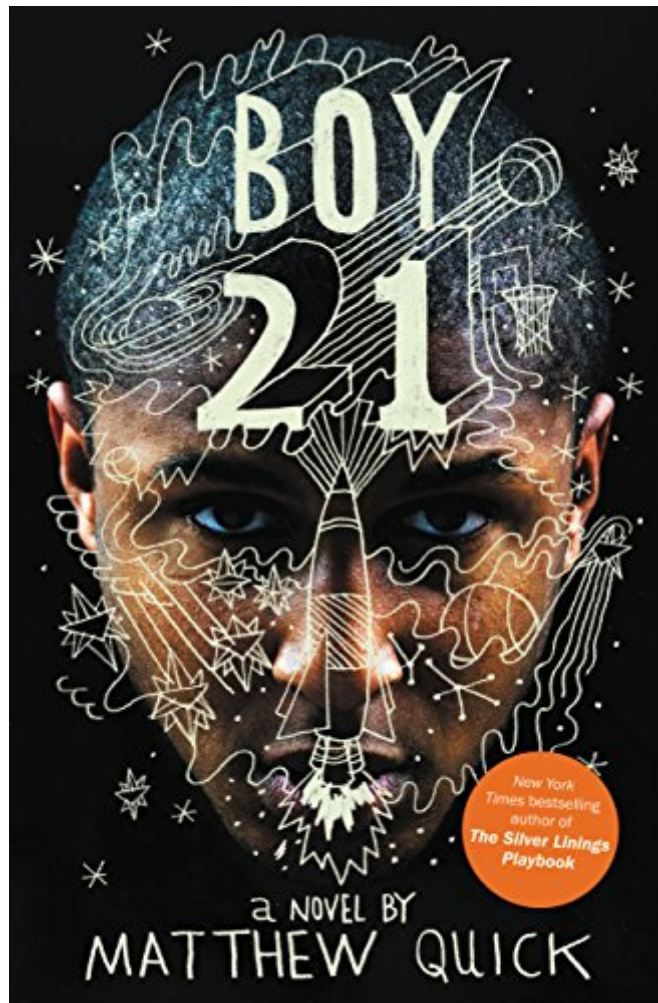




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Boy21 (Top Ten Best Fiction For Young Adults)



Synopsis

You can lose yourself in repetition-quiet your thoughts; I learned the value of this at a very young age. Basketball has always been an escape for Finley. He lives in gray, broken Bellmont, a town ruled by the Irish Mob, drugs, violence, and racially charged rivalries. At home, he takes care of his disabled grandfather, and at school he's called "White Rabbit", the only white kid on the varsity basketball team. He's always dreamed of getting out somehow with his girlfriend, Erin. But until then, when he puts on his number 21, everything seems to make sense. Russ has just moved to the neighborhood. A former teen basketball phenom from a privileged home, his life has been turned upside down by tragedy. Cut off from everyone he knows, he now answers only to the name Boy21--his former jersey number--and has an unusual obsession with outer space. As their final year of high school brings these two boys together, "Boy21" may turn out to be the answer they both need.

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Customer Reviews

This is the second book I've read of Matthew Quick's. I enjoy his writing style. If I had to guess, Quick either studied mental illness in college or grew up with someone close to him having a mental illness, as he writes about the psych really well. He knows how to go deep, and bring you back up for air before you fear drowning. I was hooked from page one--no exaggeration--and couldn't put it down unless life required it. I was totally involved throughout the whole book. Then, the end came. He ended the book the same way I always found myself ending every college paper I wrote--letting the reader's imagination do what it wanted to with the ever-after. This writing style always earned me an A, but, I now realize it just may have aggravated my professor's wildly. I remember one of my professor's actually asking what happened afterward. My paper was graded, the A in my hand, but he wasn't completely satisfied. He had to know what happened next. That's how I felt at the end of this book. It made me want a part 2; although, technically the writing on a whole was an A+. That is my simple and humble opinion. With that said, I've become a Matthew Quick fan and would recommend this book to anyone who wants a quick and brief escape. I didn't summarize the book because you can find that in the product description, which does a better job than I could.

