



The Peculiar

Stefan Bachmann

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Don't get yourself noticed and you won't get yourself hanged.

In the faery slums of Bath, Bartholomew Kettle and his sister Hettie live by these words. Bartholomew and Hettie are changelings--Peculiars--and neither faeries nor humans want anything to do with them.

One day a mysterious lady in a plum-colored dress comes gliding down Old Crow Alley. Bartholomew watches her through his window. Who is she? What does she want? And when Bartholomew witnesses the lady whisking away, in a whirling ring of feathers, the boy who lives across the alley--Bartholomew forgets the rules and gets himself noticed.

First he's noticed by the lady in plum herself, then by something darkly magical and mysterious, by Jack Box and the Raggedy Man, by the powerful Mr. Lickerish . . . and by Arthur Jelliby, a young man trying to slip through the world unnoticed, too, and who, against all odds, offers Bartholomew friendship and a way to belong.

Part murder mystery, part gothic fantasy, part steampunk adventure, *The Peculiar* is Stefan Bachmann's riveting, inventive, and unforgettable debut novel.

The Peculiar Details

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From Reader Review The Peculiar for online ebook

Soumi says

Bachmann, you rock dude.

My love and fondness for middle grade novel brought my interest in The Peculiar, and truth to be spoken; I was left absolutely and utterly mesmerized by this gripping and enchanting gothic mystery. If you have very sweet idea of faery folks being beautiful and charming, then let me warn you, they are charming indeed but a very haunting way.

Bartholomew Kettle and his sister Hettie are changelings, known as Peculiars and hated by both humans and Faes. When a mysterious lady whisked away a boy, Bartholomew broke the rule, he got noticed by the dangerous lady in plum coloured dress and by many that included risking his life. In this turmoil, Bartholomew made an unlikely ally, young Arthur Jelliby.

Part steampunk, part gothic, part feary magic and part mystery, the peculiar is one of best, actually in my opinion it's the best MG book of 2012, I have come across. The writing was magnificent and classic, very simple yet so unlikely. The novel itself unfolds the dark monstrous secret that lies beneath, mysteries tangled in magic and murder.

In this alternative Great Britain, each of the characters of The Peculiar was chosen and crafted very carefully and skilfully, especially Bartholomew who was very wise and courageous, unlike the other boys at his age. I'm also very much influenced by Jelliby and Hattie. I would like to see more of little Hattie in next installment.

At this very young age, author Stefan Bachmann has wrote something that is beyond brilliancy and his creativity is truly remarkable. In this dark and ethereal world Bachmann introduced, I was immersed into this stupendously magnificent book, and caught between the conflicts between of humans and fae alike. Sometime I felt chills in my blood as the book became more gruesomely murderous, and I finished it fast only to solve the puzzle. However by the end I found myself desperate for the next book, The Whatnot.

So dear Mr. Bachmann, would you please hurry and satisfy our thirst for the sequel?

Claire Legrand says

Just finished THE PECULIAR this morning on the train. It was an absolutely FABULOUS read -- elaborate world-building, endearing (and terrifying!) characters (especially my favorite, Mr. Jelliby), and truly beautiful prose. Several scenes thoroughly creeped me out, and the ending took my breath away. Full of adventure and mystery, horror and wonder, THE PECULIAR was just that -- peculiar, and unforgettable, in the best of ways. I can't WAIT to see what happens next in this series. Love, love, love.

Alison says

I really didn't care for this book for several reasons. I think the biggest problem for me was that none of the characters were really engaging to me...I didn't care for any of them, they were not terribly well developed in my opinion and I just didn't much care what happened to any of them.

This book takes place in a world where Fairies have come to England and more or less gotten trapped there. The fairies arrival resulted in a mass destruction of Bath in England so the fairies so you are immediately not so sympathetic to the fairies plus most of the ones you meet are varying degrees of unlikable. Once the fairies got stuck in England, the British have stuck them in ghettos/done everything they can to temper their magic and turned the vast majority of the fairies into a poverty stricken, subjugated class..no there goes my sympathy for the person.

