Brown Bag Book Review
Wednesday, March 13, 2024
12:00 PM-1:00 PM

Reviewers: Abby, Lee, Lauren S, Lauren H, Sarah, Erica, Emma, Jackie, Caitlin, Carly

The Switch by Beth O’Leary [Abby]
The Witching Year by Diana Helmuth [Abby]
Attack of the Black Rectangles by Amy Sarig King [Lee]
Pocket Change Collective Series [Lee]
Old Mikamba Had a Farm by Rachel Isadora [Lauren S]
The Wheels on the Tuk Tuk by Kabir and Surishtha Sehgal [Lauren S]
Curious Creatures Working with Tools by Zoe Armstrong [Lauren S]
Seven Year Slip by Ashley Poston [Lauren H]
Nothing Can Possibly Go Wrong by Prudence Shen [Sarah]
Through the Woods by Emily Carroll [Sarah]
Killer Triggers by Joe Kenda [Erica]
Isla to Island by Alexis Castellanos [Emma]
The Night She Disappeared by Lisa Jewell [Jackie]
The Death of Mrs. Westaway by Ruth Ware [Caitlin]
The Lying Game by Ruth Ware [Caitlin]
Apples Never Fall by Liane Moriarty [Caitlin]
Be Prepared by Vera Brosgol [Carly]

-SAVE THE DATE-
Brown Bag Book Review
Wednesday, June 12, 2024
12:00 PM-1:00 PM
Brown Bag Book Review  
Wednesday, March 13, 2024  
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*All annotations are borrowed from Goodreads.com

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The Switch by Beth O’Leary

When overachiever Leena Cotton is ordered to take a two-month sabbatical after blowing a big presentation at work, she escapes to her grandmother Eileen's house for some overdue rest. Eileen is newly single and about to turn eighty. She’d like a second chance at love, but her tiny Yorkshire village doesn't offer many eligible gentlemen.

Once Leena learns of Eileen's romantic predicament, she proposes a solution: a two-month swap. Eileen can live in London and look for love. Meanwhile Leena will look after everything in rural Yorkshire. But with gossiping neighbors and difficult family dynamics to navigate up north, and trendy London flat-mates and online dating to contend with in the city, stepping into one another's shoes proves more difficult than either of them expected.

Leena learns that a long-distance relationship isn't as romantic as she hoped it would be, and then there is the annoyingly perfect - and distractingly handsome - school teacher, who keeps showing up to outdo her efforts to impress the local villagers. Back in London, Eileen is a huge hit with her new neighbors, but is her perfect match nearer home than she first thought?

[Abby]

The Witching Year by Diana Helmuth

A skeptic’s year-long quest to find spiritual fulfillment through modern Witchcraft, perfect for fans of A.J. Jacobs and Mary Roach.

Diana Helmuth, thirty-three, is skeptical of organized religion. She is also skeptical of disorganized religion. But, more than anything, she is tired of God being dead. So, she decides to try on the fastest growing, self-directed faith in Witchcraft. The result is 366 days of observation, trial, error, wit, and back spasms. Witches today are often presented as confident and finished, proud and powerful. Diana is eager to join them. She wants to follow all the rules, memorize all the incantations, and read all the liturgy. But there’s one glaring problem: no Witch can agree on what the right rules, liturgy, and incantations are.

As with life, Diana will have to define the craft for herself, looking past the fashionable and figuring out how to define the real. Along the way, she travels to Salem and Edinburgh (two very Crafty hubs) and attends a week-long (clothing optional) Witch camp in Northern California. Whether she’s trying to perform a full moon ritual on a cardboard box, summon an ancient demon with scotch tape and a
kitchen trivet, or just trying to become a calmer, happier person, her biggest question Will any of this really work?  

[Abby] 

**Attack of the Black Rectangles by Amy Sarig King** 

When Mac first opens his classroom copy of Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* and finds some words blacked out, he thinks it must be a mistake. But then when he and his friends discover what the missing words are, he's outraged. Someone in his school is trying to prevent kids from reading the full story. But who? Even though his unreliable dad tells him to not get so emotional about a book (or anything else), Mac has been raised by his mom and grandad to call out things that are wrong. He and his friends head to the principal's office to protest the censorship... but her response doesn't take them seriously. So many adults want Mac to keep his words to himself. Mac's about to see the power of letting them out.  

[Lee] 

**Pocket Change Collective Series**  

Pocket Change Collective was born out of a need for space. Space to think. Space to connect. Space to be yourself. And this is your invitation to join us:  

- *The New Queer Conscience* by Adam Eli, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Imaginary Boarders* by Xiuhhtezcatl Martinez, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Beyond the Gender Binary* by Alok Vaid-Menon, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *This Is What I Know About Art* by Kimberly Drew, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Concrete Kids* by Amyra León, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Taking on the Plastics Crisis* by Hannah Testa, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Skate for Your Life* by Leo Baker, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Continuum* by Chella Man, Ashley Lukashevsky, Chella Man  
- *Food-Related Stories* by Gaby Melian, Ashley Lukashevsky  
- *Black Internet Effect* by Shavone Charles, Ashley Lukashevsky  

[Lee] 

**Old Mikamba Had a Farm by Rachel Isadora** 

Old Mikamba had a farm, E-I-E-I-O. And on this farm he had... a giraffe, a baboon, and an elephant! Meet Old Mikamba, who watches over a wide variety of animals on his game farm in the plains of Africa. Children will discover a whole new set of fun animal sounds as they are invited to sing along and roar with the lions, bellow with the rhino, whinny with the zebra, honk with the wildebeests, and more!  

