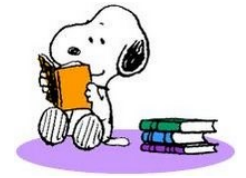




# RGS: Bonkers About Books!

June 2023



I can't quite believe that this will be the final Bonkers About Books of the year! I hope you are all looking forward to a long and relaxing summer holiday with a few books squeezed into suitcases (I'm already putting my pile together and it may need its own case!). It's been a pleasure to have shared so many books with you all again this year, and I'm looking forward to being able to shout about even more with you in September. Remember to let me know about your favourite summer reading.

Have a relaxing summer.

Happy reading

**Mrs Wall**

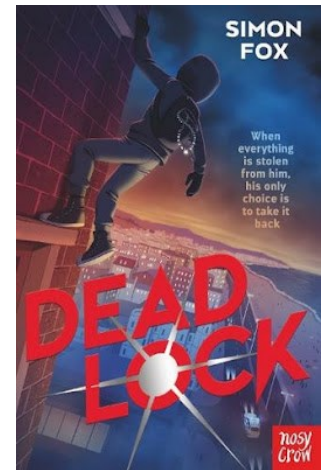
## **Deadlock - Simon Fox**

Archie Blake lives with his father, a police officer. It's just the two of them and things haven't been easy since Archie lost his mum, and 'race night' (an evening where they practise things like lock-picking and safe-opening) is the only thing that seems to bring them together. One evening, Archie's father doesn't come home on time, and then he is woken by a call from his father instructing him to pack a bag quickly and to get out of the house. When he meets up with his father, he discovers that he is on the run: he just needs a few days to sort things out. Unfortunately, he is arrested before the pair can get away, and now it's up to Archie to find out exactly what is going on and prove his father's innocence. With only a few days before his dad is in court, the race is on.

Having loved *Running Out Of Time* last summer (you can read my review [here](#)), I knew that I would enjoy **Deadlock** and the thrill of the adventure. What I wasn't expecting was just exactly how thrilling the book would be!

Archie has clearly had a difficult time and, without his mum, the relationship between him and his father is strained. It is also evident that Archie is struggling with his emotions and I loved the different calming techniques that were included. He is thrust into a completely different world with nobody and nothing to help and is forced to use his wits to help him. There is a steely determination about him and a drive to get to the truth, no matter what, and yet I liked the fact that he didn't want to break the law whilst doing it - did he manage? You'll have to read the book to find out! With only a few leads to go on, he needs all the help he can get, but meeting Bunny (a fiercely independent and strong character) isn't quite what he was expecting.

Told in chapters that are broken into days and times, **Deadlock** is one heck of a whirlwind and to use the term 'action-packed' would almost be an understatement! The adventure is thrilling and heart-stopping; the book is literally unputdownable and you will find yourself wondering how many times you can sneak a few more pages, just to find out more! **Dead Lock** is a compelling read and guaranteed to raise your heart-rate. Published on the 1st June, **Deadlock** is a guaranteed hit ... now I'm off for a lie-down to recover!



## The Stormy Life of Scarlett Fife - Maz Evans

The third and final book in the Scarlett Fife series sees the main character desperately trying to squash her BIG FEELINGS all over again in her determination not to cry so she doesn't make it rain... and she feels she has lots to not cry about, the biggest of which is her granny not having woken up from an operation. Then she has to try to find something she is good at for Rainbow Class Has Talent. With so many things going on at home, Scarlett just needs to squash her feelings so she doesn't get wet!

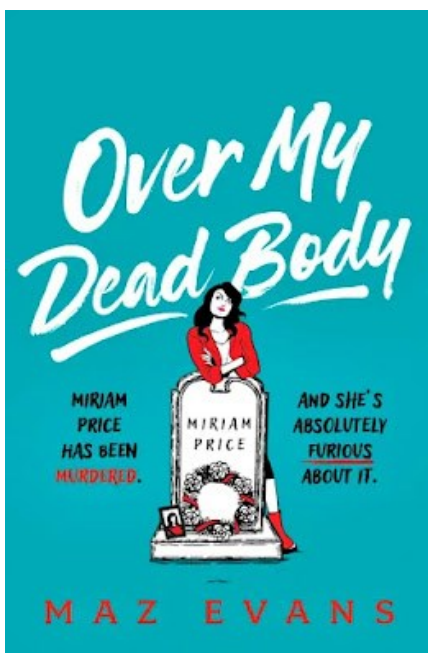
I love Scarlett and the laugh-out-loud humour that comes with her. She is blunt and I love her thoughts and observations on the world around her. I also love her BIG FEELINGS. I know she doesn't, but they really do help children to understand how to cope with things. This time, it's looking at how to cope with family changes (new babies on the way as well as the death of her granny) and changes to friendships. Maz is the queen of weaving humour with very important messages and she does this ever so brilliantly in **The Stormy Life of Scarlett Fife**. So many children reading the book will have to cope with moving house, losing a grandparent, as well as the imminent arrival of new siblings, and the humour within this book, as well as the hugely important messages, will help them to navigate that.