Barthie is a nice enough Changeling and Hettie is too young to be interesting and Mr. Jelliby as a totally lazy, disinterested man of privilege thrown into a situation where he can make a difference is the most appealing but his character is quite undeveloped, IMO. Jack Box and Millicene were the most interesting to me and I kept hoping Ophelia would show up and turn into a real character but she didn't. The book is very, very British in feel which is kind of fun in and of itself.

The world is kind of neat though the view of humanity is so dim that it was frustrating to me. Perhaps the most annoying to me was that, as a book that only barely held my attention, it ended with a total cliff hanger...nothing resolved. I don't know that I care enough to read the next now.

Heather says

To begin with this novel was well-written but not very engaging. There is a lot of ambitious world building but at times it feels cobbled together. The language while very descriptive failed to create much of an atmosphere. A lot of time is spent describing things instead of letting the reader use their imagination. The world is described very thoroughly while the characters are left with few personality traits and no features. Also more time could have been spent setting the stage in the beginning and explaining the state the world was in after the Smiling War. Humans and fae are at war and then we jump to see the fae holding government office without any clear idea of the passage of time. How did it go from enemies to equals so fast? And if the fae are so integrated why such a strong prejudice against changelings? Because when the two groups mix this is bound to happen.

It seems like a strange choice for a children's/ya book to spend so much time following a grown man. Why make the lead character so doltish and ineffectual? Why choose the person least likely to act, someone drawn in by chance and so reluctant to help? A hero shouldn't be the one who whines "why not someone else?." This makes it hard to believe his later heroic behavior. I spent a large part of this book picturing Jelliby as a middle aged man because of the way he speaks and acts and was surprised later when he is described as young and handsome. Wouldn't it have been better to make this clear in the beginning instead of making it seem as though he was just a narrative device to reveal to the reader the behavior of Mr. Lickerish. For the main protagonist he isn't a very sympathetic character. He is more inclined to help whom he perceives as a peer (Melusine) than he is to help a child (Bartholomew). He never seems to warm up to Bartholomew simply calling him boy even after he has learned his name. All this child wants is a friend, he spends a great deal of time thinking about it and most of his actions are driven by this desire. It seems cruel of the author to

offer up Jelliby as this "friend."

Attaching the term "changeling" to these half-blood children was very misleading. Traditionally a changeling is a fae child in the place of a human child and vice versa. I was under the mistaken impression from the jacket that Bartholomew was a human changeling living with the fae because of the authors usage of the term changeling to mean half-blooded faery. It seemed strange to me that people were so afraid of these changeling children. If they are so feared why allow human and fae to mix at all? It seems to me that if the children are feared why the lack of uproar about humans and fae mixing. It is never mentioned that the mixed couples are shunned, only the children.

The plot of this book didn't really pick up until the end and then it stops abruptly clearly setting up for a sequel. I was winding down for the finish when I realized there wasn't enough to wrap it up. This wasn't advertised as a series so I was a little surprised. While this novel has its faults its not a bad read. The writing is very assured and the story is imaginative. If you enjoy the genre you will probably enjoy it. Where it is lacking is in the characters, I found it very hard to connect with any of them. If it happened at all it was toward the end but by then I was already disengaged and simply following along.

*A copy of this book was provided to me by the publisher through Firstreads.

Mpauli says

Hello everyone, it's me, Magic! With a capital M that is. You know, the concept. When you say "It's magic" then you're referring to me.

Being the concept of magic in today's world is pretty tough. Back in the old days I was quite strong, but today. Thanks to Youtube videos of little kittens doing whatever little kittens do, the concept of cuteness is bigger than me. Cuteness! We used to laugh at that concept! In the Middle Ages we would have wiped the floor with...ah forget it.

So, what does the concept of magic do these days? Planning tragical accidents for so called sorcerors, for example. Remember Siegfried and Roy and their huge kitten (damn that kitten!)? Not admitting to something, but you know real magic, when I hit you. Just saying.

No, most of the time I try to do something positive and visit books. Books that deserve my attention and that are purely me.

The last book I visited was "The Peculiar". It's such a beautiful book! It's like Christmas for your soul. It has little steampunk gadgets, fantastical faeries, loveable characters and a big chunk of me.

