



A Hundred Thousand Worlds

Bob Proehl

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

A Hundred Thousand Worlds

Bob Proehl

A Hundred Thousand Worlds Bob Proehl

Valerie Torrey took her son Alex and fled Los Angeles six years ago—leaving both her role on a cult sci-fi TV show and her costar husband after a tragedy blew their small family apart. Now Val must reunite nine-year-old Alex with his estranged father, so they set out on a road trip from New York, Val making appearances at comic book conventions along the way.

As they travel west, encountering superheroes, monsters, time travelers, and robots, Val and Alex are drawn into the orbit of the comic-con regulars, from a hapless twentysomething illustrator to a lesbian comics writer to a group of cosplay women who provide a chorus of knowing commentary. For Alex, this world is a magical place where fiction becomes reality, but as they get closer to their destination, he begins to realize that the story his mother is telling him about their journey might have a very different ending than he imagined.

A literary-meets-genre pleasure from an exciting new writer, *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* is a tribute to the fierce and complicated love between a mother and son—and to the way the stories we create come to shape us.

A Hundred Thousand Worlds Details

Date : Published June 28th 2016 by Viking

ISBN : 9780399562211

Author : Bob Proehl

Format : Hardcover 368 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Literary Fiction

 [Download A Hundred Thousand Worlds ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online A Hundred Thousand Worlds ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online A Hundred Thousand Worlds Bob Proehl

From Reader Review A Hundred Thousand Worlds for online ebook

Virginia says

This book was dropped off at my desk with a post-it note that read "READ THIS NOW! I think you will love it!" I blindly obeyed, dropping almost everything to read this book from beginning to end, and I'm glad I did.

This book is BEAUTIFUL.

The reader follows several different people on their journey to various comic conventions across the country (starting from Ohio and ending in California). Each character carries their own burden that they use the comic world to disappear from. However, everyone knows that one can't escape from their past forever and they all face their demons at one point or another on the journey.

Alex is a nine-year-old boy who keeps the story together, knitting fantastical visions of the world into the creative fabric established by the comic conventions he attends with his mom, an actress who was a part of a beloved TV series. He approaches to everyone and everything is beautiful and surreal. Through his eyes, the reader sees A Hundred Thousand Worlds.

Whether you're a comic book nerd or just into regular fiction, there is something everyone will love in this book.

Joe Jones says

This is the kind of book that really gets under your skin and you can't stop thinking about. On the surface it is about the comics industry and the cons that go with it. You don't have to be a fan of either and it is probably best you are not. The author obviously knows what he is writing about, but it seems he chose to only show one side of the industry. That was a negative for me. He did include plenty of Easter Eggs for fans which was nice.

Now on to the pluses which far outweigh any reservations I had about this book. At its heart it is about the relationship between a mother and son. About relationships between friends, colleagues, and lovers. About how we use stories to navigate our way in the world. Also, how these stories influence who we are and who we want to be. All told beautifully. I can't remember the last book I marked so many passages in because I didn't want to forget what the author had to say. As in any good story don't rush to get to the end. Instead relish the journey.

Rick says

I wrote a piece about how A Hundred Thousand Worlds is an antidote for anyone who read and hated **Ready Player One**. If that sounds interesting to you (or if you think I'm crazy for not liking Cline's bestseller), you can find it here.

Linda says

I received a free copy of this book from Viking through a Goodreads giveaway.

A Hundred Thousand Worlds takes place in the world behind the scenes of sci-fi television and comic books, moving from convention to convention with a westward trajectory. It's fluent in the language of fandom, and several serious discussions about identity, sexism, and sexuality are woven into the dialogue in a natural way. If you belong to any fandom bordering those in the book, you'll recognize these issues.

The perspective shifts between a collection of compelling characters whose paths cross at these conventions. I was most drawn to the relationship between actress Val and her son Alex; there are chapters from both of their perspectives, and their relationship feels very true. They work as the heart of the novel. I really enjoyed following them on their journey, and I particularly liked how Val's retellings of tv episode plots and Alex's story reflect their emotional states. This was a moving story told in a creative, fun way.

