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White Rabbit, Red Wolf

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Preposterously plotted and with a highly disturbed 17-year old maths genius Peter as its main character, this extraordinary novel yet radiates energy and conviction. Happy to quote from mathematical formulae as one way of solving characters' current problems, it also deals with kidnapping, ruthless government spying agencies and murder. That tradition in former adventure stories for younger readers whereby villains in the last chapter are either tied up before being delivered to justice or else contribute to their own demise has no place here. Peter's otherwise sympathetic twin sister Bel has already settled into a steady killing groove, but since she has been programmed to be that way by her sinister, manipulative scientist mother, her moral culpability remains an open question.

Things start slowly with too much description of Peter's recurring anxiety states. There are also numerous jumps forward and backwards in time that follow, which can become confusing in an otherwise long story. But stick with it; how often does a Young Adult novel succeed in making maths interesting while also raising urgent philosophical points directly relevant to the action in hand? Peter himself moves from victim to action hero, becoming more attractive as a literary companion while making this somewhat unlikely journey. Before that, he is badly bullied at school. Like almost every other novel involving bullying, rather than complain to the authorities he suffers and almost dies at the hand of his chief tormentor (who then gets his own grisly come-uppance from angry Bel). Might there be a story one day where savage bullying at school is promptly reported to the relevant authorities and then stopped? If we can respect whistle blowers in the rest of society, why not in education as well? Not splitting on one's contemporaries under any circumstances seems an increasingly pointless philosophy these days.

Much else arises from this weird, quirky, utterly original and splendidly eccentric story, well written and ever-unpredictable from page to page. Read it and prepare to be constantly surprised and sometimes even amazed.

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