

THE COURIER

Weekend Matters

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Entertainment 21

Scottish book of the week

LEO AND THE LIGHTNING DRAGONS

Written by Gill White, illustrated by Gill B. Fiedlding

Press, £8.99

Leo and the Lightning Dragons is a beautifully written and designed children's story, that works on many different levels. It is an engaging children's adventure, an accessible story for young people with complex needs and a tale with a message of inclusivity for older children.

This is St Andrews-based author Gill White's first book and she was inspired to write it as a tribute to her own little Leo, who was diagnosed with a rare form of epilepsy called Ohtahara Syndrome shortly after he was born. Leo, who is now three years old, can experience up to 170 seizures in one day. When the family were going through an especially tough time just before Leo's first birthday, Gill wanted to pay tribute to her son's strength and fighting spirit and give Leo a story with a happy ending.

Brave knight Leo has legions of supporters who help him to battle fearsome dragons - they try everything from telling the dragons to go away to creating potions and even hiding from them, but nothing seems to work. Eventually Leo realises that the most important thing he can do is to believe in himself. The book has been beautifully illustrated by Gill B, who has taken Gill's words and brought them to life with bright, quirky images that will appeal to all ages.

Gill is a natural storyteller and her book has the easy, rhythmic flow of a classic children's tale, designed to appeal to all young readers, but especially to children with additional needs. At the back of the book, she has included a guide with ideas for transforming Leo and the Lightning Dragons into a multi-sensory story. Every child will enjoy the chance to blow bubbles to mimic a frothing cauldron or even using a plasma ball to show how the lightning dragons attack the brave knight Leo, but these techniques are especially helpful for little ones with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Turning a simple story into an experience that they can see, hear and feel.

While the analogy of lightning dragons representing epilepsy may be lost on younger readers, they will gain a message of perseverance from Leo's story. All royalties from the sale of Leo and the Lightning Dragons will go to CHAS (Children's Hospices across Scotland) who have been a huge source of support for Gill and her family. Review by Nora McEhnone

ordinary man with an ordinary life" was written in Edinburgh and Glasgow - a move that's not on the right side of the law, but that makes you a bad person and doesn't mean to say you're back from that and make things right again. The message goes out to any young kids growing up, I hope they realise the glamorous lifestyle is not all it's cracked up to be and there are serious consequences to it.

Leo's life was "hard" growing up in Whitfield. Mike says he was an "amazing" parents and a close-knit family around him, however, describing himself as a "nice guy" who hated his allies, it was an environment where he had to stick up for himself or "risk getting pushed around". He learned how to "handle" himself - and it was those early lessons that led him to believe he could survive the challenge of the criminal underworld.

Working on the fringes of a high stakes deal that was about to collapse, the pivotal moment came in Mayfair, London, when he "stepped in" offering to transfer illegal bearer bonds worth millions of pounds. It was made clear to him that if the deal failed he would be held responsible. Mike, who has ambitions for the book to be made into a film, says he has changed the names and locations of those involved to protect everyone he experienced. "If the story is a true depiction of events he narrow now," he said. "I was speaking to my younger self I definitely wouldn't do it again. Those times of looking over your shoulder were definitely not worth any kind of money."

• What Does Not Kill You by Mike Carr is out now, available at www.whatdoesntkillyou.org or online from Waterstones, priced £9.99.

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It's slow to build as the turning point of the book - the disappearance of Poppy - doesn't occur until a quarter of the way through. Up until this point, the story focuses on the characters, all of whom prove to be very unlikeable. While the reader becomes aware there are secrets characters are holding from each other, it is all tainted by a lot of unwarranted melodrama.

This proves quite distracting as this melodrama is embodied in the characters' reactions, or rather overreactions, to the certain situations. Subsequently, before the schoolgirl disappears, there is not much that helps to build a menacing atmosphere, which would perhaps elevate the suspense of the novel.

As the novel progresses it does become more gripping, lending itself to some twists and turns as the backstories to the characters are brought to light, but the final twist is not one that will necessarily bowl you over. Fortin's strength as an author lies in the ease of her writing, she it wasn't necessarily the most captivating thriller, it was a readable and involving, and it differs in some relevant themes and issues within the same category. It's a memorable thriller but



theSport
Farming matters
the menu
weekend
An unbeatable Saturday package of supplements

ment heart

boost

proximity to the Forth Bridges, and major transport links, for change though heritage and this funding can enable

