

★ **The Pinchers and the Diamond Heist****Anders Sparring****Per Gustavsson, Illustrator**

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In Anders Sparring's humorous chapter book *The Pinchers and the Diamond Heist*, the sole redeeming member of a family of bandits is a scrupulous boy who can't seem to lie.

Theo's parents and sister have a penchant for thievery. They swipe glittery trinkets, socks, and mints. His grandmother is already in prison. Still, the whole family wishes that Theo would fall in line and join them in their exploits. Instead, Theo looks up to his neighbor, Paul, who is an amiable, if somewhat guileless, policeman.

When a diamond exhibition comes to the Royal Palace, Theo's parents plot their next crime—and Theo gets swept up in a jailbreak. Through absurd shenanigans, Theo and others wind up at the exhibit, where Theo then devises an impromptu plan to get everyone back home. Throughout, anticipation builds thanks to Theo's understated trades between his feelings of loyalty to his family members and his own moral compass.

Entertaining profiles of each family member—all clad in classic striped shirts and masks—combine with zany illustrations that highlight the Pinchers' cartoonish antics. There's a jaunty vintage getaway car that bounces above the road, a jail cell that's made homier by potted plants, and a jagged hole left by a dynamite blast. Appealing and playful, these images are matched by the story's lightness: nothing too bad happens, and Theo, despite his guilt by association, still retains his sense of righteousness.

A family engages in cheerful criminality while their youngest makes vain efforts to tell the truth in the delightful caper novel *The Pinchers and the Diamond Heist*.

KAREN RIGBY (March / April 2024)

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