



Grave Images

Jenny Goebel

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A stylish debut mystery with the perfect balance of sweetness and scares!

Thirteen-year-old Bernie's summer is looking pretty grim. It's hard to make friends when your family runs a monument company, and your backyard is littered with tombstones. It's even harder when your mother suddenly refuses to leave her room . . .

To make matters worse, her father has just hired a new artist to engrave the headstones--the creepy Mr. Stein. Bernie has a bad feeling about him right from the start, and after snooping around his cottage, she discovers an engraved portrait of their neighbor . . . a woman who promptly dies the next day. And it's not just a weird coincidence. The pattern continues, and Bernie realizes that Mr. Stein has begun engraving headstones before people die, which forces Bernie to ask a horrifying question: Is Mr. Stein predicting the deaths . . . or causing them?

Grave Images Details

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From Reader Review Grave Images for online ebook

Susan says

I enjoyed this novel about 13-year old Bernie (Bernadette) who is certain the man her dad just hired to carve images on gravestones is evil. It kept me reading, trying to find out if Mr. Stein was really killing the people with his carvings or whether the deaths were just coincidences. I would recommend this for 4th or 5th graders. I had a hard time liking any of the characters, but I think a 10 or 11 year old would enjoy this scary book.

Pamela says

I'm not giving this a star rating because I just couldn't finish it.

I think that, for a book pitched to younger kids/middle-grade readers, the pace was simply too slow. We find out on basically every page that Bernie (our heroine, named for Saint Bernadette) JUST KNOWS that the creepy old guy her dad just hired to work at the family monument business is a Bad Guy. This means that she will do dumb things like repeatedly break into his room, steal things, and generally be a sassy pants. She doesn't show any sympathy towards her mother, either. Nice. Anyway, I made it about halfway through and nothing had really happened yet. It was still all "I think this happened" or "Oh no something bad will happen."

Well, I guess something happened--there was a weird romance that just sort of cropped up. *waves* Hi, romance!

Anyway, aside from the lack of plot movement, there were two other issues I wanted to address. One was the use of religion in the novel. I'm not averse to a novel having a religious point of view--that perfectly fine! Humans have religious points of view of one sort or another, so it's natural for books to mention that. However, Bernie lives in a small town, presumably in Colorado, where it seems like most everyone is Catholic (or maybe Episcopalian???) and they talk about church a LOT. It crops up in the narrative in rather awkward places--unnatural places. Like, "Hey, we haven't mentioned church recently. *infodump about church.*"

The other thing that bothered me was the setting. The author's bio says that she lives in Denver, and Bernie says that a town that's about an hour away is called Silverton. I don't know if she means the actual Silverton in SW Colorado, but I'm assuming she is. Even if she's not, I think my following points still apply. Okay, so the story is set in Colorado from the clues that we're given. However, the scenery described belongs more to a Great Lakes state where I live, or maybe something on the East Coast, with lots of leafy trees and grass and such. The area around Silverton, in the San Juan Mountains, is gorgeous, but it's pretty scrubby, and the mountains are red from being full of iron oxide (they're rusty!). It's also at a high altitude (most of CO is), so it's also very dry. Bernie mentions that the atmosphere one day is "swamplike." I have never, ever, ever in my life experienced a swamplike day while out there in the summer. It's kind of a soul-sucking dry heat. Unless, of course, this is all a BIG misunderstanding and it's not set in Colorado at all, although all signs point to it being so.

I know our library purchased this, so maybe someone will read it and like it. However, I just didn't.

Note: I received an ARC of this title from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

Miranda Paris says

Well-written, but some chapters seem to be out of order.

Carolyn says

This was only 200 pages, but a LONG 200 pages. It took me a few days to read. The story was heavy and dark. I wish it had been explained a bit better, but it was good enough for the spooky season.

Becky says

Bernie knows that her family is a bit off. They own and run a monument company whose main clientele are looking for gravestones. Plus her mom hasn't been the most social person of late, spending most of her time locked up in her bedroom crying. When a drifter arrives boasting an impressive skill at etching and looking for room and board, Bernie's father agrees to take him on. At first, Bernie is fascinated by the man's talent and hopes that he may be able to help her better her own. But Abbott Stein isn't interested in helping Bernie. Not one to take no for an answer, Bernie starts to snoop around the man's room and eventually finds an etching of a man who looks startlingly familiar. She'd almost forgotten about the incident when she learns that an old friend of her grandfather has just died. He and the man in the etching are one and the same, but why would Mr. Stein have carved a picture for someone BEFORE their death?

From the start, I was impressed by how well Jenny Goebel brought Bernie to life. From page one, Bernie just jumps off the page. Her voice, mannerisms, and attitude ring clear as a bell! Bernie is a clever kid who quickly figures out there's something wrong with Abbott Stein. Of course the adults are all clueless, but with the help of a fellow schoolmate (and someone Bernie reluctantly calls a friend), she bravely throws herself into investigating.