If you aren't a cold-hearted robot that likes to hit children, go and read this book. No, scratch that. Read this book and buy the second one as well, cause that one evening, when you finish it, you'll be like: "No, no, no, no, no!!!!" And you need that second book.

So, take this advice from a professional. Let yourself become enchanted by all the beauty of "The Peculiar", be ensorcelled by its language and this gathering of magic. Or was it Magic, the gathering. I'm so confused these days.

"Oh, oh, helli-hello and I'm in this book, too toodelloo!"

Oh, shut up, Cuteness!

Lindsay Cummings says

dude's 18, and he writes like a freakin 1800's poet.(Buy this book)

Alexandra says

Ich habe mich ausnahmsweise im Rahmen einer Challenge aus meiner typischen Lesekomfortzone herausbewegt, bin ins unbekannte Genre der Young/Adult-Fantasy eingetaucht und muss sagen, es war großartig!

Was hat sich dieser 16-jährige Autor (ist das wirklich möglich?) da einfallen lassen – so viel Fantasie und eine grandiose Mischung aus den unterschiedlichsten literarischen Elementen.

In Bath, England irgendwann im 19. Jahrhundert öffnet sich ein Portal, und unzählige verschiedene Feenwesen überschwemmen aus einem Paralleluniversum die Realwelt. Was dann folgt, sind alle typischen Immigrationsprobleme: schwieriges Zusammenleben von Feen und Menschen aufgrund ihrer Unterschiedlichkeit, Vermischung der Rassen, Intoleranz, Fremdenfeindlichkeit, offener Rassismus bis zu Gewalt und Mord an Mischlingskindern. Der Dreck und die verpestete Umwelt der fortschreitenden Industrialisierung und die bittere Armut der Arbeiterklasse vor allem in der Bevölkerungsschicht der Mischfamilien lässt sehr genau die Inspiration der Werke von Charles Dickens erkennen, den der junge Autor sehr verehrt. Neben den Fantasyelementen wurde auch noch eine Steampunk-Komponente eingeführt – die Mitglieder der britischen Upperclass verwenden mechanische Pferde, Butler, winzige Vögel zur Datenübermittlung etc. – was die Geschichte wirklich zu einem einzigartigen Universum zusammenwebt, das seinesgleichen sucht und an Innovationskraft kaum zu überbieten ist.

Mehrere Mischlingskinder werden ermordet aufgefunden und der kleine Halbelf Bartholomew Kettle, der übrigens nicht ein stolzer, wunderschöner Krieger wie in Herr der Ringe ist, sondern eher einem hässlichen ausgehungerten Oliver Twist ähnelt, fühlt sich auch bedroht. Irgendwie sind der Innenminister, ein Stolzer Elf der Upperclass, und eine Fee in einem violetten Kleid in diese Angelegenheit verwickelt. Als Bartholomews kleine Schwester Hettie von der Frau entführt wird, machen sich der Junge und ein menschlicher politischer Gegenspieler des Innenministers auf den Weg, das kleine Mädchen zu finden und die politischen Ränke aufzudecken.

Die Charaktere sind verschroben, aber äußerst liebevoll entwickelt, und das Ganze gipfelt in einem Showdown, der in einem Cliffhanger endet. So, mehr möchte ich gar nicht mehr verraten, denn sonst würde ich zuviel spoilern.

Wer übrigens eine simple der Jugend angepasste Sprache in diesem Roman erwartet, wird auch total überrascht sein, denn ich habe selten so treffende gar nicht übertriebene aber dennoch blumige Beschreibungen gelesen. Also auch sprachlich ist diese Geschichte hitverdächtig.

Fazit: Solltet Ihr Euch jemals entschließen, wieder mal ein Y/A –Fantasybuch zu lesen, nehmt dieses. Es ist nicht nur ein Vergnügen für Jugendliche, sondern auch für Erwachsene. Ich freue mich auf jeden Fall auf

Teil 2, denn ich will unbedingt wissen, wie die Geschichte weitergeht:-)

Ach ja der eine Stern Abzug ist meine ganz persönliche Rache für den massiven Cliffhänger - ich hasse sowas!

