



Black Magic

Russell James

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In this magic shop the magic is real. And the trick is on you.

Citrus Glade is a dying town that needs new businesses, but the one that just opened is doing much more harm than good. Stranger Lyle Miller's magic shop seems to only stock what its select customers desire. When four outcast boys buy common party tricks, only Lyle knows what those tricks can really do. As subtle changes occur around town, a few residents realize that something is amiss...and getting worse. But it may already be too late. Lyle's black magic has empowered more townspeople to help him execute his Grand Adventure, a plan that will reduce the town, and half the state, to rubble.

Black Magic Details

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Author : Russell James

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From Reader Review Black Magic for online ebook

Matt Garcia says

Enjoyable horror romp complete with an evil sorcerer, black magic, killer animals, and a good amount of gore. Black Magic felt a bit like a combination between needful things by Stephen King and a goosebumps book written for adults. If that sounds wacky, it's because it is! Decent characters who all fit into their specific roles (hero, bad guy, etc) The writing is simple and clean and the book moves along at a blistering pace with very short chapters. Overall, a highly entertaining horror novel that will please fans of B movies and popcorn flicks. Lots of fun.

Bandit says

Russell James' debut Dark Inspiration was somewhat less than inspiring. It was entertaining enough to not turn the reader off the author, but not much more than that. Plus I couldn't resist a book that had to do with magic. With this book, his third, James definitely shows improvement. While the titles remain inexplicably bland and generic and the cover art matches the story in the vaguest of way with the details way off, the contents are very solid. This book features a more original, although seriously underdeveloped idea,(ideally, the magician character would have had much more of a backstory), better realized stronger characters, tons of action, plenty of horror and a very nice ending. The pacing is so quick, the chapters are short, makes this a very easy and quick read. The setting was very well done, south Florida at its muggiest swapiest best. Looks like James has found his niche on the market churning out solid literary equivalents of B horror movies. Quick fun and entertaining way to spend a few hours. Recommended.

Darlene Cruz says

I found myself literally biting my nails turning page after page of anticipation. Scared me? First let me tell you I was drawn to the book by what I saw on the cover and in big letters, "Black Magic." Not to mention lightning bolts streaking below the title. Evil magic ran rampant by a 2000 year old sorcerer in a town called Citrus Glade. This sorcerer selects four boys to do his evil throughout the town along with other unsavory characters. This type of stories there is a heroine or heroines to balance the destruction. Andy and his mother Dolly along with Autumn and Walking Bear became the good guys. This story engrossed your mind always wandering what is going to happen next. Magic and horror and gruesome scenarios throw in carnivorous animals with a supernatural overtone. You will read this book in no time, why? Your eyes will be glued to the book that's why! Prey on the gullible and weak, Lyle did to further his Grand Adventure. The town was reeling the lost of a company that was sustaining their economy, now Lyle open shop in Citrus Glades, now the fun begins. Imaginative of pure evil that didn't quite shock me but made me think how in the world the author's mind came to such a conclusion, "BRAVO." What an adventure of manipulation, gullibility, terror like I mentioned before. One part of the book I kind of laughed at for reasons it reminded me of a horror movie, "hockey mask?" Unholy magic shop? Stupor of the living dead? "Couldn't handle the power of the top hat." Who is the armadillo visitor? Infested the creatures of the forest, why? Plain and simple, to cause destruction. Supernatural induced trip through a small town that will leave your tongue wagging and stomach clenched yet your mind on an unstable axis waiting, just waiting for the evil to either humorously excite or evoke the unimaginable black magic or both like in this story. Well done and I applaud you! Won this book

part of the Dark Scream Tour, Thank you, soooo good!!!!

Anthony Hains says

A one thousand-year old sorcerer who goes by the name of Lyle, of all things, settles in Citrus Glade, Florida in order to initiate a great adventure – a series of supernaturally induced events to unleash carnage and destruction. All just for the fun of it. So he concocts a massive hurricane over southern Florida – with Citrus Glade as the focal point. He casts evils spells on many of the tropical wild-life (the town sits on the edge of the Everglades), and the creatures turn into freakish packs of killing machines, destroying anyone they can get their teeth on. Lyle recruits four middle school boys with promises of teaching them awesome magic tricks – in return the boys unwittingly serve as conduits for the rising local apocalypse. In addition, Lyle gathers two of the town's low-life individuals – and elderly/disabled man who used to be a ruthless anti-union floor manager at the now defunct sugar plant and the local drug dealer – in order to use their dastardly personalities to further facilitate the evil sorcery being concocted by Lyle.