The only thing that annoyed me about this book was the number of times Proehl described something that was *exactly like* a property in our reality but under a different name in the book. Of course, Val has to have starred in *Anomaly*, not *X-Files*, and it makes sense to rename the two big comics companies National and Timely so you don't run into issues with DC and Marvel. But there are too many specific character analogues: OuterMan for Superman, the Blue Torch for the Green Lantern, the Astounding Family instead of the Incredibles (or Fantastic 4). There's even a not-Harry Potter series of books. When The Curator (not The Doctor) showed up, I threw up my hands. He didn't do anything to advance the plot, so he was there just for the sake of being there. Too many analogues started distracting from a very strong story.

Ruthiella says

This book is a sort of road trip story which features a touching mother son relationship while also functioning as a love letter to both comic books and the power of storytelling as an ineffable aspect of humanity. The mother, Valerie Torrey, was once on a very popular sci-fi T.V. show (think *The X-Files*) and she and her preternatural 9 year old son Alex are traveling from New York to L.A. stopping along the way for Valerie to do meet and greets at a couple of midwestern comic-cons. Exactly why Valerie has to get to L.A., where she does not want to be, is explained as the story unfolds. There are also a couple of side characters who interact with Valerie and Alex who are wonderfully drawn and woven into the story.

The author makes up a comic book publishing and story universe that is similar to our own (Marvel & DC) but with different names and slightly different properties and trajectories, which was kind of fun. I imagine the more familiar the reader is with comic books, the more this would resonate. I am not really knowledgeable about that sort of thing at all, but I don't feel my ignorance detracted from the reading experience.

Baelor says

Proehl's debut novel is a fine book. It focuses on the relationship between Val and her son Alex as they travel across the country, stopping at comic conventions on their way. Other major characters include an illustrator

named Brett (and his writer partner/friend Fred), the writer Gail, and the mysterious Idea Man, who generates more plots than anyone can actualize.

Proehl's style is generally uncomplicated and marked by the frequent use of simile. This does not limit the emotional impact of the novel or water down the characters or plot. There are many touching passages, especially between Val and Alex and the thoughts their relationship provokes in them.

I cannot comment on the accuracy of Proehl's portrayal of the comics industry and the convention world, but I can say that lack of knowledge did not diminish my enjoyment of the book in any way. Furthermore, even if the details are inaccurate, the book's value is not contained in a slavish adherence to realistic portrayals of the above, for better or for worse.

The book does have a few major problems, the most significant of which is that it is actually two books in one. Valerie and Alex are really only tangentially connected to the comics scene, and little of their relationship is dependent, literally or figuratively, on the setting. A key element of the novel is the power of story and how stories can help inform our understanding of ourselves and our lives, but that is not really brought out in anything other than Alex's relationship with Brett. Brett could have been a librarian or neighborhood sketch artist without much consequence. The other book was about the comics industry, populated by Gail, Brett, Fred, the Idea Man, Levi Loeb, the traveling cosplayers, and others. These stories all intersected in meaningful and edifying ways.

While both of these stories are well-written and interesting, they do not complement each other particularly well, with the result that both feel undeveloped to some extent. Gail and Brett could have carried an entire book had their experiences and stories simply been fleshed out. The female cosplayers could have acted almost like a Greek chorus to them. On the other hand, the Valerie and Alex narrative could also have been extended somewhat beyond its end point in the novel.

Proehl does connect the stories, especially between Brett and Alex, and furthermore includes an interaction between Alex and Gail that borders on absurdly contrived, but these connections are superficial. Throughout ATTW, I was wondering why the comics setting had been chosen at all and what it -- rather than the idea of stories more generally -- was chosen as the backdrop to the Val/Alex narrative.

