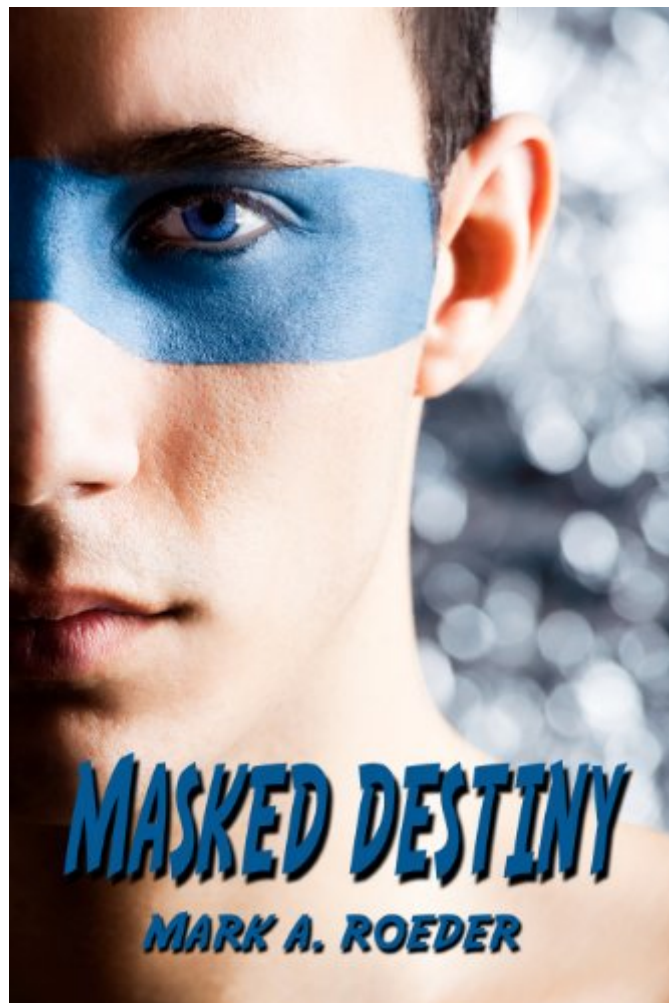


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Masked Destiny



Synopsis

Masked Destiny is the story of Skye, a high school athlete determined to be the Alpha male.

Skye is obsessed with his own body, his Abercrombie & Fitch wardrobe, and keeping those around him in their place. Try as he might, he is unable to ignore the world around him, or the plight of gay boys who cross his path. Too frightened of what others might think, Skye fails to intervene when he could have saved a boy with a single word. The resulting tragedy, wise words from a mysterious blond boy, and a unique opportunity combine to push Skye toward his destiny. Oliver is young, a bit pudgy, and interested in little more than his books and possibly his first kiss. As he slowly gains courage, he seeks out the friendship of Clay, his dream boy, in hopes they will become more than friends. Oliver is sought out in turn by Ken, who warns him Clay is not at all what he seems, but Ken, too, has his secrets. Oliver must choose between the two and discovers danger, a link to boys murdered in the recent past, and the answers to secrets he could never dreamed.

Book Information

File Size: 3501 KB

Print Length: 346 pages

Publisher: Mark A. Roeder (February 11, 2009)

Publication Date: February 11, 2009

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B001SER94C

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #606,640 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #92

in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > LGBT Issues #1309

in Kindle Store > Whispersync for Voice > Gay & Lesbian #1995 in Books > Science

Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Superheroes

Customer Reviews

Having read a couple of other books in Roeder's "Gay Youth Chronicles" series, I picked up "Masked Destiny" already knowing it would be well written and feature realistic characters with whom younger readers could relate. On that level I was not disappointed, though I feel Roeder has pushed his story lines more than a bit beyond believable, with the inclusion of ghosts, angels and a town where it seems every other teenager in town turns out to be gay or bisexual. "Masked Destiny" tells the story primarily of two teen boys who narrate the novel. There's Oliver, a 14 year old pudgy gay boy with self-esteem issues, and Skye, seemingly the stereotypical ego-driven 16 year old football jock, who work together at the feed store in small town Verona, Indiana. Skye lives with his sister and small nephew, as his parents have separated and moved elsewhere, and is obsessed with working out, competing, and remaining one of the primary "Alpha males" at the high school. Skye figures that Oliver is probably gay, but doesn't bother him about it, and actually kind of gets a kick out of it when Landon, the team's manager and towel boy, "checks him out" as he comes out of the shower each day at practice. Skye's world changes after he fails to intervene when he later sees Landon being gay-bashed by two teammates who resented being stared at, then becomes a target himself when Landon ambushes Skye and Greg (one of his attackers) with a gun, shoots Greg, chastises Skye for not coming to his aid, and then takes his own life. Witnessing another bashing after a Halloween party, still wearing his mask from the party, Skye steps in to run off the attackers, and becomes a bit of a legend at his school. Meanwhile, Oliver finds out some disturbing information about a cute boy he meets at a gay youth group, which ties into stories about ghosts at an old mansion and the murder of some gay boys years earlier. I give the novel four out of five stars. Likely a great read for teens who like "ghost stories", or fans of Roeder's series as a whole.