A wonderful introduction to African wildlife that is great fun to read aloud, this truly irresistible rendition of a beloved song includes a list of animal fun facts and gives children a huge variety of animal sounds to imitate as they pore over the detailed animals, landscapes and patterns in the stunning illustrations.  

[Lauren S]
The Wheels on the Tuk Tuk by Kabir and Surishtha Sehgal

From the mother-son duo behind the New York Times bestselling A Bucket of Blessings comes a zany picture book about a wild ride on a tuk tuk taxi in India!

This picture book brings an international twist to the beloved nursery rhyme, The Wheels on the Bus, by bringing you aboard a busy three-wheeled taxi in India! Anything can happen as the tuk tuk rolls through town—from an elephant encounter to a tasty treat to a grand fireworks display. And in the midst of all the action, one thing’s for sure: passengers young and old love every minute of their exciting ride as the wheels of the tuk tuk go round and round!

Curious Creatures Working with Tools by Zoe Armstrong

From our closest relatives, the apes, to the clever birds who build bowers and crack nuts, this beautifully illustrated non-fiction picture book tells stories of amazing animals that have learned to use tools.

Look closely at that leaf floating down the river or that owl that looks suspiciously like a butterfly—there’s something peculiar about them, something not quite right... To evade capture, to find food or to protect them from harm, animals across the world have the talents of mimicry and camouflage—and they’re more convincing than you might think.

Including fun facts and bold illustrations, this accessible and fascinating guide is a brilliant first look at how animals camouflage and change their shapes. From the incredible snake that makes its tail look like a spider to the caterpillar that takes on the appearance of a viper, children can discover how and why some amazing animals use their powers of disguise—all while visually making connections with their own everyday experiences.

Seven Year Slip by Ashley Poston

Sometimes, the worst day of your life happens, and you have to figure out how to live after it.

So, Clementine forms a plan to keep her heart safe: stay busy, work hard, find someone decent to love, and try to remember to chase the moon. The last one is silly and obviously metaphorical, but her aunt always told her that you needed at least one big dream to keep going. And for the last year, that plan has gone off without a hitch. Mostly. The love part is hard because she doesn’t want to get too close to anyone—she isn’t sure her heart can take it.

And then she finds a strange man standing in the kitchen of her late aunt’s apartment. A man with kind eyes and a Southern drawl and a taste for lemon pies. The kind of man that, before it all, she would’ve fallen head-over-heels for. And she might again.

Except, he exists in the past. Seven years ago, to be exact. And she, quite literally, lives seven years in his future.

Her aunt always said the apartment was a pinch in time, a place where moments blended together like watercolors. And Clementine knows that if she lets her heart fall, she’ll be doomed.

After all, love is never a matter of time—but a matter of timing.
**Nothing Can Possibly Go Wrong by Prudence Shen**

Charlie is the laid-back captain of the basketball team. Nate is the neurotic, scheming president of the robotics club. Their unlikely friendship nearly bites the dust when Nate declares war on the cheerleaders and the cheerleaders retaliate by making Charlie their figurehead in the ugliest class election campaign the school has ever seen. At stake? Student group funding that will either cover a robotics competition or new cheerleading uniforms—but not both.

- Bad sportsmanship? Sure.
- Chainsaws? Why not.
- Running away from home on Thanksgiving? Nothing can possibly go wrong.

**Through the Woods by Emily Carroll**

A fantastically dark and timeless graphic debut, for fans of Grimm Tales, The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and the works of Neil Gaiman,

It came from the woods. Most strange things do. Five mysterious, spine-tingling stories follow journeys into (and out of?) the eerie abyss. These chilling tales spring from the macabre imagination of acclaimed and award-winning comic creator Emily Carroll. Come take a walk in the woods and see what awaits you there...

**Killer Triggers by Joe Kenda**

The most common triggers for homicide are fear, rage, revenge, money, lust, and, more rarely, sheer madness. This isn't an exact science, of course. Any given murder can have multiple triggers. Sex and revenge seem to be common partners in crime. Rage, money, and revenge make for a dangerous trifecta of triggers, as well.

This book offers my memories of homicide cases that I investigated or oversaw. In each case, I examine the trigger that led to death. I chose this theme for the book because even though the why of a murder case may not be critical in an investigation, it can sometimes lead us to the killer.

