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When Toby breathes on Mama Inez's bird-shaped invitations, giving them the power to fly, plans for the Serendipity Market begin. Soon, eleven honored guests travel from afar and make their way to the storytellers' tent to share their stories. Each tale proves what Mama Inez knows—that magic is everywhere. Sometimes it shows itself subtly—a ray of sun glinting on a gold coin, or a girl picking a rose without getting pricked by the thorn—and sometimes it makes itself known with trumpets and fireworks. But when real magic is combined with the magic of storytelling, it can change the world.

This is a breathtaking debut novel written with elegance and grace.

Serendipity Market Details

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Author : Penny Blubaugh

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From Reader Review Serendipity Market for online ebook

Khy says

This is a hard book to review, as it is not a "traditional" book. It's mostly made up of individual stories, but it's not an anthology. There is one plot line that brings all the storytellers together in the first place, but that plot line cannot stand on its own; it needs the stories. There are characters in each individual story, and in the bigger plot that encompasses the stories. Because of that, I really cannot review this book by talking about the character development or the plot.

The main story- the one that brings all the others together- is one that is interesting and deep. Mama Inez brings all the tellers together in order to show how powerful the magic of storytelling is, and how it can affect the world. Although the book could have gone deeper, Serendipity Market definitely achieved showing how powerful stories are- each tale has a bit of magic in it, and it's easy to see how each story has effected its teller.

The individual stories are mostly retellings, and each puts a unique twist on familiar and unfamiliar tales. Even familiar characters- Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk , for example, are given more life through the various stories. Despite the very little show time each character in the story is given, their personalities shine through and make them believable.

The constant shift from the first frame of the book to the second made the book a little...awkward, but that's easily overlooked because of how entertaining everything is.

Serendipity Market is a wonderfully written, unique book that I definitely recommend.

Zoë Danielle says

At the end of the world there is a place which comes together whenever the world is out of balance and needs a little more magic. Serendipity Market by Penny Blubaugh is a book I never would have come across, except when I was stalking the Francesca Lia Block section and at the library Blubaugh was beside her and the compact hardcover looked mysterious and appealing. It's a series of retold faerie tales, connected by the fact that the person telling them is a part of the story, all gathered together at Serendipity Market so show that magic is everywhere. Many of them are stories I did not recognize, although a few like Little Red Riding Hood and the Princess and the Pea were.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly what I didn't like about Serendipity Market. I think the biggest problem is that I just didn't care- and it wasn't even the enjoyable kind of not-caring like watching bad TV- it was just dull and unexciting. I kept trying to give it another chance, another story, and although I really hate giving up on books (even awful-awful ones, which this doesn't qualify as) in the end I wish I had. It simply wasn't worth my time. There were a few okay stories, I enjoyed The Elves and the Shoemaker, as well as the Little Red Riding Hood where the wolf was actually a bully, but mostly it is nothing I'd recommend. From the other reviews I've checked out, many people loved this book, but in this case it's appeal is something I just don't

get. My favourite part of the book was probably what first drew me to it- it has a really nice cover. You can pick Serendipity Market up for yourself and find out what you think, but I would suggest a library copy and I certainly wouldn't go to the end of the world to find it.

Liaken says

It's a fun idea but it doesn't fly. The world is out of balance and stories need to be told to bring it back into balance. People are invited and gathered to tell their tales, all of which are aspects of fairy tales and folk tales. They're almost interesting enough to read, but the longer the book went, the more I found myself not caring. The tales dragged as there wasn't any way to see how they were setting the world right. Why create an intriguing frame for the stories and then do nothing with it? The stories were also trying too hard to "be in the voice" of the teller. I think this is part of why they dragged. And ... okay, I was really bugged with the Little Red Riding Hood story where the wolf is a predatory man and the way that the girl and her grandmother escape him is to say a protection spell. Because, you know, when someone is trying to rape you, if you say a protection spell, the man will just disappear and you'll be safe. Your scones will still be fine, too, so you can sit down and have tea. Yeah, it bothered me. So, the book doesn't work, though some of the concepts in the tales were fun.

Willow Curtis says

It's all about the stories within the story here. The Serendipity Market, which takes place at the end of the world, acts as the setting for invited storytellers to tell their tales and help bring the world back into balance. Why is the world out of balance and how will this help? We are never told.

Each of the tales given are retold folk or fairy tales. The larger story serves to tie the smaller tales together and gives a purpose for these stories to be told. Unfortunately, the magical market and the people behind it are never fully fleshed out. This part of the book had potential, but ended up taking a back seat. The framework that is set up to showcase the short stories is confusing and weak. We are thrown into this overarching story right off, without any explanation or back-story. After the first chapter, the short stories start. I wish that more had been done with the initial characters and that their world had been developed more.