GRAVE IMAGES is a fun read for someone my age and a great creepy read for a younger audience. Goebel does a wonderful job of building an interesting mystery with some light supernatural elements and even some slightly gory details as well. Given my own reading tastes as a kid, this definitely would have hit the spot for me (it admittedly hit the spot for me as a somewhat grown up 32 year old, too).

Jenna Scribbles says

A Mystery with Gravestones, Ghosts, and Creepy Scenes

For young readers who might be looking for a title with darker themes - here you go. Bernie is dealing with some challenges at home - not your normal teen challenges... Her dad has hired an assistant to help him with his gravestone carving business and freaky things start happening! Bernie can't bother her parents and must figure things out on her own.

Thank you Scholastic and NetGalley for the review copy of this book.

As you can imagine, a mystery involving graves, cemeteries, and death will be a bit dark. The themes are somber and sad at times. I felt it all was presented well and necessary for the storyline. I don't think it will be too much for readers, but parents and teachers may want to pre-read.

The highlights of the story were Michael, his cousin (the crazy cheerleader), and matchmaking grandma Mimi. Such fun and spunky characters.

This book is definitely a touch different. It is a fresh, unique storyline and a well done mystery. I recommend it.

William says

Creepy good read.

Bri says

Moderate.

Faira says

4.5*

Dalton Hutton says

Wow, just an amazing book. Perfect job jenny, and another wow cause I can't believe that Bernie actually sends mr. Stein to jail.

Deviki says

Alright, So this book was really interesting from the start.
Right after I've finished reading the first page, I knew this was going to be good.
So I jumped onto my bed, turned on the air condition and snuggled into my cozy blanket to read.

I knew from reading the synopsis that this book is not going to be heavy and jammed packed with supernatural details. It's like, it has enough information to "carry" the story and finish it without leaving the readers in confusion. Basically, this book is your regular light reading minus the chick flick romance :)

So, I was browsing through GD's recommendation list and this book came up, I clicked on it because it had graveyard/headstone on the cover ! I love anything to do with graveyard, etching, coffins and western funeral. *considering I've never actually been to an actual graveyard before* Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with my own culture's funeral proceedings but to be honest I always thought it's always so loud, loads of crying and too many flowers !! I'm not fond of flowers and too much of it makes me gag!

Ok ok back to the review !!

I like Bernie, she is a placid teenager who doesn't really have much social life or friends. I think she gets it from her dad. I like that Bernie is not trying to be different but rather she knows she is slightly different from how other kids her age behaves. The conversation she had with her grandma to show how awkward she is around people was hilarious !!! Her response to that weird arse question was spot on !! LOL

We are introduced to Mr. Stein real quick, we don't really have to wait for his appearance. Yep the dude is super creepy from the description of him. He instantly reminded me of the creepy arse old man from *Poltergeist 2* movie for some reason. *ugh shudders*

I think Bernie just had an inkling about Mr. Stein and decided to nose around until she eventually saw something that confirmed that inkling. I didn't think she thought he was suspicious when she first met him. I mean sure he was weird, but I don't think he was suspicious at first glance. Weird ? YES !

We are introduced to many other characters in this book and but only a few really matter, come to think about it, the book only really talks about people that matters to the plot, we don't meet any unnecessary characters in this book ! Which is great - straight to the point!

I like Michael, at first I thought he was irritating Bernie to get her attention.....maybe because he liked her, which later confirmed it :) I think they had nice chemistry between them. I liked that Michael believed her even though what she shared about Abbot sounded "crazy". Ugh, I hate that Bernie thought of hiding her finding of *the* etching from Michael was a good idea. Gurl, he keeps coming back to you and cares about you. I don't think you can scare him away easy !

Discussing the "plot" is a dead giveaway to the whole story because like I've mentioned earlier, This book is quite straight to the point and you get a very fast, easy and light read story. So taking about the whole mystery relevance would spoil the whole book !

There isn't so much as an unexpected twist, you already know who is the evil guy and how he is doing it. Now you just have to read the book to know how the supernatural "thing" started in the first place. After that, we just continue to read to see how Bernie is going to stop his evil doing ! So that basically concluded the story :)

I enjoyed this book a lot, probably because I like all things to do with *that* category. I liked the forthright plot, characters, mystery and supernatural elements.

This Gif had nothing to do with the book review but, it's too hilarious not to share!

Mary Sanchez says

Twelve-year-old Bernie is named for St. Bernadette but can't live up to the high standards, especially with the antics she pulls after her father hires a drifter, Abbot Stein, to engrave portraits of people on the monument headstones which could add money to the family business, especially since Bernie's mom can't help because she is suffering from severe depression after the death of their infant son.

