



# Frederik Sandwich and the Earthquake That Couldn't Possibly Be

*Kevin John Scott*

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At the age of eleven Frederik Sandwich awakens to an earthquake that couldn't possibly be. His town is nowhere near a fault line and no earthquake has ever been recorded there. But when he questions what could have caused the shaking, he realizes he may have uncovered more than he bargained for.

Desperately wanting to know what happened, but not the type of person to break rules or push adults for answers, Frederik is lucky (or not, depending on how you look at it) to meet a mysterious stranger, Pernille. She is the sort of person to break rules and demand answers, and is determined to partner with him to get to the bottom of the mystery. It's a mystery that will lead the two outsiders through abandoned train tunnels, into hidden library rooms, and to the shadowy corridors of City Hall in the dead of night as they try to figure out what could have caused inexplicable rumblings in their small town.

A delightfully strange and hilarious debut novel perfect for Lemony Snicket and Trenton Lee Stewart fans—the first book in a new middle-grade mystery series that will keep you guessing and laughing all along the way.

## **Frederik Sandwich and the Earthquake That Couldn't Possibly Be Details**

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Author : Kevin John Scott  
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## From Reader Review Frederik Sandwich and the Earthquake That Couldn't Possibly Be for online ebook

### Shawn Holman says

This is so good. The intended audience is probably pre-teen to early teen. This was incredibly delightful to read. The word play and the alliteration is so good and so sophisticated that it makes it fun to read for any age. The story is definitely geared young but it's fun and fast paced and the characters are quirky and more than one dimensional which so often happens in middle grade lit. So often for literature geared toward that age it's fun to read as a child but not so fun to read as an adult because the writing is too simple and the characters are too one dimensional (). But this was just plain fun to read. Seriously do yourself a favor and read this and pay attention to the alliteration. If it were read out loud it would be music on the ears. I would recommend this to anyone of any age.

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### Briana says

Kevin John Scott's debut middle grade mystery, *Frederik Sandwich and the Earthquake that Couldn't Possibly Be*, is the first in a series about the corrupt and mysterious culture of the law-obsessed, overly-orderly town of Frederik's Hill. Whimsical yet poignant, the novel explores what it means to be an outsider in one's own hometown, and how institutionalized prejudice contributes to unwelcoming cultures.

And, most importantly, what even the smallest and most unlikely heroes can do to change the world around them.

The novel artfully balances the surreal and absurd elements of its setting against a political climate that echoes painful realities of our contemporary social landscape. Frederik's Hill is a whimsical place where every store, street, and train platform are named Frederik – where the impossible happens daily on both a small and large scale, such as the passing of “hundreds of cyclists, thousands of them, everywhere” constantly in the streets. Yet it is also a town with a dark political underbelly (literally and figuratively, if you count its secret underground train).

For all its quirky hilarity, Frederik's Hill is also a land that not-so-subtly rejects foreigners and uses diversity events for PR purposes, all while passing legislature to isolate newcomers and discourage equality. While the novel's setting is fun and colorful throughout, it is also a critical depiction of our modern political landscape: one that rejects refugees and builds walls along international borders. Scott balances the absurd elements of his setting with those that ring painfully true, creating a fun and accessible work for young readers that maintains a meaningful message and packs a powerful punch.

Given the whimsical and surreal setting, the novel runs the risk of confusing readers early on, even before the meat of the mystery is introduced. What makes the novel work so well is, simply, Scott's prose. Excepting the prologue, the author's world-building takes place entirely in-scene and through the characters' (and therefore readers') interaction with their surroundings. On a micro-level, Scott develops vivid settings, character and action scenes through choppy sentences that focus on sensory detail over wordy descriptors. For instance, while Frederik searches the town library:

“The door creaked. An older room by far. Bare brick and oak panels. He closed the door behind him, listened for footsteps. Nothing. Safe inside.”

Or, as Frederik rushes to rescue his friend Pernille:

“He grabbed and heaved, and the gate swung open. Tipped him down the steps in a tumble. It made a devil of a noise. He looked around in panic. No one there. He picked himself up and ignored a sore elbow and limped through to the sliding door, a solid slab of steel. Open. Just a little. Just enough.”

The use of sensory detail – whether through Frederik’s vision, smell, or hearing – create a vivid and dynamic setting. The alternating sentence structure helps readers focus on the descriptors while also quickening the pace during tense scenes. It works well for a mystery, and particularly well for one that takes place in such a peculiar setting.

Ultimately, *Frederik Sandwich and the Earthquake that Couldn’t Possibly Be* is a page-turning, hilarious mystery/adventure about friendship and otherness. As Frederik uncovers the mysteries of his town, he unpacks his own prejudices, including those internalized against himself and his family due to years of exclusion. In the end he learns to celebrate himself and others like him – all with the promise of more mysteries to come, and justice to be served in the town of Frederik Hill.