Nafiza says

I kind of loved this book. For reasons that are completely my own and probably because I study books and analyze them and read into them far more than just the story. However before I get into those reasons, let's discuss the book itself. The cover is gorgeous. It's bright and interesting and sure to catch the eyes of the intended audience. And even though it does not say so in the cover or elsewhere in the synopsis (I don't think) the book has steampunk elements that I like very much.

The beginning is slow and at first I wondered if I should give up but for some reason, I decided that I must persist and so I did. Bart and his sister have a sad life, having to live hidden as they do because being Peculiars, their lives are forfeit if they get caught. Their mother was fooled by a high fairy who loved her, abused her and then left her. The novel begins with the narration of how fairies crossed over from fairyland to Bath and the war that ensued as humans and fairies battled for supremacy with the humans finally retaining their superior status. That was the slow part – too much telling.

However, once the narrative takes off, it does so with a bang. Bart is a sympathetic character and it is easy to be completely on his side as he lives his half-life not understanding why he is hated for being something and someone he had no say in. Then there are the various other characters, some of them terrifying, others not so much. Arthur Jelliby is a very interesting character – he is dynamic and shows a lot of growth during the course of the narrative. He begins as a pampered, soft character and ends as someone who knows and is determined to do right and punish the wrong. The pacing is awesome, the tension works to keep the narrative flowing and the relationships between Arthur and Bart, and Bart and the rest of the world is intriguing. Even the relationship between the plum lady and the parasite who actually loves her is food for thought. I thought this was a splendid novel and offered substance as well as entertainment.

Now, the reason why this novel spoke so deeply to me is because even though it is couched in mythical and fairy tale terms in an alternate universe, the issues and themes of this novel are so very contemporary. I read this novel by George Bowering called Shoot! which dealt with the downward spiral of a gang of outlaws who were mostly half-English and half-First Nations. Both that novel and this one showed the stigma that is attached with being a mix of two races who are at odds with each other. Both show how unfairly the child is treated simply because he or she is a mix. You may think that this is an old fashioned concern but a look around at the "Happa" culture will soon show you otherwise. Old prejudices still exist and are difficult to break and The Peculiar is a very admirable way of letting children learn about different people and encourage them to accept these people.

I recommend this novel most strongly.

Aleshanee says

4.5 Sterne für eine wirklich originelle und abenteuerliche Steam-Fantasy Geschichte von einem sehr jungen

Autor!

In der Nacht vom 23. September, Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts, schneit es in Bath, in der Nähe von London, schwarze Federn - bis zum Morgengrauen hinterlassen sie nur noch Ruinen. Alle Menschen im Umkreis sterben und schnell wachsen die Gerüchte: Monster gehen um! Doch tatsächlich hat sich ein Portal zur Feenwelt geöffnet und Kobolde, Gnome, Satyre und die hochgeborenen Sidhe strömen aus den Hügeln in die Städte - und sie kommen nicht in friedlicher Absicht ...

Die magischen Wesen wurden jedoch von den englischen Soldaten überrannt, versklavt und fristen nun in Elendsvierteln in "New Bath" ihr Dasein. Doch die Zeit heilt alle Wunden und so kommt es, dass die Menschen und Feen Seite an Seite friedlich miteinander zu leben lernen - doch dieser Frieden trügt. Vor allem die Mischlingskinder haben darunter zu leiden. Sie werden geächtet, müssen sich verstecken, damit sie nicht am Galgen landen, und werden von allen nur "die Seltsamen" genannt.

Also wenn ich das Alter bedenke, in dem Autor das geschrieben hat, muss ich wirklich meinen Hut ziehen! Ich fands wirklich großartig - ein wunderbares Abenteuer spannend von der ersten bis zur letzten Seite und für jedes Alter ein großes Lesevergnügen!

Bartholomew Kettle, ein Mischling, der mit seiner Schwester Hettie nur selten die Wohnung ihrer Mutter verlassen darf, beobachtet aus seinem Versteck auf dem Dachboden gerne die Nachbarschaft. Das Auftauchen der ominösen Dame im plauenblauen Kleid bleibt nicht ohne Folgen, denn Barthy verwickelt sich immer mehr in eine Verschwörung aus höchsten Kreisen. Ein liebenswerter und zu Herzen gehender Charakter, dem das Schicksal übel mitgespielt hat.

