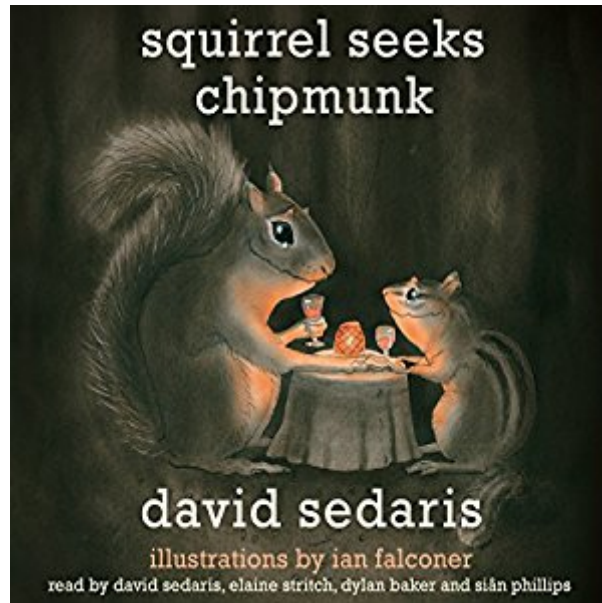


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Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk: A Modest Bestiary



Synopsis

Featuring David Sedaris's unique blend of hilarity and heart, this new collection of keen-eyed animal-themed tales is an utter delight. Though the characters may not be human, the situations in these stories bear an uncanny resemblance to the insanity of everyday life. In "The Toad, the Turtle, and the Duck", three strangers commiserate about animal bureaucracy while waiting in a complaint line. In "Hello Kitty", a cynical feline struggles to sit through his prison-mandated AA meetings. In "The Squirrel and the Chipmunk", a pair of star-crossed lovers is separated by prejudiced family members. Once again David Sedaris shows us the most outrageous, tender, absurd sides of ourselves in his "profoundly funny, well-crafted stories that somehow, magically, bring home a major point about fidelity or guilt or love...." (Christian Science Monitor).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Misanthropic seems like a strange word to describe a book in which nearly all the characters are animals, but that's what this book is. Almost entirely missing is the tenderness, the hopefulness about the possibility of meaningful relationships that characterizes the rest of David Sedaris' work. The one or two stories -- "Hello Kitty" may really be the only one -- that offer something in this vein aren't enough to redeem the book. Like so many other negative reviewers, I'm a long-time fan of Sedaris, from his very first appearances on This American Life through all of his published works. I've been to readings and have signed copies of "Barrel Fever" and "Naked". What's more, I was really looking forward to THIS book. I'd heard one or two of these "fables" on This American Life

and hoped Sedaris would put out a volume of them. In fact, I was disappointed that his last book, "When You Are Engulfed in Flames", was not that. (Frankly, I thought "Engulfed" was weak in comparison to his previous three books.) These stories are brutal, vulgar, even hateful. What's most disappointing is that there is nothing really being said about the hypocrisy, self-centeredness, arrogance, woundedness, ignorance and other negative human traits being lived out by the hapless animals in these tales. The only commentary seems to be that people are awful, and life is misery. This is so different from Sedaris' previous work. Yes, there's always been a sharp critique of hypocrisy in his stories, but there has also been a sense of hope, and laugh-out-loud humor that we can SHARE in. Only a monster (or someone under an "emperor's new clothes" delusion about Sedaris) could laugh at these stories.

I hate Aesop. He was mean-spirited and horrible, and assumed the worst of the human (and animal) spirit, and was needlessly gross and brutal. David Sedaris is a hilariously funny version, with keen-eyed and often brutal insights into human nature, but also with an occasional sweetness that surprised and touched me. I loved reading this book, but felt I had to be on guard, because you can't trust your heart to these stories. Sedaris doesn't care if he kills and maims along the way to his lesson. Unhappy lives and unhappy endings happened to a lot of these characters, even ones who didn't necessarily deserve it. The story about the sheep broke my freaking heart. Seriously. I cried. The illustrations by Ian Falconer of Olivia fame made the story even more heartbreaking. At the beginning of the story I kept going back to giggle at the insanely cheerful little lamb sitting with his mother. I loved the lamb. And then at the end, he got his eyes plucked out because his mother was kind of vacant and silly. Where was the justice in that story? A few huge, dark downers set the tone of the book for me, and it was a bit hard to read while making sure I didn't actually end up caring about anyone just in case they got slaughtered. But - it was hilarious, too! The little quips about each of the animals were fantastic. Some were based on little-known animal facts and some were based on human nature, but Sedaris managed to slip a really good bit into pretty much every page. The pages are small, so that's saying something. I'm too much of a delicate flower for this kind of book, but I still enjoyed it a lot.

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