A brilliant end to the series; I defy anybody not to have BIG FEELINGS as they finish the book (especially when they read the acknowledgements).



## A book for parents

I'm often hesitant about recommending books for parents, but if you have enjoyed reading Maz Evans's MG books with your children, then you may enjoy her first book for grown ups, **Over My Dead Body**, which publishes on the 3rd August. I'm slightly biased because I'm a huge fan of her children's books but, if you would like to know more, then you can read my full review [here](#).



# THE DIAMOND BROTHERS

THE AUTHOR IS  
ANTHONY  
HOROWITZ

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT  
TIM AND NICK  
DIAMOND. THE SERIES IS  
FULL OF HORROR AND  
CRIME AS TIM AND NICK  
SOLVE MYSTERIES. IT IS  
SET IN LONDON.

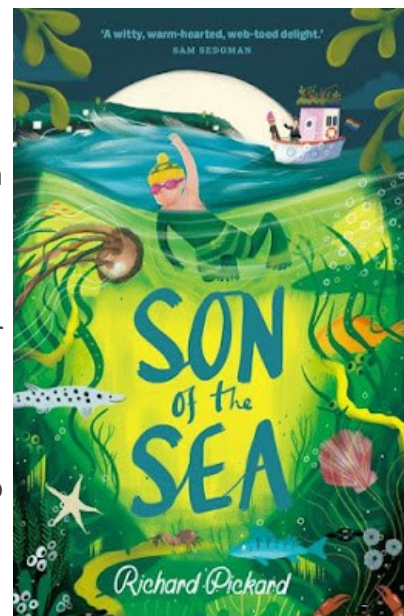
By Ewa D

IF YOU ENJOYED VARJAK  
PAW, TYGER OR HACKER  
YOU MAY ENJOY THE  
DIAMOND BROTHERS.



## Son of the Sea - Richard Pickard

Casper loves to swim so much that he will swim anywhere: in his neighbour's pond, in puddles and even in the fountain outside the local supermarket. Anywhere, in fact, other than a swimming pool or the sea for his parents have banned it. They don't even have running water in the house so the only time Casper can shower is when it rains. Casper's only dream in life is to swim the Channel and he frequently re-watches an old recording of his idol, Beryl the Bazooka, the oldest person to ever swim the channel. It's a dream he thinks will never come true as he lives so far away from the sea. However, when his parents become victim to an enormous runaway cheese, he is sent to stay with his grandmother Corallium whilst they recover. Not only is Casper about to meet a grandmother he didn't know he had, but he is about to spend the summer living by the sea. Can Casper finally get to swim in the sea and fulfil his greatest desire?



I loved the *The Peculiar Tale of the Tentacle Boy* when I read it (you can read my review [here](#)), so I was very excited when I was I received a copy of **Son of the Sea** and it most definitely lived up to my expectations.

Casper is a delightful main character and I love his determination and resilience. It doesn't matter that he isn't allowed anywhere near the sea or a swimming pool, he'll swim anywhere he can - in fact the book opens with him swimming in his neighbour's muddy pond, accompanied by at least one frog. It's evident that he lives for this and his webbed feet feel like something special to him; however his parents are obviously embarrassed by this, Casper just doesn't understand why. Once he arrives in Corallium, he feels the pull of the sea more than ever, but also notices something strange going on with his grandmother. It's down to Casper to discover what is going on. Alongside Casper are a host of other wonderful characters that I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know and I think Beryl was my favourite: if I ever visit Corallium, I definitely want to meet her - Ida too.

