Brown Bag Book Review
Wednesday, June 14, 2023
12:00 PM-1:00 PM

Reviewers: Abby, Caitlin, Lauren S, Lee, Carl, Sarah, Lauren H, Carly

The Thursday Murder Club Series by Richard Osman [Abby]
A River Enchanted by Rebecca Ross [Abby]
A Season for Second Chances by Jenny Bayliss [Abby]
In the Lives of Puppets by TJ Klune [Caitlin]
Hamnet by Maggie O’Farrell [Caitlin]
Ten in the Bed by Jane Cabrera [Lauren S]
This Jazz Man by Karen Ehrhardt [Lauren S]
In the Tall, Tall Grass by Denise Fleming [Lauren S]
Farmyard Beat by Lindsay Craig [Lauren S.]
A Magic Steeped in Poison by Judy I Lin [Lee]
A Venom Dark and Sweet by Judy I Lin [Lee]
The Last Kingdom by Bernard Cornell [Carl]
Gods of Jade and Shadow by Silvia Moreno-Garcia [Sarah]
The Darkest Part of the Forest by Holly Black [Sarah]
Carrie Soto is Back by Taylor Jenkins Reid [Lauren H]
Come Fly the World: The Jet-Age Story of the Women of Pan Am by Julia Cooke [Carly]

-SAVE THE DATE-
Brown Bag Book Review
Wednesday, October 11, 2023
12:00 PM-1:00 PM
Brown Bag Book Review
Wednesday, June 14, 2023
12:00 PM-1:00 PM
*All annotations are borrowed from Goodreads.com

Reviewers: Abby, Caitlin, Lauren S, Lee, Carl, Sarah, Lauren H, Carly

The Thursday Murder Club Series by Richard Osman
In a peaceful retirement village, four unlikely friends meet up once a week to investigate unsolved murders. But when a brutal killing takes place on their very doorstep, the Thursday Murder Club find themselves in the middle of their first live case. Elizabeth, Joyce, Ibrahim and Ron might be pushing eighty, but they still have a few tricks up their sleeves. Can our unorthodox but brilliant gang catch the killer before it's too late?

This series includes: The Thursday Murder Club, The Man Who Died Twice, and The Bullet that Missed.

A River Enchanted by Rebecca Ross
Jack Tamerlaine hasn’t set foot on Cadence in ten long years, content to study music at the mainland university. But when young girls start disappearing from the isle, Jack is summoned home to help find them. Enchantments run deep on Cadence: gossip is carried by the wind; plaid shawls can be as strong as armor, and the smallest cut of a knife can instill fathomless fear. The capricious spirits that rule the isle by fire, water, earth, and wind find mirth in the lives of the humans who call the land home. Adaira, heiress of the east and Jack’s childhood enemy, knows the spirits only answer to a bard’s music, and she hopes Jack can draw them forth by song, enticing them to return the missing girls.

As Jack and Adaira reluctantly work together, they find they make better allies than rivals as their partnership turns into something more. But with each passing song, it becomes apparent the trouble with the spirits is far more sinister than they first expected, and an older, darker secret about Cadence lurks beneath the surface, threatening to undo them all.

A Season for Second Chances by Jenny Bayliss
Annie Sharpe’s spark for life has fizzled out. Her kids are grown up, her restaurant is doing just fine on its own, and her twenty-six-year marriage has come to an unceremonious end. Untethered for the first time in her adult life, she finds a winter guardian position in a historic seaside home and decides to leave her city life behind for a brand-new beginning. When she arrives in Willow Bay, Annie is enamored by the charming house, the invigorating sea breeze, and the town’s rich seasonal traditions. Not to mention, her neighbors receive her with open arms--that is, all except the surly nephew of the homeowner, whose grand plans for the property are at odds with her residency. As Christmas
approaches, tensions and tides rise in Willow Bay, and Annie’s future seems less and less certain. But
with a little can-do spirit and holiday magic, the most difficult time of her life will become...a season for
second chances.

[Abby]

In the Lives of Puppets by TJ Klune

In a strange little home built into the branches of a grove of trees, live three robots--fatherly inventor
android Giovanni Lawson, a pleasantly sadistic nurse machine, and a small vacuum desperate for love
and attention. Victor Lawson, a human, lives there too. They’re a family, hidden and safe.