I am in the minority, but I actually found all of the comics stuff far more interesting, with its backstabbing, creative differences, sexism, and generational divides, than the Valerie/Alex story, which, while sentimentally satisfying, ultimately included a bizarre backstory (view spoiler) and did not really describe a progression of the relationship between the two until the very end. In brief, it often felt stagnant.

That being said, once I got a little into the book, it kept my attention, which is praiseworthy in itself. I will keep my eye on Proehl and plan to read his future books.

Lauren says

This novel exists in this universe of fandom, stories with cult-like followings and histories, and yet it is also a tender and loving story about the relationship between a mother and son. That mother just happens to be the former lead of an X-Files/Dr. Who mashup television show who had a child (and a brief marriage) with her co-star.

The wit! Priceless writing here, solid little things that just make the reader savor the cleverness of it all. Excited to see where Proehl goes next. I do hope it is somewhere. There were some big moments in this

book. I appreciated the care and dimension that he gave each character. Alex is a special young man. Val - and even Andrew - just want to get it right. I liked the secondary storylines with Gail (I liked what Proehl was saying about the industry through her) and even with Brett. The plastic-clothed cosplayers (the Greek-style chorus?) also had some surprising wisdom to share!

4.5 stars

Fantaghiro23 says

I started this book thinking I'd just dip into it. Did not expect to be blown away. Sure, it's set in the world of the comicons. Sure, there are characters that are their world's analogue of Joss Whedon, actresses who've played Companions to Doctor Who, Alan Moore, etc. Sure, there's a LOAD of references to Marvel and DC (in the book's world, Timely and National Comics). And yes, there's a lovely chorus of female cosplayers dropping bombs about misogyny in the industry. And yes, there are creators who straddle the blurry line of doing creator-owned stuff vs corporate creative properties. And all the while, there is intelligent and frank conversation about how things in their industry really go.

All of those things would've made me happy. But the heart of the story: a boy figuring out his story by creating a story, a mother torn by something she must do, an artist and a writer figuring out how to tell the stories they want to tell--these were the things that blew me away. Because yes, you have all those elements perfect for geeks (and even non-geeks), and it's coupled with beautiful, beautiful writing. The kind that can make you tear up.

I don't know how popular this book will be. I'm hoping it will be (for many reasons, yes), but mainly because it's a lovely story. And man, that ending. *That* was an ending.

Larry H says

I'd rate this 4.5 stars.

Despite the fact that it's less than 400 pages long, and other than flashbacks takes place over the course of a few days, the first word that comes to mind to describe Bob Proehl's *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* —other than the superlatives I'll use later—is "sprawling." This feels like a big novel, but while its cast of characters is a bit large, there are times when it feels very intimate, as it explores the dynamics of relationships, particularly between mother and child.

"Everything changes, all the time. Even if you tried not to change, things would change around you till you'd have to. It's like you're a story, not a picture."

Valerie Torrey starred for several years in a popular time travel-themed television show, *Anomaly* . As often happens in the entertainment world, she and her costar, Andrew Rhodes, became romantically involved around the same time their characters did. Valerie became pregnant and the two got married. But while the show continued, their relationship became strained because of the pressures of parenthood. When a shocking event occurs, it signifies the end of the show and the end of their marriage. Valerie takes their young son to New York, where she ekes out a living as a semi-successful theater actress and homeschools Alex.

A few years later, Valerie agrees to a series of comic-cons, as her character and *Anomaly* are still popular

with this audience. They plan to end up in California, where Alex will be reunited with his father, whom he's only seen on television in his new *Californication* -type series. But the reunion isn't going to be what Alex expects, and this takes a toll on both mother and child as they make their journey from convention to convention.

Along the way, they meet a group of comic book writers and illustrators, and we get glimpses of that world as well, from a talented illustrator who builds a rapport with Alex, to one of only a few female comic writers, who struggles with being taken seriously despite her copious talent. Alex and Val also encounter a group of women who dress as female comic book characters, and act as a Greek chorus of sorts.

