

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/4

The Biology of Luck
by Jacob M. Appel
Paperback: 220 pages
Publisher: Elephant Rock Productions

Review by Timothy Gager

Very interesting concept, if you enjoy a puzzle, a kind of thing inside a thing, creating an overall larger thing. A mirror held up facing another mirror. A book within a book. That was the strength and hook of "The Biology of Luck"; Jacob M. Appel's unfurling of the conceptual nature within his work.

Then you get the bad-ass characters. If you like real characters, in doubt of their existence, thus ending up in places they should and often should not be in, then this one is a winner. Appel writes with fine craft in this artful novel, which I feel is good---I enjoyed the writer's set up, but I also felt it just missed. I wanted to like the female protagonist, Starshine Hart more, wanted in my mind as a reader to be able to hang out with her, but somehow couldn't place myself there. Larry Bloom, a struggling writer, is also the writer creating the story within the novel's story. Larry, often placed in situations beyond his control (which, of course he's creating) as a floundering tour guide to Dutch tourists--I could relate to his weaknesses much better.

Many times, I felt Appel was hitting on cylinders that I knew he was swinging for but I didn't pick up on 100% of the time. Upon completion of "The Biology of Luck", I felt I wanted to audit a course taught by Mr. Appel to gain full appreciation of this text. I mean this as a high compliment, as I wanted to dive into and fully appreciate, every nuance here, but as a reader, was left frustrated.

