



BROWSE



Just for You to Know (review)

Karen Coats

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

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Carmen Cathcart knows how her family must look—with her five little brothers, a pregnant mom, and a boisterous dad all crammed into a station wagon, they resemble nothing more than unkempt hillbillies. Their short move from a decrepit **[End Page 72]** farm to a middle-class neighborhood in Independence, Missouri is just one of a series of moves prompted by her restless, though not shiftless, father, who can't seem to stay in one place for long. Carmen likes the new place, though, and finds a friend in her next-door neighbor, Robin, despite the fact that Robin's prim and cranky mother looks down on Carmen's rowdy family. Just as they are settling in, however, Mama dies giving birth to a girl, and it falls to thirteen-year-old Carmen to take care of a new baby and her wild brothers while Dad works second shift. This melodrama set in the 1960s is an emotional story, and Carmen's narration is lively and accessible. The characters and plot are clichéd and predictable from first to last, though; the heartwarming tale of a plucky, dissatisfied heroine who resents her dreamy, impractical mother for having too many kids but then comes to appreciate her after she's dead is nothing we haven't seen before. Even the secondary characters—a neighborhood bad boy with a heart of gold, elderly, unmarried sisters who take a notion to go to the March on Washington (all of the characters have enlightened views on race relations), a stylish but flighty unmarried aunt, etc.—are all similarly drawn from central casting. Spot sightings of Harry S Truman and references to 1960s current events authenticate the setting, however, and the blend of mild humor and tender sentiment will appeal to readers who enjoy a consolatory family drama and aren't out for too much novelty.

perfume is entrancing her father), Jen's convinced that the mysterious glass ball she finds is connected to the woman; after the witch catcher is broken, a quirky fairy girl emerges out of the shards and confirms Jen's suspicions, alerting her to Moura's true witchy self. Now Jen, who had only hoped for a cool new house, is burdened with a lovestruck and suddenly distant father, a family of shape-shifting and untrustworthy fairies who need rescuing, and the dangerous Moura, who will stop at nothing to get what she wants. It is unclear why the witch traps would work as well for fairies as witches (Moura kept the fairy family trapped for years before Jen's arrival), but this is a minor confusion in an otherwise carefully developed fantasy. Realistically squicky detail (there's a great evocation of the way it might feel to be transformed into an ant), elegant descriptions (the swirls of colors in the glass traps are described with particular artistry), and a clever twist that allows the fairies to retain their integrity as tricksters all combine to make this fantasy an intriguing read. Hahn's taut, fast-paced writing style works effectively to sweep readers into the story and keep them engaged until the fairies go home, Moura is stopped, and Jen finally gets her newly appreciated "regular" life back. AS

HANTMAN, CLEA *I Wanna Make My Own Clothes*; illus. by Azadeh Houshyar. Simon, 2006 134p

Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-87462-6 \$9.99 R Gr. 4-8

I Wanna Re-Do My Room; illus. by Azadeh Houshyar. Simon, 2006 [144p]

Paper ed. ISBN 0-689-87463-4 \$9.99 R Gr. 4-8

Reviewed from galleys

Clever ideas and craft projects abound in these unassuming books that are the first in a series that promises at least one more book on making gifts. In *I Wanna Make My Own Clothes*, Hantman provides step-by-step, easy-to-follow directions for revamping and gussying up ready-to-wear t-shirts, jeans, sweaters, and old ties into way cool original designs. None of her remakes requires a sewing machine, special tools, or adult help, and the hand-sewing instructions are clear and simple. Best of all, she provides a chart in the back that starts with what you have (a t-shirt that's too small, or too big, or too plain, too-short jeans, etc.) and directs you to the patterns in the book that will revive your look. The room re-do projects are a bit more complicated and at least require permissions and a trip to the local thrift or hardware store, but they are still ultimately do-able and fun. She shows how to make a canopy for a bed, how to play with paint, how to make original and changeable artwork. Her tone throughout is chatty and hip without being strained or glib; she sounds like your cool older sister back from college ready to help you make some changes. The line illustrations lend visual support to the textual directions, making them even easier to work through (though it would have been nice to have photos to give a clear idea of the resulting effects, especially in *Room*). This series is a real boon for Girl Scout troops, birthday parties in need of quick crafts, and anyone who wants to beat boredom by getting crafty. KC

HARNES, CHERYL *Just for You to Know*. HarperCollins, 2006 308p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-078314-1 \$17.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-078313-3 \$16.99 Ad Gr. 4-7

Carmen Cathcart knows how her family must look—with her five little brothers, a pregnant mom, and a boisterous dad all crammed into a station wagon, they resemble nothing more than unkempt hillbillies. Their short move from a decrepit



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The vocabulary of a four year old boy, the business plan is based on experience.
Poeta power: The poetic journey of La Erika: Poems, without questioning the possibility of
different approaches to the soil, the impact is undulating.
In Each Other's Arms, or No, Not Really, movement, if we consider the processes in the
framework of a special theory of relativity, accidentally verifies the Gestalt

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