This is a book about relationships—between friends and colleagues, between lovers past and present, and between parent and child. It's also a book about the blurry yet magical line between fact and fiction, and the power of storytelling. This is totally fitting since Proehl's storytelling ability is dazzling. The cast of characters is fascinating, complex, flawed, and utterly gripping, and although you know where much of the story will go, you savor the journey.

This book isn't perfect; when it touches on the backstories of different comic book characters you've never heard of it loses its way, but only briefly. I loved the book most when all of the characters were interacting, or when the focus was simply on Alex and Val—I liked the other characters but wanted more of the story's core. But this book had so much heart, and so much beauty, that I can't get it out of my mind, and I was sad when I finished.

If you're not a comic book fan, don't let that dissuade you from reading this book. This is a story more about people than comics. It's just so richly satisfying, and lovely.

NetGalley and Penguin Group Viking provided me an advance copy of the book in exchange for an unbiased review. Thanks for making this available!

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blog...>

David Dinaburg says

[A Hundred Thousand Worlds](#) is a book that I was pretty sure was going to be about superheroes; magical powers and feats of fantasy and all the tropes inherent therein. It opened with a little boy trying to uncover some magic words that would transform him, *Shazam!*-like, into something different, something more. I kept reading, pretty sure I knew what was up.

In a way, I was right. But in a different, more accurate way, I was very wrong.

Expectations do a lot to alter the experience of reading fiction: I loved [Ready Player One](#) so I went into [You](#) hoping it would be more of the same. It wasn't, at all, and I was disappointed. But its story stuck with me longer than [Ready Player One](#) and I think I liked it more the further they both slid into the past. On the opposite side of heightened expectations, going in blind or under a misapprehension can add something immeasurable to an experience. It makes the book seem smarter because you have less time to pick out plot holes or presuppose what twists the plot may take. I spent a while looking for magic and superpowers, and by the time I realized they weren't going to show up, I was already hooked.

The coolest thing in the book is hidden in plain sight; it is a little game to play while working through the story, and the author revels in it:

“National Comics set their books in fictional cities,” says Gail. “Metro City is clearly New York, but they don’t call it New York. Pearl City is San Francisco, complete with the Pearl Gate Bridge, which, for some reason, is bright blue. And Center City, which is where the Speck and Iota are headquartered, is completely and obviously Chicago.”

“Why not use real cities?” Val asks.

“In the beginning I think it was because they wanted OuterMan to have a futuristic city to have adventures in. Metro City is New York, but it’s more like New York in Corbusier’s wet dreams. Highways spiraling through the air, tram cars on a web of invisible wires. Once your main city is fictional, it’s easier to stick with fictional cities, for the sake of consistency.”

What you find as you read is fiction, but also historical fiction; everything from the history of comics—our comics, real comics—is taken and *Metropolis*’d or *Gotham*’d as they are sprinkled throughout the pages. The rough edges are smoothed away and made to fit snugly within the ongoing in-world narrative. If you know superheroes, you get to play Name That Tune(*toon? -ed*) with every origin, every character, even most businesses within the fiction. “*Metro City is New York*” becomes “*National is DC*,” and “*Timely is Marvel*,” “*Levi Loeb and Brewster Brewer are Stan Lee and Jack Kirby*,” “*Anomaly is X-Files*,” and so on. It sometimes feels like the book breaks out of comics into the world of greater geekdom to ask and answer the question, “What if Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny had a baby?” Or, perhaps even more directly, “What if Téa Leoni had been Dana Scully?”

I know this book, like *Of Dice and Men*, was written for people like me; you get to play nerd detective and feel clever and connected, with an in-group wink-and-nod that other people might get from sports tribes or political parties or fashion blogs. Cue the Fry-squint, “I See What You Did There” image macro, because I wasn’t—still am not—sure whether this casual re-writing and fictionalizing of comic book history is clever and creative or lazy and self-serving; you don’t need to do research and you can cherry pick all the fun concepts without being called a plagiarizer. But the thing is, I like that I sort of know the framework. I like the dreamlike familiarity. It’s the same reason people like retelling the hero’s journey or listening to familiar songs—it’s comfortable, if not outright comforting. There’s a reason tropes sell.