And even if we solve a case without knowing the trigger, the why still intrigues us, disrupting our dreams and lingering in our minds, perhaps because each of us fears the demons that lie within our own psyche—the triggers waiting to be pulled.

**Isla to Island by Alexis Castellanos**

This stunning wordless graphic novel follows a young girl in the 1960s who immigrates from Cuba to the United States and must redefine what home means to her.

Marisol loves her colorful island home. Cuba is vibrant with flowers and food and people...but things are changing. The home Marisol loves is no longer safe—and then it’s no longer her home at all. Her parents are sending her to the United States. Alone.
Nothing about Marisol’s new life in cold, gray Brooklyn feels like home—not the language, school, or even her foster parents. But Marisol starts to realize that home isn’t always a place. And finding her way can be as simple as staying true to herself.

[Emma]

The Night She Disappeared by Lisa Jewell

2017: 19-year-old Tallulah is going out on a date, leaving her baby with her mother, Kim.

Kim watches her daughter leave and, as late evening turns into night, which turns into early morning, she waits for her return. And waits.

The next morning, Kim phones Tallulah’s friends who tell her that Tallulah was last seen heading to a party at a house in the nearby woods called Dark Place.

She never returns.

2019: Sophie is walking in the woods near the boarding school where her boyfriend has just started work as a head-teacher when she sees a note fixed to a tree.

‘DIG HERE’ . . .

[Jackie]

The Death of Mrs. Westaway by Ruth Ware

On a day that begins like any other, Hal receives a mysterious letter bequeathing her a substantial inheritance. She realizes very quickly that the letter was sent to the wrong person—but also that the cold-reading skills she’s honed as a tarot card reader might help her claim the money.

Soon, Hal finds herself at the funeral of the deceased...where it dawns on her that there is something very, very wrong about this strange situation and the inheritance at the center of it.

[Caitlin]

The Lying Game by Ruth Ware

On a cool June morning, a woman is walking her dog in the idyllic coastal village of Salten along a tidal estuary known as the Reach. Before she can stop him, the dog charges into the water to retrieve what first appears to be a wayward stick, but to her horror, turns out to be something much more sinister...

The next morning, three women in and around London—Fatima, Thea, and Isabel—receive the text they had always hoped would NEVER come, from the fourth in their formerly inseparable clique, Kate, that says only, “I need you.”

The four girls were best friends at Salten, a second rate boarding school set near the cliffs of the English Channel. Each different in their own way, the four became inseparable and were notorious for playing the Lying Game, telling lies at every turn to both fellow boarders and faculty, with varying states of serious and flippant nature that were disturbing enough to ensure that everyone steered clear of them. The myriad and complicated rules of the game are strict: no lying to each other—ever. Bail on the lie when it becomes clear it is about to be found out. But their little game had consequences, and the girls were all expelled in their final year of school under mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of the school’s eccentric art teacher, Ambrose (who also happens to be Kate’s father).

[Caitlin]
If your mother was missing, would you tell the police? Even if the most obvious suspect was your father? This is the dilemma facing the four grown Delaney siblings.

The Delaneys are fixtures in their community. The parents, Stan and Joy, are the envy of all of their friends. They’re killers on the tennis court, and off it their chemistry is palpable. But after fifty years of marriage, they’ve finally sold their famed tennis academy and are ready to start what should be the golden years of their lives. So why are Stan and Joy so miserable?

The four Delaney children—Amy, Logan, Troy, and Brooke—were tennis stars in their own right, yet as their father will tell you, none of them had what it took to go all the way. But that’s okay, now that they’re all successful grown-ups and there is the wonderful possibility of grandchildren on the horizon.

One night a stranger named Savannah knocks on Stan and Joy’s door, bleeding after a fight with her boyfriend. The Delaneys are more than happy to give her the small kindness she sorely needs. If only that was all she wanted.

Later, when Joy goes missing, and Savannah is nowhere to be found, the police question the one person who remains: Stan. But for someone who claims to be innocent, he, like many spouses, seems to have a lot to hide. Two of the Delaney children think their father is innocent, two are not so sure—but as the two sides square off against each other in perhaps their biggest match ever, all of the Delaneys will start to reexamine their shared family history in a very new light.

Be Prepared by Vera Brosgol

A gripping and hilarious middle-grade summer camp memoir from the author of Anya’s Ghost.

All Vera wants to do is fit in—but that’s not easy for a Russian girl in the suburbs. Her friends live in fancy houses and their parents can afford to send them to the best summer camps. Vera’s single mother can’t afford that sort of luxury, but there’s one summer camp in her price range—Russian summer camp.

Vera is sure she’s found the one place she can fit in, but camp is far from what she imagined. And nothing could prepare her for all the "cool girl" drama, endless Russian history lessons, and outhouses straight out of nightmares!

Perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier, Cece Bell, and Victoria Jamieson, Vera Brosgol’s Be Prepared is a funny and relatable middle-grade graphic novel about navigating your own culture, struggling to belong, and cherishing true friendship.
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