The town is populated by some definite hero types: Andy the young veteran just returned from Afghanistan and haunted by PTSD who now is the sole department of public works employee; Autumn, the young PhD in biology who is investigating/researching the animal and reptile behavior in the Everglades (and obvious romantic interest for Andy); Andy's mom Dolly who is struggling with dementia and living in an assisted living facility; and Walter Connell (his Indian name is Walking Bear) - another resident of the assisted living facility who has made spiritual connections with certain animals who indicate that something is terribly wrong...

Black Magic by Russell James is a lot of fun, and the story moves quickly. The hurricane description and passages are deftly written. Alligator and python attacks (especially the latter) are pretty creative. At times, however, the special effects fall apart. There is an attack by mosquitoes when our heroes enter Lyle's Magic Shop which is pretty lame – and for some reason one of the characters drops his gun while in the shop and will not go back to retrieve it even though it is just a few yards away. Then there is an attack by a group of carnivorous bunny rabbits which, well, left me shaking my head.

Overall, the book was enjoyable. However, there were periodic lapses of internal consistency – the latter of which is needed for the suspension of disbelief in horror. For instance, Lyle (and why name him "Lyle") is not convincing as an evil sorcerer. At times he comes across like a cartoon character. And, why does Lyle, who can create hurricanes and turn all of the beasts of the Everglades into organized packs of ravenous monsters, need a group of 13 year-olds to facilitate his evil deeds? The same question holds for the mean old guy and the drug dealer – and these two are practically worthless when it comes down to the nitty-gritty. Then there are the two residents of the assisted living facility whose dementia comes and goes for the convenience of the plot.

Nonetheless, this is a decent 3-star work. Mr. James' dialogue and pacing are fine, and the read is as breezy as a day on a Florida beach.

Tammy says

In a word: delightfully gruesome, with lots of small-town quirkiness, an evil magician you will hate, and heroic everyday characters you will love.

I was initially drawn to *Black Magic* by its cover, which I think is so well done, especially for a small publisher. The eerie glimpse into the magic store's windows and the brewing storm overhead promise lots of

horrific entertainment. And I'm happy to say the cover perfectly captures the mood of this story. *Black Magic* was a well-written and perfectly paced book that will appeal to fans of Stephen King. Russell James does not shy away from gory scenes, so if you have a weak stomach, this might not be the book for you. But like King, he makes his story just as much about the characters as the horror, and he throws in some humor to lighten the mood.

The story takes place in the small Florida town of Citrus Glade, a dying community on the edge of the Everglades whose Apex Sugar Mill shut its doors years ago. A newcomer named Lyle Miller has just decided to set up shop, and some of the residents of Citrus Glade think this might be just what the town needs to boost its economy. But Lyle is not who he seems. In fact, he is a 2000-year-old sorcerer who has chosen the town as the site of his next "Grand Adventure," and because he is an evil sorcerer, that adventure involves destroying the town of Citrus Glade and everyone in it.

But in order to fuel his magic, Lyle needs the help of the residents of Citrus Glade to add juice to his powers. He selects those whose "whapna," or essence, leans towards the dark side, including four boys who call themselves "The Outsiders," a nasty old man named Shane who terrorizes the local retirement home, and a loser named Vicente whose used car business is a front for a drug smuggling operation. With a few dazzling tricks to entice the boys and a bit of black magic to rope in Vicente and Shane, Lyle is set to topple what remains of this pitiful town.

But a handful of heroes catch on to Lyle's tricks and they will do anything to stop him. Andy Patterson, who is the last employee of the Department of Public Works, his mother Dolly who is slowly losing her battle with Alzheimer's, and a young biologist named Autumn who has come to Citrus Glade to study the Everglades are a few of the characters who are ready to rid the town of Lyle and his black magic for good.

James' real talent is getting to the heart of small town life: its disappointments, economic failings and the despair that comes with families on the brink of collapse due to climate change and other factors. The Arroyo family owns and works an orange grove, but Felix Arroyo's orange trees haven't been doing very well. Until Lyle comes to town, though. His powers infuse Felix's orange trees with enough magic to produce beautiful fruit overnight, giving the family a bit of hope, at least until things start going horribly wrong.