The story itself is pleasant enough that I don’t want to give too much away. The characters are likable, or at least recognizable and enjoyable to see. The little nuggets of memory-foam, almost-familiar heroes, though, those are the marshmallow bits in the bowl of oat cereal. They’re bright and fun and definitely the reason you pulled this particular box down from the shelf, but a whole bowl of only marshmallow bits would not only be nauseating, they’d also leave you really hungry, really quickly. Good thing the oats are tasty, even on their own.

Pouting Always says

I really liked the writing style and the characters but the plot line was kind of boring in itself. It might not help that I’m not into comic books myself so maybe a lot of what was talked about didn’t interest me as much. I probably missed a lot because of it but also the whole thing was just Val going to leave Alex with his father and the other characters all felt very secondary to them. I’m not sure what I really got anything out of reading the book even though it was again written pretty well, I guess it just wasn’t for me personally. I would totally read other books written by this author though.

David says

Valerie Torrey used to play a part on a (fictional) sci-fi show called *Anomaly*. Then 6 years ago, she took her son, Alex, and fled to New York, where she started her new life. When a custody agreement forces Valerie to come back to the West Coast to give Alex back to his father, Andrew (her costar on the old TV show), Valerie decides to make her way west making appearances on the comic convention circuit as her former character, taking her son in tow, who in his isolation, takes refuge in the world of comics and all their hundred thousand worlds.

May we take a moment to celebrate the reliable, durable, timeless joy of the road trip as a metaphor, as a storyline, a vehicle through which a story travels? It works so often for a number of reasons: giving a story a destination also gives the story a place to go, literally. The road trip is where thoughts are expressed, where dreams are revealed, where fears are laid out. We find them so enjoyable because deep down we all want to be on the move, to be going somewhere else, experiencing the joy of unknown possibility. And the road trip at the heart of this wonderful story was key in my own reaction to this wonderful book, as I already loved it before I was even 30 pages in...

I loved this book. You don't need to know anything about comics to appreciate it, though if you do, you will recognize some of the tropes and the characters upon which the made-up superheroes of this world are based. And just to ground it in a little reality, the sections are bookended by quotes from the great (and very real) Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Alex is a sweet, likable kid who learns of Valerie's former show through her bedtime stories, in which she retells old episodes of *Anomaly*. And all throughout, we are reminded of the unbridled joy that can come from loving something silly to the point of nerdy exhaustion. Bob Proehl, an obvious comic book aficionado himself, really nailed it.

I couldn't wait to get to the end so I could write this review. I highly recommend this one.

Melissa says

Somewhat disappointed, but I think I had specific expectations going in. I am not a comic book fan but love everything geek (Joss Whedon is the man). I loved *The Guild*, I love the Avengers and even have played MMORPGs. The book was so heavy I thought I would crater under the weight of it. I think I wanted quirky, comedy with a touch of tragedy, rather than the tragedy heaped upon tragedy given. The intermittent comic book hero chapters were disruptive although very well written. I would still recommend to other geeks because I can tell there are many who loved it.

Jenne says

This was almost a good book, if the author could have just gotten out of his own way a little. I felt like he'd been saving up all these Wise Observations and interesting similes like a collection of fancy buttons and just sewed them on wherever there was a sticking-out place.

Also, "Ferret Lass"? Just no.

Melissa says

Meh.

