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## ***The Bone Witch* by Rin Chupeco (review)**

April Spisak

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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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*April Spisak*

CHUPECO, RIN *The Bone Witch*. Sourcebooks Fire, 2017 [416p]

ISBN 978-1-4926-3582-6 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 8-10

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In this sweeping high fantasy, Chupeco concocts a grim world of magic, both light and dark, and of one bone witch in particular, Tea. Tea learns of her powers after she raises her brother Fox from the dead, a rare ability indeed, and one that garners much suspicion. Fortunately, she's taken under the wing of those who can train her, helping her harness her magic in ways that can help others and keep the land itself balanced. Fox is a constant companion, protective, loyal, and steady in spite of his undead nature. The setup is intriguing, as short italicized snippets precede a verbal exchange between Tea and a storyteller, who sought her out because of the legends surrounding her, and who now has seven days to collect as many memories from her as possible. The longer chapters are focused on Tea's evolution from child to old soul, though she is only seventeen by novel's end. Horror buffs who enjoyed Chupeco's earlier novels (*The Suffering*, BCCB 12/15, etc.) may find this a sharp tonal shift as it is much more fantasy than horror, but the author's keen [End Page 304] eye for exploring the afterlife is consistent, and there are plenty of chilling scenes that prove this novel fits within both genres effectively. A map and description of the primary kingdoms are necessary orientation tools.

(BCCB 7/12). Anna's voice has a quiet directness about it, as when she discusses her conflicting emotions about her loving but sometimes distant Chinese-born mother, and readers will sympathize with her as she grapples with the idea that relationships are more complex than purely good or bad. Barton's softly blended monochromatic illustrations match the delicacy of the text. Fans of Anna and Laura's adventures will enjoy seeing the beginning of the girls' friendship. KQG

**CHENG, JACK** *See You in the Cosmos*. Dial, 2017 [320p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-399-18637-0 \$16.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-399-18639-4 \$10.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-7

Everything is all set—eleven-year-old Alex, accompanied by his beloved if timid dog, Carl Sagan, is taking his homemade rocket to the Southwest High-Altitude Rocket Festival where he will shoot it and its payload, an iPod that records Alex's reflections about his life for the aliens he hopes will be their audience, into space. Though his rocket fails at launch, Alex's own journey takes flight: two adult would-be rocketeers take him to Las Vegas, where Alex discovers a half-sister, Terra, he never knew about, which leads to more road-tripping and the reveal of more secrets about Alex's family. Alex is a poignant but sturdy figure, and while his narration suggests he may be on the autism spectrum, the book wisely focuses instead on his sequence of quests and his relationships with the people who help him; his growing bond with nineteen-year-old Terra is the heartwarming standout of his emotional journey. The book strains credulity to the breaking point, however, in removing the obstacles to Alex's journey time and time again and in giving him a hugely neglectful home life (his single mother proves to have schizophrenia) that has completely escaped intervention. In addition, there are just too many plot elements in play, so that some, such as Alex's (temporary) loss of his beloved dog, simply don't have room to land, and Alex's narration is at times dauntingly torrential. A kid on the loose being helped by benevolent adults is still an enticing premise, however, and youngsters with rocketry and independence dreams of their own may want to follow Alex. DS

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