

Frozen Secrets: Europa Academy: Book 1

Myles Christensen

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Middle school crushes, competitive sports games, and teenage shenanigans play out on Jupiter's ice moon Europa in Myles Christensen's *Frozen Secrets*.

Thirteen-year-old Max and his family move to Europa for his father's job. There, Max attends Europa Academy, led by the esteemed Dr. Faraday. Always snooping and getting himself caught in sticky situations, Max witnesses a theft of a secret chemical compound; his investigation reveals that a team of super spies are hiding a scientific breakthrough from the public with nefarious intent. With help from his friends, Max uncovers secrets and faces danger, all while dealing with the everyday struggles of middle school life.

Each character, from Max's elusive crush Vanesa to his intelligent friend Cameron, plays a pivotal role. Max is a troublemaking yet nerdy kid who loves his family and friends, though he accidentally puts them in danger. Witty dialogue shapes relationships and pushes the story forward; there are unexpected revelations about who's really on Max's side as the teens use their smarts and snooping abilities to save Europa.

Precise visual details capture settings like the snow-covered mountains that Max traverses during an Iditarod race, camouflage at a covert base where the bad guys hide amid intimidating peaks and icy wind, and the settlement on Europa, with its Earthlike neighborhoods and expansive view.

Fast, suspenseful action sequences are complemented by slower, important conversations. Preteen crushes that lead to hand-holding and pecks on the cheek are shared alongside scenes where Max and his friends prevent—or cause—explosions. Scientific terms are contextualized; futuristic inventions like artificial gravity created by centripetal force are intriguing and incorporated with purpose.

Frozen Secrets is an otherworldly adventure full of teen mischief and cool science.

AIMEE JODOIN (January / February 2020)

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