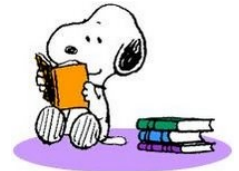




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

May 2025



Hi,

I'm always thrilled when people read the reviews I write about the books I've enjoyed and it still comes as a huge surprise and honour when a publisher chooses quotes from my reviews to help promote the books. This time, it's for *Shadow Thieves* (you can find my full review in this newsletter) and I have to admit that every time I see it, I can't quite believe it!

Mrs Wall



The House At The Edge Of The World - Nadine Aisha Jassat

Amal and her family have just lost their home and the library they ran so it's with a huge amount of luck that they receive a letter saying that they have inherited a house from a long-lost relative. However, when they get there, somebody else believes that the house is theirs and gives them 30 days to prove they have a claim on it. With a race to find proof, Amal and her family begin to learn exactly what the house means to them. As strange things begin happening, is it possible that the house is leading them to the truth?

Nadine's first book, *The Stories Grandma Forgot* was the first book written entirely in prose that I'd read (you can read my review [here](#)), and I really enjoyed it, so I was excited when **The House At The Edge Of The World** arrived.

Amal and her family are facing huge changes in their lives with the closure of Honeydew Library. Together, they know they will get through this one way or another but the house is something they don't expect. When they arrive, things are almost spooky and rumours in the village suggest that there is more to the house than they know. As Amal begins to explore, she starts to wonder whether the house is listening to her and magic weaves its way into the book. With Victoria and Hector breathing down their necks, there is intrigue and a race against time that creates a tension within the prose and will keep readers guessing.

I have to give a nod to Flavia's illustrations that wonderfully compliment the story.

With a host of characters to get to know (both wonderful and evil), including Hope House itself, **The House At The Edge Of The World** is a book that readers will delight in. It is a wonderful story of magic, family, perseverance and hope that will enchant readers and open their lives to the world of books in prose.



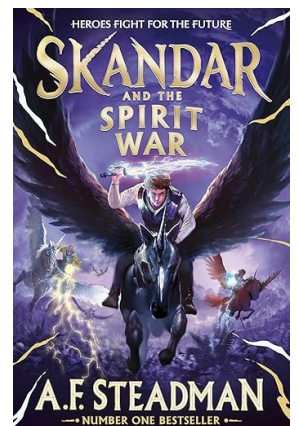
The Final Skandar Book Cover Reveal!

I know how many of you are eagerly anticipating the final book in the Skandar series (me too!).

Well, on the 4th May, AF Steadman revealed the title and cover of the book, and here it is in all its purple glory...

Publishing on the 28th August, join Skandar and his friends for their deadliest adventure yet with **Skandar And The Spirit Walr**, the heart pounding, explosive conclusion to this epic series!

I don't know about you, but I can't wait! I know many of you have asked, but no, even I won't get an early copy of this book!



Shadow Thieves - Peter Burns

Tom and his friends have lived their lives fending for themselves whilst trying to dodge the workhouse; shining shoes to make ends meet as well as picking pockets when they needed to. When Tom's friends find themselves locked in the workhouse and forced into a brutal regime, Tom is determined to rescue them if it's the last thing he does. When his shoe shining leads him to meet the Corsair, his life changes completely. Sceptical at first at the opportunity being presented to him, Tom succumbs and allows the Corsair to lead him to Beaufort's School For Deceptive Arts ... otherwise known as Thieves School. Set in a remote area of the mountains, discretion is paramount which is why the majority of the students are legacy students, coming from families with a long history of studying at the school; however, there are a minority of others, preferably orphans with nobody to disclose the secret to. As Tom tries to find his feet at the school, he quickly discovers that things may not be exactly what they seem and danger is lurking. The question is: will Tom live up to the Corsair's expectations and will he have what it takes to step up when the situation arises?



I have to say that **Shadow Thieves** has all the elements for a truly gripping read: adventure, an alternate world, a remote school and the promise of skulduggery. I was thrilled to be offered an early copy and it skipped the reading pile as I was so keen to dive in; however, part of me wondered whether it could live up to my expectations. Spoiler alert: not only did it live up to them, it went way beyond!