The idea of Corallium made me chuckle: a seaside town full of old people where every shop and restaurant seems to cater for them.

**Son of the Sea** is full of charm and chuckles, and from the second we meet Casper, I promise you will be drawn into the story and will be fully invested in Casper's desire to swim in the sea. Having read the acknowledgments, I understand how much the sea means to Richard as this shines out of the book and is completely reflected in Casper.

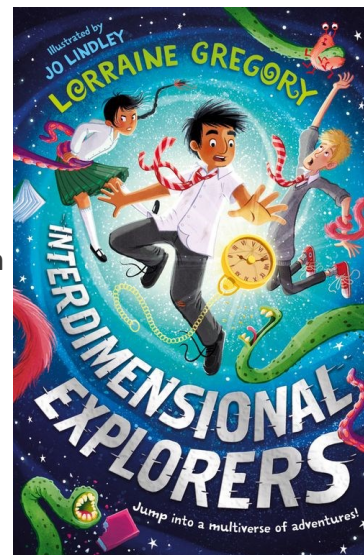
It would be remiss of me not to mention Ida, the grandmother Casper didn't know he had. Like Richard (again, read the acknowledgments), I was blessed with grandparents well into adulthood and I spent many a happy summer in Scotland with my paternal grandparents. As the book progresses and Casper and Ida's relationship develops, you see the love she has for him and I was sat reading, internally cheering that Casper was given this opportunity (not that I would wish giant cheese accidents on any parent!). **Son of the Sea** is a delightful celebration of grandparents and the older generation; it reminds us that age is just a number and you can do anything you want to, no matter how old you are.

Richard Pickard wowed us with his warm humour in *The Peculiar Tale of the Tentacle Boy* and he's absolutely done it again with **Son of the Sea**. It's a book about pursuing your dreams; about showing the world you are proud to be you, and about loving your family. I can't wait to see what Richard writes next.

Update: a child in my class nabbed **Son of the Sea** last week as soon as it arrived in the classroom. They gave it back to me this morning with this note: *'I liked this book because it represents friendship, determination and webbed feet. I would definitely recommend it.'*

## Interdimensional Explorers - Lorraine Gregory

When Danny's grandfather suffers a heart-attack which leaves him in hospital, he asks Danny to look after things for him. Danny assumes he is talking about the office he has on the estate where they live, where everybody comes to get their odd jobs done. However, Danny quickly discovers that this couldn't be further from the truth and he has, in fact, been entrusted with the Interdimensional Lost Property Office (IDLPO), with an alien as his new boss. He and his best friend, Modge, try to get to grips with things but struggle so, despite being sworn to secrecy about the place, Danny enlists the help of his cousin, Inaaya (without breaking his promise not to tell anybody; after all, he doesn't want his brains to turn to mush and leak from his ears). But just as they are starting to get the hang of things, everything takes a slightly sinister turn and it's up to Danny, Modge and Inaaya to save the multiverse.

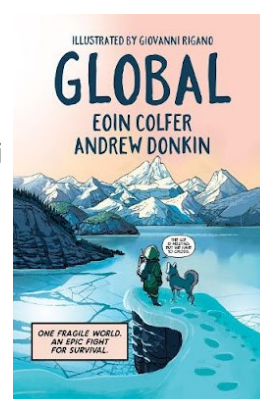


I'd been looking forward to **Interdimensional Explorers** and so I was excited when it arrived just in time for me to dive into one weekend, and it made the perfect read. The idea of a lost property office for the multiverse is intriguing and I thoroughly enjoyed finding out the sorts of things creatures were losing that needed to be returned. A secret business and one Danny's grandfather had clearly been running for years without anybody knowing; it's a big role for Danny to take over, especially when he is so worried about his grandfather (and feeling guilty that he didn't arrive sooner at his office). It is obvious that Danny wants to do his grandfather proud but doesn't have a clue where to start, even with Modge's help, which is why he resorts to asking his cousin (whom he finds incredibly annoying). I loved the relationship that builds between them and the bickering is something I know many children will be able to relate to with siblings. There is clearly more going on in both of their lives and this unfolds as the book progresses.

The book is a perfectly balanced recipe of adventure, giggles, fantasy and relatable family issues (complimented by the wonderful illustrations by Jo Lindley). With friendship and doing the right thing at the heart of the plot, this made the perfect weekend read and I know my class are going to love it (especially Shugly!). **Interdimensional Explorers** will make a brilliant read in the sunshine and will leave readers excited for book 2.

