



BEST
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AUTHORS

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Galley Talk

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Lauren Tarshis's wonderful middle-grade novel *Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree* (Dial, Mar.) features girl characters, but it is something that boys would enjoy, too. Emma-Jean is fresh and interesting, and the situations she finds herself in transcend gender. She is not just quirky for the sake of being quirky. Emma-Jean is a character I haven't encountered in a novel for this age group, and bravo for that fact alone! Twelve-year-old Emma-Jean takes after her late mathematician father—she is very logical and level-headed, and also very curious about the illogical way her peers tend to act. She studies them like ants in an ant farm. One day, she decides to step out of her role of observer and get involved when she comes across the nicest girl in school crying in the girls' room. She tries to help Colleen with her problem, but chooses a questionable tactic that sets off an unforeseen chain of events. Emma-Jean's outsider narration provides wonderful insight into the social hierarchy at school.