The day Vic salvages and repairs an unfamiliar android labelled "HAP," he learns of a shared dark past
between Hap and Gio—a past spent hunting humans. When Hap unwittingly alerts robots from Gio's
former life to their whereabouts, the family is no longer hidden and safe. Gio is captured and taken
back to his old laboratory in the City of Electric Dreams. So together, the rest of Vic's assembled family
must journey across an unforgiving and otherworldly country to rescue Gio from decommission, or
worse, reprogramming. Along the way to save Gio, amid conflicted feelings of betrayal and affection
for Hap, Vic must decide for himself: Can he accept love with strings attached?

[Caitlin]

Hamnet by Maggie O’Farrell

Drawing on Maggie O'Farrell's long-term fascination with the little-known story behind Shakespeare's
most enigmatic play, Hamnet is a luminous portrait of a marriage, at its heart the loss of a beloved
child.

Warwickshire in the 1580s. Agnes is a woman as feared as she is sought after for her unusual gifts. She
settles with her husband in Henley street, Stratford, and has three children: a daughter, Susanna, and
then twins, Hamnet and Judith. The boy, Hamnet, dies in 1596, aged eleven. Four years or so later, the
husband writes a play called Hamlet..

[Caitlin]

Ten in the Bed by Jane Cabrera

A favorite nursery rhyme and counting book gets a fresh twist as Cabrera takes young readers on a
new adventure with every verse. Full color.

[Lauren S]

This Jazz Man by Karen Ehrhardt

In this toe-tapping jazz tribute, the traditional "This Old Man" gets a swinging makeover, and some of
the era's best musicians take center stage. The tuneful text and vibrant illustrations bop, slide, and
shimmy across the page as Satchmo plays one, Bojangles plays two...right on down the line to
Charles Mingus, who plays nine, plucking strings that sound "divine."

Easy on the ear and the eye, this playful introduction to nine jazz giants will teach children to count--
and will give them every reason to get up and dance! Includes a brief biography of each musician.

[Lauren S]

In the Tall, Tall Grass by Denise Fleming
If you were a fuzzy caterpillar crawling through the tall, tall grass on a sunny afternoon, what would you see? To find out, just follow the tiny tour guide as he inches his way through the pages of this book. You'll see ants and bees and birds—hip-hopping bunnies too. You'll even hear the sounds some of them make. Beginning as the sun is high in the sky and ending as fireflies blink and the moon rises above, this backyard tour is one no child will want to miss.

[Lauren S]

Farmyard Beat by Lindsay Craig

Author Lindsey Craig teams up with Arthur creator and bestselling artist Marc Brown in a toe-tapping farmyard dance-a-thon—perfect for toddler and preschooler read-alouds. As soon as the sun goes down, the animals are up! ("Sheep can't sleep. Sheep can't sleep. Sheep can't sleep 'cause they got that beat!") Before long, there's a giant farmyard dance party, complete with funny animal sounds. But what happens when all the racket wakes up Farmer Sue? Here's a colorful bedtime story that begs to be read aloud.

[Lauren S]

A Magic Steeped in Poison by Judy I Lin

For Ning, the only thing worse than losing her mother is knowing that it's her own fault. She was the one who unknowingly brewed the poison tea that killed her—the poison tea that now threatens to also take her sister, Shu. When Ning hears of a competition to find the kingdom's greatest shennong-shi—masters of the ancient and magical art of tea-making—she travels to the imperial city to compete. The winner will receive a favor from the princess, which may be Ning's only chance to save her sister's life.

But between the backstabbing competitors, bloody court politics, and a mysterious (and handsome) boy with a shocking secret, Ning might actually be the one in more danger.

[Lee]

A Venom Dark and Sweet by Judy I Lin

A great evil has come to the kingdom of Dàxi. The Banished Prince has returned to seize power, his rise to the dragon throne aided by the mass poisonings that have kept the people bound in fear and distrust. Ning, a young but powerful shénnóng-shi—a wielder of magic using the ancient and delicate art of tea-making—has escorted Princess Zhen into exile. Joining them is the princess' loyal bodyguard, Ruyi, and Ning's newly healed sister, Shu. Together the four young women travel throughout the kingdom in search of allies to help oust the invaders and take back Zhen's rightful throne. But the golden serpent still haunts Ning's nightmares with visions of war and bloodshed. An evil far more ancient than the petty conflicts of men has awoken, and all the magic in the land may not be enough to stop it from consuming the world...

