



2019

### Freakboy

Abigail Packard

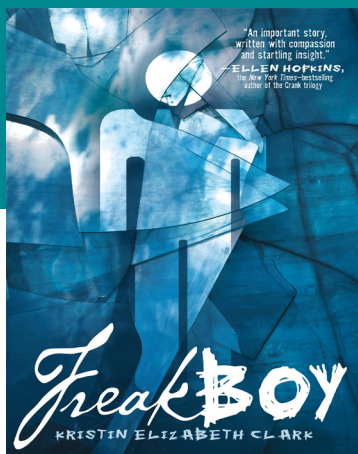
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## Book Review

# Freakboy

### Author

Kristin Elizabeth Clark

### Illustrator

### Reviewer

Abigail Packard

### Rating

Excellent

### Level

Young Adult

### Pages

448

### Year

2016

### Publisher

Square Fish

### ISBN

9781250062956

Brendan lives a pretty normal life. But Brendan doesn't feel comfortable in his skin. He feels like he would be more comfortable wearing girls' clothes or having soft curves and long hair. Vanessa loves her boyfriend, Brendan. She loves their open relationship; she loves that Brendan is her best friend on top of being her boyfriend. But when Brendan starts to pull in on himself, Vanessa doesn't know what to do. As Brendan struggles with the feelings he's having about his body he begins to ignore those he loves. It becomes so much that he even lashes out by breaking a window at the nearby building for LGBTQ+ teens. As penance, Brendan sends money anonymously each month to fix the window he broke and begins talking to Angel, one of the volunteers. Angel is comfortable with who she is. But it wasn't always like this; she used to be a he and it's been one obstacle after another to become the person Angel has felt that she's always meant to be. Together, these three teens work to help each other navigate relationships, friendships, and sexual identity.

Clark's debut novel is an enlightening look at LGBTQ+ issues from an insider, outsider, and in-between point of view. Clark deftly weaves Brendan's, Angel's, and Vanessa's stories together in an interesting mix of perspectives around the central point: Brendan's sexual identity. The three perspectives work well together. Clark also uses verse to discuss this story, bringing the element of language—the fluidity of language—into play to add layers of complexity to this already complex story of emotions and perspectives. Clark's writing is stellar, and some of the poems (particularly those that have a poem within a poem) are so spot on and interesting that readers will be left reading and then rereading in order to pick through all of the nuggets left by Clark for us to sift through and make sense of. Overall, Clark's novel skillfully navigates this complex and timely topic with grace and aplomb.

\*Contains mild language and mild sexual content.