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Twisted Fate

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pers of magic, witchcraft, and murder—soon replace the safety and comfort of the forest with menace and evil. The teen begins to hear her dead mother, rumored to be a powerful witch, speaking to her. And those murmurs are urging Rune to wreak havoc on the village and the people who burned her mother at the stake. Laurentz is the son of the Electorate. A chance meeting with the protagonist reveals dark secrets in his own family. Certain he has been bewitched, Laurentz is no longer sure whom to trust. Murgia's dual narration makes this historical fantasy a compelling read. The plot-driven text quickly moves the story forward, and the vivid descriptions of 17th-century southwestern Germany pull readers in. Lead and supporting characters are a bit flat and two-dimensional, but the pacing and narrative are absorbing. A solid novel for fans of historical fantasy that are looking for a fast-paced, action-filled tale.—*Elaine Baran Black, Georgia Public Library Service, Atlanta*

MYERS, Walter Dean. *On a Clear Day.* 256p. Crown. 2014. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780385387538; lib. ed. \$20.99. ISBN 9780385387545; ebk. \$10.99. ISBN 9780385387552. LC 2013046708.

Gr 7-10—Myers dips his toe into a genre not typically found in his canon with this futuristic dystopian series opener. Eight corporations (C8) have taken over the world and society is strictly classified between the haves and the have-nots. A team of eclectic characters band together to stand up to the corporations and ultimately fight a global terrorist. Effort has clearly been made to diversify this cast, including a smart Dominican female lead. The supporting characters are less fleshed out. Though there is a final climatic battle scene, most of the story deals with negotiation and strategic planning, rather than a violent confrontation. The first-person narration propels readers forward, though characters at times take surprising or unrealistic action. Fans of Myers's work will welcome his characteristic themes of class, gender, and race, though they may miss deeper character and plot development. Reluctant readers, however, will be attracted to the slim size and easy-to-follow plotline.—*Carrie Shaurette, Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ*

OATMAN, Linda. *Teeny Little Grief Machines.* 252p. (Gravel Road). ebook available. Saddleback. 2014. pap. \$9.95. ISBN 9781622508839.

Gr 9 Up—Issues of teen pregnancy, drug use, self-harm, alcoholism, autism, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome all shape High's verse novel. Narrator Lexi, 16, lives with her previously incarcerated father, a vacuous and uneducated stepmother, and a brother who is severely autistic. Her mother was a strip-

per and saddled Lexi with what her classmates call a "stripper" name. This could be—and sometimes is—a heavy-handed problem book. But the verse form serves the voice of Lexi well, and the poems feel authentic. The initial couplet ("My name is Lexi/(rhymes with sexy)") is initially cringe-inducing, but readers begin to understand its aptness as more is revealed about Lexi and her family history. When the teen's life burdens become too much to bear, she goes to a psychiatric hospital, is healed, and eventually emerges strong enough to survive in her relatively unchanged circumstances. A quick read and a useful one, with some interesting examples of concrete verse, especially, "Life Eats Me Alive," which screams Lexi's anguish in varied fonts.—*Nina Sachs, Walker Memorial Library, Westbrook, ME*

OLSON, Norah. *Twisted Fate.* 272p. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen Bks. Jan. 2015. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9780062272041; ebk. \$9.99. ISBN 9780062272072.

Gr 9 Up—Allyson and Sydney Tate may be sisters, but they are hardly alike. Allyson dresses like a model from the L.L.Bean catalog and spends her free time baking muffins, while Sydney skateboards, smokes pot with her friends, and listens to punk rock. Then Graham Copeland moves in next door. Graham is an artist and his medium is film; he quickly and easily loses himself behind his ever-present camera. Graham is cute and seems a little shy, but Syd knows that something about him is off. She just doesn't know if she can convince Ally in time. Set in present-day coastal Maine, Olson's first young adult novel is an exploration of drugs, mental illness, individual perception, friendship, and familial relationships. The work cycles through the perspectives of Ally, Syd, Graham, and a few others, with consecutive chapters that often convey the same scene from two different points of view. Olson combines this distinct style of storytelling with past-tense narration and subtle foreshadowing to develop the three main characters, to create conflict as well as tension, and to propel readers forward. A great addition to any YA realistic fiction collection, this thriller that will keep readers guessing until the very last page.—*Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina*

PURDY, Rebekah. *The Winter People.* 380p. ebook available. Entangled. 2014. pap. \$16.99. ISBN 9781622663682; ebk. \$7.99. ISBN 9781622663699.

Gr 9 Up—Salome Montgomery hates winter. Having fallen through the frozen pond on her grandmother's land as a child due to haunting voices wanting to kill her, she works hard to stay away from the gated woods on the family property. But when

her grandparents go to the warmth of Arizona for health reasons, Salome has to take care to keep her family land safe. Discovering that there is more to the voices that she first thought, Salome is pulled into a land of magic, danger, and a curse that has haunted her family for centuries. She is the only one capable of saving not just herself but an entire race of people. But will Salome be able to break the curse before she's killed? The plot of *The Winter People* is fascinating enough to keep readers interested, but many of the more intriguing aspects, such as Salome's attempts to figure out how to break the curse and just why her family was cursed in the first place, are glossed over in favor of a complicated but incredibly bland love square among Salome; Nevin, the mysterious stranger; Gareth, the other mysterious stranger; and Colton, the boy Salome has gone to school with for years. Purdy's storytelling lacks punch, characters are two-dimensional, and plot elements are told rather than shown. The action falls flat and there is never a true sense of danger, leading to an anticlimactic climax. Readers who enjoy novels dealing with fairies may enjoy this one, but authors like Julie Kagawa and Holly Black have done this before and have done it much better.—*Paige Garrison, Aurora Central Public Library, CO*

REYNOLDS, Jason. *The Boy in the Black Suit.* 256p. S. & S./Atheneum. Jan. 2015. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9781442459502; ebk. \$10.99. ISBN 9781442459526. LC 2014001493.

Gr 7 Up—Matt's mother just died, and his dad isn't coping well, hanging out with the local drunk and downing whiskey, which results in his getting hit by a car and landing in the hospital. Matt is also grieving his mom's death and now he's on his own, until he lands a job at the local funeral home: \$15 an hour and Mr. Ray as his boss. Attending other people's funerals helps the teen come to grips with his own grief. Hearing mourners express their real thoughts of suffering at each funeral allows Matt to figure out his own feelings. Mr. Ray is wise and shows up at all the right times to help out the struggling young man, and when Mr. Ray's secrets come to light, he appears even cooler in Matt's eyes. Amid all this, Matt meets Lovey, the girl of his dreams, who is smart, funny, gorgeous, and tough. A mystery intersecting Lovey's life and that of Matt's best friend, Chris, deepens the plot. Written in a breezy style with complex characters who have real lives, this is another hit for Reynolds, fresh off the success of his *When I Was the Greatest* (S. & S., 2014). The author's seemingly effortless writing shines in this slice-of-life story, which covers a lot of the protagonist's emotional ground. The realistic setting and character-driven tale keeps readers turning