



2002

### Witch's Business

Cathleen Alton

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Jones, Diana Wynne. *Witch's Business*. Greenwillow Books, 2002. ISBN 0060087838. \$17.99. 201 pp.

Reviewer: Cathleen Alton

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy Fiction; Occult Fiction;

Subject: Magic--juvenile fiction; Witches--juvenile fiction; England--juvenile fiction; book--reviews;

What do you do when you're in debt and your parents cut off your pocket money to pay for a broken chair? Jess and Frank decide to start a revenge business: Own Back Ltd. They will undertake difficult tasks on behalf of those too scared to do so--for a small fee. Things are stirred up when the first customer is the villainous town bully Buster Knell, asking for revenge against someone good. The situation spirals out of control when, in two different plot twists, Buster and another client both involve a witch, Bidy Iremonger. Buster wants the witch to affect a more complete revenge; Jenny (the other client) wants a curse taken off. As the witch, Jess, and Frank head towards a showdown, the author raises several interesting questions. Is revenge ever justified? Is a good deed still good if done from mercenary motives? Does doing good ever pay?

As Frank, Jess, and their friends try to outwit Bidy Iremonger, they give a rollicking read that's almost as good as a broomstick ride across the night sky. Plot and characterization are especially well done, with each new development working towards a believable but surprising conclusion. This is a good book, particularly for Halloween.