Plain Bad Heroines: Reviewer's Notes

Page(s)	Event	Notes
14-15	Deaths of Clara and Flo Brookhants 1902	 Clara Broward steps into yellow jacket nest while running away from her overbearing cousin Charles. Clara dies almost at once, enveloped in yellow jackets (awful way to go). Her girlfriend Florence "Flo" Hartshorn also dies when she tries to help her. Charles runs away and survives long enough to board the Titanic. Clara and Flo are discovered near the nest, with a copy of Mary MacLane that later disappears. After the yellow jacket attack, the fountain in front of Main Hall is clogged with dead yellow jackets and later with oily black algae (the algae may be a myth).
19	Introduction of narrator– Merritt? Sounds like her	And who, you ask, am I? The voice telling you to come this way, to follow me? Some hazy apparition with a beckoning hand? A thousand yellow jackets shaped to look like a body with intention, one prone to scatter into diverging paths if provoked? I can promise you that by the time we reach the end, you'll know me much better than I'll know you. (And if I seem to know things I shouldn't, or couldn't possibly, well that's part of our bargain. I'll cite my research when I can, but when I can't: I do now ask for your trust in me to fill in the gaps as I see fit. I can see quite a lot from this vantage point.)
40	Influence of Elaine	Elaine "Lainey" Elizabeth Bishop Brookhants—"Elaine" sort of similar to "Adelaide"? Plays similar role in Merritt's life to Adelaide's role in Ava's life? The thought was this: she hadn't actually been the one to write <i>The Happenings at Brookhants</i> . Elaine had been that book's true composer, the one with all the ideas and the know-how to manifest them and she, Merritt, had only ever been the vessel for relaying those ideas—the chimp at the keyboard. What had Truman Capote said? <i>That's not writing, that's typing</i> . A typist. What if she'd only ever really been the typist?
52-53	Death of Eleanor Faderman Brookhants December 7, 1902	Eleanor Faderman steals Mary MacLane copy that was found with Clara and Flo (copy belonging to Libbie). She becomes obsessed with it and ODs on angel's trumpet (Brugmansia suaveolens) blooms. Her body is shipped back to Baltimore for burial.

Page(s)	Event	Notes
73	Merritt and impostor syndrome	Merritt writes herself rude notes in her book file and binges impostor syndrome articles instead of writing
89	Caroline Wells accident July 14, 2006	Caroline (37) crashes her car into a residential fence and is attacked by the property owner's pit bull, leaving her with lifelong scars. Caroline is currently out of work. Audrey (14) is filming a Disney Channel show.
118-119	Origins of Breakwater + Eckharts	 Libbie's house is officially called Breakwater (name it still has in the present day), but students and locals call it Spite Manor after Spite Tower built by Jonathan Rash Harold brought Eckharts from his Pittsburgh estate to Rhode Island to run Breakwater for him Eckhart family: Caspar: carriage driver, livestock tender, groundskeeper Hanna (wife): head housekeeper and sometimes cook Max (son): everything else Adelaide "Addie" Trevert (daughter-in-law): everything else
138	Wow I want these earrings	[Merritt] also wore long, copper vertebrae earrings; they were intricate, delicate, weird.
139	Answered Prayers Answered Premise of Merritt's next planned book–not going particularly well	"Do you know Truman Capote's unfinished final novel?I'm rewriting parts and adding my own story lines—it's like a companion novel more than it is a true completion of his." "That's because Truman's was never actually a novel," Elaine said, twisting the band of her simple watch. "It was a face-painted collection of tawdry gossip columns done up as literature."
140	Is Elaine an alias adopted by Adelaide? Does Adelaide inherit Brookhants from Ava?	Inscription from Capote to Elaine in <i>Other Voices, Other Rooms</i> : To sticky-rich, violet-eyed Lainey-Janey: What troubles have you seen this week? Tell me, but first let me fix me a drink. Yours, Truman