[Lee]

The Last Kingdom by Bernard Cornell

This is the story of the making of England in the 9th and 10th centuries, the years in which King Alfred the Great, his son and grandson defeated the Danish Vikings who had invaded and occupied three of England’s four kingdoms. The story is seen through the eyes of Uhtred, a dispossessed nobleman, who is captured as a child by the Danes and then raised by them so that, by the time the Northmen begin their assault on Wessex (Alfred’s kingdom and the last territory in English hands) Uhtred almost thinks of himself as a Dane. He certainly has no love for Alfred, whom he considers a pious weakling and no
match for Viking savagery, yet when Alfred unexpectedly defeats the Danes and the Danes themselves
turn on Uhtred, he is finally forced to choose sides. By now he is a young man, in love, trained to fight
and ready to take his place in the dreaded shield wall. Above all, though, he wishes to recover his
father’s land, the enchanting fort of Bebbanburg by the wild northern sea.

This thrilling adventure—based on existing records of Bernard Cornwell’s ancestors—depicts a time
when law and order were ripped violently apart by a pagan assault on Christian England, an assault
that came very close to destroying England.

[Carl]

**Gods of Jade and Shadow by Silvia Moreno-García**

He Jazz Age is in full swing, but Casiopea Tun is too busy cleaning the floors of her wealthy
grandfather’s house to listen to any fast tunes. Nevertheless, she dreams of a life far from her dusty
small town in southern Mexico. A life she can call her own.

Yet this new life seems as distant as the stars, until the day she finds a curious wooden box in her
grandfather’s room. She opens it—and accidentally frees the spirit of the Mayan god of death, who
requests her help in recovering his throne from his treacherous brother. Failure will mean Casiopea’s
demise, but success could make her dreams come true.

In the company of the strangely alluring god and armed with her wits, Casiopea begins an adventure
that will take her on a cross-country odyssey from the jungles of Yucatán to the bright lights of Mexico
City—and deep into the darkness of the Mayan underworld.

[Sarah]

**The Darkest Part of the Forest by Holly Black**

Children can have a cruel, absolute sense of justice. Children can kill a monster and feel quite proud of
themselves. A girl can look at her brother and believe they’re destined to be a knight and a bard who
battle evil. She can believe she’s found the thing she’s been made for. Hazel lives with her brother,
Ben, in the strange town of Fairfold where humans and fae exist side by side. The faeries’ seemingly
harmless magic attracts tourists, but Hazel knows how dangerous they can be, and she knows how to
stop them. Or she did, once. At the center of it all, there is a glass coffin in the woods. It rests right on
the ground and in it sleeps a boy with horns on his head and ears as pointed as knives. Hazel and Ben
were both in love with him as children. The boy has slept there for generations, never waking.

Until one day, he does...

[Sarah]

**Carrie Soto is Back by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

Carrie Soto is fierce, and her determination to win at any cost has not made her popular. By the time
Carrie retires from tennis, she is the best player the world has ever seen. She has shattered every
record and claimed twenty Slam titles. And if you ask her, she is entitled to every one. She sacrificed
nearly everything to become the best, with her father as her coach. But six years after her retirement,
Carrie finds herself sitting in the stands of the 1994 US Open, watching her record be taken from her by
a brutal, stunning, British player named Nicki Chan.
At thirty-seven years old, Carrie makes the monumental decision to come out of retirement and be coached by her father for one last year in an attempt to reclaim her record. Even if the sports media says that they never liked the 'Battle-Axe' anyway. Even if her body doesn't move as fast as it did. And even if it means swallowing her pride to train with a man she once almost opened her heart to: Bowe Huntley. Like her, he has something to prove before he gives up the game forever.

In spite of it all: Carrie Soto is back, for one epic final season. In this riveting and unforgettable novel, Taylor Jenkins Reid tells a story about the cost of greatness and a legendary athlete attempting a comeback.

[Lauren H]

Come Fly the World: The Jet-Age Story of the Women of Pan Am by Julia Cooke

Required to have a college degree, speak two languages, and possess the political savvy of a Foreign Service officer, a jet-age stewardess serving on iconic Pan Am between 1966 and 1975 also had to be between 5’3” and 5’9”, between 105 and 140 pounds, and under 26 years of age at the time of hire. Julia Cooke’s intimate storytelling weaves together the real-life stories of a memorable cast of characters, from Lynne Totten, a science major who decided life in a lab was not for her, to Hazel Bowie, one of the relatively few black stewardesses of the era, as they embraced the liberation of their new jet-set life.

Cooke brings to life the story of Pan Am stewardesses’ role in the Vietnam War, as the airline added runs from Saigon to Hong Kong for planeloads of weary young soldiers straight from the battlefields, who were off for five days of R&R, and then flown back to war. Finally, with Operation Babylift—the dramatic evacuation of 2,000 children during the fall of Saigon—the book’s special cast of stewardesses unites to play an extraordinary role on the world stage.

[Carly]

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