



The Game Weavers

Books Reviewed:

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Editor's Choice:

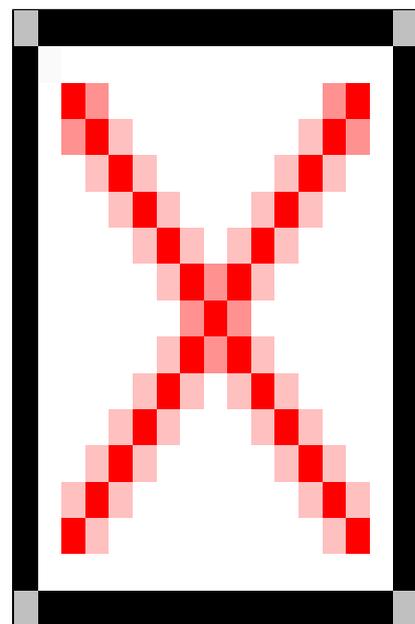
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



This futuristic novel for young adults tells the story of a famous gamer. Seo is training hard to become the youngest ever champion of the world's smash hit game, but he is battling much more than just his fellow gamers. As his feelings towards a young man called Jack become stronger and stronger, Seo struggles to accept his own sexuality, and faces harmful discrimination from his fans and even his family.

Because of his talent for the game Twine, Seo is adopted as a child by Sir Neil, and moved from his home in Korea to England. His little brother, Minjun, is also adopted, and is Seo's only link to his familial past. The pair are inseparable, and Seo is very much Minjun's father figure. It is a responsibility that Seo relishes until Minjun inadvertently tells the world about Seo's relationships with men. At first, Seo's distress at being exposed seems to stem from his very private and reserved character. However, at his next Twine match, the fans in the stadium shower him in abuse, and it becomes clear that this story is set in a world where, despite the futuristic setting, homosexuality is not universally accepted and evokes dangerous reactions from many.

The way that discrimination and vilification are carried out in this novel are often brutal, even from close family members, and descriptions are visceral and frank. As well as Seo's sexuality, gender-based discrimination is rife in the Twine world and close-minded fans fail to acknowledge the skills of the current world champion, with whom Seo has much in common, despite their rivalry.

Sir Neil exercises complete control of Seo because of his managerial as well as parental role, and forces him to begin a relationship with a woman and prove his heterosexuality to the world. His fake girlfriend's name is Penelope and, unlike other characters in the novel, she is rather inauthentic, and written with less agency and less authenticity than other characters. Seo feels trapped and doesn't want to hurt anyone. In a tense finale, Seo's only chance to win his freedom and make his own romantic decisions is to win the world championship for himself.

The Twine matches are described in dramatic fashion: gamers create their own pawns (different animals and creatures) using threads of 'twine', who fight one another on an imagined battlefield. Zahabi has envisioned a genuinely exciting, believable, futuristic computer game, which adds an effective balance of pace and action to a novel that is also full of emotional turmoil.

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