Book Buddy, October 2024

Books to Keep You Guessing

Get ready for some pleasing, peculiar picks—not shiver-me-timbers scary reads, but a trio of “Unique Books to Keep You Guessing.” There’s nothing better in October than a good mystery, or offbeat story with weird characters to sink your teeth into. Clover delivers!

Your bee buddy has scoured the literary landscape and discovered intriguing page-turners certain to entertain, and perhaps stump the most clever, wily readers in Buzzville.

Page On! Enjoy!

Imagine a garden with plants bearing fangs, and distended eyeballs, plants that thrive on bones instead of fertilizer. Meet this odd menagerie in the quirkily creative “Millie Fleur’s Poison Garden,” with pictures and story by Christy Mandin.

Millie is unhappy about moving to just perfect Garden Glen. There’s not a blade of grass out of place in the town, where spotless houses line the streets “like candies in a box.” Except for one abode, dark and foreboding—the new home of Millie and her mom.

Millie is in a mood when they arrive, knowing she’s not going to fit in as a townie until her wise mom suggests she plant the seeds she’s brought along from her old yard. Millie gets to it.

Soon her sprouts spring from the earth, “fast … and wild.” She’s delighted with her Fanged Fairy Moss, tickled pick with the Glowing Jack-in-the-Bush, and eager to tend the Grumpy Gilliflower.

Though Millie joys in her garden, the snooty members of Garden Glen’s Rosebud Club are appalled, sticking their noses up in disgust. Their rude reaction sends Millie on a mission to have others appreciate plants that are eerily extraordinary. She succeeds, transforming Garden Glen into “… a truly one-of-a-kind-place.” Funny as this book is, the story reminds us “… some people are scared of things that are different.”

Things that go bump in the night are alarming, especially when the mysterious noise wakes you at midnight. In “We Are Definitely Human,” by X-Fang, readers meet Mr. and Mrs. Li, fast asleep in their comfy bed. Suddenly they’re shaken awake, as if by an earthquake, a strange spacecraft going belly up nearby.

Brave Mr. Li ventures outdoors, his flashlight providing light, his trusty pup along for protection. Suddenly, three odd creatures appear, obviously visitors from outer space. “Their eyes were big, their skin very blue and their shape … hard to describe.” The aliens state they’re “… definitely human.”

They continue to claim they’re earthlings, explaining their car broke down. When Mr. Li tells the creatures no stores are open at midnight to get car parts, they drag their dejected selves back into night, until Mr. Li stops them, offering them shelter for the night.

The goodwill Mr. Li extends is offered by others in the community, who embrace the strangers and make them feel welcome in a book that reminds us to practice the motto: “Do onto others.” Illustrations in this comical read are as funny as the tale, each character’s personality shining through.

A weird occurrence in the art museum where his mother works sends a boy reeling in “A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall.” Rami, an almost 12-year-old, lives in Maple Lake, a totally safe place, as he reminds his mother.

Rami wants to stay at home by himself, not accompany his mom to work as a cleaner at the museum, but she won’t hear of it, reminding Rami she’s from a country that was in a war zone. Rami also had a father from Lebanon, but he left when Rami was 2, a desertion the boy doesn’t get.

Each day, Rami, whose friends have stopped having lunch with him, does his homework in front of the same painting, and comes to know it very well. Imagine his shock when Rami gets to the art museum and learns the painting has been stolen.

Rami’s life gets really bizarre when he hears a voice coming from the place where the painting had hung, and then sees a girl floating, her nearly-invisible feet inches from the floor. Rami recognizes the girl, and soon realizes she was in the missing painting.

The painting is by an obscure artist and drew little interest at the art museum, but once it disappears, and a story about it hits the newspaper, the painting becomes the topic of conversation. When Rami reads details about the artist, he becomes determined to crack the case with help from his classmate Veda. His success will surely put an end to all of his troubles.

This fast-paced book is sure to have kid-sleuths donning their Sherlock Holmes hats to bust the culprit in a caper featuring an admirable hero, an ordinary boy determined to do good.

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