



## MiNRS

*Kevin Sylvester*

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A boy and his friends must find a way to survive in the mining tunnels after their new space colony is attacked in this gritty action-adventure novel, which *School Library Journal* called “a solid survival story.”

In space. Underground. And out of time.

Christopher Nichols and his family live on a new planet, Perses, as colonists of Melming Mining’s Great Mission to save the earth. Dozens of families like Christopher’s have relocated, too, like his best friend Elena Rosales.

A communications blackout with Earth hits, and all of Perses is on its own for three months. It’s okay, though, because the colonists have prepared, stockpiling food and resources to survive. But they never prepared for an attack.

Landers, as the attackers are called, obliterate the colony to steal the metal and raw ore. Now in a race against time, Christopher, along with a small group of survivors, are forced into the maze of mining tunnels. The kids run. They hide. But can they survive?

## MiNRS Details

Date : Published September 22nd 2015 by Margaret K. McElderry Books

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Author : Kevin Sylvester

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## From Reader Review MiNRS for online ebook

### Amy says

Book talk:

Chris and his parents live on the planetoid Perseus at some point in the future from present day, when Earth's natural resources have been depleted. Perseus is a big mining colony started by scientific and humanitarian visionary Hans Melming as an innovative way to return natural resources and precious metals back to Earth.

One day, a group of strangers come to bomb Perseus, and Chris's life as he knew it comes to an end. His mother dies in front of him and his father whisks him to safety underground, where he meets a few other teen survivors from the bombing. Who could ever want to bomb a company out to do so much good? And what do these bombers really want? How will Chris and the other survivors find safety?

Review:

With tight pacing, PG-level content, and large spacing between lines of text, this book is perfectly suited for the middle grades reader in a way that similar survival series like Monument 14 and The Maze Runner are not. I found the overall premise engaging and felt that the book kept me on my toes just enough to allow me to race to the end.

What I found confusing, though, was the somewhat convoluted war strategy that Chris and his fellow survivors (the MiNRS) had against the outsider "Landers," though I can't tell if this is a weakness of the book or my own weakness in reading this genre. I also found it difficult to visualize some of the technology as it was described.

Though I appreciated how this book touched upon big ideas like the ethics of scientific exploration, readers who are looking for character development and literary merit are probably best off elsewhere.

That said, I think my students will like this one, and I will add it to my collection.

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### Jessi says

Excellent!

My 9 year old loved it as well! So well done!

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### Niki says

Interesting premise: A colony of people relocate to the planet Perseus to mine for materials that Earth is running out of. They are believed to be Earth's hope for survival. The colony is preparing for a blackout period when Earth and Perseus will not be able to communicate, but chaos ensues when bombs start to fall. A handful of children escape into the mines and they need to survive and fight off the attackers. Well-written,

gripping, and holds high appeal for young readers.

First book in a series - and the cliffhanger ending makes the reader long for the next one!

Short-listed for the 2017 MYRCA.

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### **Rob says**

Typical dystopian YA fiction. Cute, but "independent" girl who is a friend.... or more? Check. Genius boy as main character who's nice and everyone tolerates as the main character? Check. Leader of the community's son, who is spoiled, wants leadership, and might be secretly working against them? Check. New smart, funny independent girl who might become the third angle in a love triangle? Check. A horde of peeps who fill a broad spectrum of ancillary roles (medic, little kid, etc.)? Check. Danger and bad guys who are clearly nameless bad guys? Check. Subtle betrayal of all everyone believes to be true, and have built their entire lives upon? Check.

Where the book does make an effort, is in the setting (mining colony), though the series of events leading to its existence are also a little forced. The portrayal of the kids in various states of shock as their world crashing-down was also a well-thought-out part of the story, and it drives the plot well. But key factors like understanding basic Newtonian physics in the Verse, or the explanation behind the technology is a little vague and lacks real depth. "We must accept that such and such is true and now we'll use that prop to the death" kinda attitude.

