

Featuring 262 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction, Children's and YA books

KIRKUS

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REVIEWS



Edward Snowden

on mass surveillance,
life in exile, and his new
memoir, *Permanent Record*
p. 56

Also in this issue:

Jeanette Winterson,
Joe Hill, Maulik Pancholy,
and more

The stories—strong and graceful—raise issues that children and parents could profitably discuss together.

ZIZZLE LITERARY: ISSUE 3

of Pleckoo and Anand dominate the volume's two scenarios, but the tale unfolds in a way that very naturally expands to embrace not only a host of secondary characters, but also an abundance of intricate worldbuilding. Readers should keep in mind that the titles of these novels are apt: No detail of Dranveria's vast theological mosaic is left unexplored.

A dense, complex, and engrossing second installment of a genuinely promising high fantasy series.



ZIZZLE LITERARY Issue 3

Ed. by Dahl, Lesley
 Illus. by Moriyama, Schinako
 Promiseshore (126 pp.)
 \$13.65
 978-9-8879360-2-2

Third in a series, this illustrated collection of flash fiction edited by Dahl (*Zizzle Literary: Issue 2*, 2019, etc.) for middle schoolers and up focuses on fantasy and magic.

Zizzle Literary publishes concise, imaginative pieces that both parents and kids can enjoy and discuss. Each of the 10 stories is tagged with its reading level, from “Easy” to “Not Easy.” Magic is the theme of this third issue, whether “outright fantasy” or a more subtle variety, according to the Foreword. The opener, “A Reluctant Fairy Tale,” by Karen Heuler, riffs on elements from childhood classics like “Little Red Riding Hood.” Instead of being helpful and complaisant, the heroine refuses to help an old lady—with at first “delicious” and then more disturbing consequences. In other stories, magic can be delicate and poignant, as in “The Shelter of Abandoned Dreams” by Kimberly Huebner. An old woman works at a shelter that reunites people with their lost dreams. By the story's end, she's able to nurture her own adrift dream. Other stories tap into the anarchic energy of childhood, such as “Dead Mudge” by Melissa Ostrom; a teacher's death in the classroom liberates the children's vitality and creativity. Magic can shade into the sinister, as in “Uncle Frank” by Wendy Nickel. The title character insinuates himself into a family, but the child narrator knows she's never had an Uncle Frank. In “Serbian Dracula Mysteries” by Kate Felix, magic takes a turn for the funny and sweet. The story's puckish narrator, Arsen, is sent to school counseling for his pranks. Amateur detection is meant to be a good outlet for him, but investigating the daytime doings of his attic-dwelling uncle reveals nothing ominous. Instead, his uncle smiles at him “with more admiration than I have ever enjoyed from anyone else in my growly, vampiric family.” The book also includes photos, usually of the authors when they were children, and in a final section, contributors talk about their favorite books from childhood.

The stories—strong and graceful—raise issues that children and parents could profitably discuss together. “A Reluctant Fairy Tale,” for example, might prompt questions about why it feels good to be bad, what the consequences are of defying such cultural norms as helping old ladies, or why the narrative seems to both admire Eugenia's defiance and punish her for it. Genre

expectations could be another topic. “Serbian Dracula Mysteries,” for example, takes its horror influences in an unexpected direction, with Arsen reinvigorated, not drained, by his encounter with the unknown. Depending on reader taste, some stories could also invite more critical analysis. For example, is Eugenia perhaps too obviously a stand-in for an adult sensibility with dialogue like, “your false tests, your arbitrary trials”? Adding to the issue's charm are debut illustrator Moriyama's lovely, otherworldly rabbit-themed paintings resembling Japanese woodblock prints.

Well-wrought, unusual, and memorable fiction beautifully illustrated—a keepsake.



THE FOREVER TIME The Wolf & the Warlander

Davis, Chip & Valenti, Mark
 Illus. by Taylor, James
 Mannheim Steamroller (107 pp.)
 978-0-9656909-2-8

A young horse and a wolf pup transcend their natural instincts to form an unlikely bond of friendship in the first of a three-part series for middle-grade readers.

When Ghost, a wild Warlander horse, and his father, Pegasus, stumble upon a dead female wolf and her litter of newborns, the young horse feels an inexplicable tie to the sole surviving pup. He persuades his father to bring him to their pasture to look after. As the little wolf, Seti, grows, he becomes Ghost's playmate and companion, although the young horse's parents warn him that one day “*he won't see you as a friend. He'll see you as his prey.*” A dangerous chance encounter with Seti's father separates them, and, during their time apart, Seti lives as a junior member of his father's pack, learning how to be a wolf. Although tragedy brings the horse and wolf back together briefly, they can't deny their natures and their separate destinies. The link between them, however, will prove unbreakable. This action-packed and compassionate story is credited to Davis, the founder of the multiplatinum-selling New Age music group Mannheim Steamroller; the text is written by TV and YA writer Valenti (*Last Night at the Monarch Motel*, 2013, etc.). It pulls readers into a human-free, natural world of wild forest and pastures where the young animals grow through friendship and adversity. The tale employs a deft blend of authentic animal characteristics and humanlike thoughts and speech (the latter rendered in italics). Realistic charcoal images by Taylor effectively complement mood and action; a subtle design of hoof and paw prints running throughout the pages underscores the theme of interspecies friendship. The book also includes information about the lives and histories of real-life Warlander horses and timber wolves and a brief glossary of story-related words. In addition, there's a 45-minute CD of “soft atmospheric effects”—rain and thunder, running water, buzzing insects, frogs, and birds—and a bit of musical

pageantry and otherworldly sound effects that seem to represent the magical bond between Ghost and Seti.

