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A Drop of Night

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Vic leap from the page with enough genuine life and emotion to smooth over the fact that background characters often stray too close to caricature, and the ending is satisfying despite being a little too tidy. The book's biggest strength comes from Adler's talent for pinpointing the raw emotion of every situation and building them into the feeling of a freight train barreling toward the girls as they try to decide their futures. **VERDICT** A complex emotional story in a lighthearted package. Highly recommended for older teens.—*Amy Diegelman, Vineyard Haven Public Library, MA*

BACHMANN, Stefan. *A Drop of Night.* 464p. ebook available. HarperCollins/Greenwillow. Mar. 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780062289926.

Gr 9 Up—Seventeen-year-old Anouk has been chosen for an amazing opportunity: along with four other teens, she has received an all-expenses-paid trip to France, where she will be one of the first people in over 200 years to enter the Palais du Papillon—the Palace of the Butterfly—which was built underground. But soon after arriving in France, Anouk becomes suspicious. Something is very wrong, both with the people who chose her and with the palace itself. Woven throughout Anouk's story is the tale of another teen. Aurélie du Bessancourt, eldest daughter of the Marquis du Bessancourt, who lives under the reign of Louis XVI. When the townspeople march on Versailles and the royal family flees to Paris, Aurélie and her siblings are taken to live in the palace her father built below their château. But upon arrival, Aurélie is confused. If the palace is for safety, why is she being separated from her sisters? Why is she confined to one apartment? And why won't her father visit? Smooth writing, an engaging plot, and only wisps of romance place this work's focus squarely on two headstrong and rebellious girls. Aurélie's account offers readers just enough information to build suspense throughout Anouk's tale, and with so many oddities, teens will have a hard time recognizing the true villain of the story. **VERDICT** For readers who like strong characters in a unique setting and prefer their horror with a streak of science fiction.—*Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina*

BENOIT, Charles. *Snow Job.* 288p. ebook available. Clarion. Mar. 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780544318861.

Gr 9 Up—It's the end of 1977, and high school senior Nick is trying to reinvent himself. In his effort to become a better person, he makes a list consisting of four phrases to live by: Stand Up, Stand Out, Stand By, Stand Fast. Adhering to the list proves to be difficult when Zed, a lowlife from Nick's past, reappears and persuades Nick to deal

drugs. Nick is able to convince himself that delivering cocaine is just a means to an end—a way to get enough money so he and his new crush, Dawn, can escape snowy upstate New York and move to Florida. Despite the danger and illegal nature of his activities, Nick comes to believe that he has achieved his metamorphosis into a better self through his drug deals. While the plot moves along quickly and will hold readers' interests and the characters are well drawn, there's a disconnect in the narrative. Nick's conviction that he has achieved his goals in the course of his drug running does not seem reasonable. At no point did he truly Stand Up, Stand Out, Stand By, or Stand Fast, and as such, his transformation feels hollow. Also, the cartoonish cover and large font will cause this to appeal to middle schoolers; however, it's largely about drugs and drinking (even the deceptive cover features a bag of cocaine). **VERDICT** An entertaining yet implausible read that teenagers will nonetheless enjoy.—*Melissa Kazan, Horace Mann School, NY*

CALAME, Don. *Dan Versus Nature.* 384p. ebook available. Candlewick. Apr. 2016. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780763670719.

Gr 10 Up—Dan Weekes, a budding graphic novelist, and his geeky, germophobic best friend, Charlie, are just trying to survive high school, their main goal being not getting beat up by the jocks. Meanwhile, Dan's mother has made a point of dating almost every man in California. Then she meets Hank, to whom she gets engaged before Dan even meets him. The teen's first impression is that Hank is the living version of Wolverine, leaving him checking his hand for fractured bones after their initial handshake. For Dan's 16th birthday, his mom gets him two tickets to go on a wilderness adventure to bond with Hank. To make matters worse, Dan is assigned to take Baby-Real-A-Lot (a mechanical baby) the same week as the trip. Dan convinces Charlie to go on the trip, with Charlie coming up with a series of increasingly raunchy pranks designed to scare Hank off from marrying Dan's mom. Calame throws a twist in when Penelope, a smart and adorkable teen, and her mother end up on the same trip. Full of uproariously funny scenes and foul language typical of today's teens, this is a journey through the wilderness that readers will never forget. The pranks include doctored-up chili, doe urine, rainbow barf, and an unplanned stalker. Under the surface, Calame touches on deeper issues, including Dan's absent father, Hank's own father issues, jealousy, and expectations of what makes a family. **VERDICT** Perfect for the most reluctant of readers, this book is a sure-fire hit.—*Erin Holt, Williamson Cty. P.L., Franklin, TN*

CARTER, Ally. *See How They Run.* 336p. (Embassy Row: Bk. 2). Scholastic. Jan. 2016.

Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780545654845; ebk. \$17.99. ISBN 9780545654883.

Gr 8 Up—This installment picks up where *All Fall Down* (Scholastic, 2015) left off. Grace is reeling from the realization of what actually happened to her mother and the lies her own family had encouraged her to believe. Her guilt and anger have reescalated, and she barely eats or sleeps. Partially in explanation for what happened, her grandfather's chief of staff, Ms. Chancellor, reveals the existence of a secret society of women of which Grace's mother was a member and to which Grace herself will soon belong. Ms. Chancellor reveals little more other than that the society is an ancient one that has been involved in much of Adria's political intrigue. Concerned about her mental state, Grace's brother Jamie returns to the embassy from West Point, bringing along a friend whose grandmother was from Adria. When the friend winds up dead and Jamie's Russian friend Alexei is accused of the murder, the threat of an international incident has all of Adria in an uproar. Convinced of Alexei's innocence and suspecting the involvement of the society to which she is shortly to become a member, Grace enlists the help of her friends to keep him hidden until they can discover what really happened. While Grace's ceaseless anger and self-recrimination weigh heavily on the story line, this surprise-filled page-turner with its cliff-hanger ending will not disappoint. **VERDICT** Carter delivers another plot-twisting thrill ride for "Embassy Row" fans.—*Cary Frostick, formerly at Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Falls Church, VA*

CASSIDY, Yvonne. *How Many Letters Are in Good-bye?* 456p. ebook available. Flux. Mar. 2016. pap. \$11.99. ISBN 9780738747453.

Gr 9 Up—Cassidy's epistolary novel skillfully explores the trauma of family tragedy against the backdrop of New York City in 1999. As her 18th birthday approaches, Rhea wrestles with experiences of homelessness and confronting the tragedies in her family's past by writing a series of letters to the mother she lost when she was only three. After running away from her aunt's home to survive in the city she had obsessed over as a child, Rhea is given the opportunity to work at a seaside summer camp for homeless youth. At camp Rhea begins to heal from the pain of her mother's death and her father's alcoholism and learns to accept herself and her sexuality. Rhea's undeliverable letters provide insight into her past and present, progressively revealing the tragedies of her past interwoven with the stark realities of her life on the street. Rhea's frustration over being perceived as disabled due to the childhood incident in which she lost her arm feels authentic, even as her denial of family history sometimes borders on naïveté. The individ-

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