



BROWSE



 ***Jump the Cracks (review)***

Deborah Stevenson

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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DeKeyser, Stacy *Jump the Cracks*. Flux, 2008 [216p] Paper ed. ISBN 978-0-7387-1274-1\$9.95 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

Is the friendship firmly established in *Dog and Bear: Two Friends, Three Stories* (BCCB 6/07) in danger? It would seem so, since the first of these three stories involves Dog informing Bear that he's so angry with his friend that he's running away. Bear patiently supports Dog through his packing labors and then wistfully supposes that Dog won't stay for an ice-cream snack, which, of course, is all the convincing to stay that Dog needs. In the second story, Dog makes Bear a birthday cake so delicious that he can't resist testing it out himself; in the third, Dog is feeling poorly, but he's not so unwell that he can't find plenty of helpful labors for kind Bear to perform in assistance. As in the first book, text is simple and it's almost entirely couched in dialogue; even when Dog is alone and nibbling away at Bear's cake, he's exclaiming aloud over its irresistibility. Character is effectively delineated through the compact words, though, with volatile Dog the childlike partner to Bear's more adult stability (really, Bear's getting short shrift if this is an actual friendship). Sweeping, textured thick black lines form the outlines of the visual elements, enhancing the appearance of simplicity, as does the fact that most spreads are dominated by the figures of Dog (a rich wiener-dog brown) and Bear (a harlequin confabulation of autumnal tones). Combining some of the relationship dynamics and toy-animal charm of *Winnie-the-Pooh* with a pared-down form and style, this will make a cuddly read-aloud for young storytimers.

Mama what you've done"), so Ace makes a cell phone call to Mama, and he gets his wish to follow Daddy Rat from show to show. There's a rowdy cruise ship filled with smooching sweethearts and party animals, a sidewalk performance in Times Square, a rooftop concert for a high-toned cocktail crowd of pooches, and then on the way home, an opportunity for little Ace to wow a crowd and delight his father with his own vocal pyrotechnics. Crow's text swings with scat-along possibilities ("Cool Daddy Rat/ shooby dooby doo dat/ grabbed his hat in his rat flat/ zowie zowie zoo zat"), and Lester laces his agile line-and-watercolor pictures with plenty of visual humor (little Ace slumps greenly over the rail of the cruise boat; a mime supports himself against thin air to listen to Daddy Rat). This packs more punch than many jazz picture books of the earnest or informative variety, and it would easily harmonize with any musical storytime, or even Take Your Child to Work Day programming. EB

DEKEYSER, STACY *Jump the Cracks*. Flux, 2008 [216p]

Paper ed. ISBN 978-0-7387-1274-1 \$9.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

"Can they put you in jail when you're only fifteen?" wonders Victoria, who has found herself semi-accidentally kidnapping a toddler on a train at New York's Penn Station. The boy has been attended to only sporadically by his obviously troubled teenaged mother, and when she disembarks from the train to see her clearly criminal boyfriend she leaves the kid behind in the train bathroom. Victoria is already riled about faithless parents, since her divorced father has let her down as usual, failing to meet her train as promised; she therefore decides that she needs to keep this little boy safe, and they head out together on the departing train. Then Victoria discovers that the child's mother stuffed cash into Victoria's backpack to keep it from her boyfriend, who is calling Victoria threateningly and insisting on the return of what is clearly drug money; meanwhile, the police and Victoria's father are cajoling her to come back before the situation escalates. DeKeyser crafts what could be a contrived scenario with step-by-step credibility, and the linkage between Victoria's own parental disappointments and her dismay over the boy's mother's indifference is an effective motivator that's overtly but not heavy-handedly outlined. The book's acknowledgment that good solutions can be tough to achieve is bracingly realistic, with Victoria staying in contact throughout her odyssey with the boy's loving great-aunt (a character with such force that she makes her impact felt on the book merely through phone appearances until the very end), who has been unable to obtain full custody of her endangered great-nephew. With a combination of lively adventure and humane treatment of its characters, this is an absorbing and emotionally effective read, suitable for those looking to move up from the oeuvre of Wilo Davis Roberts. DS

DOLE, MAYRA LAZARA *Down to the Bone*. HarperTeen, 2008 [384p]

Library ed. ISBN 978-0-06-084311-3 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-06-084310-6 \$16.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 9-12

If Laura had known that surreptitiously rereading a love letter in class would lead to being outed as a lesbian, getting expelled from school, and being kicked out of her mother's home, she likely would have never opened it. However, it is in these grim circumstances that Laura truly begins to find herself. Fortunately, her friends



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