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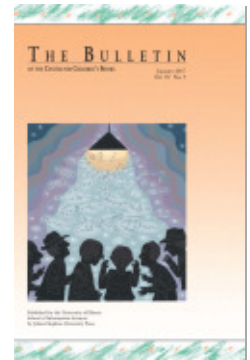
The Crystal Ribbon by Celeste Lim (review)

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LEWIS, GILL *Gorilla Dawn*; illus. by Susan Meyer. Atheneum, 2017 [432p]
 Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-8657-6 \$16.99
 E-book ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-8659-0 \$10.99
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

Imara doesn't know how many years she has been traveling through the Democratic Republic of Congo with the Mambas after they slaughtered her family and village. She only knows that when they cut her face during the massacre, they let a demon in, and its presence allowed her to live and become their Spirit Child. The Mambas have now made camp near a protected area of a jungle where rangers guard endangered gorillas. Meanwhile, Bobo believes the rebels have taken his ranger father and ventures out into the jungle to save his father and protect the gorillas. While the focalization shifts among Imara, Bobo, and Kitwana, a baby gorilla that comes into Imara's care, this is really Imara's story, and her cool indifference is the most heartbreaking evidence of the tragedy that surrounds her. As the demon screams at her internally to obey the Mambas, to watch their killings without flinching, to hold a gun to a little boy's chest, readers quickly realize there is no evil spirit within her, only a coping mechanism that has aided her survival. The straightforward text has a simplicity that conveys the violence and despair more powerfully than any vivid description would; Imara's brief observation of Bobo's haunted look after he returns from a raid with the Mambas needs no further explanation. While the conclusion reunites various parties, both Bobo and Imara recognize their innocence is gone. Readers not quite ready for the reality of Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (BCCB 5/07) will find this fictional account to be an effective and emotional exploration of an ongoing crisis. KQG

LIM, CELESTE *The Crystal Ribbon*. Scholastic, 2017 [352p]
 ISBN 978-0-545-76703-3 \$17.99
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 4-6

In 1102, during the Northern Song Dynasty in China's Taiyuan province, a girl named Jing is married off at eleven, in spite of her father's hesitation, so that she won't be a burden to her family any longer. Off she goes to care for her three-year-old husband, content enough to be his nursemaid despite his unpleasant family; however, her in-laws then sell her off to courtesans, so she embarks on an epic journey back to the home and biological family that she hopes will welcome her, should she ever make it there. This quiet, unhurried gem of a coming-of-age story is an impressive outing from debut author Lim, who uses culture, history, magic, and spirituality to explore one girl's persistent search for a way to belong, in spite of significant odds against her. Jing's connection with spirit animals is both comforting and helpful in practical ways, as when a spider who she aids comes back during a key moment to help her escape, and she also draws on her own significant reserve of steel, reminding herself that in spite of her lack of education and her lowly status as a poor girl, she deserves more than mere survival. Historical fiction fans will appreciate the unusual setting, and for the most part, Lim carefully keeps her characters' actions and language firmly placed in this rural, 900-year-old Chinese setting. A brief, informative author's note is included. AS