Bailey says

Rating: 4.5/5

A Hundred Thousand Worlds was not a book that I was prepared for. All that I knew when I first heard of it and saw its gorgeous cover was that I needed to get my desperate hands on it ASAP! I'm a huge fan of the comic book medium and all that its creation entails. Plus, going to a con has been on my bucket list for ages. **So, reading a book that included comic book writers and artists, cosplayers, convention goers, cons themselves, panels, fandoms, and all the nerdy feels, centered around a story of familial love and sacrifice, was paradise for my little beating heart!**

Looking back on it, I'm extremely surprised that I haven't really come across a novel revolving around people going to and from conventions before. As a result, I didn't initially have too many expectations or standards heading into this book. With no idea what to hope for except a story that would keep my mind interested and my imagination engaged, all that I could ask for was what every other reader would ask for. You can imagine my surprise, then, when Proehl threw me for a loop with his enthralling, sincere debut that captivated my every waking moment with its exclusive quirkiness, deep rooted themes, and more than beautiful story telling. ***A Hundred Thousand Worlds* literally took my breath away. It was such a gracefully sculpted story that I was left speechless by the end (and slightly close to tears). It's true that *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* is full of crazy ideas and even crazier characters, but at the core of it all, there is a touching story about the bonds that hold us all together, some by a thread and others by glue.** Yes, there are brave superheroes, popular actors, eccentric writers, and awkward artists, but at the same time, this is a story where at the core of it all is heart, and there is so much more to this book than can possibly be explained with words. **It needs to be experienced firsthand or you'll be missing out on something huge.** If you're into comics, consider yourself a "geek", and/or are an extreme fangirl or fanboy, you need to pick this book up and take in all of its epic glory! And, even if you don't fit any of these descriptions whatsoever, this book should be read regardless, because it holds something special and rich inside of it that's equally incommunicable and untouchable except by Proehl.

For some, this may seem like an intimidating book. I know that when I first saw *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* in person it appeared daunting (but that could just be because I read a lot of YA . . . and I mean A LOT of YA). It may also take awhile to get into the story. I was about on page 70 before I became totally engrossed. **On top of that, there are quite a few story lines continually being introduced throughout the book, so keeping names straight took a little bit of getting used to.** However, I loved how so many characters crossed paths with one another in unexpected ways, overflowing into the later chapters, the entirety of their hopes and dreams and despairs spilling into different people's lives. To be honest, I first pictured *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* as a wacky comedy, but what I got was a debut with weight and honesty. Sure, I was more than a little surprised that my initial prediction was wrong, but I got something better, thought-provoking even. I was left with a permanent impression that I will never forget. **Proehl made a huge impact on me, and I'm ecstatic to see what he comes up with next. He's one of those authors whose every word I will gladly hang on to when it comes to his future works.**

The bond between a mother and son is inexpressible; of course, any bond between a parent and child is. However, Proehl managed to pull off an undefinable phenomenon as if it was nothing harder than a flick of

the wrist, creating an impressive, stunning intensity that is inconceivable or unreachable in most other novels. I fell deeply in love with Proehl's story. The heartbreak and the strife, the triumphs and the failures, *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* battled it all. It's hard to sometimes picture, but we live in a world within worlds, which Proehl understood and covered in depth. **Each and every single one of us has countless facets to ourselves that fit into different places and in different phases of our lives. Alex struggled with trying to figure out his own life and story, so he decided to create a fictional one in an attempt to unravel his own.** Alex's innocence allowed the author to relay a message to his readers in the simplest yet most profound way possible. **Sometimes the connection between reality and fantasy is closer than we think, and we just have to look hard enough to see the connections. It may even be that the stories we hear along the way or create on our own are bigger than ourselves.**

There are many other aspects to this novel that I loved, as well. For example, there were all of the side characters that were able to enrich the story and allow the author to dig deeper into the comic book world. The diversity of this aspect made me a happy camper, especially because one of these characters was a lesbian. I also had no idea how cut-throat the comic industry could actually be. Proehl obviously knows a great deal about this area and used this to his advantage while crafting his debut. He made an excellent point that there are not a great deal of females in the world of comic book making. Of course, my curiosity got the better of me and I had to look back at all of my old reads after finishing *A Hundred Thousand Worlds*, only to discover how true this actually was! So many comic writers and artists are males. Proehl also brought up the point of how heroines are continuously oversexed with their costumes so that their serializations will attract more readers, which is absolutely true. Unfortunately, this is the reality of today, but hopefully the future will prove helpful in changing this fact! Another point that I want to make is that dispersed throughout the novel were little origin stories based on random heroes who we never hear about again. I know that for some, they may disrupt the flow of the story, but I gravitated towards them. They were fantastical and addicting. I can only imagine how amazing the origin stories would be if they were further fleshed out!