In the end, the characters are simple, ignore obvious truths that every YA dystopian story character ignores until the end, and we're left with a feeling of having just eaten a spoon full of whipping cream when we hoped it'd be fork full of steak. There's not much substance, though some surprises are nice if unbelievable. And it suddenly wraps into a nice bow... until, of course, it doesn't so you can write another novel about the continuing adventures of some kids trying to survive on a rock against overwhelming group of faceless soldiers in the far orbit of our solar system.

Okay, I guess, just lacking in real substance and depth.

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### **Rachel says**

Read this because I saw it recommended by a Twitter "friend". It is the perfect middle grade sci-fi book. Haddix fans will love this book. Since it ended on a cliffhanger, I'll definitely be reading the next one!

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### **Julia says**

This book was a solid 3.5. Good action and suspense with a couple of twists. I had a difficult time visualizing some parts and craved more description, but overall a fun read.

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## **Randy says**

Chris is one of the few survivors of a mysterious attack on the mining asteroid he calls home. The attack was carried out as the asteroid moved into a communication blackout with the Earth. With the help of the other children who've survived the attack, Chris begins to fight back in order to survive long enough to get back in touch with Earth.

I picked this book up because the author will be visiting my school this week, and I was sent a copy in advance of his presentation.

I finished the book because I wanted to know how Chris was going to deal with all the issues facing him. He had to balance the needs of the survivors with the wishes of his parents, and his knowledge of how he was going to find the beacon to contact earth.

I would recommend this book to Tanner. I think there is enough action in it to keep him interested, but the book is also not that lengthy so he could make his way through.

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## **Aaron says**

Really liked this book. Full of action and you can think along with the characters as they plot their moves.

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## **Vikki VanSickle says**

Throw a mix of characters into a small space and you have a great set-up for drama. Make that space an underground mining colony on Mars under attack and you've got a set up for GREAT drama. Kevin Sylvester is an award-winning author-illustrator of nonfiction for kids, picture books, and middle grade fiction. He is also the host of the podcast Great Kids, Great Reads, in which he interviews indie booksellers about children's books. He is perhaps best known for his smart-alec, verbose kid chef-turned-detective Neil Flambe, the star in a series that is as much humour as it is mystery. With this new series, Sylvester proves he can also write sci-fi adventure.

Christopher is a reluctant but capable leader, which endears him to the reader and eventually the other MiNRs. He is kept honest by Elena, his best friend who is obsessed with military history, and Fatima, a wry and skeptical new ally who's existence makes Christopher question everything he thought he knew about his home and Melming Mining. Chris is not quite an everyman character, he has been taught to drive a digger by his father, for example, but he isn't the kind of stock protagonist to which heroism and ingenuity comes naturally. The dialogue is snappy and allows Sylvester's natural knack for comedy to peek through heavy situations.

The plot moves quickly and makes for one-sitting reading. Sylvester doesn't languish at any point or get bogged down in losses or too much melancholy. The MiNRs are engaged in a race against time, and it feels like it to the reader. This is high-stakes sci-fi, lives are lost, alliances broken, but the tone still feels relatively light and appropriate for younger readers

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### **Rose says**

This is the first half of a story but at least it left off in a good place. I would say it's target audience would be young teenage boys but really anyone can read and enjoy it.

It takes place on a planetoid (seems a bit large to be realistic, maybe an asteroid would have been a better choice) which has been brought into orbit near Earth. It's being mined to provide our planet with the material we have completely used up. Pirates invade killing (all?) the adults leaving a small group of kids alone in the mines trying to stay alive.

I probably would have given it another star but for this: Partway through, the kids discover a group of other kids in the mine they knew nothing about. Food and water are scarce so almost all the original group of kids wants to let the new group die on their own in the mine. It was only through lying and manipulation that the protagonist was able to talk the rest into sharing and keeping everyone alive. It doesn't sound like much but while reading I progressively detested these kids more and more. They grew on me a bit more by the end but I'm hoping they grow out of their self-centeredness in the second half.

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### **Debbie Ohi says**

Appropriately enough, I began and finished Kevin Sylvester's MiNRS underground. It was soOooOooOoo good that I missed my subway stop. Twice.