Initially set in a version of London where la Grande République de France rules and airships command the skies, we find Tom and his friends doing everything they can to stay out of the workhouse. However, when they are caught, it is Maxine who breaks Tom out, which is when he first meets the Corsair. His loyalty to his friends is evident to see throughout the book and is to be admired. Having been forced to be independent, he is resilient and strong but not immune to doubt and worry. He is a character that readers will quickly find themselves rooting for. I think, at times, he even surprises himself as his new life unfolds (I'm giving nothing away!).

I loved the concept of a school for thieves, spies, politicians and assassins, and was intrigued by the range of characters Tom meets along the way - the question is, who can he trust?

As I said earlier, when it arrived, **Shadow Thieves** jumped straight to the top of my reading pile and I began it before the end of term. It immediately caused a stir at school, with children quick to ask what it was about and even if they could borrow it before I'd finished it! My only regret is that I had to read the book in instalments when it quickly became apparent that hibernating with it and devouring it in one sitting was what I actually wanted to do! The book is an immersive adventure full of twists, anticipation and deception that's guaranteed to have your pulse racing. And oh my goodness, that ending!!

Publishing 5th June, **Shadow Thieves** is the first in a new series that is destined to be a huge hit this summer. I just have one question: when will I be able to get my hands on book 2?!

STEALTH Rising Storm - Jason Rohan

With Donna away in Trinidad for her birthday, Sam persuades Arun that using MADROID to head over there to wish her a happy birthday in person is a good idea. Little do they know that terrorists are about to attack an oil platform just off the coast of Trinidad and the trio unintentionally end up being at the heart of the action. But can they save the day in this, their most dangerous challenge yet?

The STEALTH series is one I have loved from the start and the books are hugely popular in school so I was thrilled to see there was a third book to enjoy.

STEALTH Rising Storm gets to the action from the very beginning, with Donna inadvertently thrown into the middle of the action when she is kidnapped during a morning run. With her father complicating things, she needs all of her skills to avoid disaster within the first few pages. It is fortunate that Sam and Arun decide to plan a birthday surprise for her and MADROID are needed.

STEALTH Rising Storm is a high action, tensely gripping plot from start to finish, with the danger being ramped up from the previous two books. Be prepared for an unputdownable read!



Oliver's Great Big Universe: Volcanoes Are Hot—Jorge Cham

Oliver is back in his second book. After his best friend, Sven, barfs epically in the school canteen and Oliver slips and falls in it, the pair become known as the 'Epic Barf Kids'. To counteract this, Oliver decides that he needs to find a way to take people's minds off the event. With his first book having been a big success, he decides that writing a second book will be the key to success so sets about discovering everything he can about volcanoes. But is the book good enough for him to win first prize and to ensure that everyone forgets that epic barfing incident?

This is a thoroughly enjoyable book that brilliantly combines laughs and science. I really enjoyed the wealth of facts that Cham had managed to deftly weave into the book, all explained in a way that will be easy for readers to understand. From facts about lava to continental drift; the layers of the Earth to different types of rocks - I think I may have even learned something new myself! The illustrations compliment the book perfectly and enhance the understanding of the facts that are being explained ... and add to the humour too!

With messages about taking care of the planet, friendship and being kind, **Oliver's Great Big Universe: Volcanoes Are Hot** is a book that will go down well in school and is perfect for fans of Wimpy Kid and Louis Stowell's Loki. Great as part of the series, but also great to read as a stand alone, I really hope there will be more from Oliver.



Exit Stage Death—Ava Eldred

Livi Campbell is heading to spend the summer in her favourite place: Camp Chance, a musical theatre summer camp where she will be a senior and will finally get the coveted starring role in the end of season performance. However, she didn't bank on two famous people being at camp this summer; nor did she bank on a camper showing up dead. Suddenly, her summer has taken a very different role and, along with a group of friends, she finds herself embroiled in hunting down a killer before they strike again.

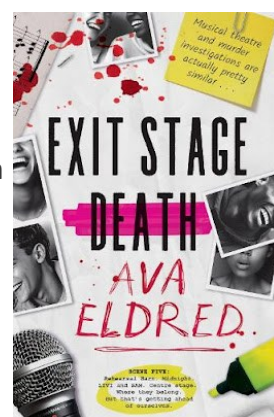
This was a wonderful book and one that kept me guessing until the very end! My theories changed with every chapter and I had so many people as the culprit at various stages as the plot unfolded and twists were revealed!

Set in America, readers will adore the setting, especially anybody with dreams of a career on stage, or those who dream of long summers at camp without their parents! From sharing dorm rooms to after hours parties, the book has it all.

