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“[A] morally complex, edgy debut...Schaeffer’s antiheroes show empathy and insight as they struggle to define the line between human and monster. It’s a testament to Schaeffer’s excellent writing that these themes never overtake the characters’ stories.” —*Booklist*, **starred review**

“A slasher flick spliced with *Crime and Punishment*, this engrossing debut novel asks complex philosophical questions in a pleasingly hard-to-stomach way.” —*Kirkus*

“So compelling that readers have to keep going to find out how, or if Nita gets out of this mess.” —
School Library Journal

NOT • EVEN BONES

REBECCA SCHAEFFER

Dexter meets *This Savage Song* in **NOT EVEN BONES** (on-sale September 4, 2018 from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), the dark fantasy debut from **Rebecca Schaeffer**: the first installment in a heart-pounding trilogy that questions just what makes a hero—or a villain.

Nita, the distinct antihero of **NOT EVEN BONES**, isn’t your average teenager. She hasn’t been to school in years; she’s spent most of her life traveling across the globe with no real home; and the only people she talks to with any regularity are her parents. Oh, and Nita’s favorite hobby? Dissecting the dead bodies of zannies, vampires, and even unicorns that come across her examination table—to her favorite Disney playlist, of course.

NOT EVEN BONES by Rebecca Schaeffer

Publication Date: September 4, 2018 | \$17.99 hardcover | 368 pages | ISBN: 978-1-328-86359-1

Also available as an ebook

For years, Nita and her mother have been a team: her mother hunts and kills the monsters, and Nita cuts them up and packages the pieces for sale on the online black market. Relating to other people has never been Nita's strong suit, and she's too fascinated by the smooth strokes of the scalpel and the intricacies of the bodies she dissects to feel *bad* about it. Plus, they're usually one of the species the International Non-Human Police has categorized as "dangerous unnaturals," creatures dependent on human suffering to survive. Why should Nita pity a monster?

It's only when Nita's mother brings home a *live* one—a harmless teenager, no less—that Nita thinks she's found a line she won't cross. What she doesn't realize is that saving him will set off a chain reaction of events that will change her own life—because Nita is secretly an unnatural, too. When she finds *herself* as the merchandise, Nita knows she'll only be free when the whole world burns. The question is, how far will she go to set it aflame?

"I didn't write Nita to be the kind of character you'd want to be best friends with," Schaeffer writes. "I wrote her to be the kind of character you'd want to read about." Indeed, Nita is strong and smart and a survivor—but she never makes the choices you want her to, or not for the reasons you'd think. **NOT EVEN BONES** is full of villains, human and unnatural alike; and as Nita confronts and reclaims her inner monster, we are forced to wonder about our own.

Rebecca Schaeffer was born and raised in the Canadian prairies, but her itchy feet have taken her far from home. You can find her sitting in a café on the other side of the world, writing about villains, antiheroes, and morally ambiguous characters. **NOT EVEN BONES** is her debut novel. Rebecca is available for interview and personal essays, and excerpts are available on request.

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A CONVERSATION WITH **REBECCA SCHAEFFER**

AUTHOR OF *NOT EVEN BONES*

What inspired *Not Even Bones*?

I really wanted to write a novel with main characters who, in any other character's story, would have been the villain. It was something I'd wanted to do for years, but I wasn't really sure if an all villain cast was sellable, and I didn't have quite the right idea for it. Then one day, I was talking to a friend about a different story I was writing, set in the same world as *Not Even Bones*, and she said to me, "this whole online black market for monster body parts is really cool, but where do the body parts come from?" And I realized that the people hunting down, murdering, and selling monsters would be the perfect opportunity to do the all villain cast I'd always wanted.



Why were you so interested in writing a story about villains?

I wanted to delve into that moral complexity, and how narrowly we define good and evil and how much uncomfortable space there is between them that we don't discuss because it can't be boiled down to something easy. How people can do both the kindest and the most terrible things. Evil isn't some outside force we battle, but something inside each and every one of us. Being evil, doing terrible things, is human.

Have you always liked villains more than heroes?

Growing up, I almost exclusively identified with villains in stories. They were ambitious – they had something they wanted, and they worked hard to get it. Their motives were clear, and their choices made sense as a way to get their goals.

Heroes... didn't. I could never understand them. WHY did they want to save the world/overthrow the dark lord/stop the serial killer? They were always talking about how it was the 'right thing to do' and how they were saving people and I just... didn't get it. Why would you risk your life for the vague reason of 'the right thing'? And then they'd say murder was evil and go kill the villain. Get your stories straight! You can't condemn murder except when you do it! That kind of unaware hypocrisy bothered me. I just felt that heroes lacked the moral complexity for the stories they were in. And I felt like there was so much hand-waved off as 'for the sake of good.' It frustrated me.

Do you think Nita is evil?

By some people's definitions, yes. By others, no. I think Nita is not a good person, but she is a person, with all the good and bad that comes with. I didn't write her to be the kind of character you'd want to be best friends with – I wrote her to be the kind of character you'd want to read about.

Tell us about the world Nita inhabits. How do monsters fit into the human world?

So, for the world of *Not Even Bones*, I wanted to entwine the familiar with the unfamiliar. It's our world, in modern day, except there are 'unnaturals,' creatures mostly based on mythology. Some look human, some can pass for human, and some are just not at all human looking. Most are different but not inherently dangerous, but there are a few varieties that are predatory. So unicorns, for example, target virgins and eat their souls. They all look like human men, and the 'horn' refers to a very different part of the anatomy.

Everyone knows that 'unnaturals' exist, which changes the shape and the dynamics of the world. I really wanted to play with how having different mythological creatures that appeared human would change law, society, religion, and culture. So there's a church that believes Jesus was a vampire and has a very literal definition of the Eucharist. There's pishtacos who offer tailored liposuction, since they eat human fat. There's a legal case where a business tried to get chinchillas classified as 'unnatural' so that they could circumvent animal cruelty laws when making fur coats.

And on the black market, many of these body parts are valuable. When things are valuable and illegal, a black market is inevitable. And to supply those body parts, people need to hunt and kill the 'unnaturals' they come from. Which is of course, where Nita and her story come in.

What do you hope readers will take away from *Not Even Bones*?

First and foremost, I hope they'll have fun. That's the point of a book – to entertain. I'm not a fan of preachy books, so I tried to avoid writing one. If the readers end up having some interesting thoughts about moral ambiguity afterwards, that's cool too, but mostly I just want people to enjoy the ride. People many not ever want to meet these characters in real life, but I hope that readers will have fun following their escapades in fiction.

What's next for Nita?

You'll have to wait for book two to find out!

