



I'm Not Scared

Niccolò Ammaniti , Jonathan Hunt (Translator)

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In this immensely powerful, lyrical and skillfully narrated novel, set in southern Italy, nine year-old Michele discovers a secret so momentous, so terrible, that he daren't tell anyone about it. Read an exclusive excerpt at BookBrowse today.

The hottest summer of the twentieth century. A tiny community of five houses in the middle of wheat fields. While the adults shelter indoors, six children venture out on their bikes across the scorched, deserted countryside.

In the midst of that sea of golden wheat, nine year-old Michele Amitrano discovers a secret so momentous, so terrible, that he daren't tell anyone about it. To come to terms with it he will have to draw strength from his own imagination and sense of humanity. The reader witnesses a dual story: the one that is seen through Michele's eyes, and the tragedy involving the adults of this isolated hamlet. The result is an immensely powerful, lyrical and skillfully narrated novel, its atmosphere reminiscent of Tom Sawyer, Stephen King's Stand By Me and Italo Calvino's Italian Fairy Tales.

This is Ammaniti's third book, but his first to be published in the USA.

I'm Not Scared Details

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Sarah saied says

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Beatrice says

I read this book for my Italian class. Reading in another language, especially it being my first time reading a full-length novel in Italian in this case, was a really rewarding experience and it allowed me to experience one of my favorite activities in a completely different way. I read this with a pencil in hand and circled all of the words I didn't understand (there were quite a few). I hope to do this again in the near future, with Italian and other languages, because I really enjoyed the challenge. The book itself was quite wonderful, riddled with aspects of magical realism, though quite a few questions, it seemed to me, were left unanswered. By the end I was both shocked and confused, leaving me with mixed feelings that I hope to clear up by watching the movie adaptation.

Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says

A real horror. Evil is committed in pursuit of the "good", the victims are innocent and young, their innocence lost in the most painful way possible, and the story ends without any expectation of redemption or happiness for anyone.

And what a unique and brilliant narration! The author inhabits the mind of a nine-year-old boy and tells the story like a real nine-year-old. Reminded me of Esther Freud's "Hideous Kinky" but with really something extraordinary: it doesn't take Niccolo Ammaniti whole paragraphs to jolt his readers. He does it with just one or two short sentences, often when his fictive boy narrator makes a wrong perception of something (which at first seemed real). Then all that the boy has heard, felt and seen he ties them up in the end, like a bundle of hard wires, then hits you with it in the head leaving you dazed.

Now thank me for not giving away the plot which, by itself, had it even been badly presented, would have netted five stars from me.

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Gabyal says

notgettingenough says

I must confess that I've done no more than flick through the book and check the odd scene here and there. Sorry, book, but the visual spectacle of the film simply outdoes in spades anything you can do in words.

The first thing I wanted to do when I saw this film was give it to my father. It was a story of what his life would have been like if my grandfather hadn't made the decision to leave Calabria for something better - Australia, as it happened. Since my father bitterly resents his childhood, I thought it might do him good to see how bad it might have been.

But I couldn't make myself do this. I was plain scared of how terrified he would be. I was scared of the demons it would awaken inside him.

See the movie if you can, it's brilliant. And don't be put off by my terror. It is also sweet and gentle, and a lovely reflection on childhood.

Snow says

Sizzling story of a childhood and the horrid events that changed the aspects of the growing up process in one boy's eyes!

Great story telling...

SMLauri says

No leí ni la sinopsis de este libro y es lo mejor que pude hacer. Me ha sorprendido bastante. No me esperaba para nada todo lo que ha pasado.

Se lee muy rápido, sobre todo a partir del primer tercio, porque quieres seguir leyendo para saber qué narices está pasando.

Y el final me ha tenido con el corazón en un puño. No me gustan los finales abiertos, pero este me ha emocionado.

Raya ???? says

"?????? ?? ??????. ??????? ??????? ????? ??????? ??????? ??????? ???????
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The style comes across as so effortless and the plot is so well handled, that one almost feels as if this could very well really have happened, which makes the chilling and ironic conclusion feel even more shocking and resonant.

..and since truth is stranger than fiction, who knows, perhaps it did happen; and in a certain sense, it did. The novel is apparently partly based on real-life historical events that took place in 1970's Italy.

Although the events that take place is the stuff of crime fiction and thrillers, it's given a fresh 'take' by being told from the point-of-view of the young protagonist who finds himself initially 'outside' the events that eventually rob him of his innocence and introduce him into the harsh world of adult reality.

What makes it really stand out from your general run-of-the-mill thriller though, is the insight that Mr Ammaniti shows into the psychology and souls of the characters he brings to life in this deftly-told novel.

Ammaniti poignantly brings to life the mind of an innocent child through the protagonist's initial interpretations of events; and it is a stomach-churning and heart-wrenching process to travel with young Michele into the realization of what is actually going on.

Diane S ? says

Set during the heat wave in the summer of 1978, in rural Italy nine year old Michele and his friends pretty much have the countryside to themselves. The parents stay in and try to alleviate the heat in whatever ways they can. Michele is only concerned about today, like most children and does not yet think about the wider picture, world events or other things that have affected his town. His only concern is having to drag his little sister everywhere, his friend Salvatore and the unelected leader of the group who can be very cruel. Yet one day, an top of a hill and in a old house everything for Michele will change in an instant.

