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# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS



THE BEST  
BOOKS  
OF  
2019

THE BEST 100 NONFICTION & BEST 75 YOUNG ADULT BOOKS  
OF THE YEAR PLUS OUR FULL DECEMBER 1 ISSUE



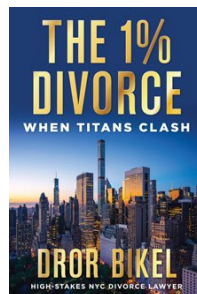
**BIG CITY MAGIC**  
**Uncover the Secret of the Big Apple**

*Bender, Jeanne*  
*Illus. by Willows, Kate*  
 Pina Publishing (270 pp.)  
 Oct. 15, 2019  
 978-1-943493-27-2  
 978-1-943493-26-5 paper

A puppy explores New York City, makes new friends, discovers a secret, and experiences a little magic in author Bender and illustrator Willows' (*Flying High*, 2nd Ed., 2018, etc.) latest children's book.

Little Lindie Lou, a spirited brown pup with huge paws and floppy ears, has, in previous series installments, experienced early life in Missouri, found a new home in Seattle, and visited a farm in Iowa. As this lively, travel-themed chapter book series continues, Lindie Lou jets into New York with her loving owners, Kate and Bryan, to stay with their friends at a posh apartment house overlooking Central Park. Lindie Lou and the hosts' puppy are allowed to explore the idealized city alone because they have tracking collars, and Bender infuses the plot with benign suspense as Lindie Lou searches for a legendary apple tree that, their host says, gave New York its nickname of "The Big Apple." The pup's ability to read comes in handy as she tracks down the tree; so does her surprise ability to speak with a mysterious woman (whose eyes, strangely, are the same bright green as Lindie's) and an elderly man named Kris, who explains the legendary tree's secret and makes a significant appearance in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The sunny, character-building revelation may disappoint children hoping for magic—and may strike adults as exceedingly aspirational—but Kris and the green-eyed woman retain an air of mystery. Bender's text, in which occasional words are enlarged, colored, or reshaped for emphasis, will attract young eyes, and Willows again charms with watercolor-soft digital illustrations that combine realism and a cartoonish style. The humans are diverse; Bryan and Kate are white, their friends are people of color, and the few other human characters have varying skin tones. As in previous books, Bender describes various landmarks; here, they include One World Trade Center, the Oculus transportation hub, the Statue of Liberty, and others. Post-story features include a Lindie Lou-related song, New York City "Fun Facts," a calendar of events, and a "Quick Quiz" for reading comprehension.

**A tale with an adorable, relatable central character, a hint of mystery, and a wholesome message.**



**THE 1% DIVORCE**  
**When Titans Clash**

*Bikel, Dror*  
 Sutton Hart Press (189 pp.)

An experienced divorce attorney thoroughly explains the issues that arise when ultrawealthy marriages dissolve.

Divorce is never an uncomplicated affair, but according to lawyer Bikel, it poses "unique challenges" for rich couples.

Such parties may be acrimonious, and they must have all of their considerable assets valued and divided equitably—an astonishingly complicated process that can take years and, in itself, come at an extraordinary cost. The author, a veteran divorce attorney based in New York City, takes his readers on an expert tour of the myriad issues that can arise in such situations, including property division, conflict over the custody of children, the difficulty of maintaining privacy, and revelations of infidelity, among many others: "there are countless things that can go wrong with a high-stakes divorce. Affluence can make life easy, but it can also make it infinitely complicated unless experienced counsel is at hand." He illustrates the lessons of this instructional primer with a series of high-profile cases involving the marital woes of actors Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie; Donald Trump and both of his former wives; and Amazon.com founder, CEO, and president Jeff Bezos and his spouse, MacKenzie Tuttle, among others. The overarching lesson of Bikel's lucid, comprehensive guidebook is that one should prepare for every eventuality and hire the finest legal and financial experts that one's money can buy: "a legal team with a panel of expert forensic accountants, valuers, art appraisers, real estate appraisers, and other specialists who understand the appropriate appraisal methodologies to use for each specific asset type."

Although much of the author's counsel in this book will be of practical interest to anyone who may be facing the end of a marriage, it does specifically focus on the wildly financially fortunate. As a result, many less-wealthy readers will find the text to be more entertaining than edifying. Relatively few people, for example, will be able to relate to such questions as "Did you use your income as a gallerist in Soho to improve your condo in Belize?" However, even for those readers who don't have billions of dollars at stake, the book will offer a prudent cautionary tale about the costs of being unprepared for a marital catastrophe. In addition, the book looks at divorce not only as a division of wealth, but also as a bitter contest between relentlessly competitive Type A personalities. For the most part, Bikel largely sticks to his own areas of expertise—this is a legal guidebook, after all, and not a self-help manual—but he does offer a wellspring of prudent counsel on the equitable mediation of conflict. Along the way, he also discusses, at great length and with impressive authority, the messiness of child-custody negotiations. These sections will be of value to many readers, including those who are less well-heeled. Overall, this is an impressively comprehensive survey of its subject conveyed in flawlessly clear language.

**An intelligent handbook to divorce for the abundantly rich that also contains some useful information for the rest of us.**