Als sich schließlich die Morde an Mischlingskindern häufen, schaltet sich auch die Regierung ein, der Staatsrat - dessen Mitglied auch der unscheinbare Mr Jelliby ist. Eigentlich mag er keine Sitzungen und ihn interessieren auch nicht die großen Dramen, die sich in der Stadt abspielen, doch wie es der Zufall will, gerät auch er in den Bann der mysteriösen Dame. Und damit mitten hinein in ein gefährliches Abenteuer. Natürlich gibt es auch einen bösen Gegenspieler. Hier hat der Autor schon recht strikt alles in gut und böse getrennt, was mich in dem Fall nicht gestört hat, da er es trotzdem schafft, die Figuren vielschichtig und Entwicklungsfähig zu machen. Es ist nicht großartig anspruchsvoll oder tiefgründig, sondern zeigt eher offen und verständlich, auch für jüngere Leser, was alles möglich ist, wenn man sich nur traut.

Es ist flüssig geschrieben mit vielen verspielten Details und vor allem auch mit ungewöhnlichen und stimmigen Metaphern und Umschreibungen, die die Geschichte auflockern und viel Lesespaß bieten. Gerade durch den Schreibstil hab ich mich wunderbar unterhalten gefühlt und es war durchweg spannend bis zum Schluss. Gerade das Rätseln, was es mit der Dame, den Morden und den mechanischen Vögeln auf sich hat, blieb sehr lange geheimnisvoll und die vielen kleinen Steampunk Elemente des "Qualmzeitalters" haben die Geschichte wunderbar abgerundet.

Vor allem aber auch die Entwicklung der beiden Hauptfiguren hat mir hier sehr gut gefallen, genauso wie die unerschöpflichen, originellen Ideen, die die Geschichte sehr lebendig gemacht haben!

© Aleshanee
Weltenwanderer

1 - Die Seltsamen
2 - Die Wedernoch

Emily says

The author was only 16 when he started writing this, but you really wouldn't know unless someone told you. Some beautiful metaphors and passages throughout, just very well written. Reminded me of the Bartimaeus series by Jonathan Strout in setting; the rainy and foggy portrayal of London, lots of scenes taking place at night, many magical beings around.

VERY UPSET when I finished. I read it on my Nook so I wasn't sure how close I was to the end (which can be a perk or a problem, depending on the book) and when I turned that last page and saw the author's bio page instead of more story, a lot of expletives came out of my mouth. Good for him for writing something that made me so mad that I couldn't keep going. But I still think he's a jerk for it.

Book Whales says

Originally posted @ Book Whales

When it comes to books about fey, I always look for a good world-building. *The Peculiar* did not disappoint. Stefan made a world so colorful and vivid. I don't usually read middle-grade books, but this book became an exception. I love how it will test your imagination. A story bursting with colors, action and mystery, I was addicted.

The story took place in a world where faeries were trapped in our world and an imminent war between human and faeries is about to explode. The Changelings/half-lings were being condemned. Bartholomew and his sister, who themselves are changelings abide from this rule given by their mother, "Don't get yourself noticed and you won't get yourself hanged." Then Hettie disappeared, who can Bartie trust? Will he be able to find his sister? Pick up this book to find out.

The world-building is incredible! It was well constructed and furnished. Last middle-grade book that I read that can muster a rivalry is *The Percy Jackson* series. Yep, this book blew me away. I love how Stefan made a world that is supposed to be a fairytale, darker and richer. I always commented books that can be turn into a comic because on how the author describes the scenes and characters wonderfully. Stefan made a world that is original, colorful yet dark at the same time. Steampunk, murder mystery and gothic fantasy gave this book extra edge.

The character-building is remarkable. The fact that the story was written in different perspectives made the characters more connectable and believable. I felt Bartie's every emotion from this book. He longs to belong and the way he sees things made him mature for his age. Bartie became my instant favorite among the cool bunch. Arthur Jelliby! The unlikely hero is my second favorite. Why? What a peculiar name! His name is really stuck in my head now haha. There is something about him that you won't easily forget. Though, there were times when I find him boring at first but that trait had actually caught my curiosity too. There are more characters that made an impression on me. I shall leave them all to you. Just don't forget to buy a copy.

