



A Family of Strangers: A Misfits and Heroes Adventure

Kathleen Flanagan Rollins

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A Family of Strangers is truly an epic tale of love and friendship, mystery and adventure, danger and suspense.

Kathleen Flanagan Rollins's *A Family of Strangers* is an epic tale set in Northern Spain fourteen thousand years ago. Its richly detailed world, singular characters, and mix of cultures make for an engrossing adventure.

When an arrogant old chief dies, he expects to be welcomed into the hierarchy of the ancestors—and at the top, of course. Instead, the ancestors reject his presence among them and send the unscrupulous old man back for a second round of life in hopes that he can change his ways.

In his new life, he meets up with a group of strangers and is pulled into their quest to find one man's runaway wife. As their journey takes them from the mountains to the sea, secrets from each of their pasts surface, and they must band together to survive both natural and man-made disasters.

Each character in this story is rendered with a distinct personality and characteristics that impact the dynamics of the group. There is a strong man whose innate goodness grounds the group, a young boy whose naïveté is countered by his youthful perseverance, a woman who holds the group together and steers it in the right direction, and the angry ex-chief who is haunted by his forgotten first life. A left-behind husband is at once wise and distant, seeming to barely exist in the world; his mind is focused on something just out of reach.

The ancient world these adventurers travel through is richly detailed and immersive; it elicits genuine emotion. In one scene, a massive rockslide in the mountains is beautifully depicted in all of its tense and harrowing power:

Whole scree fields started moving, sliding, pushing, crashing into others and carrying those with them as they went, until it was a roaring thing that flew down the side of the mountain.

World-building is thorough, with descriptions of food, animals, clothing, entertainment, and other cultural elements of multiple groups of people living in disparate places, from the mountains to the river valleys to the sea. On their quest, the group encounters both living people and spirits—some of whom are helpful, others who are not. While the veil between this world and the spirit world sometimes lifts, the story incorporates mystical properties without becoming unmoored from its realistic foundation.

A Family of Strangers is the fourth book in the Misfits and Heroes prehistoric fiction series, but it's engrossing as a stand-alone story as well. It is truly an epic tale of love and friendship, mystery and adventure, danger and suspense.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (October 19, 2017)

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