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The Emperor Of Any Place



Synopsis

The ghosts of war reverberate across the generations in a riveting, time-shifting story within a story from acclaimed thriller writer Tim Wynne-Jones. When Evan's father dies suddenly, Evan finds a hand-bound yellow book on his desk—a book his dad had been reading when he passed away. The book is the diary of a Japanese soldier stranded on a small Pacific island in WWII. Why was his father reading it? What is in this account that Evan's grandfather, whom Evan has never met before, fears so much that he will do anything to prevent its being seen? And what could this possibly mean for Evan? In a pulse-quickening mystery evoking the elusiveness of truth and the endurance of wars passed from father to son, this engrossing novel is a suspenseful, at times terrifying read from award-winning author Tim Wynne-Jones.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although this is clearly marketed as a young-adult book, I was attracted to its subject and so ordered it. And read it with great pleasure, too, all the time wondering why it had this classification. Well, the protagonist, Evan Griffin is still a teenager at 16 -- but in Toronto where he lives, that is apparently old enough not to be taken into care when his father dies. And that's the first thing that is surprisingly mature about the book: it opens with the death of Evan's father, who had brought him up alone since childhood in a remarkably close relationship. Evan can cope remarkably well in the house, but he needs to call in his grandfather to help with the legal work. And there's the problem: "Griff," as he was called, is a retired Sergeant Major of Marines; Evan's father, a Vietnam draft-dodger, rebelled against his spit-and-polish style, and now the grandson has inherited that

legacy of hate. Though Griff may be a little stereotypical, there are surprisingly adult themes here. Just before he died, Evan's father had been sent a privately-printed book called "Kokoro-Jima, the Heart-Shaped Island." It is the account of a Japanese soldier marooned on an island not far from Tinian during the Pacific War, and his encounter with an American airman whose plane crashed there. It is a kind of ROBINSON CRUSOE story, and a terrific one, though distinguished by two features. One -- again mature and very instructive -- is the portrayal of both Japanese and American actions in the Second World War, a realistic background that the author makes no attempt to sanitize.

Composed of a book within a novel, "The Emperor of Any Place" is a heart-wrenching story of conflict and reconciliation, of loss and of discovery, and in the end a story of the healing power of love. Tim Wynne-Jones's latest novel is one that is beautifully crafted, engaging from the first page to the last one, and memorable in the truths it tells and the lessons to be learned from both stories. Having fled to Canada rather than being drafted and having to serve in Vietnam, Clifford E. Griffin III is a gentle, modest man. While reading a mysterious book that will become indispensable to the overall themes of "The Emperor of Any Place", he dies of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. His son Evan finds him. Following the funeral, seventeen-year old Evan lives alone at 123 Any Place, the nickname he and his father gave to their address. Although his father is gone, Evan retains the habits and manners he had been taught. "So much of grief is unlearning" • Estranged from his own father, eighty-one year old Chief Master Sergeant Clifford E. Griffin Jr., Cliff had warned Evan to avoid his grandfather. When Griff calls and tells Evan, he has arrived early to help him settle things, their resulting conflict and eventual respect for and understanding of one another propels the present day portion of the novel. The book within the novel "The Emperor of Any Place" is the diary of Lance Corporal Isamu Oshiro, a Japanese infantryman who was marooned on the island of Kokoro-Jima during the waning days of World War II. Isamu believes in the Emperor and the Japanese way of life. "There can be no surrender. A great man should die a shattered jewel" • Yet Isamu is also a realist, making sure no one who reads his story misunderstands where his loyalties lie.

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