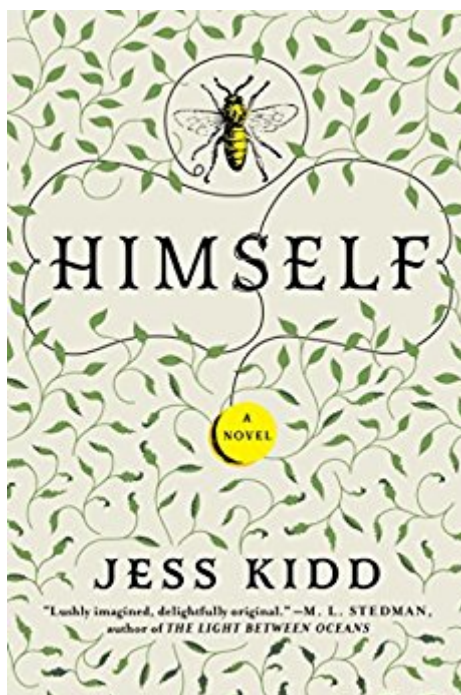


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Himself: A Novel



Synopsis

"[A] fast-paced yarn that nimbly soars above the Irish crime fiction genre Kidd clearly knows very well." • "New York Times Book Review" • "[A] supernaturally skillful debut." • "Vanity Fair" • "A delicious, gratifying and ageless story." • "New York Journal of Books" Abandoned on the steps of an orphanage as an infant, Dublin charmer Mahony assumed all his life that his mother had simply given him up. But when he receives a tip one night at the bar suggesting that foul play may have led to the disappearance of his mother, he decides to return to the rural Irish village where he was born to learn what really happened twenty-six years earlier. From the moment he sets foot in Mulderrig, Mahony's presence turns the village upside down. His uncannily familiar face and outsider's ways cause a stir among the locals, who receive him with a mixture of curiosity (the men), excitement (the women), and suspicion (the pious). It seems that his mother, Orla Sweeney, had left quite an impression on this little town "dearly beloved to some, a scourge and a menace to others. But who would have had reason to get rid of her for good? Determined to find answers, Mahony solicits the help of brash pot-stirrer and retired actress Mrs. Cauley, and the two concoct an ingenious plan to get the town talking, aided and abetted by a cast of eccentric characters, some from beyond the grave. What begins as a personal mission gradually becomes a quiet revolution: a young man and his town uniting against corruption of power, against those who seek to freeze their small worlds in time, to quash the sinister tides of progress and modernity come hell or high water. But what those people seem to forget is that Mahony has the dead on his side.... Centering on a small town rife with secrets and propelled by a twisting-and-turning plot, Himself is a gem of a book, a darkly comic mystery, and a beautiful tribute to the magic of language, legacy, and storytelling.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Mulderigg is a place like no other. Here the colors are a little bit brighter and the sky is a little bit wider. Here the trees are as old as the mountains and a clear river runs into the sea. People are born to live and stay and die here. They don’t want to go. Why would they when all the roads that lead to Mulderigg are downhill so that leaving is uphill all the way?” Mahoney returns to Mulderigg, although he has no memory of being there, it was in Mulderigg he was born. Raised in a Dublin orphanage, he never knew his mother, has no memory of her or of family, or even of this place. “She couldn’t have known it but it was then that her baby stopped crying. The void her son had fallen into without the cradle of her gaze was immeasurable. He lay as mute as a little mushroom.” He’s an adult now, old enough to search for her, for the reasons why she abandoned him. Who, and where he comes from. At first Mahoney’s presence goes mostly unnoticed by the mortal members of town, but Mahoney is aware of those beyond the realm who hover around him, teasing him with their presence. Their eyes tell so much, and nothing at all at the same time. “For the dead are drawn to those with shattered souls.” He is aware of the others, can see them, but he can’t see her. His mother. Orla Sweeney. He has a photograph of her, where she’s holding him as an infant, given to him as he was leaving the Orphanage. Sister Veronica had left him an envelope, his real name, and the town of his birth: Mulderigg. He knows from the note that he was taken from his mother, by unknown townspeople, because his mother was “the curse of the town.” “His dark eyes are her eyes, the shape of his face, hers. The way he stands with his weight shifted back on his heels and his nose in the air, hers.” And so, Mahoney arrives in Mulderigg in search of himself. Jess Kidd shares her story in writing that is lovely, inspired, ingenious, and quintessentially Irish in the colloquial expressions. The mysterious mystical setting revealed with enough cleverness and wit to keep the heebie-jeebies at bay. Her characters are complex, including the intimidating local priest to Mrs. Cauley, a rather unconventional, wealthy, former theatre actress who is not afraid of much, and

who takes Mahoney a bit under her wing. The hairs at the back of my neck stood up often, but perhaps most often at the splendor of her prose. Still there is an element that many would consider supernatural. Creepy, even. It is a truth universally acknowledged that when the dead are trying to remember something, the living are trying harder to forget it. Magical, moving, magnificent debut novel from Jess Kidd. I loved *Himself*, a uniquely beautiful blend of genres, a tale of love and loss, grief, and of secrets kept too long. Secrets that might rise from the grave under the right conditions and circumstances. With a little help.

While it took me a few chapters to get into the story, this book was excellent. Part murder mystery, part ghost story and a cast of unforgettable characters. I loved it.

Very imaginative and chock-full of interesting characters , both living and dead.

Wonderful read. Beautiful descriptions and characters. Unique, funny, well written. I recommend this book to anyone who loves reading and stories. I choose this rating because this is a great story.

I really enjoyed this book - the author has a wonderful way of telling the story, using wonderful descriptions and characters.

Very different, a good read.

Murder mystery meets science fiction.

Loved it

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