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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ MYSTERY

The Brothers Geek

Kevin Fuss
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Nyx Grimm may be a geek who quotes Star Wars and Lost, but his younger twin brothers, Westley and Nigel, are even bigger geeks. In fact, when the Grimm family moves to Parker's Point before the action of The Brothers Geek, Nyx's brothers are given the nickname that lends itself to this book's title. Lumped in with his brothers, Nyx initially feels a little embarrassed until he, Westley, and Nigel determine that they can use their geekiness to solve a mystery.

Nyx's high school seethes with the typical inter-clique tensions, which heat up when a star football player, Noah, is accused of stealing fundraiser money. In fact, the money is found in his locker, but Nyx believes that Noah has been framed. Setting out to clear Noah's name, Nyx becomes an amateur sleuth with the help of his brothers and a strange prophecy from a comic-store owner.

Kevin Fuss knows how to structure an effective mystery. He quickly lays out the scene and the suspects, then hooks readers with the aforementioned eerie prophecy and the brothers' humorous, brainy attitudes. He combines his knowledge of mystery plotting with a flair for the dramatic gleaned from comics, so there are surprising plot twists, game-changing revelations, and cliff-hanger chapters to keep readers going. With nary a false step, The Brothers Geek provides amusing, engaging reading from first page to last.

While the well-executed mystery plot is admirable, what really raises this book to the level of excellence is Fuss's attention to a full cast of characters. While his heart clearly lies with his superhero-loving, nitpicky, and bickering characters Nyx, Nigel, and Westley, Fuss also gives others in the story well-rounded personalities. The Grimm brothers' little sister Ariel and the framed jock Noah, for example, offer sympathetic portraits outside of Fuss's comfort zone. The good humor with which Fuss treats his cast makes The Brothers Geek a smooth and enjoyable read.

Criticisms are minor, and mostly concern formatting. Sometimes single quotes are used instead of double in dialogue, and the story switches once or twice from past to present tense. But neither of these errors makes a significant dent in the book's high quality.

Fuss is also the author of Pete and Devin. He is a proud geek who works as a substitute teacher. He is also one of the founders of the online community, Embrace Your Geekness.

ELIZABETH A. ALLEN (July 1, 2010)

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