Page(s)	Event	Notes
177	Sara Dahlgren Mary MacLane inscription Annotated in Libbie's copy of Mary MacLane by her friend Sara, with a handwritten postscript— book was stolen back by Libbie after Eleanor's death	To library— I feel a strange attraction of sex a certain strained, tense passion And this is my predominating feeling It brings me pain and pleasure mingled in that odd, odd fashion. Love, Your sara P.S. Hasn't your Alex ever learned to share?
227	Confirmation of narrator?	It seems to me-given the horrors you've already experienced with them, and also the dreadfulness still to come in these pages-that we owe them at least that. After all, their particular subplots of this unwieldy story didn't make it into Bo's screenplay. (Though I won't apportion all the blame for that to Bo Dhillon. Alex and Libbie scarcely made it into Merritt's book on the curse, either. Or at least Merritt's first book on the curse.)
272	Adelaide injured? Sick? Channeling Simone?	 Face discolored and swollen in patches Arms marked with welts Black muck (algae?) deep under fingernails
285	Merritt a little too close to home	"Merritt doesn't like me," Audrey said, shaking her head. She was nine parts embarrassed to one part impressed by his orchestrations. "Ehh, maybe," Bo said. "I'm not sure that's itHave you ever heard of Thomas de Mahy, the Marquis de Favras?" "No," Audrey said. His question felt like a trap. Another one. "Riddles, Bo," Heather said again. "No, it's not a riddle," Bo said. "He was an aristocrat, got caught up in French Revolution drama and publicly executed as a martyr. But he's most famous now for his last words, which he spoke immediately upon reading his death warrant: I see that you have made three spelling mistakes Dude's about to be offed and still it's: I see that you have made three spelling mistakes. That's Merritt. That's Merritt exactly. It's not about liking or not liking you."

Page(s)	Event	Notes
294	Audrey roasting white people	"I mean, not exactly, exactly the same," Noel said, "but The War of the Worlds, right? That was a radio play before it was a movie, but they broadcast it like it was a news bulletin–they kept interrupting with these fake breaking news alerts. Didn't some white people even call the police because they thought aliens were attacking?" "Sounds like us," Audrey said.
318	Adelaide pretending to be Matryoshka seller named Irina Belevol at Columbian Exposition; supposed to be Russian, still speaks with French inflections Tries to sell Alex creepy Matryoshka-says it was meant to warn her against Libbie? Why is Libbie being presented as an antagonist? Has a male companion called Gleb-is he Simon Everett?	First doll - who is this? Simone Verrett? Elaine? Skeleton with violet eyes, wearing headscarf and clothing like other dolls, blackberry brambles wrapped around her throat, flesh piled around her feet, holding Mary MacLane book Second doll - Clara Holding Mary MacLane book, surrounded by yellow jackets Third doll - Flo Holding branch with apples and Mary MacLane book, apples at feet Fourth doll - Eleanor Holding Mary MacLane book, trumpet blooms in hair and dress Fifth doll - Alex? Mouth sewn shut, holding Mary MacLane book Sixth doll - Libbie Drowned, holding Mary MacLane book Seventh doll - Ava 9-10 y.o.
325	Baby daddy	Libbie one-night stand with Simon Everett III, Sara Dahlgren's distant cousin from San Franciscobut apparently arranged by the Verretts? Whoever he is, he's a bad lay

