



2007

# The Life and Crimes of Bernetta Wallflower

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Graff, Lisa. *The Life and Crimes of Bernetta Wallflower*. HarperCollins, 2008. ISBN 9780060875923. \$17.89. 250p.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Swindlers and swindling--Juvenile fiction. Magic tricks--Juvenile fiction. Schools--Juvenile fiction. Family--Juvenile fiction. Moneymaking projects--Juvenile fiction. Family life--Juvenile Fiction. Moneymaking projects--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Framed by Ashley, her so called best friend, for a cheating ring, Bernetta Wallflower is grounded for the whole summer and not allowed to assist her father in his magic club. Having lost her scholarship Bernetta resolves to earn the \$9,000 she needs to return to her private school. When no one will hire a twelve year old, Bernetta thinks all hope is lost until a chocolate-brown eyed boy named Gabe convinces her to join him running simple con games. Desperate for the money she joins Gabe and everything goes smoothly until Ashley reenters the picture and steals their money, thus forcing the two friends to take her down with an elaborate con. An extremely unique premise gives this novel an interesting plot. Bernetta is a sympathetic character that readers will understand. However the many plot elements and character actions end up being so unbelievable that the whole package loses credibility in the end. Even her magic training in her favor, it is too hard to accept that twelve year olds could get away with cons after having only learned them from movies and books. In addition it is hard to accept that Bernetta could so easily put aside all the moral, ethical, and legal issues surrounding the endeavor. The return of Ashley and her previous involvement with Gabe is also implausible and her ultimate downfall is unsatisfying. In the end the implausibility of the events prevent this book from being a satisfying read.

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