

Woden's Key: A Me, the World, and a Dog Named Steve Adventure

Wayne Cotes

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Woden's Key is a speedy adventure novel that puts a twist on history.

In Wayne Cotes's globe-trotting thriller *Woden's Key*, a team of ambitious adventurers go wherever mystery leads them.

Jerod Grey turned his passion into a legitimate organization, The Adventurers' Club. Jerod has a diverse resume from his years in the military and law enforcement, and he uses those skills to track down stolen historic artifacts with a ragtag team of skilled individuals.

The Club's first mission comes after Jerod finds notebook pages in the back of a painting. They are linked to a World War II-era spy mission. The Club's resourcefulness and loyalty is put to the ultimate test as they uncover hidden history, defending treasures and legacies from those who wish to exploit them.

The novel switches perspectives between Jerod and Amelia, an agent who lives in the 1940s and who is the person at the center of the Club's case. Transitions between their timelines are clear. Each perspective adds more information and clarification to the main storyline.

Jerod is a confident, competent lead whose skills are on display as he makes complicated plans and engages in fights. His expertise in martial arts is balanced by relatable qualities: he is fiercely loyal to his dog; he suffers from chronic back pain. However, his narration includes tedious descriptions of his daily experiences, including his morning routines, meals, and thought processes. The excitement of his adventuring is lost in this minutiae.

Amelia's story is more direct and emotional, focusing on her relationship with a fellow agent, Brandon, if their love story is anticlimactic. She is willful, and her activities as a spy flesh out the history in the story, filling in the gaps in Jerod's research. Her scenes are a window into Nazi-invaded countries, in which dire circumstances help to justify the risks that she and others take.

Jerod's team—comprised of people he's known for years and newcomers, too—is large, and supporting characters are difficult to track, especially since new characters are frequently added. The Club members themselves are well described with the exception of Stephanie, Jerod's girlfriend. Their relationship is underdeveloped, and its role in the story lessens as the book moves forward.

High stakes situations are handled well, with problems solved thanks to Jerod's knowledge and the Clubs' teamwork. The central mystery is resolved quickly in comparison to the speed at which the rest of the novel moves.

Its story spanning multiple countries and accounting for a wide range of legal and cultural considerations, *Woden's Key* is an adventure novel that puts a twist on history.

DELIA STANLEY (April 22, 2019)

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