

## A CONVERSATION WITH KURTIS SCALETTA

### What inspired you to write *The Tanglewood Terror*?

I loved horror stories as a kid and wanted to write one of my own. I set out with the idea of writing something in the vein of H. P. Lovecraft, whom I read voraciously as a teen. Some of his stories had luminous mushrooms as a harbinger of doom, monster gods buried deep in the earth. I decided to start there.

### What research did you undertake in writing your award-winning book?

I learned more about those glowing mushrooms. I decided mine would belong to the honey fungus, which can live for thousands of years and sprawl for miles through subterranean networks. It felt like sci-fi already! I stretched the truth a little toward the end but most of the book is somewhat true to science.

### What do you like most about *The Tanglewood Terror*?

I'm proud of the female characters. It occurred to me after two books that I really hadn't created any female characters that were not mothers or crushes to the boy heroes. This book has three great female characters who are not love interests or rela-

tives. There are four if you count Cassie the pig!

### What do you hope your readers take away from the book?

I tend to walk a line between improbable and impossible stories – the endless rain in *Mudville*, the snake in *Mamba Point*, and the mushrooms in *The Tanglewood Terror*. There are always scientific explanations and magical explanations for the weird phenomena. I would rather have kids wonder about those things than give them canned answers.

### What is your current writing project?

My next novel is the first that takes place in my own neighborhood in North Minneapolis. It's about kids building a giant robot to fight a monster lurking in the ruins of an industrial park somewhere near the Camden Avenue Bridge.

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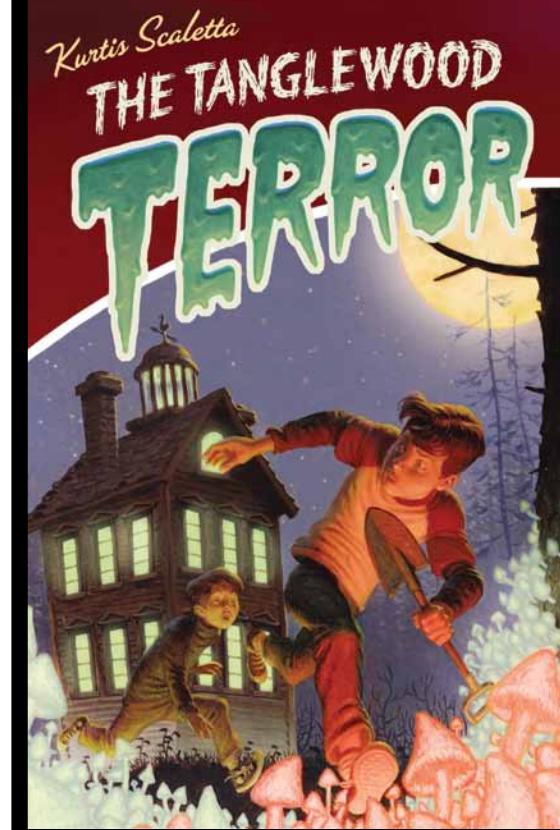
Young People's Literature

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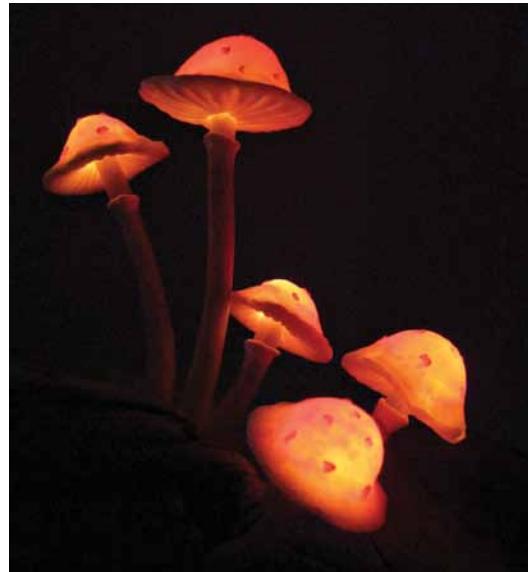
325 Cedar Street  
Suite 555  
Saint Paul, MN 55101  
651-222-3242

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***The Tanglewood Terror***

by Kurtis Scaetta

ALFRED A. KNOPF/RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

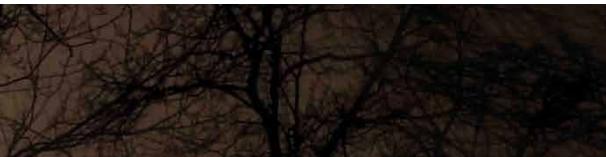


## SUMMARY

When Eric Parrish comes across glowing mushrooms in the woods behind his house, he's sure there's a scientific explanation. But when the fungus begins to overrun the entire town of Tanglewood – in a repeat of a blight that, legend has it, reduced the town to rubble two hundred years ago – it falls to Eric, his brother Brian, and a runaway girl named Mandy to get to the bottom of the mystery.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the book's main themes?
2. What is the most realistic part of the story? What did you find unrealistic or hard to believe?
3. Do you think Eric is a bully? Why or why not?
4. How does taking care of Cassie change Eric?
5. If you were Mandy, would you have made the choice to run away?
6. What is the significance of the two different colors of mushrooms?
7. Should Eric's dad pursue his dream of being a rock star or stay in Maine with his family? What would you do?
8. Maxwell Bailey's dream was to discover a true-to-life science fiction story. Have you ever seen anything in real life that was so incredible it felt like make believe?
9. If a sequel was written, what might the next adventure be for Eric and Tanglewood?
10. If you wrote a book for young readers, what topic and title would you choose?



## ABOUT KURTIS SCALETTA



Kurtis Scaletta was born in Louisiana and grew up in New Mexico, North Dakota, England, Liberia, Brazil, and a few other places. His books for young readers include *Mudville*, which was a Booklist Top 10 Sports Book for Youth and *Mamba Point*, which the New York Times Book Review called "entertaining and touching." Kurtis now lives in Minneapolis with his wife, son, and several cats.

**Learn more about the author at [www.kurtisscaletta.com](http://www.kurtisscaletta.com)**



Minnesota Department of  
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