The author does a great job of portraying small town characters, and two of my favorites were Andy and his elderly mother Dolly. Andy is the good son who loves his mother and weathers her many memory lapses, as painful as they are. And James has given Andy an intriguing back-story: he's an Army vet who had a life-changing experience in Afghanistan, an experience that colors his daily life in Citrus Grove. Dolly's character takes a wonderful turn when the side effects of Lyle's magic start to not only improve her memory, but her mobility as well. Before long, Dolly's mind is as sharp as a tack, and along with her friend Walking Bear, a wonderful character who fancies himself a Native American and has an armadillo as a spirit guide, she sets out to stop Lyle's magic before it can destroy the town.

Even the peripheral characters are well drawn, like Juliana, Vicente's drug addicted girlfriend who can't seem to tear herself away from the abusive Vicente, or his piles of cocaine, for that matter. A couple of characters border on the cliché, like the Reverend Rusty Wright who immediately knows that Lyle is "the work of Satan" and sets out to find proof of his evil deeds. But for the most part I enjoyed all of James' portrayals of ordinary folk who are just trying to survive in a dying town.

The author uses the magician's bag of tricks to his advantage, taking ordinary props like the magician's hat and wand and imbuing them with wicked and evil magic. He also infuses wry humor into the story with his tricks. Paco (one of the Outsiders) is given a wand that makes things disappear, and the first thing he wants

to get rid of is his Ritalin (he has ADHD)! And Barry, another of the four boys, gets a special top hat from Lyle, a hat that can call forth any small animal. It's a dream come true for a boy whose parents don't allow pets in the house, until the magic turns nasty and something monstrous emerges. But watch out: a couple of standard magician's tricks are given a diabolical treatment, and one of the most creatively horrific scenes I've ever read involves poor Reverend Rusty when he tries to break into the Magic Shop.

Aside from a couple of awkward sentences that could have used a bit more editing, the writing is polished and the pace will keep you turning pages. James wraps things up with a bang but includes some poignant moments that give this story emotional depth. For horror aficionados, *Black Magic* is a treat, not a trick, and is highly recommended.

Many thanks to the author for supplying a review copy.

This review originally appeared on Books, Bones & Buffy.

Laurie says

From beginning to end, this twisted and creepy story kept me wondering how the Grand Adventure would shake out. I was frustrated not to have been given much backstory about Lyle. I would have liked to have gleaned some sort of understanding of why he felt it so necessary to corrupt specific children and some other marginalized people. Lyle has been around a long time – what motivates him? Has he always been rotten? Is he simply an agent of chaos or something more sinister?

The imaginative, crass evil that Lyle systematically unleashes in the sleepy, unsuspecting town of Citrus Glade is absolutely staggering. I actually woke up from dreaming about a particularly gruesome scene in the middle of the night, picked up the book and continued reading because my mind could not let go.

This book delivers a shocking story of an evil puppeteer deliberately plucking out and manipulating weak, disenfranchised souls for no other reason than to reign devastation upon an entire community of folks already beaten down and near economic ruin. When a few people finally figure out the town is in deep trouble, their plan to thwart Lyle's scheme is rushed into action. I was captivated!

This book was given to me in exchange for my honest review.

Reviewed by Laurie-J

Joshua Hair says

While I did not enjoy this book to the extent that I did Mr. James's short fiction, I still found it an entertaining if somewhat slightly ill-paced read. What I mean to say is that for the majority of the book events escalate rather slowly. In fact, other than the opening scene, there is not a single death until the last quarter of the book. With a villain as sinister as Lyle, I had expected a great deal more damage to be done.

That said, I liked the story overall. The characters were engaging, the kids naive enough to be realistic, and

the danger toward the end ramped things up rather quickly. Good job, Mr. James, and here's hoping I'll enjoy the next one just as well.

Deedra says

Audible:I loved this book!It was very like a bunch of other books I loved.A store comes to town and kids start to do magic tricks,then it's not just tricks.There is an ancient evil beneath the town and a few are chosen to fight it.David Stifel was a very good narrator.A great read!"I was voluntarily provided this free review copy audiobook by the author, narrator, or publisher.