Page(s)	Event	Notes
335	Libbie (22) and Alex (23) have lunch with Harold Brookhants (66) and Madame Odette Verrett (who knows)	Harold proposes marriage and offers to change the parentage of Libbie's unborn child using a ritual by Madame Verrett–why do Verretts care? Using Harold to recover Verrett-owned land? Harold offering the school to the land to make it more amenable to his harvesting its power? "Madame Verrett led me to it [Simone/Rash brothers land] and it's full of the most magnificent vitality. It hums with it. I want to establish a school there, that's what this land wants—I feel so sure of it—a school for young women, and now I know the woman to run that school. The womenEven with no students, you could stay open. But of course you will have students, too many even to take them all, I imagine." "No need to imagine," Madame Verrett said. "It would be so. For a time."
355-359	Alex's motives Alex mourns Eleanor more than she mourns Clara and Flo because Eleanor was younger and more isolatedwants to prove Mary MacLane book is dangerous for Brookhants students	Alex saw very clearly how dangerous a book like Mary's could become in the hands of such impressionable girls, such privileged girls: girls who kissed and fondled and laughed as they read each other passages out in the woods; girls whose parents' social standing had taught them that there was nothing at all in the world they could not subjugate, purchase, or ignore; girls who set fires only to watch as others tried, and failed, to put them out. What could be the harm in destroying this single, festering copy of such a book? For if there was even the slightest chance that it was the cause or conduit of their current troubles, wouldn't it be better to do so?
359-361	Alex change of heart	Harold and Madame Verrett catch Alex on the train home from Chicago and gaslight her until she agrees to talk Libbie into accepting Harold's offer, using Alex's desire for a life with Libbie as bait

Page(s)	Event	Notes
364-365	Merritt writers block–Elaine obstacle to new book	She'd then tried to throw herself into her writing. She now had notebooks and Word docs full of timelines, sketches, and asides, both about Capote's original Answered Prayers pages and the reallife people on which he'd based his characters. She also had a nearly twenty-page outline. What she didn't have was a book. Part of it was that she'd spent too much time researching and obsessing over Truman Capote's own inability to finish that novel. But the bigger part of it was that she didn't think she really knew how to write a book, at least not when she wasn't at the desk atop Spite Tower. Elaine trading her snacks for paragraphs. And then Elaine doing much more than just reading those paragraphs, those pages: asking astute questions about them and offering insights, suggesting edits, bringing her additional documents to round out her research. Elaine Brookhants, the true keeper of the story. Always.
372	Lainey go down the hole	Elaine diagnosed with mixed dementia and having intermittent strokes
372-376	Merritt's relationship with Brookhants and Elaine	 Merritt dragged into Brookhants obsession at age 10-spent summers there with Elaine shepherding her around, started a blog as a teenager and eventually got picked up by a number of listicles, Elaine suggested turning blog into book Book helped Merritt cope with father's suicide-he killed himself sometime after Elaine hooked Merritt up with literary agent Elaine already talking about movie before book published and then bought film rights right away JFC back off lady Merritt doesn't think she can live up to Elaine's expectations/belief in her, and also feels indebted to her
379	Elaine sales pitch	Elaine convinces Merritt that she can finish Answered Prayers Answered by observing the Brookhants film set
401	Alex descent into paranoia	Alex becomes convinced students Camille Andrews and Josephine Narse are secretly reading Mary MacLane but turns out to be wrong

Page(s)	Event	Notes
414	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part I	Heroines pick up Black Oxford apples and run into yellow jacket swarm while driving to Tiverton convenience store, but only Harper sees it as an actual shape
418	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part II	Orange trees delivered to Orangerie were dead, but were found thriving later
421	Adelaide driving wedge between Libbie and Alex	Libbie tutoring Adelaide on Tuesday and Thursday evenings; Alex jealous and lonely
426	Yellow jacket song	Alex suspicious of Adelaide because she heard her singing Brookhants yellow jacket song-this is supposed to be proof that Adelaide was on school grounds or something? why does she care?
429	Alex still suspicious	Alex convinced Camille had two red books with her and showed Libbie the one that wasn't Mary MacLane's
430	Alex sick	She sensed the dark shape of someone at the door, footsteps coming toward her, a rustling of skirts. Then there was Hanna next to her saying, "Oh, Miss Trills–you really aren't feeling well!" And then her blurry vision gave up for black.
437	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part III	Apples turn to mush after a few minutes in the car