MiNRS is Kevin's upcoming action-adventure sf book for middle grade ... though honestly, I believe older readers will enjoy it as well. The premise: A 12-year-old boy and his friend have to survive in the mining tunnels after their new space colony are attacked during an Earth communication blackout.

Love the unexpected plot twists.

Loved the action and adventure, sense of real danger. The darker bits are part of what helps set this sf middle grade apart from others.

Love the main character, Christopher, and how his character develops throughout the story. Love the fact that he's just an ordinary boy (no superpowers, etc.) who has to use resources available to him to figure things out and learn how to be a leader.

Loved the depth of the character interactions and complexity of some of the relationships.

Loved the strong female characters.

Loved the fascinating tech/science behind some of the asteroid mining process.

Just \*\*\*LOVED\*\*\*.

Can't wait until MiNRS comes out this September from Margaret K. McElderry Books/Simon & Schuster.

And Kevin: I want MORE, PLEASE.

(Thanks to Simon & Schuster Canada for the ARC)

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### **Jocelyn says**

#### **3.5 starts**

The world is running out of resources, and Christopher, along with his family and others, have left earth to mine for resources on the planet Perses, a planetoid that almost obliterated planet earth. When the people on Perses temporarily lose communications with earth, the bombs hit. Christopher is forced into the underground tunnels, with only a map that proves impossible to decipher, or even find, given to him by his father, right before he rushed to his death. No adults survived, and only a few children made it to the tunnels. Supplies are running low, and worst of all, the people who bombed the place, the Landers, are still above ground, waiting to finish mining their resources so that they can finish off Perses, for once and for all.

Kevin Sylvester actually came to my school, to advertise his book. He talked about it and it sounded interesting, so I decided to put it on hold at the library. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't amazing. Although it was pretty good, expectations were not met.

I thought it was a pretty good book. It had a really good storyline. It was hard to follow though. In the book, they went back to rooms that were told to be blocked off and caved in. They managed to acquire an IV tube. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure IVs are pretty high tech. If they don't even have food, how did they get an IV? That didn't make sense to me. Everything was hard to imagine. Most of us have never been in a mine before, so it's hard to imagine. I've been in a mine before, and still I couldn't really make sense of what was going on. The technology was advanced, and I had trouble imagining that also. In english class, we were talking about showing and telling. In my eyes, although maybe I just wasn't paying attention, Kevin Sylvester was doing more telling than showing in some parts of this book. Regardless, I still enjoyed reading this. I probably will read the second one, if one comes out, and I'm pretty sure one will, based on the ending, which, by the way, I did not see coming. I thought that this would be a one book series (actually that's not a series anymore but whatever) up until the end.

(view spoiler)

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I would recommend this book to Emma. I know that she enjoyed the Neil Flambé series, which was also written by Kevin Sylvester, so I think she will enjoy this book.

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### **Megan says**

I enjoyed this dystopian YA novel from Canadian writer Kevin Sylvester. While lacking some of the complexities of a more adult novel, Sylvester deftly keeps readers engaged while keeping true to the maturity

level of the teenage characters. I highly recommend this for teen and preteen readers. I'll be buying this for my guy for summer reading.

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### **Barb Middleton says**

Science fiction over the years has reflected the fears and concerns of society. In the 50's, 60's, and 70's there was hype over landing on the moon and exploring space, the fear of alien invasions and nuclear war. The cold war fizzled in the 90's and the war on terrorism and technology exploded. Books such as "Fahrenheit 451," by Ray Bradbury reflected fears over the invention of the television while more recent novels like, "Hunger Games," by Suzanne Collins mirrored reality-TV shows and the Iraqi war. From biotechnology to artificial intelligence, science fiction dances across a gamut of topics exploring scientific, political, and social implications in a speculative society. Kevin Sylvester's book, "MiNRS," shows the political ramifications of one company controlling resources needed by a future Earth that has been destroyed by humans. When a war breaks out, the story unfolds from the viewpoint of one boy who is trying to survive and make sense out of violence.

