



An Embarrassment of Witches

Sophie Goldstein

Sophie Goldstein, Illustrator

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In Sophie Goldstein's *An Embarrassment of Witches*, magic is commonplace, and two women juggle careers, romance, family, and friends.

Rory, a recent college graduate, is cast aside by her boyfriend at the airport before a trip to Australia. Her best friend, Angela, is about to start a job working for Rory's demanding mother. Add in Rory's prickly, sardonic owl familiar and a handsome new roommate in Rory and Angela's apartment: the stage is set for drama.

The book contains knowing nods to other magic-centered stories, including an "intramagicks" professor descended from John Dee, Queen Elizabeth's court magician, and a *Little Shop of Horrors*-inspired Venus flytrap that yells "Feed me Seymour!" Asphodel grass, "The Food of the Dead" according to Homer, is studied as a sustainable food source for zombies, too.

Still, despite this inventive richness, the story is most rooted in post-graduate angst. The stress-laden characters are easy to laugh at and with, as when, during Rory's search for a job, nine one-panel interview glimpses find her professing her love for "data entry," "cold-call telemarketing," and "waste management," among other low-level tasks.

In Goldstein's art, the faces of the large cast of characters are consistent and recognizable. Her smooth visual storytelling enhances the script's humor, and the palette is distinctive and appealing, with a near-absence of red and orange and lots of purple, green, blue, and yellow.

A fantasy grounded in the mundane, *An Embarrassment of Witches* is a work with magic at its center, casting a unique spell through its memorable, lovable characters.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2020)

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