I read part of a better place and thought the bullying aspect of the book was too outdated for this day and age of gay marriage. Masked destiny has too much bullying to be believed in the modern era, but it was plausible with the supernatural overtones. The book is worth the read for Skye who is a normal football player who happens to be gay. The other character was a forgettable puss, but without a victim there can't be a hero. Book isn't 5 stars but it may have been if Skye was the sole narrator.

I'm addicted to all of Mark Roeder's books. His writing is fantastic, and once I pick up any of his books I can't stop reading them. I'm only getting 5 hours of sleep per night because of it. I've now spent hundreds of dollars just to get the next book in his stories... I can't get enough.

As usual I give Mark A. Roeder, high marks for this well written teenage coming of age novel. The two main characters Skye and Oliver are telling their separate stories. They are not romantically involved with each other, but they work together, they go to the same school and do some socializing together. The story is fast paced, and keeps you wondering until the last word is spoken. There are a lot of old friends in this story. Which is nice, as we get to see these old friends' characters develop. We come to love them even more. I am waiting for Mark's next novel with great anticipation.

Skye and Oliver are two very different boys. Skye is obsessed with his body and being the "big dog", while Oliver likes to read and is more quiet. I really enjoyed the book and how these two boys become friends. I also like the bringing back of characters from previous books. I would recommend reading the books in sequence as it helps in the learning process about these great guys.

Mark A. Roeder is in my reading list since a very long time; I actually bought this novel, *Masked Destiny*, more than 2 years ago, but I haven't read it yet for a very simple reason: I was afraid. Aside for two novel set in the '50 (*Outfield Menace* and *Snow Angel*), all these novels turn around a group of gay guys in Verona, a small town in rural America, between the '80 and the first years of the XXI century; the first two of these boys, Mark Bailey and Taylor Potter from *The Soccer Field Is Empty*, met a tragic fate in their own story, and I was really afraid all the following stories had the same path. I was wrong, plenty wrong, and in a way, *Masked Destiny* was a good choice since I had another point of view also on Mark and Taylor's story, story that maybe I will finally have the courage to read sooner or later. The writing style of the novel is something I believe is common to this author: each chapter is a first point of view from one of the two narrative voices, Oliver and Skye. The most interesting aspect of this writing style choice is that Oliver and Skye are not together, and so basically they are telling us their parallel lives, giving each of them a different insight, and details the other cannot know. While Oliver is a nice character, a nerdy 14 years old with a big heart, the most interesting character is for sure Skye: he is vain, conceited, but nevertheless a good boy. Skye is overly worried about his body, he is well aware that is a stupid thing, not really important, but nevertheless he worries. The main comparison parameter in Skye's search for a boyfriend is the other guy's look, and he was even willing to make exception on morality, if the look was good enough. Lucky for his own good, he doesn't arrive to the limit, but almost. The novel is pretty complex and indeed, for a small country town, there are a lot of crimes happening in Verona, not all of them related to the gay factor; but that is probably the main

expedient of the author to build his plots: most of the supporting characters arrive from previous stories, like same-sex married couple (? I need to read this story...) Ethan and Nathan, or football coach Brendan Brewer and his boyfriend, or teenager couple Nick (Ethan and Nathan's son) and Sean. The paranormal element that was non-existent I suppose in the first novels, it's now one of the main themes and for the reader who followed the series it will be not a surprise like it was for me; but the author managed to intertwined it in the story, making it almost "likely". I'm not regretting my choice to start the series more or less in the middle, to me it worked since it enticed me to go back to the stories of the supporting character I liked the best, but for sure it generated some spoilers the more traditional reader maybe would like to avoid: to me it was good since I'm that reader who read the last pages of a book to be sure, but I know that is not the same for others.

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