



[Home](#) > Life of Riley: Beginner's Luck

Life of Riley: Beginner's Luck

Books Reviewed:

[Life of Riley: Beginner's Luck](#) [1]

Issue:

[244](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Stuart Dyer](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

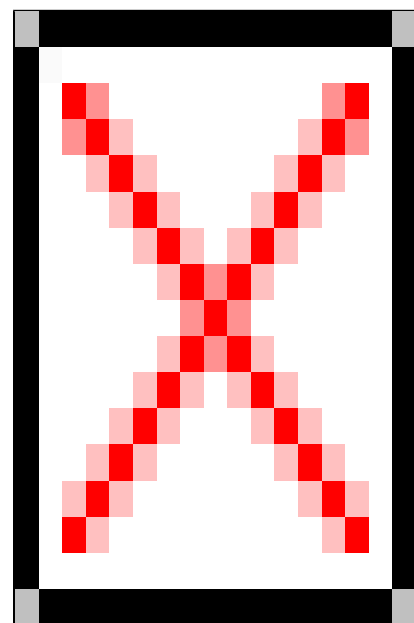
off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



This comedy tells the story of ten-year-old Riley and his efforts to rid himself of a terrible curse.

A rather unfortunate event involving a fortune-teller, a pushy mum and an especially snotty sneeze results in Riley receiving a curse, which, he truly believes, is the reason that bad things happen to him. And bad things really do happen to Riley. In the first few chapters alone, he suffers disasters involving extra sticky glue, a banana skin, and pants-wetting. In fact, the beginning of the book features so many comedy mishaps in quick succession, that it has the feel of a comedy sketch show, rather than a story.

This changes with the arrival of Brad Chicago. His timing is perfect: he arrives as the new kid in school, just when Riley needs a friend most, and catalyses the story into something far more interesting. The relationship between Brad and Riley becomes the heart of the book, as they navigate the tricky territory that is making friends at school, especially with classmates like the melodramatic Zaza and Telling Miss, who's always telling Miss.

Riley becomes obsessed with the idea that Brad is a human good luck charm, who can help him counter the curse, and he clings to him for dear life! That's not to say that the unfortunate events stop completely, and neither does the humour. Simon James Green clearly revels in slapstick comedy, and his descriptions of Riley's disasters are hilarious. He lines up potential laughs like dominoes (e.g. killer seagulls, oversized swim shorts, a dog called Shark) and then, just when you think one domino is about to topple, the entire stack explodes in one great comedy armageddon!

Though the laughs are sustained from start to finish, there is some depth to the drama in *Life of Riley*, too. The characterisation is original and refreshing. Riley is a labrador puppy of a child, resilient and loyal and impossible to calm down, especially when it comes to his passion for musical theatre. Brad is cool and level-headed and da bomb at football, yet the friendship of these contrasting characters never feels unlikely or surprising. What they have in common is simply a sense of humour and kindness, and *Life of Riley* proves that when you have these things, you don't even need luck.

Source URL (retrieved on Jan '21): <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/244/childrens-books/reviews/life-of-riley-beginners-luck>

Links:

[1] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/life-of-riley-beginners-luck>

[2] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/244>

[3] <http://ww.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/stuart-dyer>