The Extraordinary Education of Nicholas Benedict by Trenton Lee Stewart

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Review:
Because of his extraordinary intelligence and narcolepsy, Nicholas Benedict feels like an outsider, especially at his new orphanage, 'Child’s End which was once the manor of millionaires Mr. and Mrs. Rothschild. After his arrival, Nicholas hears rumors about a treasure left behind by Mrs. Rothschild and works with his two new friends, John and Violet, to uncover clues. When John is adopted and the treasure clues end, Nicholas runs away, but he soon realizes that he needs to give the orphanage a second chance. Upon his return Nicholas recognizes the real “treasure” is the library Mrs. Rothschild anonymously built in town and he discovers that Violet’s family adopted John and has plans to adopt Nicholas too.

Stewart does it again with this masterfully written prequel to his Mysterious Benedict Society series. Stewart explores complex themes in the story: kindness, friendship, and service. Because of his life in orphanages, Nicholas lost faith in adults. When he sees that adults can be good is when the clues clicked together to reveal the philanthropic kindness of the Rothschilds. The story also shows that friendship cannot be a one-sided relationship. Nicholas only wanted the treasure so he could escape his life at the orphanage. He didn’t see the sufferings of his friends or the other orphans. Once he sees those things, Nicholas finds happiness and purpose to his life by helping others. A beautifully written story that is sure to become a classic in children’s literature.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

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