Raven

Sue Loh
Susan Loh (May 20, 2020)
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In Sue Loh's extraordinary, fun, technology-centered novel, teenagers confront an intense hacking scheme.

A computer hacking mystery reveals dark secrets in Sue Loh's young adult novel, *Raven*.

Fireball and her computer genius friends attend an elite academy that's associated with a technology company, Cinzento; they work with the organization as Team Raven. A new kid, Angel, whose recently deceased parents were also computer scientists, joins Team Raven just as a financial company's servers are infiltrated by mysterious hackers.

Fireball, Angel, and the rest of Team Raven are hired to seek and stop the hackers, but their investigation only reveals more uncertainties. Tension rises among the teammates. Their disagreements regarding the cause of the hack, and potential solutions to it, amp up the story's suspense. Cinzento's leaders influence their decisions, and they often bump heads.

While they are brilliant, mature, and focused, that the teammates are teenagers in an adult-dominated world is never forgotten. The team battles moral questions about artificial intelligence; teenage drama and emotional limitations get in their way; and men in black chase after Angel in this exciting, fun novel with cool technology.

Though it is most focused on Fireball's story, the novel also enters into the minds of its other characters in sections that are set off from the text proper. These delineated sections are necessary to the plot; they show what Angel and others are thinking when Fireball is not around. Each team member's backstory is also revealed, resulting in intriguing dimension.

The cast's personalities are distinct: Angel struggles with the loss of his parents while trying to prove himself as a valuable member of the team; Fireball, the leader of Team Raven, is feisty and takes care of her friends, all while keeping them focused on their work. That she has a crush on a teammate which never comes to fruition adds realistic dimension to the relationships between team members. Several parent-child relationships are represented, and the team's emotional baggage drives their interactions with others.

The technology behind the hack is modern and realistic. Much of the story centers on the team working with computers, with computer science parlance incorporated, but the text is still accessible and enjoyable to comprehend. The teens communicate with AI via messenger and voice, making the tech more interesting and making room for a natural teenage vernacular.

Sue Loh's extraordinary, fun, technology-centered novel follows a group of teenagers who're handling an intense hacking scheme that could cost them their futures.

AIMEE JODOIN (April 21, 2020)

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