The nine short stories are all well done. Some, of course, appealed to me more than others, but that is usually how a collection of short stories works.

Here are the stories told: (view spoiler)

I picked this book up off a display shelf in the library because I was attracted to the cover. Not a bad read.

Rosa says

I loved this book. Mama Inez knows that the tilt of the world is off and they need the power of stories to set it right. Mama Inez invites 10 people to the market at the end of the world and tell their stories to set the world right.

I found the beginning a little bit confusing; I had to reread parts of it a few times, but once I started meeting the story tellers it all comes together. The story's are familiar fairy tales, folk tales, and nursery rhymes but all with a twist. Sometimes the twist is as simple as telling the tale from another characters point of view; other times the tale is more drastically altered, changing the species, sex or sexual orientation of the character. All of the tales are entertaining, and it's definitely worth the read. This may be one of my new favorites.

Mary says

Another book that should have been better. I was enticed to read this by very good reviews and an appealing cover design. But an interesting premise and an charming cover do not make a good book.

The premise of the book is that Mama Inez, a mysterious matriarch with magical powers and a psychic dog Toby, feels that the world is out of balance. This has happened before and she knows what the remedy is--storytelling. So Mama Inez sends out invitations to the four winds for people to come and tell their stories to right the world. Each storyteller has his own background which colors the tale he or she tells. All of the tales are well-known folk or fairy tales--Jack and the Beanstalk, Pecos Bill and Slewfoot Sue, The Princess and the Pea--but they are given special twists, which don't always work. The Red Riding Hood tale, the last one, really doesn't work at all. The stories are short and feel undeveloped. The writing style is light and graceful, but the stories are unremarkable and slip from the memory easily.

The character of Mama Inez remains mysterious. Who is this woman who summons the storytellers? Does she have her own story? Where is the story set? It could be Spain; it could be New Mexico.

If you are an avid reader of fairy tales, this book will leave you feeling hungry for more substance.

Marilyn says

YA book - although I can't really imagine that many teens would want to read it. I like fairy tale retellings and I love the idea that when the world is off-kilter, storytellers can be summoned from the far corners of the earth to tell their stories and somehow make things right again. However, the frame story of Mama Inez, while poetic, is never fully or convincingly explained. The stories inside the story are uneven. A few are quite fleshed out; some are mere sketches. Many have a bland sameness; a couple are so different that they don't seem to belong at all. Winken, Blinken and Nod. Really? Why these stories? How will they help? We are not told. In the end, it felt like a hodge-podge of random styles and stories, loosely linked with a rather precious frame.

Gemma says

Clever. Instead of just a collection of stories, they're a collection of stories woven into one big story. Well, that's one way to do it, I guess.

The stories were sweet. Almost fractured fairy tales, but lacking the cheesy familiarity that makes the FFTs corny. Well, some had that, but that was because the narrators switched. Each story had a different feel to it, because they were all somebody else's story. I liked the one about the mermaid man, and the other one about the fae boy. Would have loved to see some of these turned into full length novels.

T.V and Book Addict says

A woman, Mama Inez sets out to invite eleven people to tell their stories in order to set the world in balance. The power of their storytelling will surely set things right. Each story is told in the POV of each of the tellers. The tales are those readers will recognize such as Cinderella but told with a twist. :)

Now, Penny Blubaugh..that girl can write!

Meet the tellers:

A Lizard turned into a man by a fairy godmother in order to take a girl to a ball. The Lizard's story just broke my heart, poor guy. :(

Clarisse and Renata, two sisters who find a dying mer man.

John who buys magic beans from a guy named Jack.

Earl and Naddie, twin brother and sister elves, who at the age of 15 help a shoe maker out.

Maisie who at the age of 18 has to save a special someone from the clutches of an evil Elf Queen. :)

B.J, Wink and Nodia, this trio races on a flying boat.

Zola, a prince who's parents only want him to find his princess so they can get an heir, but Zola is not looking for a princess, he's looking for a prince.

Sue who only wants to ride a the horse of a mysterious stranger who rode the firework.

Rosie, who wearing her bright red scarf travels through the woods in order to get to her grandmother, Mama Inez's house but the journey gets dangerous.

At first I just wasn't sure what to make of this book just by having read the back cover. I mean, I was not expecting anything like this. The book completely blew me away! I loved it! Each story was told in such an incredible way and I just couldn't help but be awed by it all. The way Blubaugh describes things is amazing.