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## **Andréa says**

*Note: I received a digital review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.*

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## **Laura says**

It's never clear what's wrong with Frederik's name, but it is very clear that he's been ostracized for whatever it is that's wrong. That wrong-ness also leads to his being afraid/unafraid of finding out why there was no earthquake, and what the very old, very weird train that shouldn't be running to stations that don't exist. I loved Frederik's voice and his bravery while insisting that all he wants is to just be left alone to go about his business. This will be a huge hit with my MG readers.

Copy provided by publisher.

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## **Suzanne says**

Fans of mystery adventures with memorable characters will have fun with the story of an earthquake that couldn't possibly be. Frederik Sandwich lives on Frederik's Hill, a place where everyone follows the rules. Because his parents were foreigners who moved to the city, Frederik tries extra hard to be good and do what is expected so that everyone will see that he belongs. The problem is that his plan doesn't work and the kids at school tease him about his name, his accent (which he denies having), and anything else they can think of to make his life miserable. When everyone is shaken awake in the middle of the night, the mayor sends out word that there was no earthquake and that no one should mention the word because it might scare visitors away from the upcoming International Festival. Normally Frederik would follow those instructions, but he and a strange girl from his neighborhood discover an odd train that rumbles beneath the city and an odd man who warns them of dangers and zombies down in the train tunnels. Could he be right? Or is he plotting something sinister to ruin the festival and hurt the mayor? They have to find out the truth!

Frederik is a boy swept up into events that are out of his control. He can't stop the neighborhood bullies from picking on him. He can't get any adults to listen to what he has discovered. He can't even get his new friend (the strange girl) Pernille to call him by name; to his annoyance, she calls him things like melon, enchilada, and other food items. Pernille is a very striking person with dark skin and white hair, unlike anyone else in the city - which makes her an outsider like Frederik. She is also convinced that the two of them can solve the mystery and save the day, although it would be easier if they were orphans. "It takes an orphan to solve a mystery, you see. Nobody else will do." Pernille has learned this from reading children's mystery adventure fiction. Between the two of them, readers are pulled along as if they are trapped on one of those trains running beneath Frederik's Hill.

An entertaining mystery perfect for middle grade fans of Lemony Snicket and similar stories of children facing seemingly unbeatable foes. I read an e-book provided by the publisher for review purposes.

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### **Dorine White says**

Frederik Sandwich, though born in Frederik's Hill, has felt like an outsider his entire eleven years. Because his parents are foreigners, the kids tease him and treat him like an outcast. The only other person treated that way is Pernille, the young girl with olive skin and pure white hair.

Frederik always obeys the rules hoping to fit into the crowd. Pernille does the opposite, breaking all the rules. When an earthquake hits their town, everyone refuses to admit that they even felt the earth move, all but Frederik and Pernille.

Together they decide to find out the truth. They discover a long forgotten railroad line, underground water pipes, secret doorways, and a plot to assassinate the major. Can they save their town, the major, and stop the earthquakes?

#### **My Thoughts-**

This book cracked me up. From the get go it is just hilarious. The absurdity of all the rules, all the kids named Frederik, and Pernille's bizarre logic and adventure hero characteristics. At every turn the author throws in a phrase or situation that is absurd. Even all the letter I's in the book are written upside down.

Frederik and Pernille are quite the duo. They play off of each other perfectly. Somehow, in all their misadventures, they actually figure out the truth. The major is really a bad person. Now, here is where I had a problem. Thirty years ago an incident occurred caused by the major. She had the railroad closed, accused someone of attempted murder, and basically took over the town. BUT the author never tells us what exactly happened. UGH! Plus, the book ends with our duo finding out that the major is a bad lady, but there is no resolution on how to stop her and bring her evil deeds and bigotry into the light. I wonder if there is perhaps a second book coming? That would help solve the issue, but I don't have a clue. I'll cross my fingers, because this hilarious book really deserves a chance.

Kids will enjoy the antics of our super duo. The weirdness of the characters and the towns absolute adoration of the major and following the rules will give them pause for thought. I'm giving this book 4 stars!

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### **Chelsea says**

Two "outerlopers" (as opposed to interlopers) set off to explain a mystery that takes them into the depths of

their bigoted city. This book was delightfully odd and chocked full of masterful word play. In some ways, it reads like a Dr Seuss for middle graders - quirky prose with a broader social message. The book could be used as a jumping point to discuss the immigration experience, bullying, the power of government....heck, it could even go along with a lesson on geology. I thoroughly enjoyed the plot, but the writing style is what pushed me to go with a 5-star rating.

1. The alliterations roll off the tongue, making it a fun choice for a read aloud.

"The chief of police for Frederik's Hill is a toadying timeserver and typical of this two-faced tin-pot tightwad town."