Page(s)	Event	Notes
450-451	Brookhants family tree	 Ava became better known than Madame Verrett as a spiritual advisor to Broadway and Hollywood stars-became known for her invite-only séances Ava married a count and moved back to France after the occult went out of fashion, possibly due to McCarthyism Elaine is the great-granddaughter of Harold Brookhants's youngest brother-cousin to Ava, twice removed? Both Brookhants and Packard families did not acknowledge Ava as a relative
465	Libbie bored	Libbie never wanted to settle down with anyone, including Alex-suspects any curse over Brookhants must come from her own "resentment and perpetual discontentment" over her domesticated life
468	Merritt and Audrey becoming friends	She looked at Merritt and smiled. Merritt smiled back and side-eyed Bo on her behalf. So there, Readers. So there. People can change. And after the stalking convenience store trio and pizza picnic in Spite Tower and Elaine being Elaine, after a night like that together and more days on set in between, Merritt had softened her once-hard feelings about Audrey.
473	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part IV	Black fungus in camera equipment stops filming for the day
475	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part V	Audrey hasn't gotten a good night's sleep in weeks-thinks she's seeing stalkers and shadowy figures, hearing buzzing inside the walls and beneath her pillow, breezes smell like rotten apple
477	Angel's trumpet tea	Eric makes tea with stolen angel's trumpet blossoms; Audrey thinks it will help her sleep

Page(s)	Event	Notes
484-489	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part VI	Audrey and others suffer severe drug trip under effects of angel's trumpet tea, but also possibly witness effects of Brookhants curse? • Black algae • Yellow jackets • Audrey's phone going haywire
489	Merritt callback to Hanna finding Alex sick in dining room Ref. 430	From the front door of her tiny house, which she'd left open, she heard Merritt say, "Oh, Audrey. You really aren't feeling well." And then her blurry vision gave up for black.
494	Alex finds missing Mary MacLane page Ref. 177	Adelaide tells Libbie that she and Hanna found Sara Dahlgren's specially annotated page and gave it to Alex, who seemed upset over the markings
499-500	Death of Alex	Alex identifies Hanna as the source of the curse and attacks her, but falls down the stairs of Spite Tower to her death
501-502	Libbie's confinement	 Libbie blames Hanna for Alex's death and embraces Alex's belief that Hanna is to blame for the curse, becoming so violent that her family commits her to the Rhode Island State Asylum for the Incurable Insane Libbie is confined for over a year in the asylum, where she is abused by the nurses while the doctor gaslights her, but she remains convinced of the Brookhants curse
503	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part VII September 27, 2015	 Costume supervisor Maya Barslonick receives second-degree burns when a storage container burst into flame, and is rushed to the hospital Fire causes \$65k+ in damages and significantly delays shooting again

Page(s)	Event	Notes
511	Unexplained modern Brookhants happenings part VIII-crew getting spooked	"Ghosts in the micsFeedback," Harper said. "It was these truly bizarre noises-kind of like moans, at one point, but then it was like people talking fast from far away, so you couldn't really make out the words. They switched out a bunch of the sound equipmentDidn't help." "I'm sure I'll be able to watch it online any minute," Merritt said. "Probably," Harper said. "I didn't notice anybody with their phone out this time, though. Actually, Misha and Renae seemed scared today. Like genuinely scared."
523	Warped predilection threesome	It was Merritt who said, "I just really want to kiss you." She paused and then: "Both."
531	Threesome ultimatum	As Merritt pulled the car past the two of them [Bo and Caroline], standing there with puzzled faces in the glow of the film, Audrey said, quietly but not <i>that</i> quietly over her door, "Anything from the orchard's off-limits. I mean it. It's out or I walk."
537	Ava's education–what is Harold's motive???	For instance, most people would likely find it peculiar that the Verretts had taught her not only geography, spelling, and mathematics, but also philosophies of ontology and mysticism. (As they had been directed by her uncle Harold.) And she'd learned about various methods of spiritual communication in much more experiential ways, too. All of the Verrett sisters were mediums of different abilities, from channeling to clairvoyance.
539	Ava's relationship with yellow jackets	Ava was not afraid of the yellow jackets. She had sat, and even moved, in swarms much larger than this one–especially when she went into the woods to the hot springs. Adelaide had shown her the best paths to reach the springs and she had never once been stung. Not yet.
544	Return of the nesting doll Ref. 318	Ava has the ugly nesting doll Alex refused

