



Cirque Du Freak #1: A Living Nightmare: Book 1 in the Saga of Darren Shan

By Darren Shan

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In the tradition of Stephen King's 'Salem's Lot, Cirque Du Freak is the frightening saga of a young boy whose visit to a mysterious freak show leads him on a journey into a dark world of vampires. Filled with grotesque creatures, murderous vampires, and a petrifying ending, Cirque Du Freak will chill, thrill, and leave readers begging for more.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Anyone who loves the humorous but hair-raising horror in R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series will devour British author Darren Shan's first novel with equal zeal. Some books are born with a surrounding buzz; this one even has Harry Potter creator J.K. Rowling's stamp of approval: "Fast-paced and compelling, full of satisfying macabre touches," she writes. Warner Brothers will be making it into a movie, and the rest of the series is already in the works. Given all that, you'd expect a tour de force! Really, though, *Cirque Du Freak* is a thrill ride that will keep even the most reluctant readers turning pages, but will never take its place in the literary canon.

Darren Shan, author and narrator, sets the book up as a true story, warning readers: "Real life's nasty. It's cruel.... Evil often wins." Indeed, evil begins to win when Darren and his buddies find a flier for "Cirque Du Freak," a traveling freak show promising performances by the snake-boy, the wolf-man, and Larten Crepsley and his giant spider, Madame Octa. Darren and his friend Steve wouldn't miss it for the world.

So, Saturday night they sneak out to the old theater, tall and dark, with broken windows. "Every act you see tonight is real," croaks Mr. Tall. "Each performer is unique. And none are harmless." That's for sure. (A werewolf bites off the hand of someone in the audience, for instance.) Things grow very serious for the two boys when Steve not only recognizes Mr. Crepsley as a famous vampire, but professes his true desire to join him! To make matters worse, the spider-obsessed Darren goes back to the old theater to steal Madame Octa so he can teach her tricks in his room. (He does, with mixed results.) The plot further coagulates as Darren is faced with some terrible decisions about what to do to save his bloodthirsty friend Steve.

Readers may be too enthralled to notice some clumsy editing (the aforementioned bitten-off hand is later referred to as an arm, Darren stops dead in his tracks when he's already stopped, etc.). They may also not notice that the boys constantly use adult-sounding expressions like "his breath stank to the high heavens," though the book is clearly set in the 21st century. If this book gets under your kids' skin (and it probably will), they're in luck--we haven't heard the last of the Saga of Darren Shan. (Ages 10 and older, not for the faint of heart) --Karin Snelson

From Publishers Weekly

With strong sales overseas and a movie deal in the works, book one in The Saga of Darren Shan series is poised to capture a wide audience of series horror readers. After a rather slow buildup, a boy with the same name as the author sneaks out with best friend Steve to an illicit freak show, and his life becomes entangled with a vampire spider-wrangler, Mr. Crepsley. "This is a true story," writes Shan. "In real life, bad things happen. People die. Fights are lost. Evil often wins." The scenario is compelling, and the author mines the exploitative history of early 20th-century sideshows to create an artfully macabre "Cirque du Freak." But Darren's actions are often undermotivated: "I can't explain why Madam Octa [the spider] meant so much to me, or why I was placing my life in such danger to have her. Looking back, I'm no longer sure what drove me on." Also his intermittent attraction to and repulsion by the vampire is never fully explored. His behavior may be explained in the sequel, *The Vampire's Assistant* (due in Sept.), but the open ending leaves so many loose ends that readers may leave more frustrated than intrigued, especially since the characters' wooden dialogue drains them of personality ("I'm upset," says Steve. "It hurt, what Mr. Crepsley said, and you ignoring me at school... If you break up our friendship, I don't know what I'll do"). Readers interested in boys becoming vampires would be better served by M.T. Anderson's *Thirsty* and those fascinated with freaks by

Iain Lawrence's Ghost Boy. Ages 10-up.
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From School Library Journal

Gr 4-8-In his introduction, 12-year-old Darren claims that this is a true story, though the names have been changed and the country (obviously England) kept secret. When a bizarre-sounding freak show comes to town, he and his friend Steve sneak out to attend, and Steve recognizes one of the performers-as a centuries-old vampire. Darren decides he must steal the vampire's performing, poisonous spider. The theft is successful, and he learns to control Madam Octa with a combination of flute music and ESP-until she bites Steve. Darren must then sell himself into vampire slavery to get the cure to the spider's poison. This volume is neither as well written nor as compulsively readable as the "Harry Potter" books (Scholastic), though surely J. K. Rowling's endorsement on the cover will win it a few fans. Most of the characters aren't developed much beyond their names and a brief description. The slowness of the plot in the beginning might turn some readers off, but once the supernatural enters, they will be hooked. The fun here is in the details and in the uniqueness of the non-evil vampire monster. Several volumes of the series are already out in England, and the movie rights have already been purchased, ensuring that this title and probably its sequels will be in demand.-Timothy Capehart, Leominster Public Library, MA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rebecca Esquivel:

This book untitled Cirque Du Freak #1: A Living Nightmare: Book 1 in the Saga of Darren Shan to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, that is because when you read this publication you can get a lot of benefit on it. You will easily to buy this book in the book shop or you can order it by way of online. The publisher in this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, because you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to your account to past this guide from your list.

Ruth Little:

This Cirque Du Freak #1: A Living Nightmare: Book 1 in the Saga of Darren Shan is great reserve for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who also always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it data accurately using great arrange word or we can state no rambling sentences inside it. So if you are read the idea hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only offers you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Cirque Du Freak #1: A Living Nightmare: Book 1 in the Saga of Darren Shan in your hand like obtaining the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous 1. We can say that no guide that offer you world inside ten or fifteen minute right but this publication already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Heya Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt which?

Thelma Atkins:

Is it a person who having spare time then spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just telling lies on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Cirque Du Freak #1: A Living Nightmare: Book 1 in the Saga of Darren Shan can be the answer, oh how comes? A fresh book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your time by reading in this brand new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

Tom Harris:

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