:D

My favorite story is the Lizard's. It just broke my heart. Poor guy, I still can't get over that, it was just sooo sad!

I loved pretty much everything about this book, but two things. I didn't like how sometimes the stories within the story were slow. I also didn't like how the author does not really go into detail about how the world is being put back to normal.

Overall it's a beautiful read so I don't mind too much. :)

Miz Lizzie says

The world has gone off-kilter again so Mama Inez sends out her magical origami bird invitations to folks she has serendipitously assisted in one way or another to come tell their stories at Serendipity Market. There follows a Story Slam with a difference ... the difference being that the true first-person accounts are shared by fairy tale characters, giving very different perspectives on familiar tales. The joy here is that the author has a feel for the oral tale and the art of storytelling. Not only are the individual stories believable as performance pieces, the power of storytelling to create connections and community among the tellers and listeners is richly detailed. It is but a small leap to believe that the very act of sharing these stories has put the world back in balance once again. The only disappointment is that more of the story of Mama Inez is not told. Already I know Mama Inez is my role model -- I want more so I can figure out how to become her when I grow up! Oh, let's all find the way to share our individual stories (deep sharing, true listening) and bring our world back into balance.

Book Pairings: *Cloaked in Red* by Vivian Vande Velde is another book that plays with fairy tale re-tellings from different character's perspectives in an interesting way. In this case, focusing just on "Red Riding Hood." Penny Blubaugh's new book *Blood and Flowers* is another obvious pairing since it takes place in what feels like the same world and also gives a delightful portrayal of another form of performance art, guerrilla puppetry.

Emily says

I have to admit, I was a little unsure about this book at the beginning, but it turned out to be quite charming and lovely. *Serendipity Market* is a story about stories. When Mama Inez senses the world is off balance, she sends out invitations to ten individuals to come share their stories and set the world right. Each of the stories is a unique take on a different fairy tale or legend, and each storyteller has his or her own unique voice.

The concept of telling stories to keep the world in balance is an interesting and appealing one, although in practice, I found those parts of the book to be the least engaging. That said, I did enjoy seeing the various storytellers interact with and respond to each other. The book first came alive for me at the point where each one receives his or her invitation and the reader is given a little sliver of insight into their lives. The heart of the book, however, is in the individual stories. My favorites were the versions of Cinderella, Tam Lin, and The Princess (er...Prince) and the Pea. I'm glad I stuck with it after my initial misgivings because the stories truly are delightful.

<http://aftran.wordpress.com/2011/02/0...>

Brandi Wamsley says

Cute book with a neat twist on fairy tales. The story that links the fairy tales together is pretty flimsy though. It kind of just cuts off at the end.

Miss Clark says

2.5 stars

I liked the ideas, the simplicity of the writing, but felt as if I was left on the outside of the story, which was too little explained and vague to make me truly care.

The Lizard's Tale = Cinderella

Conversions = The Little Mermaid

Beanstalks in Enlay = Jack and the Beanstalk

Lost = Shoemakers + the Elfs

Carter House = TamLin

Cabeza, etc. = Winkin, Blinkin and Nod

Matresses = Princess and the Pea

Colors of Lightning = Pecos Bill and Slewfoot Sue*

Rosey and the Wolf = Little Red Riding Hood

Nicollette Winiewicz says

An enchanting story. I loved the whole idea that our stories are what puts the world back in order. It included tales of fairies and mermaids, magic and royalty, animal friends and sweethearts!

Alissa says

UPDATE: 3/23/14 Ended up re-reading this one. It all started when I remembered a book I'd read some years ago that included a bunch of really unique fairy tale retellings, among them a GLBTQ retelling of the "Princess and the Pea" and a role-reversed take on "The Little Mermaid". But there was more to the story too. A bit of hunting and I finally found it. This book. I re-read and liked it just as much the second time around. My only complaint was that the perspective jumped around a lot (with very little distinction to tell who was speaking) and the tense made unexpected shifts from past to present. This interrupted the flow of the story and sometimes made it hard to follow. Otherwise, still a good read.

Originally read November 2009

The world is out of balance again, and the only way to restore it to its rightful state is through stories. Here at the Serendipity Market, a group of seemingly ordinary people (strangers to each other) gather to share their personal stories of magic and adventure. These stories will seem vaguely familiar to the reader, but wait!

There's a twist! A different angle! And when the last words of the last story are spoken, the world has retained its former balance--as if by magic.

A truly unique read!