## Global - Eoin Colfer, Andrew Donkin, Giovanni Rigano

**Global** tells the story of two very different children: Yuki and Sami. They live very different lives; Yuki in the Arctic and Sami in the Bay of Bengal. However they have one thing in common: they are both suffering at the hands of global warming. Sami has lost his parents when they were swept away during a cyclone and now he and his grandpa struggle to make ends meet, catching very little in their fishing boat. Yuki has realised that global warming has resulted in polar bears and brown bears crossbreeding to create grolars. Concerned for their future, Yuki is determined to do something to help them.



I have a confession to make: **Global** is the first graphic novel I have read! I have another confession to make: it won't be the last! I loved everything about this book and gobbled it up in one go this morning! The combination of stunning illustrations and story-telling had me spellbound. Throw in the dual story, which switches every chapter, and you have yourself a winning combination. Not only does the book tell the story brilliantly, but it also perfectly highlights the plight of the world and the global crisis we are in the middle of. These two children may be far removed from those I teach, but I know that their story will touch everyone who reads it and will make them think.

Out now, **Global** has officially convert me: I am a lover of graphic novels!

## The Wall Between Us - Dan Smith

Anja and Monika are cousins and best friends living in Berlin in 1961. They play together every day and why wouldn't they, they live across the street from each other - only 46 paces; Anja's counted them. But then, one night, Anja wakes to a commotion and finds soldiers unrolling barbed wire along the street, cutting it in half. And shortly after, a wall goes up there as well. Suddenly, the best friends feel so far apart and can only signal to each other from their bedroom windows, but that has to stop as well for fear of retribution. In the blink of an eye, the girls' worlds have been changed forever, with Anja living in West Berlin and Monika in East Berlin. Life becomes very different for them but one thing remains the same: their longing to see each other. So when Anja realises that Otto, her cat, can make his way to Monika, then surely she can too.

**The Wall Between Us** is a very cleverly told story, using diary entries, letters, newspaper articles, and prose effectively. From the very first page, you know what's going to happen, you just don't know where and how, and interestingly this made the book all the more gripping for me. As the book unfolds, things become clearer and I found myself willing things to change; hoping that the thing I know is coming, isn't really and I've got it wrong somehow!

This feels like a very different book for Dan, using several styles of writing to move the plot along. This helps us to hear from both Anja and Monika and to get both sides of the story. There is an innocence in the diary entries and the letters that the girls write, and I really liked that; they are, after all, only 12 years old (well 12 2/3 and 12 1/2). At a time when there was no social media and lives were lived more simply, the girls don't fully understand the implications and the danger of what is really happening. They hadn't lived through WWII and don't fully understand the fall out and the reasons for the wall. However, within their innocence, there are some powerful messages about friendship, family, trust and love. Despite their youth, they manage to convey the unsettling reality of what is happening and the danger of the situation - the fact that this is based on real-life events, makes this all the more scary.

The book certainly opens up readers' eyes as to the Cold War, and I can't think of another children's book that is set during this time. I love reading books set during WWII and I'm fascinated by the time period, (indeed, Dan has written three: *My Friend The Enemy*, *My Brother's Secret* & *Nisha's War*); however, I know very little about the Cold War (although I do remember watching the wall come down on the news). The thought of friends and families being separated like that breaks my heart and Dan really explores this very effectively. The desperation for some people to escape at any cost; the need to be guarded about everything you say and do, even in your own home; the fear of doing the wrong thing would be exhausting and that comes across well through the story the girls tell.

If I put my teacher's hat for a moment, I can see **The Wall Between Us** making a fascinating class read: the discussion and the writing opportunities would be amazing.

I could go on and on about this book and those who know me will know that I'm already a huge fan of Dan's work. He is great at writing gripping reads which are difficult to put down. And **The Wall Between Us** was definitely that; however, in a very different and wonderful way. I don't know whether it was the idea that this is based on real history or that I knew at least some of what was coming; perhaps it was the use of different styles of writing - or maybe it was a combination of all of those things, but **The Wall Between Us** left me moved and with a serious book hangover.

I can't promise you won't cry at the end of the book (I certainly did), but I can promise that this is a book you will love and you will be thinking about long after you finish reading it.

