



Fember: The Secret Book

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off

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You may well wonder who, or what, Fember is. First, it's the name of the island where the story takes place, and then it's the name of the life force on which the island depends. However, that's just one of the life forces in the island town of Eden. The other is the boy Dev, an inventor whose ingenuity and ambition are limitless. When we meet him he is jumping off a cliff supported only by chicken feathers and cheese powered boots. Jamie Smart helpfully provides diagrams of some of this young Da Vinci's machines, although there's no danger of readers trying them out at home. It's doubtful whether you can order 'stretchable orteingle tubes' or 'smellkonics' even online. Oh, and I mustn't forget Dev's other remarkable quality - determination. That is, he doesn't know when to stop, as my mother used to say. Dev's inventions often have unforeseen disastrous consequences. Think the sorcerer's apprentice, and, worse still, think Dr. Frankenstein. Dev, from the very best intentions, and with the help of a long lost secret book, harnesses Fember to create life; and, in this case it's a giant teddy bear with the unrestrained impulses of a hunger driven toddler. That's where all the bother begins, because there's only so much Fember to go round and Dev and Boja the bear (surely nothing to do with Boris Johnson?) have used up nearly all of it. Jamie Smart's self-illustrated story is packed with incident, humour and ideas. There's also a serious message about 'the journey of a young boy taking responsibility for his mistakes'. Indeed, any story where there's a town called Eden possibly has more going on than appears on the surface, even if the surface has more peaks and troughs than a gale in the Atlantic.

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