



Bambert's Book of Missing Stories

Books Reviewed:

[Bambert's Book of Missing Stories](#) [1]

Issue:

[175](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[George Hunt](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Bambert is a great writer, but nobody knows this because he lives alone in an inherited house above a grocery store, confined to its limits by a painful skeletal condition that has restricted his growth and ability to move. He feels exiled from everyday life, but at the same time intimidated by its stridency. His consolations are a friendly bond with the kindly grocer, and his book of wishes, a series of stories inspired by his gazing at the moon. One day, discovering that there is room in his book for only one more story, he decides to set the contents free, so that they can find their own settings. He launches them into the sky on little balloons, confident that they will be returned by their finders, whose locations will be integrated into a redrafted Book of Wishes.

What follows is the compendium that Bambert writes as the stories return one by one, linked by his reflections on how the stories relate to his desires and regrets. The tales are all to do with suffering of one kind or another, sometimes alleviated by kindness and courage, and sometimes not. They include a meeting between a whale and the great grandchild of a boy who had helped rescue it three generations earlier, the inveiglement of a living beggar boy into the stock of a waxworks, and a truly chilling tale about a group of children being marched towards a pit beside a freezing river by an SS squad. All of the tales are concise, intriguing and very moving, especially the final one, despatched by Bambert as four blank pages, and completed by another hand.

Bambert's visions are enticingly strange but distinctly sombre, and the latter fact should be borne in mind if you intend to share the book with younger children. Emma Chichester Clark, working in a more chiaroscuro world than the ones she is better known for depicting, represents this atmosphere very hauntingly: the profiles of buildings and landscapes and people are sharply incised against a subfusc palate of blues and grays, which also tinges the margins and backgrounds of the text pages. This is a fascinatingly different book, one which reinvisages familiar lessons about the power of solidarity and imagination, without making much of a pretence about the grimness that gives birth to such necessities.

Running Order:

42

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/bamberts-book-of-missing-stories>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/175>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/george-hunt>