

Peaches and Jake and 19 Cobras: Oh, My!

Paula Bailey

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Dogs make playful trouble for their human and vie for treats in the midst of a pandemic in the easygoing picture book Peaches and Jake and 19 Cobras.

In Paula Bailey's picture book *Peaches and Jake and 19 Cobras*, dogs go on adventures with their human.

Peaches and Jake are sibling rescue dogs who live with their human, Mommy, in both a recreational vehicle and a permanent home. They are wary of a new danger they hear about, the 19 Cobras (otherwise known as COVID-19). Still, their daily life is mainly about making playful trouble for Mommy and working for treats.

Each page is occupied by a title, a caption, and at least one photograph; the titles and captions are written from the perspectives of Peaches and Jake, whose voices are often indistinguishable. They talk about the dynamics between Mommy and them. For instance, while in Mommy's RV, Jake play-acts as Mommy, sitting in her spot in the front seat; after parking, Jake looks out the window and at the ground as if he is trying to park. This confuses and delights other drivers. At home, Peaches waits by the door and bows so Mommy will open the door for her; she also observes Jake and instructs him on how to best get the mail so that they both get a treat afterward. These snapshots of the dogs' lives together result in a meandering book.

The photographs are grainy and blurry. An applied filter makes their somber blues, mint greens, dark oranges, browns, and whites feel consistent, though. In most images, Peaches and Jake are centered, their expressions animated. For instance, when Peaches and Jake get locked in jail for being naughty, Peaches shows off her comical "dirty look."

COVID-19 safety practices are inserted at a few awkward intervals throughout the text. The space devoted to them is disproportionate; they cover best hygiene procedures and social distancing in a way that is at odds with the bulk of the book. Further, the dogs' misunderstandings of COVID-19-related talk jars with the informative nature of such additions: They call the Delta variant the "Delta Very Aunt," for example.

In the picture book *Peaches and Jake and 19 Cobras*, canine siblings enjoy their loving relationship with their human being, even in the midst of a pandemic.

ALEENA ORTIZ (November 23, 2024)

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