Almost from the beginning, I felt a palpable tension in this book, the heat, the barren countryside and the short sentences all added to this feeling. I found this to be a gripping read of lost innocence as what Michele finds causes him to mistrust those he previously trusted the most, even his own father. By the ending things have happened that cannot be undone and I was left thinking, what a heavy price there was to pay for trying to do the right thing. I was so proud of this little boy for going the extra mile for what he thought was right. Rather short novel but awfully though provoking.

Debbie says

Despite its title, I'm scared and so is Michele, the 9-year-old narrator of this suspenseful story. It's fast paced and wild, and you can't help but be pulled in immediately and with full heart and soul.

Ammaniti knows how to create a grim story that has a loveable, heroic boy at its center. And he knows how to keep you sitting on the edge of your seat. The book is scary, but addictive. It reads like a nightmarish fairytale. There's good versus evil all over the place. There's one small good guy against a slew of big bad guys. And Michele is constantly being exposed to terrifying situations. For example, I died (along with Michele) when his mother insisted that a scary and gross old man would be sharing Michele's tiny bedroom.

Michele stumbles upon a criminal secret and then spends his time frantically trying to help right the wrong. There is much urgent bike riding as he crashes through the wheat fields in the sweltering heat in Italy. We're routing for him the whole way, but we share his fear that things could get uglier at any second. And they do, repeatedly. Michele is scared, but he's also brave and determined to make things right, hindered again and

again by the evil adults who hold the power.

Michele's innocence, combined with the impact of the horrific discovery, affect his perception of reality. He begins questioning everyone's motives and the basic goodness of people. In a minor scene, when he sees his friend dunking her dog in a disgustingly murky pond, he thinks she is killing him. Michele rescues the dog, and the girl insists she was just trying to wash off ticks. Always the helper, Michele then proceeds to remove the ticks. (Ammaniti gives us the gross and graphic details; and we keep watching, the same way we keep watching a car accident.) But was she really trying to kill the dog, or was Michele just being paranoid? Did he save the dog's life, or was he merely a friend who helped remove some ticks? Ammaniti is a genius at setting up such ambiguous realities.

I have four complaints. First, I didn't think this book was quite as tight as "Me and You," but that's only because I'm not a fan of scenery (and I know many people will argue that describing the setting was necessary in order to create the right atmosphere). Second, the translation was poor in the first half of the book. In several cases, the translator used the Italian word instead of the English equivalent—it seemed more a sign of laziness than lack of skill, since some words seemed like they would be easy to translate. Third, even though the ending was clever and dramatic, I thought it was too abrupt. I would have liked more closure. Fourth, I had trouble buying the fact that there was a whole slew of bad guys—including people you would expect to be good guys. I'm just not sure that worked.

I give it a 4.6—I knocked off a tenth of a point for each of my four complaints. It's darker than "Me and You," but that didn't stop me from loving it. Wait till you learn about "wash bears." I hope more people discover this author; he's a gem.

Vonia says

My second book from Nicolo Ammanati. The first was "Me and You". "I'm Not Scared" was able to rectify my complaints about the first (lack of believability, focus on only one character's development, rushed story and rash examinations of important issues), but things I was impressed by in "Me and You" fell by the wayside here (insightful emotional examination, keeping the reader's interest, no unnecessary scenes).

"Spine-tingling"? I hate to say this (because I love his writings, I really do, but neither of the books I have read by him have all the components necessary for that really good book), but not so much. I lost interest a few different times. I feel like the suspense waned as the book continued, with not much explanation for different events, except that Michele was unable to learn everything from the secretive adults.

Believability? That a group of men in a small town, one of which is our narrator's father, together manage to kidnap a nine year old boy for ransom? Yes, likely it has happened before. That they are all mostly good people? Certainly. That the wives are mostly in on it and if not condoning, have accepted it? Maybe not so much, but given the time period, yes. And it is the extremely rare but very possible events that make the best fiction. After all, real life has the best stories. One could never make some of that stuff up.

The book was good, but not great. Pacing issues, character depth focused almost entirely on the narrator (understandable, as it is not an omniscient voice, but makes the important point that this particular story may have been better served if it were), and, most importantly, anticlimactic. I was very upset with the ending.

The vagueness of it, the ridiculousness. It left me feeling cheated.

Lori says

I'm not sure how to describe this book. Is it a shattering of innocence, a coming of age story, a mystery, a suspense novel or is it all of these? I was drawn into the story immediately by the short terse prose, the descriptions of the countryside and the dialogue and actions of the young children in the story. Ammaniti, has captured with accuracy the actions and thoughts of a child who is caught in an adult situation. As the reader you are viewing the events from the eyes of nine year old Michelle and you feel the same confusion and detachment that he does when placed in a situation where an incredible event is occurring. As he learns more and sees more from the actions of his parents and the other adults around him he begins to understand what is really happening and can no longer remain detached. He can no longer remain neutral, he must act. The book moves along at a quick pace and ends in a nail biting climax. This was a good story with beautiful detail and a realistic portrayal of a nine year olds reactions and thoughts. I really enjoyed this book.