Page(s)	Event	Notes
545	Ava's relationship with Adelaide	There was nothing her aunt Libbie could do about it now, anyway. Addie already had her loyalty. And Addie would keep it.
554	Annie Meng	Harper's girlfriend made papier-mâché props for set
557-560	Audrey meltdown	Audrey gets sick at Noel's show and starts seeing yellow jackets and black algae
561	Final confrontation	Heroines realize they've all been duped and set up against each other
564	Machinations	Harper was in on plan from beginning; found-footage approach was Elaine's idea
567	Elaine has a stroke	Elaine's strobe light smoke detectors put her in the hospital
569	Death of Elaine	 Elaine dies (81 y.o.); official cause is "complications stemming from a fall at home" Born June 21, 1934 to railroad heir Arthur Ryan Brookhants and second wife Valerie Bishop Brookhants, a photographer who OD'd on sleeping pills in 1955
573	Libbie making plans	Libbie plans to burn Mary MacLane, Matryoshka, and Spite Tower before leaving Newport, but troubled by absence of Adelaide
574	Hanna dead	Adelaide wrote to Libbie to tell her Hanna died; Libbie still blames Hanna for Alex's death
575	Sara Dahlgren	Sara Dahlgren pulled strings to get Libbie out of asylum early; Sara wants to take Libbie and Ava to France ASAP, Libbie has no such plans but uses Sara to get back to Brookhants to carry out her ritual
578-588	Simone Verrett	Life and murder of Simone Verrett, and feud with Rash brothers

Page(s)	Event	Notes
582	Simone paper art	During that visit, she also gave each of their [Rash brothers'] children small papier-mâché figures she'd made: an apple and a tree, a yellow jacket and a flower. They were beautifully constructed and painted, delicate and fine-it was clear she was an artist.
588	Motives of Harold? Whatever he was trying to do, it clearly didn't work	It was never Spite Tower itself, or its rather silly and certainly incomplete local lore, that had interested Harold Brookhants. Instead, it was the bloody root of the brothers' feud that had lured him to this place, the act of murder that linked those men to a womanwith a powerful and mysterious lineage. Harold Brookhants believed that some of that woman's power remained in the land that she had loved, the land where she had died too soon and violently. And he wanted to not only understand that power, but claim it for himself. (In this life and in any others to come.)*
		* If you guessed, Readers, that Harold's interest in Libbie's childa child (or vessel) that could be reared in exactly the manner he prescribed–had something to do with these beliefs, you'd be right.
591	Adelaide's history with Libbie and co.	 Adelaide trying to get Libbie to live in Spite Manor with her and Ava-genuinely attracted or trying to fulfill an agenda? Adelaide tells Libbie she sold Sara Dahlgren the Mary MacLane books
		Adelaide mind-reader?
	Motives of Adelaide and Verrett family?	She said, "Your husband did not know her name, the woman who lived herepoor Harold never had her story quite correct. He was such easy meat, your Harold. He so wanted to believe that he forgot to ask questions. Or never the right questions, at any rateSimone lived with her mothers—two mothers—only one sometimes dressed and acted as a man because the world didn't understand
592 - 593	Simone genealogy	her when she did not do soand so, they got on a boat and left to make a new life."
	WHAT IS THE CONNECTION TO HAROLD???	"Yes, they killed her, but who did they kill? The real trouble, the trouble that claimed this place and claims it still, was that one of Simone's two mothers had left a family of diverse and powerful talents back in Franceits remaining members were not happy when one of their own absconded to America to make her life anew and raise her child here without their guidance. That is not what members of the Verrett clan did. That is still not what we do. Not without permission."

