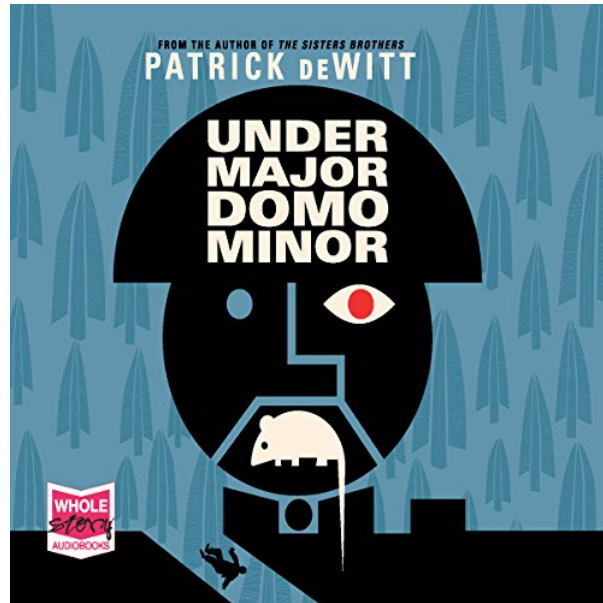
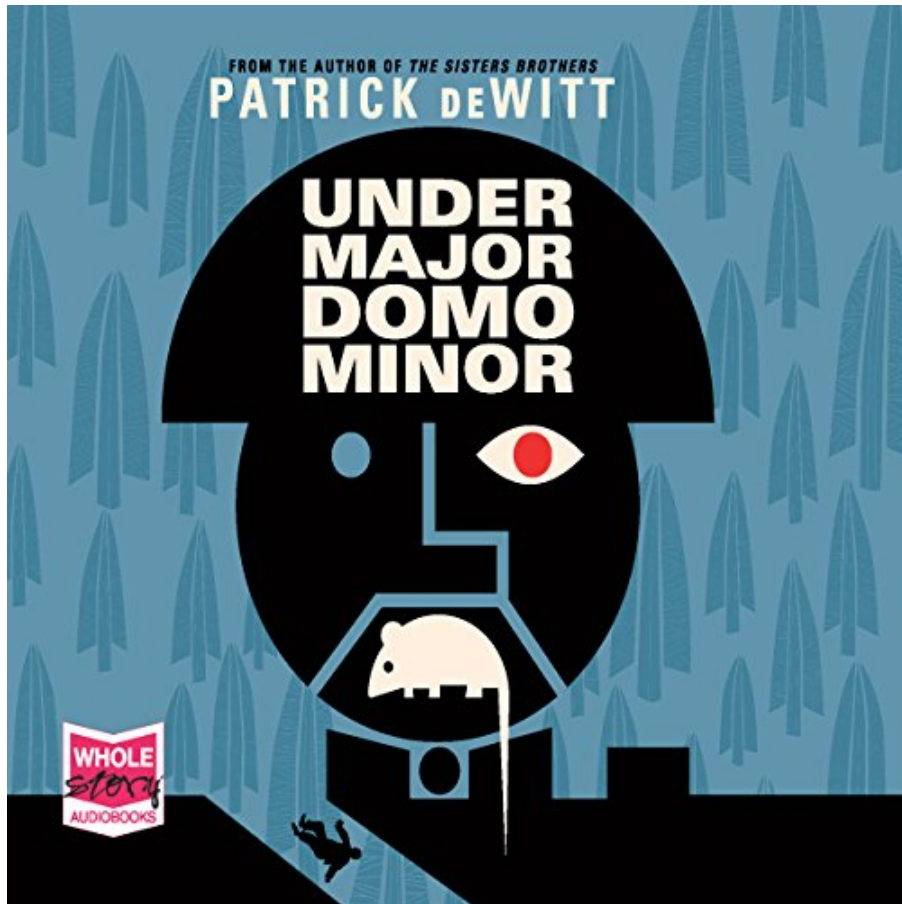


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Lucien (Lucy) Minor is the resident odd duck in the bucolic hamlet of Bury. Friendless and loveless, he is a compulsive liar and a weakling. When Lucy accepts employment assisting the majordomo of the remote, foreboding castle of the Baron Von Aux, he meets thieves, madmen, aristocrats, and a puppy.

Thus begins a tale of polite theft, bitter heartbreak, domestic mystery and cold-blooded murder....

- Sales Rank: #157892 in Audible
- Published on: 2016-01-21
- Released on: 2016-01-21
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 462 minutes

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9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Life Is When Something Happens

By Jill I. Shtulman

What type of book IS Undermajordomo anyway? Is it an old-fashioned adventure tale? A dark fairy tale (think: Brothers Grimm)? A serio-comedy narrative in the vein of his earlier work, Sisters Brothers?

It's hard to define, exactly, but I will say this: for a reader like me, who leans towards strong character-driven or theme-based novels, I was a bit out of my comfort zone and that was just fine. The strong writing and the plot kept me eagerly turning pages and I surrendered to DeWitt's talent.

The main character is Lucien Minor (consistently called Lucy), an earnest and naïve young man. Spindly and pale, and – at the very beginning – at risk of dying – he sees a shadowed man who asks him what he wants out of life. His answer: “Something to happen.”