***Thousand Worlds* is an unexpected gem, which I can never truly define, no matter how many words I try to use. Stories are a huge part of our lives, and how we allow them to shape us and how we allow ourselves to shape them is all up to us!**

Please note that I received a free ARC of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

You can see reviews like this one and more at <http://knightingalereviews.blogspot.com/>.

Alana says

Full fandom book club discussion here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDR5k...>

Bailey says

4.5, but bumped up here because I think it's so deserving.

I mentioned this before, but I still can't believe this was written by a man. *A Hundred Thousand Worlds* is a deep dive into the world of geekdom, of comics and genre TV and where the two come together with fandom. You don't have to be familiar with comics history to enjoy this at all, though I felt certain there were

Easter eggs I missed because I'm not a comics person.

However, this is really the story of Val Torrey, essentially a fictionalized version of Gillian Anderson, and the story of her life a few years after the unexpected, painful end of her TV show, *Anomaly* (a mish-mash of *X Files* and *Doctor Who*). Divorced from her co-star husband and raising their young son, she and Alex make their way from NY back to LA, stopping at fan conventions across the country to meet fans and reinhabit the most painful time in her life, that as Special Agent Bethany Frazer.

There are multiple POVs here, including her son Alex, comics artist Brett, and token woman comics writer Gail Pope. Each of these characters is written with such nuance and sympathy that I still find it hard to believe this was written by a man. Not a chapter goes by that doesn't look a little too closely at the rampant sexism within these industries and that doesn't excoriate those who uphold these "traditions".

This is heartfelt and delightful, and I highly recommend it if you have even a passing interest in any of the things mentioned above.

Ron says

The book's description makes it sound as if this boy meets a cast of characters in space. But that's only true in the sense of comics, comic-cons and what lies in the imagination of this 9-yr old boy whose head is actually screwed on straighter than most adults. What this story manages to do so well is straddle a line between the world of comics and the lives of people. Those lives happen to be part of that world: artists, writers, actors. Therefore, it's a great read for those who love reading comics and watching sci-fi because within these pages you'll get a dose of what you love, plus some tasty bits of the insides. (*Note: you don't have to be a comic geek to enjoy this. Point in fact: I know very little outside of the movies*). Proehl does an awesome job creating this. He doesn't use the comics and heroes that we all know (Marvel, Avengers, etc.). Maybe that's because of copyrights - I'm not sure. Instead, what you see in the book is this closely-related, alternate reality of that. Recognizable but fresh. And guess what? It works. At least it did for me.

On the flip-side, this book is good for those of us who like a story about people struggling to get through life. Some struggles are everyday issues. Some are life-altering, as it is for this young boy, Alex, and his mom, Val. I liked these characters so much because they felt real, and their plights are our plights. This book doesn't try to be exciting. No flash-bangs. Not at all necessary. (not something you would expect in a world of comics and movies, but it's another thing that keeps it real). What it is does have is some pretty good depth, and multiple-likeable-characters with crossing story lines. And of course, it has uniqueness. In that I think it truly excels.

Audrey DeMello says

This love story between a mother and son felt very real and beautiful and funny and sad. But it's also so much more than that, I wanted to watch every show, read every comic, and hear every story mentioned throughout this book; most do have a real life counterpart but I want to watch/read *these* ones. This was one of those books I couldn't wait to pick up again and never wanted to put down, the writing is so wonderfully unique. I have a problem with endings, they can spoil a fantastic story by being too sappy, too tied up in a neat little bow, too out of left field. This was baby bear porridge, it was just right.