The story is told from Livi's point of view and readers will quickly get to know her and understand her desire to make this her best year yet; however, everything seems to be working against her. When Chloe is found dead, everybody believes it's been a tragic accident; it's only Livi and her immediate friends that know otherwise, and that's down to the cryptic note that is left for them to find...

Exit Stage Death is a brilliant read that will grip and entice readers. It's perfect for those who are beginning to make the move from MG to YA, and it's already being coveted by members of my class; so much so that one girl approached me every day last week to ask if I'd finished the book and raced to my office to borrow it on Monday morning! She's had her head buried in it ever since!

Publishing 5th June, **Exit Stage Death** makes for a perfect summer mystery.



This edition of Bonkers About Books was proof-read by:

Harry and Maddie



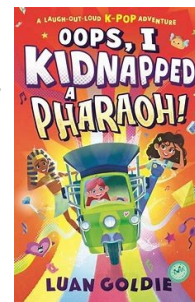
Oops, I Kidnapped A Pharaoh! - Luan Goldie

'When Skylar and best friend Dana accept a ride in Nana's new tuktuk, they don't expect to travel through time – nor to accidentally kidnap Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh King Tut and turn him into a K-pop sensation! Soon Skylar and Dana are on a whirlwind race through time to put things right before they change history for ever...'

Having already read great reviews about this book from some of my blogging friends, I was really looking forward to reading **Oops, I Kidnapped A Pharaoh!** and I wasn't disappointed. The book is fast paced and full of humour and excitement. With Skylar's Nana's tuk-tuk masquerading as a time-travelling machine, she and her best friend Dana unexpectedly end up on the adventure of a life-time. A trip to collect ingredients turns out to be more than nipping to the supermarket and they end up in Ancient Egypt meeting Tutankhamun! When the Egyptian King decides he needs to escape his responsibilities for a bit, he hides in the tuk-tuk and ends up in modern Britain attending a K-Pop convention! And that's only the beginning!

Readers will love exploring time travel and meeting a host of historical figures in this hilarious book that would make a great read aloud in class or at home. With themes of friendship as well as the butterfly effect to explore, the book is guaranteed to prompt some interesting discussions, not least of which would be where would you go and who would you want to meet?

Oops, I Kidnapped A Pharaoh! is a thoroughly enjoyable read that will leave readers with a big smile on their face.



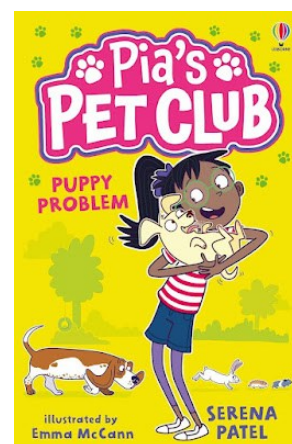
Pia's Pet Club Puppy Problem—Serena Patel

Pia adores pets and is desperate for one of her own, so much so she's read everything she can about them. She'd prefer a dog but would be happy with any pet; however, with her parents separated, the chances of her getting her dream are looking slimmer by the minute. Then she meets Hari in the garden of her dad's apartment building. He's trying, rather unsuccessfully, to train his puppy Luna before Nani arrives. With Pia's help, can they train Luna in time?

I love Serena's Accidental Detective series so I was thrilled to see that she's written the first in a new series. The book is a delightful read that is full of humour but also weaves in some important topics that will help readers. As well as the responsibility of own and looking after a pet (I also liked that there was mention of why people might be wary of pets), there are also issues around parental separation and Pia getting used to moving between two homes. As well as that, sibling relationships are explored.

Pia is a completely relatable character and one readers will enjoy getting to know. She makes mistakes and gets things wrong, and it's important that readers understand that this is part of life.

With illustrations by Emma McCann that perfectly compliment the story, **Pia's Pet Club** is a perfect chapter read for children in Years 3 and 4. I'm already looking forward to the next book in the series.



Robin Stevens Book Reveal.

I know how many of you enjoy the *Murder Most Unladylike* books and the spin off series, *The Ministry of Unladylike Activity*. Well, on the 6th May, Robin revealed the cover for the next in the series.

A Stocking Full of Spies is a Christmassy Bletchley Park spy murder mystery set in December 1941 and publishes on the 11th September.

Get the mince pies and the magnifying glasses ready!