An eventful coming-of-age novel with vivid, relatable animal characters and the promise of more adventures to come.



HUNTER'S SUPER NIGHT

Ellen, Laurel

Illus. by Laurice, Skye

FriesenPress (48 pp.)

\$22.49 | 12.99 paper | \$3.99 e-book

Jun. 20, 2019

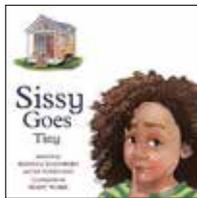
978-1-5255-5000-3

978-1-5255-5001-0 paper

A group of tiny owls face their first-day-of-kindergarten fears in this sweet debut from Ellen and Laurice.

At dawn, Hunter and all the good little owls are going to sleep, excited but nervous about starting kindergarten the next night. Grecko is afraid the other owls will make fun of his missing talon; Luma worries that others won't like his colorful wings; Little Hoot is nervous that she'll be too small; and Melody worries she won't make friends because of an injured wing. The little owls' families—a diverse group that includes single parents and older siblings as mentors—all offer the same encouraging song: “Be brave. Be kind. / And smile. In a while / Everything will be alright / It could be a super night!” The wise owl teacher welcomes the kindergarteners and helps each of them appreciate their special gifts, sending them home with greater confidence and fewer worries. Laurice's beautifully shaded cartoon illustrations feature a range of owl types—spectacled, snowy, barn, pygmy, and barred—to highlight the owls' differences and strengths and balance realistic owl features with anthropomorphic expressions. Ellen's accessible prose is complemented by the rhyming verses seeded naturally into the dialogue, and the refrain will inspire lap readers to join in. Although Hunter is the title character and does save the day, he's one of a strong ensemble of likable youngsters.

These charming, differently abled owls give just the right comforting encouragement.



SISSY GOES TINY

Flansburg, Rebecca & Norrgard, Ba

Illus. by Weber, Penny

Audrey Press

978-1-936-426-22-5

A young girl adapts when she and her family move into a tiny mobile house in this debut illustrated children's book.

Sissy, a biracial girl, loves her life, especially waking up in her big, spacious room. One day, Sissy's parents inform her that soon they will be moving out of their house and “going Tiny.” They explain: “Our new Tiny House will be on wheels...we can live wherever we want!...Living Tiny means we can own Fewer things and have More experiences.” Sissy

is skeptical, especially when her mom says, “We must look at everything we own and keep only the things that have a necessary purpose or are very special to us. We're going to do what's called a possessions purge.” Sissy feels reassured after talking to friends who already live tiny. They teach her how to repurpose old items, such as turning her baby blanket into a pillow, and how to take pictures of her “Favorite Things” and put them in a memory book. Sissy feels good about donating her old toys to families in need and becomes very excited when the tiny house arrives. She is thrilled to explore the house on wheels and especially loves her tiny bedroom; the bookshelves feature maps and home-schooling works, indicating that her new journey is just beginning. Flansburg and Norrgard offer an inventive concept here. Weber's (*I Belong*, 2018, etc.) illustrations are colorful and appealing, featuring friendly faces and realistic depictions that skillfully complement the text. Throughout the story, the authors deftly demonstrate their knowledge of the tiny house movement. The book also includes a page listing facts about tiny houses and a short history of Sissy (who was “named after” Norrgard's tiny house, Sisu). The tale's positive message should be welcomed by teachers and librarians. But the work relies heavily on telling instead of showing, with some long-winded descriptions (“The twinkle lights that used to be on her headboard were now wrapped around the handrail, and, just as she predicted, her homemade sun catcher glittered and danced in the light that streamed in from her new skylight window”). Still, the topic is timely, and Sissy's situation will be relatable to many kids as the concept of tiny living gains traction.

An engaging and child-friendly look at a growing lifestyle.



MISTRESS OF BEACON HILL

Gentry, Leigh

Kurti Publishing (355 pp.)

A lovely Irishwoman immigrates to Kentucky in this debut historical novel.

Arrabella “Ella” McCarthy expects to marry her childhood friend and remain in Ireland with her loving family for the rest of her life. But there are limited prospects for a talented Irishwoman in 1897, so when her American uncle proposes naming her his heir in exchange for moving to Kentucky and marrying a neighbor's wealthy son, Ella can't refuse. Her major consolation is that she'll be able to bring four of her beloved horses to her new homeland. But to do so, she must survive a dangerous ocean crossing where unlucky circumstances make her a target for harassment and assault. If readers know that Ella disguises herself as a man in response, they will begin to understand the contours of this adventure. The first of several romantic options comes to her aid as well, and he soon admires her beauty, resilience, and humor. Landing in America presents Ella with two more dubious romantic choices in the form of the Brannock brothers, Pdraig and Sean. The latter is Ella's intended, and she soon realizes that as