I Moved Your Cheese
By Darrel Bristow-Bovey
Reviewed by Jacob Aliet, July 2006

I Moved Your Cheese is a humorous, satirical book that mocks people who seek guidance and personal improvement from self-help books. In fact, the writer, Darrel Bristow-Bovey, presents himself as a fine example of how lazy people can make money by unashamedly trying to cash in on the popularity of Who Moved My Cheese? Darrel says that his book is the self-help book for people who want to take no steps at all to change their lives. He describes it as the self-help book for people lying on the sofa. Indeed, he writes of a revolutionary new formula that allows wisdom, through a process patented under the name Osmatix™ to pass directly from the page into the atmosphere, where it can be easily inhaled from a reclining position on the sofa where a lazy person sits watching TV as he or she inhales this deep wisdom.

Recall that Spencer Johnson wrote Who Moved My Cheese? Where he allegorically described change in people's work and life, and four typical reactions to the said change, using two mice and their hunts for their moved cheese.

I Moved Your Cheese is a lazy person's guide to helping themselves. Sorry, lazy people don't need help. After all, Darrel notes, "We may be lazy, but we are not dumb. It is only the very smart who can get away with being as lazy as we are." All lazy people need to do is give Osmatix™ time to work. The author takes shots at old, commonplace advice that circulates around like "Be Yourself". He says that if being you was such a great idea, thousands of people would line up wanting to be you.

This book is actually an anti self-help book because at one point he says that "self-help books are damaging to the self-esteem and promise to help people, yet they really mock them. He asks readers to recite the following words with him: We are lazy, we are idle, we are downright inert, and we don't give a damn.

Darrel even pokes fun at Who Moved My Cheese?, whose message, conveyed through the story of two mice, is that people should embrace change and adapt themselves to new circumstances of cheeselessness by going into the maze (life) and finding their cheese.

In a contrapuntal tone, Darrel writes, "Tell me, my brothers: are we mice or men?... Because if there is a serial cheese-mover on the loose, he or she is unlikely to stop at once. Having acquired the taste of moving cheese, there is nothing to stop them from moving it again and again - and again, if they are not stopped - all the while snickering up their sleeve at your discomfort".

The author mocks wisdom (which he personifies as an old, feeble, idle man throwing rocks at people who try to move close to him) and the idea of having a mentor or role model. He says most people we look up to are actually lazy, flawed and scared like the rest of us and that when we look closer to them, we will see they have no clue. He writes: "Do not be afraid of discovering that your idols have feet of clay. If they have clay feet, it won’t hurt so much when they kick you in the head.” He says success can be faked and that we can bluff our way through life and make our emptiness work for us. So long as we fake our hollowness for something big, elemental and strong.
He advises that "we just need to embrace that hollowness, and give people the opportunity to persuade themselves that there is something there." Instead of trying to improve ourselves, he says, we should reap the benefits of letting others do the improvement for us. And how exactly do we make others improve us: "Make silence your friend. Cultivate the knowing look, the mysterious smile, the sudden unexplained frown, as though you were remembering words spoken a long time ago by someone very different"

Oprah, Deepak Chopra and Dr. Phil among other personalities (no, these are not people, but personalities) are caricatured as the author argues that in life, people have ideas they want to see. People hold heroes in their heads that they want to be real and that all lazy people need to do is identify the ideas and become those ideas. He says that, "No one can be Oprah. Because not even Oprah is Oprah. Oprah the person was just smart enough to let herself inhabit the idea"

At 92 pages, it is an easy read, written in a witty, sometimes insightful tone. He takes nothing too seriously and enables readers to question conventional wisdom and turn it on its head. It is a funny read.