

The Magician

by **Michael Scott** - Random House. Paperback rrp \$29.95

Guest Reviewer - Anastasia Gonis

After the amazing international success of *The Alchemist*, the first book of Scott's magical series, *The Magician* picks up Nicholas Flamel's quest to save the world and his immortality.

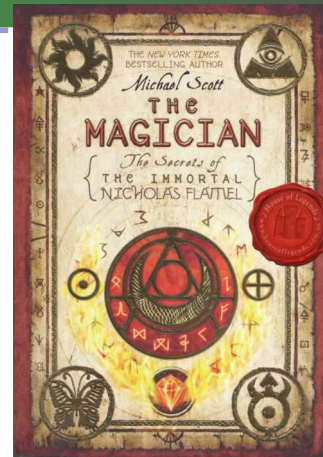
As long as the Codex was in Flamel's possession, immortality was guaranteed to Nicholas and his wife Perenelle. But Perenelle has been imprisoned in Alcatraz and is guarded by the crazed and powerful Dagon. Dr Dee has gained possession of the Book - except for the last two pages that Nicholas has secretly given to Josh for safekeeping. These pages are imperative for the Summoning that will bring his Dark Elder masters back to destroy this world.

Flamel, Sophie and Josh, (the legendary twins from the prophecy in the Book of Abraham the Mage) and Scathach, the ancient Celtic Warrior, return to Paris via

a leygate to try and find someone to awaken Josh's powers. Sophie's elemental magic training has already begun with the Witch of Endor's instruction on the Magic of Air.

Nicholas turns to his old friend Saint-Germain for a hiding place while in Paris and to teach Sophie the elemental Magic of Fire. But they are not safe from the other-earthly forms controlled by Dee and his rival Machiavelli, that stalk them. It is Scathach's fighting skills that save them, while Nicholas weakens and ages as the spell that's keeping him alive fades.

Flamel retrieves Clarent, one of the four great swords of power linked to the elements, and gives it to Josh as protection against Dee and Machiavelli. But Josh, beguiled by Dee who will stop at nothing to gain power, agrees to be



awakened at whatever cost by the great Mars Ultor, the Avenger, and Lord of War.

Meanwhile, Perenelle has discovered that Dee has amassed an army of monsters and destructive spiders, which are awaiting his command in the bowels of Alcatraz.

This is imaginative and fast-paced fiction, full of intricate plots, myth and folklore, and battles between good and evil, played in part amidst the skeleton-framed catacombs of Paris. The third book, *The Sorceress*, continues Flamel's quest.

www.dillonscott.com

Polar Boy

by **Sandy Fussell** - Walker Books. Paperback rrp \$14.95

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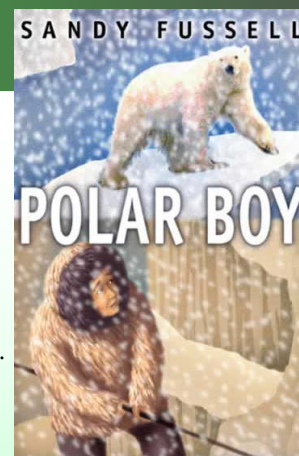
Illuak, the narrator, is thirteen years old. His fate is written in the stars. He wears his late grandfather's bear claw necklace that represents strength and courage. To secure his rite of passage into manhood, prove himself worthy of taking his grandfather's place as leader of the Icelandic Too-lee people, Illuak must overcome his fears, meet his challenges, and face the Bear that has many forms. He must also hold strong against the persuasive power of the Raven that always shadows him and offers the darker alternative to facing his fears. His immensely loveable and wise grandmother, Nana, is his people's shaman and advisor, and one of the best characters in the book.

Regardless of the enormous responsibility that awaits him, Illuak still experiences a normal teenager's feelings such as fear and jealousy. Nana

has chosen Tuak as her future successor. This decision has generated hatred between the two boys who should otherwise be two parts of a whole considering the positions fate has mapped out for them.

Finn is Illuak's closest friend. His body has grown but his mind has been left behind. Blessed with superlative skills, Finn is a person of few words but of great loyalty, wisdom, and strength. It is Finn who saves Illuak from drowning on a seal-hunting trip, and the Raven from claiming his spirit.

The major characters are bolstered by an outstanding cast of minor characters, all with something specific and endearing about them. All the cast evolves by the end of a story where things frequently have a dual form, and whose climax leaves the reader satisfied but longing for more.



An important factor of the story is how

it incorporates a strong sense of respect and connection to the natural world and the human ties to all living things. This is reflected well in the way the people give thanks to the spirit of the animal whose life they have taken to sustain their own, acknowledging its spirit, and taking only what they need to survive on, and nothing more.

The setting is in a brilliant white landscape that is partially night and always white. This is a stylish, perfectly crafted novel by the author of the *Samurai Kids* series.

www.sandyfussell.com