Christopher Nichols appears like a typical kid, going to school and thinking about homework while adults run a mining operation for metals and minerals in his town-like setting; however, there is one itty-bitty detail that is far from typical... Christopher's "town" is a small space colony plopped on the asteroid named, "Perse." For a kid with a slant toward science and math, his life is not only cool, he absorbs the information and world around him like a hygroscopic substance. Perse threatened to collide with Earth until a scientist, Hans Melming, was able to use rockets and gravity to propel it into a habitable part of orbit. He terraformed the planetoid's surface and sent up humans to mine the ore. About twenty children live on Perse and Christopher is one of them.

As time passed, Earth depleted its resources and left Melming Mining Company with the golden rod or rock of invaluable resources. The colony seems unaware of the target on its back but some are worried, like Christopher's parents. Christopher has everything he needs and leads a privileged life with his parents who work as supervisors at the mine. He idolizes Melming and every year the school watches a propaganda movie about the great contributions Melming has made to the survival of Earth.

The inhabitants on Perse are readying for a blackout caused by solar interference and know that communications with Earth will be knocked out for a month. The colony is protected by the Melming Mining Company from Earth but the blackout means no protection or warnings. Their worse fears are realized when they are attacked by "Landers," an unknown group from Earth, intending to steal the ore. They bomb the facility and the adults are killed with only a few children able to seek shelter underground. Christopher's mathematical and scientific brain immediately goes into survival mode and makes plans. His parents had a backup plan if something went wrong during the blackout, except the plan was in code and Christopher is having a hard time deciphering it. With the aid of his friend, Elena, the two seek help from Earth and retaliate against the Landers.

Futuristic or science fiction novels speculate what the world would be like in a different setting. A common trope in these novels is an authoritarian government that is in control with a naive protagonist that accepts the status quo. The government is seductively attractive until the protagonist unravels serious flaws in the system. Such is the case as Christopher believes the propaganda at first before slowly realizing that all is not idyllic. Others are in forced labor and oppressive conditions but this has been hidden from the 20 children. When discovered, most of the other privileged children don't see what is wrong with it but slip into

superior, prejudiced views that do not value other human beings. As Christopher's ideal world is exposed to harsh realities, he has to choose right from wrong and it is these internal battles that give the novel depth. Not only is Christopher dealing with problems on a personal level, but he has to analyze and think critically about the political and social issues of how the asteroid was governed and maintained by the adults.

The surviving children are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. They have seen family members blown up by bombs and shot at and respond in different ways. Elena tries to take comfort in military strategies and attacking the enemy. Christopher makes plans and tries to think of the survival of the group. Another character cares medically for the others, while another hoards food. Everyone reacts differently to traumatic events and it adds to the authenticity of the characters. The attack and subsequent deaths are traumatizing making it difficult to move forward each day.

The world-building is well-done and not so scientific that young readers can't follow it. The reader never discovers who the enemy is and the end suggests that the government is seriously messed up down on Earth. I wanted more back story but enough was given to tease me along. While I would normally want to know who the attackers are rather than have these faceless, pirate villains that never interact with anyone, I didn't think it detracted from the novel. I think it was left out to entice the reader to the sequel, but I would have preferred more clues as to who the Landers were that so violently attacked Christopher's community.

The subplot of Christopher's budding romance with Elena adds another emotional element to the story, but is not overpowering. Elena's jealousy of the grinder is never realized in this novel and the cliff-hanger ending leaves more than just that question. The adults that Christopher thinks he sees raises new questions as well. This reminds me a little of the book "Shipbreaker," but less violent. Not that this one isn't. It is. The action adventure will appeal to many of my students along with Christopher's ability to use math and science to survive in dire circumstances.

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### **LaurenB says**

This was a fantastic book. It made me cry because someone sacrificed their life for his child. This was the first time I cried reading a book and I couldn't put it down. It was lovely, suspenseful and heartbreakng. Thank you to my youth book club at the Burlington library for recommending this as a group read. Kevin Sylvester, you are a fantastic author, I will definitely read the rest of the series!

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