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Don?t Cross the Line!

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

I?m all for peaceful protests and gentle anarchy and this postmodern picture book, which originated in Portugal (and is translated by Daniel Hahn) is a terrific portrayal of a revolution of the peaceful kind.

It starts with a guard ? albeit a fairly polite one ? whose task it is (assigned by the general) to prevent anyone crossing the line; the line being the book?s gutter, onto the recto or right-hand side of the page. The reason being, according to the guard as he addresses the first would-be transgressor, ?? the general reserves the right to keep the page blank, so he can join the story whenever he feels like it.?

More and more people come along ? look carefully and see if you recognise any ? each having business ?on the other side?; but all are stopped. A sizeable crowd amasses and the trusty guard is apologetic, ?I?m sorry, I?m only obeying orders,? they?re told. Things start to get a little frantic and one ? a spacesuit clad chap ? seems about to pass out, when the ball being kicked between two small boys bounces BOING BOING BOING BOING across onto that clean white page. Oh-oh!

Everyone stands stock still as one of the boys requests the guard?s permission to retrieve it. Surprisingly permission is granted and both boys, followed by a lively dog chase after the ball. The guard seems to be softening under pressure, for then he agrees (on a promise of not telling to let others follow and the right-hand page fills up pretty fast.

But then who should come riding along on his trusty steed but the general himself and he?s far from happy about what he sees. ?What on earth is going on here?? he demands to know and orders the guard be arrested instantly.

As you can imagine, the guard has become a hero among the liberated line crossers. They lift him aloft and carry him away to safety, cheering as they go and leaving the furious general, now unhorsed, kicking and screaming amongst various bits of discarded paraphernalia on the verso.

The whole brilliant thing is achieved through speech bubbles and a huge array of comical characters who come into and go out of view as the story ebbs and flows. The complete cast of characters is displayed on the front and back endpapers in their before and after poses, adding to the overall dramatic effect. All power to the revolution, say I.

There is just so much food for thought herein. I can see it being relished, discussed, and used in all manner of establishments from primary schools to politics studies sessions at university and anywhere that people feel the need for change, or consider themselves in the least bit put upon.

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