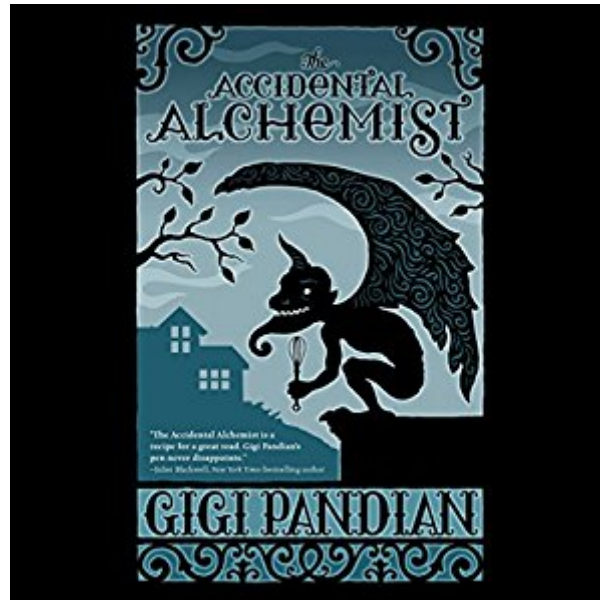


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The Accidental Alchemist



Synopsis

From USA Today best-selling author Gigi Pandian comes a modern tale of ancient intrigue. Unpacking her belongings in her new hometown of Portland, Oregon, herbalist and reformed alchemist Zoe Faust can't help but notice she's picked up a stowaway. Dorian Robert-Houdin is a living, breathing three-and-half-foot gargoyle - not to mention a master of French cuisine - and he needs Zoe's expertise to decipher a centuries-old text. Zoe, who's trying to put her old life behind her, isn't so sure she wants to reopen her alchemical past... until the dead man on her porch leaves her no choice. Includes recipes!

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours and 18 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: January 8, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00RN7LVPG

Best Sellers Rank: #31 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Paranormal #175

in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Supernatural #212 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers

Customer Reviews

The Accidental Alchemist by Gigi Pandian is the first in a new mystery series; unfortunately, it didn't leave me much interested in reading the next two. Pandian has some decent ideas to work with, but issues with plausibility, pacing, choice of detail, and style had me thinking about giving up from about the halfway point on. To be honest, had it not been a review book, I almost certainly would have, making this one a "not recommended" from me. Zoe Faust, a centuries-old alchemist who specializes in plants, has just relocated from France to Portland, seeking, she says, a more normal life. Normal, however, is not in the cards, something she quickly realizes when out of her just-unpacked belongings hops a living gargoyle, one who tells her he is slowly dying and she "thanks to her alchemical knowledge" is his only hope. The gargoyle (Dorian Robert Houdin) would be bad enough, but soon Zoe is embroiled in a murder investigation and then

an attempted murder investigation. Throw in a troublesome yet needy teen boy, and things quickly go from bad to worse and from worse to potentially disastrous, if not fatal. Stylistically, the language is generally flat, simplistic or just plain awkward. Exposition or historical tidbits are often clumsily inserted into the text, more interruptions than digressions. Plus, there are several stylistic tics that just got to me after a while, such as Dorian's constant "Mon Dieu!" exclamations.

Somewhat in that same vein was the odd amount of page-space/detail given to food in the novel. Dorian is a gourmet chef, while Zoe is a committed vegan/herbalist, one who believes strongly that one's diet is essential to one's physical and mental/spiritual health.

(Note: I received a copy through NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.) An interesting premise, but one I had trouble staying focused on, and I just could never push myself to read more than a chapter or two before switching to something else. The first chapters, with Dorian popping into Zoe's life, his predicament, the book that needed deciphering, hinted at a good modern fantasy story. Unfortunately, the mystery that followed was too flat, and took too long to properly unveil. It could have been more of an adventure, yet it wasn't. There wasn't even that many alchemical concepts and knowledge to munch on. I'd chalk a large part of this to the main character going around in circles about some things, always recalling her ability with plants, how she was not a night person, needed her healthy foods, etc. There was more cooking and vegan recipes than actual alchemy here. I know they say alchemy kind of started in the kitchen and all that, but the metaphor didn't bring much to the story for me. I mean, it's the Accidental Alchemist, not the Accidental Cook, so in turn, the sense of urgency got lost somewhere along the road. After a murder and another murder attempt, with Zoe having the potential to be seen either as the culprit or as the next victim, I would have expected more tension. When clues finally started appearing, and Zoe at last started taking them into account, I was past caring, and just wanted to finish the novel to see if Dorian could be saved. The ending, by the way, was too rushed to my liking.

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