

★ **A Good Night for Shooting Zombies****Jaco Jacobs****Kobus Geldenhuys, Translator**

Rock the Boat (Mar 12, 2019)

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In Jaco Jacobs's *A Good Night for Shooting Zombies*, Martin's life is shattered the day his father is killed in a car accident. Two years later, his normally gregarious ex-actress mother is housebound, his sister is always out with her gangster boyfriend, and Martin himself is relatively friendless, with an almost unhealthy obsession with numbers. When he goes next door to confront the boy whose dog has just killed his prize chicken, he doesn't realize that meeting Vusi will completely change his life.

Vusi is battling cancer. His only goal in life is to make the best zombie movie the world has ever seen. Martin finds himself being sucked into Vusi's dream, too. The boys develop a strong friendship that is a light in Martin's otherwise dark life. As the two go against all odds to make their movie dreams a reality, Martin realizes that life is about much more than just numbers.

A Good Night for Shooting Zombies is set in South Africa and is an excellent introduction to translated works for middle grade readers. It features accessible situations, easy-to-like characters, and plenty of action. Martin is the perfect antihero with his strange mannerisms and crushing loneliness, while Vusi makes the ideal underdog. The boys' relationship is heartfelt and believable and develops smoothly and humorously throughout their zombie project.

Though Martin and Vusi are on an outlandish and often hilarious quest, Vusi's illness hangs over the book like a thick fog. While other characters make brief appearances, adding to the plot and atmosphere of the book, it's really all about Martin and Vusi's friendship. Never too sentimental or depressing, *A Good Night for Shooting Zombies* strikes a perfect balance of humor and heartbreak and helps to define what friendship really means.

ANGELA MCQUAY (March/April 2019)

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