BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

A PSALM FOR THE WILD-BUILT

BECKY CHAMBERS

2022 BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK PRIZE FINALIST
BOOK SYNOPSIS


It's been centuries since the robots of Panga gained self-awareness and laid down their tools; centuries since they wandered, en masse, into the wilderness, never to be seen again; centuries since they faded into myth and urban legend.

One day, the life of a tea monk is upended by the arrival of a robot who is there to honor the old promise of checking in. The robot cannot go back until the question of "what do people need?" is answered.

But the answer to that question depends on who you ask, and how.

They're going to need to ask it a lot.

Chambers's new series asks: in a world where people have what they want, does having more matter?
Becky Chambers is a science fiction author based in Northern California. She is best known for her Hugo Award-winning Wayfarers series. Her books have also been nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award, the Locus Award and the Women’s Prize for Fiction, among others.

Becky has a background in performing arts and grew up in a family heavily involved in space science. She spends her free time playing video and tabletop games, keeping bees and looking through her telescope.

Having hopped around the world a bit, she’s now back in her home state, where she lives with her wife. She hopes to see Earth from orbit one day.

LEARN MORE ABOUT BECKY AT OTHERSCRIBBLES.COM AND IN SELECT MEDIA INTERVIEWS:

- Los Angeles Public Library blog - "Interview with an Author: Becky Chambers"
- Tor.com - "Watch Martha Wells and Becky Chambers in Conversation"
- Wired - "Is Becky Chambers the Ultimate Hope for Science Fiction?"
- Vox - "Why the Best Aliens Are Just a Little Bit Human"
BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

1. Chambers dedicates *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* “for anybody who could use a break” and begins the first chapter with Dex’s feelings of burnout (“Sometimes, a person reaches a point in their life when it becomes absolutely essential to get the fuck out of the city.”). How has burnout affected you in recent years? Can you relate to Dex’s feelings about the city and their need to get out?

2. During their first experience as a tea monk, Sibling Dex realizes quickly that, although they look like they know what they’re doing, they are lost in how to conduct themself and help the person who has sought them out. Was there ever a time you had to feign confidence or knowledge to seem like you knew what you were doing (“fake it till you make it”)?

3. Crickets and bears are two prominently featured animals in *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*. Crickets can be known to represent good fortune or luck, while bears can be known to represent strength, family, vitality, courage and health. Why do you think Chambers selected these two animals in particular? Were there other creatures that stood out to you?

THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WERE CREATED BY THE PUBLISHER TORDOTCOM AND ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY.
While discussing whether or not to leave the road to collect water—and disturb ecosystems in the process—Sibling Dex argues that “Everybody thinks they’re the exception to the rule, and that’s exactly where the trouble starts. One person can do a lot of damage.” What are your thoughts on Dex’s statement? In response, Mosscap states, “Sometimes, damage is unavoidable.” Do you agree or disagree with Mosscap? Why?

Mosscap brings Dex to the ruins of the metal building and they discuss the evolutionary remnants each carries from previous generations. Mosscap, a fear of the factories that once existed, and Dex, a fear of the algae in the river. “Remnants are powerful things. Hard to ignore.” Both know they have the “sense and the tools” to realize the fears are foolish. Are there “evolutionary remnants” that humans have today? Is there one you’ve experienced in your life specifically?

Throughout the last half of the novella, what moments of connection and growth did you find most compelling in Dex and Mosscap’s blossoming friendship? Was it a minor moment or a larger one that you related to?
EARL GREY MARTEANI

Audrey Saunders’s American creation—spelled, with punning emphasis as Earl Grey MarTEAni—actually made its debut in London 2003, at a pop-up at the Ritz’s Rizzoli Bar. That was appropriate, since the cocktail was intended as a homage to the hotel’s legendary tea service. “Tea is often served with lemon, lumps of sugar on the side and milk,” explained Saunders. “Instead of using milk, I opted for the egg white, which not only provides an ethereal mouthfeel but is also a perfect foil for the tea’s tannins. Technically the egg white bonds the tannins in the tea before it has an opportunity to cause palate fatigue, similar to what you might experience with red wine. The half-sugar rim is a nod to the lumps of sugar traditionally served with tea.”

The drink made its American debut at Bemelmans Bar in the Carlyle, where Saunders worked at the time. Still later it became a staple at Pegu Club, the bar Saunders ran in Manhattan.

Ingredients

1 ½ ounces Earl Grey tea-infused Tanqueray Gin (recipe follows)
1 ounce simple syrup
¾ ounce lemon juice
1 egg white
Sugar for the rim
Lemon wedge for the rim and a twist to garnish
Wet half of the rim of a chilled cocktail glass with the lemon wedge and dip the rim in sugar. Combine the liquid ingredients and egg white in a cocktail shaker. Shake briefly without ice, about 10 seconds. Fill the shaker half-full with ice. Shake until chilled, about 15 seconds. Strain into the prepared glass. Garnish with the lemon twist.

**EARL GREY-INFUSED TANQUERAY GIN RECIPE**

1 cup Tanqueray gin
1 tablespoon loose Earl Grey tea leaves

Combine the ingredients in a bottle. Stir briefly and gently. Infuse for 2 hours. Fine strain the tea leaves from the gin. The infusion will keep at room temperature for 2 days.
BKLYN BOOKMATCH READING ALIKES

Did you enjoy *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below.

- *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet* by Becky Chambers
- *Legends & Lattes* by Travis Baldree
- *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov
- *Babel* by R.F. Kuang
- *Nettle & Bone* by T. Kingfisher

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