



Frek and the Elixir

Rudy Rucker

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In the year 3003, nothing in the world is the same, except maybe that adolescents are still embarrassed by their parents. Society and the biosphere alike have been transformed by biotechnology, and the natural world is almost gone.

Frek Huggins is a boy from a broken family, unusual because he was conceived without technological help or genetic modifications. His dad, Carb, is a malcontent who left behind Frek's mom and the Earth itself several years ago.

Everything changes when Frek finds the Anvil, a small flying saucer, under his bed, and it tells him he is destined to save the world. The repressive forces of Gov, the mysterious absolute ruler of Earth, descend on Frek, take away the Anvil, and interrogate him forcefully enough to damage his memory. Frek flees with Wow, his talking dog, to seek out Carb and some answers. But the untrustworthy alien in the saucer has other plans, including claiming exclusive rights to market humanity to the galaxy at large, and making Frek a hero.

Frek and the Elixir is a profound, playful SF epic by the wild and ambitious Rudy Rucker.

Frek and the Elixir Details

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Author : Rudy Rucker

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From Reader Review Frek and the Elixir for online ebook

Matt says

I had never read any Rudy Rucker before, and after this outing I can not say I'll be running out to pick up something else by him.

The book tells the tale of a Frek a human kid in a crazy future where rampant bioengineering and consumerism rule the day. Most of the original species on Earth have been obliterated, and now only Gov sanctioned creatures can live and reproduce. Frek finds himself on an adventure to retrieve a mysterious elixir that will supposedly restore Earth to its former glory, bringing back all the faced out plants and animals, but will Frek survive the perilous galactic journey is the question.

Frek has his talking dog, a strange mutant, and eventually a girl raised on an asteroid as companions as he attempts to find his long lost father and the elixir. Along the way he and his companions discover a whole lot of strange, and run into things that Frek never knew were possible back on good old Earth.

Throughout the book uses its own vernacular and until you get a handle on it you will likely be flipping to the glossary in back to make sure your footing is sound. I enjoyed the latter, but I mention it because I know mileage will vary.

Overall the book was a just okay, I felt that nigh on five hundred pages it was a bit over long, and that around the three hundred and some change mark I was personally ready for Frek's tale to come to an end. The main reason for the latter is likely because I simply never connected with Frek, or any of his pals that were along for the journey, and that subjectively lengthened the journey. Another thing that likely hurt the novel is that Rucker presented the reader with a lot of innovative concepts, and really never stopped doing so- and this had a negative impact in aggregate.

Erik says

Rucker is interesting. A friend of mine is reading some of his books and this one and Spaceland were available at my local library. I feel like this author needs more feedback from his editors because he has a tendency to both over- and under-explain different scenes, leading to some tedious passages and then also some scenes that are sped up and glossed over. He may not feel he needs to do that much refining because his main gig is as a mathematician and so the pressure to listen to feedback may not be there. That, of course, is conjecture, but it's the feeling I get when reading his stuff.

That said, I enjoy that he's interested in delving into multi-dimensions and spirit matters. He seems totally unafraid to tackle any subject and his stories can get downright weird in a fun way. He's also a bit of a mimic. This book, Frek and the Elixir, is styled like L. Frank Baum and Roald Dahl might have written it. And Spaceland is written very much in the style of Flatland, the book that inspired it.

I'm only giving this two stars because, although I admire the courage, I don't feel like this book was worked until it reads well. And also it's written for a young audience and, well, I don't think young readers are dumb by any means, but it seems obvious that Rucker can't seem to decide who he's writing for and so parts seem to default to his adult writing mode and parts seem to strain to fit into the younger readers mode.

Despite all that I did finish it and enjoyed it somewhat but it's a book that I was glad to finish instead of wishing it would continue.

eva says

a lot of interesting ideas - perhaps too many - it didn't hang together very well, although i could feel the outlines of a good story somewhere in the background. some surprisingly charming characters - perhaps the most affection i've felt for a sci-fi dog since we3's 1 - but i wish they'd been fleshed out more.

mo movie measure report card: FAIL, although there were a couple brief conversations that could arguably make for a borderline PASS. i suppose third-person limited narrative with male POV character is a disadvantage for this test.

Brett Bydairk says

A coming of age book, seemingly for the YA crowd, but not really.

In the 31st Century, all normal plant life is gone, replaced by artificial organisms, and the genomes of the original plants have been wiped from all databases.

Frek, a young boy of 12, must make contact and deal with aliens who promise him an elixir that will restore the genomes. Along the way, he reunites with hi estranged father, and meets many interesting...creatures. Much imaginative science and social relations.

Sarah says

Wacky hijinks! Too fast paced for someone at home recovering from surgery. But I love Rudy Rucker, bless him, the man's imagination is out of control.