-and-

"His name is Eduardo,' Pernilla put in. 'Eduardo Esteban de Enchilada.'"

2. The author adeptly navigates run-on and incomplete sentences in a way that makes the passages more interesting.

"As if in answer, a head was lowered sideways into the space between them. A red, rude face, all beastly beard and bad breath and boils and warts and nose hairs. The foul old man gave a fearsome belch and the air grew thick with onions."

3. The silly word choice is fun and perfect for a middle grader.

"Goodness, gooseberry,' she protested. 'Do keep your undershorts in order.'"

4. And finally, this...well, this made me laugh.

"For Pete's sake!' he burst out. 'It's not safe. Nowhere is safe. This isn't some childish children's adventure story.'"

Thank you to NetGalley for allowing me to read this in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Heather Brown says**

"A delightfully strange and hilarious debut novel perfect for Lemony Snicket and Trenton Lee Stewart fans—the first book in a new middle-grade mystery series that will keep you guessing and laughing all along the way." I agree completely! Frederik Sandwich is a brilliant boy bullied by his classmates for being different, and when an eccentric new girl named Pernille takes a shine to Frederik, he knows this is not a good thing for his popularity. Fortunately, there is nothing Frederik can do about it. Together they are going to solve the mysterious shaking that plagues their village.

Very strange and funny, with important messages about tolerance, bullying, and popularity.

## Pop Bop says

It's a Little Edgy, and I Like It

In one sense this is a simple buddy/adventure. In another sense it's a pretty thorough examination of what it's like to be an outsider in a heavily regimented and closed society.

Frederik's parents are immigrants to Frederik Hill, but by gosh Frederik was born here! and feels he should be treated as an insider. No one else thinks that though, and so he is bullied mercilessly. Frederik is also small and passive, which doesn't bode well for him, even though we suspect that there is a hero within this smart, sensitive and observant boy. Then one night there's an earthquake, which Frederik knows to be impossible as a matter of geology and soil dynamics, (I told you he was smart). The next day Frederik is frustrated to find that all of the insiders have circled the wagons and decided to totally suppress any acknowledgment of whatever the event was. Frederik may be an unquestioning and rather timid rule-follower, but he also wants answers, darnit.

Enter Pernille, (rhymes with vanilla, she says). Pernille is the middle grade version of a manic pixie dream girl, but I mean that in the most positive way possible. She is the neighborhood weird girl, and unlike Frederik, who yearns to fit in, she revels in that distinction. She takes poor, diffident, rule following Frederik under her wing, and decides that the two of them will solve this earthquake mystery. (Here's my favorite Pernille line, and a good indicator of her character in the book: After Frederik admits he has never read "children's adventure literature" Pernille observes, "How tragic. No wonder you're at sea in mystery scenarios. I shall have to lead. Follow me." If that line tickles you then you'll love this book.)

Thereafter, and along the way, the two partners define their outsidersness, ally with other outsiders, and challenge the corrupt insiders. Also along the way they have exciting adventures, discover a strange world, (including a brilliantly described and atmospheric abandoned subway under Frederik Hill), delve into a Borgesian library, and learn that some rules were made to be challenged. I should note that the mystery itself is sort of wacky, but I didn't care about that at all.

At the outset this felt like a grim sort of bullyfest with Frederik suffering page after page of subtle and not so subtle humiliation. But, early on you realize that there is going to be a point to this, and the narration is just playful and whimsical and edgy enough that you know there is an underlying method and there will be relief eventually for poor Frederik. And of course once Pernille enters the picture, the book opens up into a glorious tale of Frederik loosening up and Pernille coming back a bit to Earth. Along the way there are numerous touching, sympathetic, funny, sad, and confused characters who aid or frustrate our heroes.

So, with two unusual and engaging heroes, tons of sly observations and throw-away lines, and a good deal of subtle irony, (and with an underlying edge regarding who belongs and who doesn't), this book struck me as an unmitigated success and a finely crafted treat for an ambitious reader with an appreciation for the awkward and the absurd. A nice find.

(Please note that I received a free advance copy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

## **Ms.Gaye says**

Frederik is a likable underdog and the power-hungry mayor in this story is easy to dislike, as are the frightened and rule-driven community members. I enjoyed the story overall and its mysterious theme, but Pernille's way of addressing Frederik in terms of food items began to wear on me ("my pinto bean" "dear croissant" "dented date" - it goes on and on in at least a dozen different ways). And so, I only give it 3 stars but I expect readers who aren't bothered by the food terms will enjoy the story much more than me.

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## **Chris says**

A fun mystery with an unusual setting and a slightly askew sense of humor.

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## **Colleen says**

\*I received a digital copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.\*

I'm all about the quirky middle grade books and this one was awesome. The mystery was well written and the plot was nice and twisty turny. Pernille's constant use of different new nicknames for Frederik was perhaps my favourite thing. I just loved her.

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