"Whenever I think the world is ugly--that life has no meaning at all...I can always look up at the cosmos and marvel, no matter what happens. And when I look up at it, I feel as though my problems are small...."Maybe, like the title character in BOY21, we've all looked up at the deep, black, bigness of star-studded sky and found perspective--felt the insignificance of our day-to-day problems and the immense scope of that which is greater than us. Such is the framework of Matthew Quick's newest novel in which a young man, Finley, struggles to make sense of the poverty, marginalization and loss that has shaped his life, while his friend Boy21 copes with a devastating tragedy by forming a strange fixation with outer space. In Finley, Matthew Quick has rendered a voice is honest and compelling. In Boy21, he has created a character who is enigmatic and engaging. Their world is defined by hardship, vulnerability, and a struggle against challenges that seem to loom too largely to make sense of. The novel's tensions and conflicts gather and compound as both Finley and Boy21, through their friendship, gain strength and a deeper understanding of themselves. Loyalty and love are tested in this beautiful novel, resonating with a profound sense of loss which threads throughout. But ultimately, BOY21 is about finding meaning, and even comfort, in what we lose and what we cannot change. And like Quick's other works, it's about escape, hope, and silver linings.

`It's like my mind is a fist and it's always clinched tight, trying to keep the words in.' ~ Finley

McManus (a.k.a. White Rabbit), the narrator - Matthew Quick, *Boy21* Such is the way Finley McManus lives his life. He's not much of a talker. When you're harbouring a secret that is bigger than yourself, it's so much easier to take a backseat through life. The reader gets the sense that if Finley were to start talking, he would just keep going until everything is out. The reader also gets a sense, right from the beginning of Finley's narration of this intriguing story, that there are a lot of secrets behind Finley's silence...a whole boiling cauldron of secrets that could destroy the carefully constructed safety he silently hides behind. Quick gives the reader just enough tidbits throughout *Boy21*, though, to drive their curiosity. There are whispers of the Irish Mob, of a less than admirable reason for Finley's grandfather's missing legs, of the fact that his mother is dead. We get just enough of the back-story to know a lot has happened to bring Finley to where he is in his life at the narration's onset. We know the back-story is eventually going to explode into the present and reveal the huge dark secret that has affected Finley so deeply, a secret so terrible he is forbidden to speak of it even in front of his father and grandfather--two men who know its intimate details just as deeply as Finley himself knows. This alone gives the reader enough of a reason to read on. Then we are introduced to Erin. Erin is the star of their school's girl's basketball team. She is also Finley's best friend and girlfriend. Together, Finley and Erin plan to one day escape the mean dark streets of Belmont--hopefully with basketball scholarships to their choice schools. Enter Russ. Russ is new to Belmont. He's one of the best high school basketball players in the country. But he is so devastated by the recent loss of his parents that he has escaped into an alternate reality where he is known as Boy21--a visitor from outer-space who is just putting in time while he awaits the arrival of his space travelling parents. The basketball coach, Coach Wilkins, asks Finley to take Russ under his wing, shadow him while he adjusts to his new surroundings. This is where I had a slight problem. To be honest, I found it rather vague. I'm thinking the coach was perhaps attempting to help both boys by putting them together. I just felt that it was unrealistic that Finley was given the herculean task he was given. It seemed almost mean-spirited of the coach--and the rest of the school--to set Finley up like this. The boys had all the same classes...also implausible to me that a school would do something like this. Anyway, because of the great writing and the interest I had in discovering the remaining of the story, I tried to overlook this boggling detail. These problems aside, Russ was a great character. I was immediately intrigued by him. His ability to live within his make-belief cosmos as Boy21 was near magical. The friendship that builds between Boy21 and Finley was wonderful. And all the while there is so much bubbling underneath...the promise of so many secrets to be revealed. My desire to see the two boys deal with their heavy burdens was palpable. And, in the end, Quick delivered. The real tribulations begin with Erin. The event that changes things for her also

makes Finley begin to wonder if there is not more to life than basketball. This, at the same time his position on the team is threatened by the existence of his new friend Boy21. I have to mention here, that Finley's character arc was one of my favourite things about this novel. It was a fabulous arc...very satisfying to see his growth over the course of the story. It made Finley one of my favourite characters of late. There was so much going on in the last half of this book that I devoured it in under a day. And I believe you may do the same. Give it time. It's one of those books that seems quite good as you're reading it...but then kicks it up a notch and holds you right to the end. And it has an extremely satisfying ending. The last scene with Boy21 and Finley...I'll just say that it's absolutely remarkable. It will get you good!

Expectation: Apart from a couple issues I had...minor issues...this was a surprise. I well and truly enjoyed it. Great characters, a LOT at stake...quite the ride. Enjoy! I'll be checking out Matthew Quick's other novels!

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