so that Alex can clearly see the blockage in his throat. The vision is fleeting but it gives Alex the information he needs to jump into action and apply the Heimlich maneuver.

Over the next couple of weeks, this unnerving phenomenon happens repeatedly: if someone nearby experiences physical distress, Alex can see into the sufferer’s body to identify the malady.

This turns out to be an hereditary trait.

Many of Alex’s paternal ancestors had the same gift, to varying degrees: the psychic ability to see through a body to pinpoint diseases and injuries.

Alex’s parents had not mentioned this to him. They hoped that he would not be one of the Revelstoke’s to be endowed with the gift because it is accompanied by an onerous burden. Throughout time, those with the gift have become powerful healers but they also have found themselves pitted in battle against an ancient evil: ILL, the creator of all diseases.

Now that Alex’s powers are revealing themselves, ILL will be on the hunt for him, hoping to take the Revelstoke line down once and for all so he can dominate the world with a hideous new pandemic he created.

McCormick alternates the story between ILL’s diabolical plotting and Alex’s growing recognition of his own gift.

Along the way, Alex is assisted by the counsel of his ailing Revelstoke grandfather. He also acquires the company of a huge mutt and a blue-haired girl.

McCormick creates interesting characters and tells this story in intense, cinematic detail. As the site of a final confrontation, Mount Rainier assumes an iconic role reminiscent of the one Mount Rushmore played in the Hitchcock film, “North by Northwest.”

But the story does run rough in some places. It could have used more editorial guidance in tightening up the pacing, and in providing ILL’s backstory and manifestations. What is most concerning, is for all of the truly fascinating medical details “The Antidote” provides, it repeatedly suggests that its 12-year-old hero needs to kill ILL.

This book is recommended but with those reservations — you know your middle schooler best.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbarmcm@gmail.com.

From protecting your car and home to preparing for your future, let’s discuss options to meet your needs.



Sheryl Teuscher, LACP, LUTCF, CPIW
 Representative
 112 West B Street
 Rainier, OR 97048-0310
countryfinancial.com/sheryl.teuscher
sheryl.teuscher@countryfinancial.com
 503-556-0186

Auto and Home policies issued by COUNTRY Mutual Insurance Company®, COUNTRY Casualty Insurance Company®, or COUNTRY Preferred Insurance Company®, Bloomington, IL. 0520-507HC