Elena Alvarez Dosil says

Review originally published at: <http://www.lomeraniel.com/audiobookre...>

Citrus Glade is a little small town with a great past but a bleak present and future. Lyle Miller arrives in town and opens a mysterious magic shop, which appears to be almost empty, but just has the necessary item on display when the right visitor arrives. Four boys purchase there different items, without knowing that they are getting much more than what they think, since they will be part of an evil plan crafted by Lyle.

I have to say that I expected more from this book. The premises were interesting enough but the lack of character development and background stories made me lose interest. It is clear that Lyle is a very old evil being, since we get a couple of glimpses about his past here and there, but not really enough to make him a solid character. The most developed characters were the four boys, victims of Lyle, but even like that they were two dimensional. The rest of characters were likable but mere drafts. Their actions were expected.

All in all, despite these minor issues, it was an enjoyable story, a bit long winded for my liking, but an easy and entertaining listen. David Stifel, its narrator was the best part of this audiobook. More than just reading, he is a great story teller, creating a special atmosphere and unique character interpretations. Just only because of the narration, this audiobook is worth the listen.

I received a copy of this book in audio format from the narrator in exchange for an honest review.

Garryvivianne says

Good characters in this book. A new store opens up in a very small town & things start happening. Very weird things!

Erin Al-Mehairi says

This was an awesome, well-written book!! Small town magic gone awry after being formed by a sinister plan. The ending was cool and I can't wait for a sequel. More review to come! Super cool read!

Hunter Shea says

Brilliantly original, chilling and fun as hell. Russell James taps into his own inner magic with this one! A must read.

Michael Hicks says

My original BLACK MAGIC audiobook review and many others can be found at Audiobook Reviewer.

Black magic is the name of the game in this entertaining horror story from Russell James. Dark magician Lyle Miller has set up shop in the downtown portion of the dying Citrus Glade, Florida, where his magic shop draws the attention of four teenage misfits and a priest who suspects devilry is afoot. Such is the opening of Lyle's Grand Adventure, which promises to deliver plenty of bloody murder alongside an apocalyptic storm that will wipe Citrus Glade and all its inhabitants clean off the map.

Black Magic was a nice surprise to discover. At first, I had thought the story lacked focus as much of the first hour of this 8 1/2 hour listen is devoted to introducing the book's major players, of which there are many. James assembles a large cast to wreak plenty of havoc upon, ranging from the mayor of Citrus Glade to the town's sole DPW worker, a citrus farming family, a drug mule, a handful of retirees living in an old folks home, and more. Thankfully, *Black Magic* rewards the patient listener and James draws his diverse cast together in a few surprising ways, drawing them all into various energetic and action-packed set pieces. This book also served as my introduction to Russell James, and I was pleasantly surprised at his ruthlessness as he dispatched characters in some rather unsettling, and magically showy, ways (it's only after having listened to *Black Magic* that I now realize I have several other titles from this author on my Kindle, which I'm now forced to move up the reading queue a bit!). The classic trick of sawing somebody in half gets a gory, gut-twisting workout in a scene I won't soon forget, and James riffs on several other well-known magic tricks along the way in wonderfully gruesome scenarios. James doesn't pull any punches and, frankly, I wouldn't have it any other way.

On narrating duties is David Stifel, whose baritone voice gives this book's various horrors rich gravitas and plenty of weight. Having listened to a few of Stifel's other readings, I knew what to expect from this reliable narrator and wasn't disappointed. *Black Magic* is a fun work in its own right, but Stifel makes it an easy listen to sink into. He's a pro, delivering a well-finished audiobook with no noticeable flaws in the production.

Russel James delivers a highly enjoyable and engaging magic-based horror thriller. *Black Magic* is more Wes Craven than *Charmed*, so if you're looking for a fun, pulpy romp with plenty of darkness and savagery, this should fit the bill rather well. And if that doesn't sell you, there's some mean alligator action as a nice bonus!

[Audiobook provided for review by the audiobookreviewer.com]

Debbie Smith says

An entertaining magic based horror where a malevolent 1000 y/o sorcerer sets up shop with the intention to destroy the occupants of the local community. The novel is reminiscent of Stephen King's "Needful Things" albeit not in the same league. Still worth a read and I give it 4 stars for entertainment value.

Micky Parise says

First time reading Russell James. Enjoyed this book, characters were good, story line flowed and the plot was pretty good. Recommend.