The rest of the book explores what DOES happen as he goes into service to the Majordomo, Mr. Olderglough, a good-hearted man who has a tenuous grasp of reality. The characters of an adventure tale are all here – a mad love-sick baron (who reminded me a bit of the “crazy wife in the attic” from Jane Eyre), an extraordinarily handsome and potentially dangerous soldier, two sneaky (but redemptive) thieves, and of course, the fair maiden who gives Lucy a reason to live.

We don't know exactly where and when this tale takes place (think: Ishiguro's Buried Giant) but it feels somehow familiar, somehow knowable. There was a point over half-way through – a scene of debauchery – where I began wondering, “Where is the heart of the story? It's a fine “read”, but what do I take away from it?”

On reflection, I had my answer. The book is about life itself. As the majordomo himself says, “What are rooms for if not entering, after all. Or else exiting. Indeed, think of how many rooms we enter and exit in our span of days, boy. Room to room to room. And we call it a life.” A life – defined in this book – is when something happens and we show up for it. Patrick DeWitt delivers again.

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

An Old-Fashioned Romance

By Roger Brunyate

Literary history defines "romance" less as a love story than in terms of the fantastic world inhabited by the hero and the many adventures he has along the way. We are talking Tasso or Ariosto, Spenser or Cervantes. It was against these traditions that Tolkien and CS Lewis were writing, or more recently Kazuo Ishiguro in *THE BURIED GIANT*. And it is this tradition that inspires Patrick deWitt's thoroughly modern and comic subversion of the genre in *UNDERMAJORDOMO MINOR*. It is a curious book, thoroughly enjoyable on a chapter-by-chapter basis, even laugh-aloud funny. But surprisingly unfilling; there is no substance there, nothing to chew on when the book is done. And very little to write about.

Lucien Minor, known as Lucy, leaves home to take up the position of Undermajordomo at the distant Castle Von Aux. It is hard to pin down the period; he travels by train, but the castle itself has the feel of 19th-century Gothic, and the local population seems to be fighting one of those perpetual 18th-century wars. But no matter. Lucy finds himself working for the majordomo, the dustily benevolent Mr. Olderglough. He and the culinarily-challenged cook Agnes appear to be the only inhabitants, until the Baron himself appears -- and this kicks us into higher gear, with even more fantastic happening and more grotesque outcomes. Meanwhile, Lucy falls in love with a girl from the village named Klara, whom he has to pry away from her soldier-suitor and larcenous father and brother.

I could go on -- and deWitt does go on, with charmingly understated humor and bizarre invention. But what's the point? At no time does the book go beyond skillfully executed entertainment. Which will be enough for some, I think; but not for me. [3.5 stars]

15 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

You may get squeamish, but what the hell—it's worth it!

By Ryan J. Dejonghe

If Tim Burton and Wes Anderson collaborated to write a novel in the writing style of Ronald Dahl, it would turn out a lot like Patrick DeWitt's *UNDERMAJORDOMO MINOR*.

The story is about Lucien (Lucy) Minor, an inconsequential young man from the town of Bury. Seeking to escape the undesirable and uninteresting, Lucy finds his way to Castle Von Aux. "...a decision which led to many things including but not limited to true love, bitterest heartbreak, bright-white terror of the spirit, and an acute homicidal impulse." As he notices, "Lucy couldn't shake the notion that there was some malicious anathema about in the castle."

"...we'll die here."

"That's not how we see it..."

"How do you see it?"

"We'll live here."

Through quirky verse and fanatical happenings, DeWitt tells the tale of life and love. I REALLY enjoyed it all. As he writes: "Undemonstrative manner of reportage; and yet he was moved by the tale as well." This is more than a story; it is a pondering of a quick life boiled down to a summary that can be bound up within an epitaph. At times the events may not make sense, but then it strikes your heart.

“I have no regard for a man so willing to give his life for an idea...”

“Yes, and what is the idea?”

“Precisely.”

“May I ask who it is they’re fighting?”

“What are they fighting about, do you know?”

“Well now, what does anyone fight about, boy?”

There are two wars taking place in this book: a war between men with an unknown cause, and a war of love. “What a violent thing love is, he thought. Violent was the word that had come to him.” Not only does Lucy battle, figuratively and literally, with the concept of love, but so do the others around him—in all manners and forms. “For if love had so degraded a personage of the Baron’s powers, what might it do to him?”

The person Lucy goes to work for is twisted within his own heart’s constraints. Lucy also battles to become significant in within his own life. “Lucy recognized his taking solace in giving up; he was familiar with the comfort which existed in the acceptance of failure.”

“All that I’ll say is that there is an unwellness rampant in the castle.”

“A pervasive unpleasantness...”

A word of warning. This paragraph has minor spoilers about animal cruelty and sexual pervasiveness. Twice you may think harm befalls a puppy—take comfort, it does not! However, a rat is devoured by a crazed man (the things love will cause!). And, yes, there is a tart-induced orgy in the castle. As for violence with humans, heads are blown off via cannon balls and fingers are chopped off via envy. End of spoilers.

This book was a fabulously fun ride with quite a bit of meaning. Its story is simple, its effects complex. DeWitt is a magical author with tons of character. You may get squeamish, but what the hell—it’s worth it!

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