The Near Witch is only an old story told to frighten children.

If the wind calls at night, you must not listen. The wind is lonely, and always looking for company.

And there are no strangers in the town of Near.

These are the truths that Lexi has heard all her life.

But when an actual stranger—a boy who seems to fade like smoke—appears outside her home on the moor at night, she knows that at least one of these sayings is no longer true.

The next night, the children of Near start disappearing from their beds, and the mysterious boy falls under suspicion. Still, he insists on helping Lexi search for them. Something tells her she can trust him.

As the hunt for the children intensifies, so does Lexi’s need to know—about the witch that just might be more than a bedtime story, about the wind that seems to speak through the walls at night, and about the history of this nameless boy.
Part fairy tale, part love story, Victoria Schwab’s debut novel is entirely original yet achingly familiar: a song you heard long ago, a whisper carried by the wind, and a dream you won’t soon forget.

My Personal Review:
This should be 3.5 stars really.

I wish I could say I loved this book - I certainly wanted to love it, but there was something essential lacking for me. Its a bit hard to put my finger down on because the story was beautifully crafted in so many ways - but the plot moved a bit slowly, and the characters seemed lackluster.

Victoria Schwab is a word smith of the highest caliber. Her words flow gracefully across the page as if dancing. Every scene is painted with painstaking perfection in our minds - we can practically feel the moor grasses beneath our toes, and the wind pushing at our hair.

Her story reads like a dark fairy tale, the kind you imagine your mother reading you just before bedtime, as the darkness creeps over the sky and sinister shadows play across the walls. I loved the content - its whimsical, a bit creepy, and deliciously dark - but its a slow and sleepy sort of story. It doesnt pick up the pace, and become a page turner until near the very end of the book, so I found myself a bit yawny throughout much of it. I think Im just spoiled by the latest generation of fast paced action oriented urban fantasy books.

Sadly the characters felt a bit lack luster to me. Alas poor Lexi - I did not feel I knew you well! Lexi is strong, determined, loyal, protective, and skilled. Her hunter father taught her to track and defend herself. She stands up for her family with great courage, and faces untold dangers for their sake throughout the story, so you LIKE her, but you dont know her. I never really had a sense of Lexi, or the mysterious Cole. Perhaps its because the narrative of the story focuses more on the world around Lexi instead of whats going on in her head. I know all about the wind, but sadly I dont feel I really know Lexi, or any of the other characters in this story.

And then theres Cole, the mysterious boy that shows up just before the children start disappearing. Hes quiet, awkward, and seemingly socially challenged, but hes also noble, and brave. If possible, I knew him even less than I did Lexi, although his back story is well fleshed out.
The lack of closeness I felt with the main characters detracted from the enjoyment of their romance. The love unfolds between Lexi and Cole beautifully and sweetly - there's a lot of tender, shy kisses shared, and gentle touching. It's lovely, but I just couldn't get too swoony over it since I didn't feel attached to either of the main characters.

If you are in the mood for a well written, sleepy sort of fairy tale, the Near Witch is perfect. The story will bewitch you with its artful prose, and even if you feel a vague lack of connection with the protagonists you'll still enjoy the journey. So grab a warm blanket, and curl up with a nice cup of tea and relish your travels in the dark, wind beset moors that surround the town of Near.

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