



The Lemon Jell-O Syndrome

Man Martin

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A funny, touching story is enlivened by literary techniques that will delight word nerds.

A quirky but lovable word nerd develops an unusual neurological syndrome, in Man Martin's *The Lemon Jell-O Syndrome*, an intelligent, whimsical gem of a novel that appeals to the grammar nerd in us all.

Bone King is a college professor whose life revolves around the etymology of words. He entertains himself by diagramming sentences and compiling cliché inventories. Nonetheless, words fail him when it comes to simple conversation with neighbors or communicating with his wife, Mary, a woman who Bone still cannot believe married him.

Soon after Bone begins to suspect that something is amiss with his marriage, he develops an odd neurological condition in which he is unable to walk through doorways. Enter his equally quirky neurologist, Dr. Limongello, who provides Bone with some unorthodox treatment methods that lead to hilarious results.

Rather than being assigned numbers, each chapter is set apart alphabetically, with the etymology of each letter and definitions of unusual words that begin with it. Chapter intros are an enjoyable read unto themselves; highlighted words often foreshadow the chapters they introduce.

Bone's perfect meld of quiriness and offbeat charm make him a unique, appealing protagonist. Constantly bewildered, he is a man stuck in life: delayed in getting his book to his publisher, and in a holding pattern with his wife.

Some scenes are laugh-out-loud funny. The book is also infused with touching moments, as when Bone tries desperately to find a source of water when he is marooned in his own home, incapable of movement.

Humorous plays on words, shrewd turns of phrase, oxymorons, and paradoxes: there are enough literary techniques employed in *The Lemon Jell-O Syndrome* to delight any word lover. Coupled with a funny and touching story line, they make for a winning combination within a truly unique and gratifying reading experience.

HILARY DANINHIRSCH (May/June 2017)

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