Page(s)	Event	Notes
593-594	Adelaide tried to warn Alex at Columbian Exposition Adelaide's goals at cross purposes with Odette's and clan's? Or just differing ideas on approach? Ref. 318	"For instance, I could tell you that I tried to warn your Alex at the fair. I did try, with the doll. I wanted to scare her, too-just a little, you know, for sport. But I did try to warn her as well. I liked her. I thought she could do better than you." "She could have," Libbie said. "It didn't matter in the end-my warning. They got to her on the train. Did you know that?I can't remember if you do know that. Harold and my aunt-they got to her to get to you, two worms in your apple before you even took the bite."
594	Verrett interference in Ava's conception Again, WHAT IS THE MOTIVE? Why do the lesbian characters keep dying?	"Or I could tell you about Simon Everett, if you likeSimon Everett, Simone Verrett?You shouldn't blame yourself as you do, Library. You were only ever a means to an end. Swarms of yellow jackets, poisonous flowers, a too-steep staircase built by a brute out of vengeance? I should think there's ample room for accidents in each of those." They were not accidents! Libbie thought like a scream. Adelaide heard this thought perfectly. "You're right about that," she said.
594-595	Adelaide tries to seduce Libbie	"We could be three here, again-in our house by the sea. Two mothers for little Ava." Adelaide trying to recreate Simone Verrett or her childhood? "Three here, again" referring to Libbie, Alex, and Adelaide, or to Simone and her two mothers? Can Verretts die? Is Adelaide Simone, or one of her mothers?
596-597	Possible death of Libbie	She did not scream. She did not even try to do so. It may be that our Libbie accepted this fate as punishment for what she knew to be her previous inaction [wtf what the fuck kind of reasoning is that, inaction over what], or perhaps as something foretold by a curse that she now believed in her very marrow she could not outrun. Libbie Packard's drowned and lifeless body should have drifted over to at least Portsmouth, maybe all the way over to NewportBut this did not happen. Our Libbie disappeared that night, it's trueBut her body was not found. Not the next morning, or the one after that, or even to this day. There is a known photograph of Sara Dahlgren in Paris sometime around 1920The woman who makes the exception is one near the back of the groupShe is standing beside Sara Dahlgren. And she looks more than a little like Libbie Packard's mother in photos of Mrs. Packard at that age.

Page(s)	Event	Notes
605	Completion of film	Filming finally wrapped after death of Elaine [Ref. 569]; curse seemingly gone, nothing interfered with production despite yellow jackets haunting red carpet during film premiere
605	Merritt's new book	Merritt dropped off grid after bidding-war book deal for Answered Prayers Answered "It's more like a love letter to Answered Prayers than it is a true completion of Capote's novel." [Ref. 611]
607-608	Merritt being a badass	"Sorridi!" And now someone shouts from down the carpet, "Don't fucking bark at her to smile, asshole." Harper turns. It can't be, but it is: Merrittlooking hot as fuck in her own suit with a satin stripe down the leg. Only paired with hers, beneath her jacket, is a T-shirt with Warped Predilection on it.
609	Future Merritt books	Merritt has signed up to write two more books for her publisher–heroine's name is Capote Capote
610	Audrey and Merritt friends now Merritt moved from CT to LA	Audrey finally learned to drive and went to Merritt's house in her own car–pestered Merritt to let her read galleys for APA (though Merritt left them out on purpose, because ofc)
614	Elaine's will	Merritt inherited Spite Manor and all of Brookhants land after Elaine's death-considering demolishing the school