Bernie must find out why her friends and neighbors suddenly are dying after Mr. Steien has engraved their portraits. Thankfully, Bernie has Michael Romano to help her uncover the mystery, but is he next in line after Bernie discovers his finished portrait?

I really enjoyed the unique premise of the story told through Bernie's special voice, and how Ms. Goebel wove religion into the story. I would have preferred a realistic reason for the deaths but believe kids will enjoy the fantasy element.

Christine Ditzel says

Thirteen-year-old Bernie – named after St. Bernadette, but called Bernie because she doesn't act very saint-like – is spending her summer helping her father and grandma at their monument company with simple things like dusting and filing, while wishing she could do something more worthwhile, like help design monuments and headstones. One day a man named Mr. Abbot Stein comes in with a hand-etching of a woman, asking for a job and place to stay. Despite feeling there is a “wrongness” about Mr. Stein, Bernie sees this as an opportunity to develop her drawing skills. Until, that is, she finds a hand-etching of someone who looks strangely familiar in one of his drawers and learns the next day that they have died. Now Bernie, in addition to continuing to help her father and grandma, and taking trays of food up to her mother who is refusing to leave her room, needs to find out the truth behind Mr. Stein and his etchings – preferably before anyone else dies.

The characters and their motives are realistic, and the main characters are well-developed. There are a few coincidences that I felt might be a bit too much in terms of how easy it is for Bernie to figure out what is going on with Mr. Stein, but for the most part it is a very solid read. Michael Romano – the boy who bothers Bernie until she gets to know him, and sometimes even then – is very likeable and brought a sense of comic relief to the story when needed, especially because of how difficult Bernie's home life is, but also helped to bring Bernie out of her shell a bit more. Bernie herself, meanwhile, tends to lean more towards the serious side, wants to be able to help her family, and does her best not to put undue pressure on them which some younger readers might not be able to relate to, but is very realistic given the Morrison family's history.

Jenny Goebel has taken some very serious subjects and melded them together in a great Middle Grade novel with a hint of fantasy. First there is the day to day dealings of death with Bernie's family owning a monument company and trying to support grieving families through the process of choosing monuments and gravestones. I have occasionally seen something similar with family-owned funeral homes, but never monument companies. By using a monument company rather than a funeral home, Goebel doesn't need to include an actual body to get us to feel for the grieving loved ones. Instead, we see an upset husband and how Bernie tries to help him through his grief while choosing a picture for the etching he wants on his

deceased wife's monument. These are the little moments that are sometimes overshadowed by wakes, funerals, etc. in fiction and it was nice to see such a small moment at the forefront of the grieving process.

You can read the rest of my review at my blog: <http://readerlymusings.com/2013/10/28...>

Ionia says

Lately I have been on a string of middle grade novels that left a lot to be desired. This one--total joy. I loved Bernie. She is the kind of character that will make your child feel like they have a new friend. Her attitude is often funny and the thoughts she has about the boy who likes her are hilarious.

I think the thing I enjoyed the most about this book, was that it was different. You don't see too many stories out there where the main characters are in the headstone and monument business. This was a perfect backdrop to build an interesting and original story that you older children will surely love.

The story of why her mother was acting as she did was touching but not overly graphic or sappy to the point that it was tear producing. I liked the dynamic between the good hero and the bad bad guy. Bernie is pretty stealthy and smart and Mr. Stein was creepy!

I also really liked that there was a balance of terror and humour, realistic events and child-like features to this book.

This was a fun read that I imagine middle-grade students and parents alike will both enjoy. I would definitely recommend it. You don't have to be a child to have fun with it.

This review is based on a digital ARC from Netgalley and the publisher.

Medeia Sharif says

Bernie's father has a tombstone business. It's not glamorous. In fact, it's kind of creepy, and things are about to get even creepier. A stranger by the name of Mr. Stein wants to work there as an engraver. Bernie's father rejects him on the basis that Mr. Stein's work is too good. He surely couldn't afford someone like him. The sample Mr. Stein shows him is so detailed and lifelike, it's like the person's face is about to jump out at them. Mr. Stein insists on working there for room and board. Bernie's father relents and hires him. That's when the deaths begin to happen.

Bernie knows that Mr. Stein's presence is related to the mysterious deaths and his amazing artwork. He engraves someone and the person soon dies. She has to prove he's the culprit, though. The lives of the townspeople are at stake. Also, the boy who's her friend, but who wants to become her boyfriend, might be his next target.

I liked this book, although the beginning was way too slow. It didn't get good until I knew for sure Mr. Stein had something to do with the deaths. I think this would appeal to children who are looking for something darker to read. The book is atmospheric and chilling, although not graphic. This is a 3.5 for me, but I'll go ahead and give it a 4. I read this via NetGalley, courtesy of the publisher.