Noelle says

I would actually give this book two and half stars if it were possible. It has a lot of good ideas, but the author attempts to use all of them. This bogs down the story, but also makes events happen in far too rapid succession to make sure everything gets in. Could have used some pruning.

Smallerdemon says

This book is odd. I enjoyed it, but I can't say I liked it. It's a different type of adventure-scifi that I just may not be used to. I appreciate Rucker going for a "wet" scifi world instead of a "hard" one, but the story drags on for hundreds of pages more than I really wanted to invest myself in. Still, if you like Rucker and you like odd worlds that are practically from scratch, this might be for you.

David says

There's plenty of plot summaries here already. I enjoyed Rucker's exploration of cosmic physics in the setting of Frek's adventures. The book is a bit long, but for the most part it is well paced and highly enjoyable.

Richard Stern says

3.75? Creative, humorous, kept one's interest, a few new ideas. Perhaps a little on the long side. Loved the grammatical twist of the clam headed aliens, the collapsed Biome. A bit of shark jumping is inevitable but did not stop me from enjoying this.

Laurie says

This is a crazy, wild story of pre-teenaged angst in the far future. While it takes a while to get the rhythm as characters speak in a totally idiomatic vernacular that kids might use in an extremely advanced society where there is virutally no difference between technology and human physicality (cell phones are integrated with their brains), once you do, it's a joyride. Between aliens using our world as a reality show, talking dogs, and a small 12-year-old boy who has to save the world, this is just Rucker's pure brain juice at his best. The most priceless moment was a character's understanding of how to teleport: "Just do it."

Adam Boisvert says

Frek and the Elixir incorporates some pretty complex ideas: M-theory, quantum mechanics, genetic engineering, stem cells, the effects of media on culture, journalistic ethics, artificial intelligence, and advertising ethics, to name a few.

It then takes these ideas and weaves a standard cheesy "boy's adventure story" where the protagonist makes a series of bad decisions and worse decisions (because that's what boys do), but he still wins in the end (because he's the hero and it's that sort of story). The plot progresses quickly enough that you almost don't notice how cliché the whole thing is. This may be what kids today like, but if so they have lots of other options.

Is it a good book? Well, the science is lots of fun (if not especially realistic) and for that I liked it. Furthermore, I'd really like it if the book became popular and kids started to discuss these issues over their juice boxes. Unfortunately, I don't know if the plot and characters are compelling enough to pull it off.

Arminzerella says

Frek's father left the planet in a big hurry after gov (the government) peeped him with their rather invasive brain scrambling techniques. Ever since then, Frek and his family have been seen as kind of renegades and outsiders, not really proper company for the upstanding citizen. Frek follows in his father's footsteps when he discovers that some alien intelligence is trying to get in touch with him - gov discovers it too and comes after Frek. With the help of a Grulloo, a second class citizen with a tail - and some new alien friends, Frek escapes the clutches of gov and blasts off to sign a branecasting deal. Branecasting is only the best and greatest technology craze sweeping the universe. The branecasters hold the rights to produce different races' brains - the watchers get to control the brains and actions of the people/creatures being branecast. Frek doesn't really want that for his fellow earthlings, but once the aliens save him, he doesn't seem to have much choice. Humans are GOING to be branecast, and all he can do is make sure that he gets a good group of aliens to do it! In return, the aliens promise to give Frek an elixir to restore the biome of the planet earth, which under gov has been reduced to only a handful of animals, birds, insects, and plants. Everything is strictly regulated. Frek eventually secures a good branecasting deal, which he sticks to until he can come up with a plan to keep earth and humans from being branecast at all.

Frek and the Elixir starts off with a lot of excitement and novelty. The language and the very genetic fabric of this futuristic earth are so bizarre and engaging that you are immediately caught up in it - much like A Clockwork Orange. Learning about what the world is like in that future (and let's hope it's not ours!) is fascinating. Once Frek leaves earth and starts dallying about with the different aliens things are much more confusing and, despite all of the back and forth between different places and species, less interesting. Still, if you make it through to the end, you'll have some interesting ideas to chew on about our own society and the parallels it has with this make-believe one. How different are we, and what are our goals with this technology WE have. We're probably not going to be branecast any time soon, but what a hoopy insidious idea!

David C says

RR makes you think you understand cosmology: the kids in the story do! From an author famous for inventive worlds, here's one for YA. A far future in which Earth's ecology is severely truncated, aliens want to ride humans like avatars, and Frek is just trying to keep Gov off his back, rescue Earth, and protect his mom and sisters. Which aliens are the good guys? Can he get to the root of Earth's problems and solve them? Avoid getting too big or too small for his britches? All this and more, much more.

I loved the book!

Norm says

This is the Rucker Novel that will be read in schools 50 years from now.

Diane says

Very fanciful, unique ideas. Interesting story and compelling characters. Sometimes it go a little too convoluted but a good read for most sci fi fans.

