

Creeples!

Patrick D. Pidgeon

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The middle grade fantasy Creeples! mixes heady scientific speculation with giddy fun.

With a boisterous collision of magical science fiction and rowdy comedy, Patrick D. Pidgeon's middle grade novel *Creeples!* begins on an ominous note, as a 1938 archaeological excavation in England reveals a powerful, malign influence concealed within a ruby-like treasure.

In the Adirondack Mountains in the present day, Spigs attends the Aberdasher Academy of Very Weird Science. Spigs is talented but undisciplined. Despite the extraordinary experiments carried out in his classes, his problems are ordinary: he butts heads with strict teachers, has a crush on a classmate, runs afoul of school bullies, and feels out of place among his nerdy classmates.

But Spigs soon falls into the company of straightlaced, brilliant T-Ray and techhead Peabo. The trio is drafted by their professor to assist on genomic projects. When the department is threatened with defunding by the disapproving dean (whose initials spell out his unfortunate nickname, ASS), the three decide to take matters into their own hands by performing a groundbreaking biofabrication experiment. But an accident with a soda can leads a computer virus to merge with a vial of unknown serum. The result: a new species, the Creeples, humanoid creatures with zany powers and a talent for mischief that's amplified when they ingest catnip.

As the Creeples are unleashed on the unprepared campus, the imaginative story runs wild with them. Each creature has its own talents, ranging from super speed to laser vision. All have the ability to animate objects, which becomes a definite problem when vending machines and monstrous museum exhibits lurch to life. Spigs, T-Ray, and Peabo not only have to corral their creations, but they must also evade mercenaries who are bent on capturing the Creeples for their own gain. They also uncover a campus conspiracy that could lead to nothing less than the end of the world.

Despite its high stakes, the narrative is loose and funny, indulging in merry mayhem every step of the way. While certain character types and plot points are familiar, its proceedings have their own anarchic glee. In keeping with Spigs's rambunctious personality, the hijinks lean towards fart and belch jokes, atomic wedgies, and icky gooey stuff, all carried off with good-natured humor. Spigs and his friends are likeable heroes whose story builds to a colorful climax featuring dragons, animated statues, and mutant monsters.

Peppered with amusing interior illustrations by Marco Bucci and dossier-style descriptions of each Creeple, the middle grade fantasy *Creeples!* mixes heady scientific speculation with giddy fun.

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