

# EVIL LIBRARIAN

A NOTE FROM AUTHOR MICHELLE KNUDSEN

One of the best birthday presents I ever received was from my friends Alan and Jessica during my sophomore year of college. They filled a shoe box with homemade cassette tapes (this was in the early nineties) of all the musicals they knew I didn't have but thought I should: *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *A Little Night Music*, *Chess* (both the British and American versions), *Into the Woods*, and a whole bunch more. I spent the next several weeks, maybe even months, listening to those tapes over and over, getting happily lost inside their songs and stories.

Like Cyn, the main character in *Evil Librarian*, I have loved musical theater for as long as I can remember. I love to watch and listen, and (less like Cyn) I love to perform, too. From local children's theater in Staten Island to school musicals and summer theater camp and on into college and beyond, I couldn't get enough. I'm not a strong enough singer to have ever been cast with a solo part, but it was never about wanting to be the star for me. It was about being a part of that whole—that wonderful coming together of different voices and actors and pieces of music and staging and dancing and costumes and sets into a magical creation that exists only as long as the run of that particular show. You could do the same musical any number of times, but each cast and crew would develop a different incarnation, and no two experiences would ever be the same.



I had a lot of fun indulging my love of musical theater while writing *Evil Librarian*. I sprinkled in a lot of theater references for the like-minded, and my secret dream is that some readers who aren't currently musical theater fans might be inspired to explore some of the shows mentioned in the book—especially (it may go without saying, but I'll say it anyway) *Sweeney Todd*, which really is one of my favorites.

The whole novel isn't about musical theater, of course. There's a lot of other stuff going on in there: demons, libraries, very cute boys, best friends, dark magic, complicated romances of various kinds. But I think one of the reasons that the musical theater element came to run so strongly through the book is that the magic of musical theater has always resonated for me just as it has for Cyn. I like to believe in worlds where anything can happen, and as Cyn notes at one point in the story, anything really is possible in musical theater. In that space between the first notes of the overture and final closing of the curtain, we open our hearts and minds to the surprising and the unlikely—and sometimes even the ridiculous, and we leave all the better for having done so. Sometimes I think the real world might be a better place if we would all just break into song once in a while. Or at least spend a little more time listening. And believing. And, at least occasionally, humming along.



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