There was no romance. You know.. the boy-girl relationship? None. But you will feel the love between siblings, a story where you will do anything for your family. It was touching.

Over all, this book is awe-inspiring! I was satisfied with the ending! Haha I have a feeling that *The Peculiar*

will be a series- yay- I need another book from Stefan. I recommend this book to steampunk and fantasy lovers.

I give this book , 4.5 peculiar whales

.5

Brenda says

Going in I didn't really know what to expect but I've always loved the cover and premise. With a line like "don't get yourself noticed and you won't get yourself hanged", I knew I wanted to read it too. It really lives up to its definition of "part murder mystery, gothic fantasy, steampunk adventure." What I wasn't expecting to find was that the book is darker than I thought it would be but not in a way that I minded. Plus, man the lady in plum turns out to be pretty creepy and whisking children away, well that is creepy too. I was on edge to see what was going to happen next. I enjoyed how the story was told in alternating perspectives of Bartholomew and Mr. Jelliby and had a mysterious element to solve. I certainly am looking forward to seeing if my library has the next one in the series.

Laura says

Thank God that's over.

The guy can write. He really can. But I fell asleep several times while reading this. I took a shower with it playing, and was thinking I may even fall asleep in there listening to it!! (I didn't.)

Pros: Terrific cover. Audio is very well done. He writes like a British author (a high compliment, coming from me). He seems to know England well (and he was 16 when he started writing this), yet he was born in Colorado, and now lives in Switzerland. He writes in some respects like an old soul. Sounds good, right? No, no, a thousand times no.

Cons: I couldn't have cared less about the characters, any of them. And some were kids, in fear of their lives! I still didn't care. They were all flat. The story glimmered at times. It could've been so much better. There were hints of whimsy and magic that gave me hope, time after time, and then it was as though someone took the flame and buried it in a well.....along with my enthusiasm for the story, my will to care about it at all, and my will to keep from drifting into unconsciousness!!

Now that I'm finished, I feel like you do when you dive way down in a pool to retrieve something from the bottom, and race back up to the top, seeing the sunshine and breathing air again.

KayvanTee says

Eine tolle fantastische und spannende Welt. Voller magischer Wesen und eigenartigen Geschehnissen.

Karissa says

I have wanted to read this book for some time. I ended up picking it up off of the dollar table at one of my son's book fairs at school. It ended up being a wonderful steampunk middle grade novel with magic and mystery.

This book takes place in an alternate London where fae unwillingly fell into our world. The story follows two characters; the first is Bartholomew Kettle, who lives with his mother and sister in the faery slums of Bath. Bartholomew is a Peculiar, half fae and half human. When he sees a strange woman in a rich plum dress he is determined to find out the mystery behind her. The other character is Arthur Jellyby who is on the London council. Arthur just wants to coast through life unnoticed and unbothered, however he ends up drawn into a mystery surrounding the disappearance of Peculiars that puts him in contact with Bartholomew.

I loved the lush and descriptive writing. This book is all about the moody atmospheric setting; the descriptive writing makes all of the scenes really come alive so that you feel like you are walking the streets of this strange and peculiar London.

There is some excellent world building here and I really loved the idea of a London where faery had unwillingly taken residence. It's a very creative idea and very well done. I love that you never know what kind of fae you will see next wandering the streets of this book.

This is one of the first middle grade steampunk books I have ever read and it was well done. There are a lot of fun steampunk elements in here.

Probably my biggest issue with the story was that I had a bit of trouble engaging with the characters. I just am not all that sympathetic to the characters and their plight; they come off as a bit dry. I also thought the story ended very abruptly. I didn't realize that this was part of a series, but even knowing that now the ending to this book just seems very unfinished...which is a shame.

Overall this was a well done middle grade steampunk novel. I enjoyed the world-building and the wonderfully descriptive writing. I did have some trouble engaging with the characters though. I would recommend to middle grade and older readers who love mysteries with some fantasy in them; especially to those who are interested in the steampunk genre. I personally am not sure if I will continue reading the series.
