

Weird Girl and What's His Name

Meagan Brothers

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With refreshingly real teenage protagonists, this compelling YA novel has all the makings to become a classic of this generation.

The transition to adulthood can happen slowly, bit by bit over time, or it can happen in a screaming rush of shattered perceptions that seem to suck the air out of the room and replace it with little more than a dizzying confusion. In *Weird Girl and What's His Name*, Meagan Brothers takes her characters through the latter journey, proving that in the end, the truth can be far more complicated and interesting than the perception.

Lula and Rory are best friends. The bestest of best friends. They share the same outsider status in their tiny North Carolina town, spending hours together watching old episodes of *X-Files* and confiding their deepest secrets. Rory came out to Lula years ago, and she shared the bag of artifacts her mother left behind when she dumped Lula off with her grandparents as a toddler. But then Lula catches Rory having an affair with his divorced boss, and she begins to question everything, including herself. That one night of discovery will change everything as Lula takes off in the middle of the night in search of her long-lost mother and the answers that she might hold.

Brothers, author of *Debbie Harry Sings in French* and *Supergirl Mixtapes*, deals with serious issues—an illegal affair, running away, questioning one's sexuality—in a simpler, quieter way than many authors of young-adult novels these days. She eschews melodrama and edgy sex scenes, and proves that a story can be just as compelling without them. This extends to her characters as well. There has been a tendency over the last couple decades, especially in television, to create hyperintrospective teenage characters with the vocabulary of forty-year-old English professors. Lula and Rory are refreshingly real seventeen-year-olds: just as smart and sarcastic, but with an insecurity and longing for normalcy that anyone can relate to.

This is a novel that transcends the LGBTQ genre, and it holds universal lessons for all. It is reminiscent of Judy Bloom's *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret* and *Tiger Eyes* in the way it tackles somewhat taboo subjects within a smoothly written narrative. It has all the makings to become a classic of this generation.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (Winter 2016)

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