



Geek Love: A Novel

By Katherine Dunn

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Here is the unforgettable story of the Binewskis, a circus-geek family whose matriarch and patriarch have bred their own exhibit of human oddities (with the help of amphetamine, arsenic, and radioisotopes). Their offspring include Arturo the Aquaboy, who has flippers for limbs and a megalomaniac ambition worthy of Genghis Khan . . . Iphy and Elly, the lissome Siamese twins . . . albino hunchback Oly, and the outwardly normal Chick, whose mysterious gifts make him the family's most precious—and dangerous—asset.

As the Binewskis take their act across the backwaters of the U.S., inspiring fanatical devotion and murderous revulsion; as its members conduct their own Machiavellian version of sibling rivalry, *Geek Love* throws its sulfurous light on our notions of the freakish and the normal, the beautiful and the ugly, the holy and the obscene. Family values will never be the same.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A wild, often horrifying, novel about freaks, geeks and other aberrancies of the human condition who travel together (a whole family of them) as a circus. It's a solipsistic funhouse world that makes "normal" people seem bland and pitiful. Arturo the Aqua-Boy, who has flippers and an enormous need to be loved. A museum of sacred monsters that didn't make it. An endearing "little beetle" of a heroine. Sort of like Tod Browning's *Freaks* crossed with David Lynch and John Irving and perhaps George Eliot -- the latter for the power of the emotions evoked.

From Publishers Weekly

This audacious, mesmerizing novel should carry a warning: "Reader Beware." Those entering the world of carnival freaks described by narrator Olympia Binewski, a bald, humpbacked albino dwarf, will find no escape from a story at once engrossing and repellent, funny and terrifying, unreal and true to human nature. Dunn's vivid, energetic prose, her soaring imagination and assured narrative skill fuse to produce an unforgettable tale. The premise is bizarre. Art and Lily, owners of Binewski's Fabulon, a traveling carnival, decide to breed their own freak show by creating genetically altered children through the use of experimental drugs. "What greater gift could you offer your children than an inherent ability to earn a living just by being themselves?" muses Lily. Eventually their family consists of Arty, aka Arturo the Aqua Boy, born with flippers instead of limbs, who performs swimming inside a tank and soon learns how to manipulate his audience; Electra and Iphigenia, Siamese twins and pianists; the narrator, Oly; and Fortunato, also called the Chick, who seems normal at birth, but whose telekinetic powers become apparent just as his brokenhearted parents are about to abandon him. More than anatomy has been altered. Arty is a monsterpower hungry, evil, malicious, consumed by "dark, bitter meanness and . . . jagged rippling jealousy." Yet he has the capacity to inspire adoration, especially that of Oly, who is his willing slave, and who arranges to bear his child, Miranda, who appears "norm," but has a tiny tail. A spellbinding orator, Arty uses his ability to establish a religious cult, in which he preaches redemption through the sacrifice of body partsdigits and limbs. "I want the losers who know they're losers. I want those who have a choice of tortures and pick me." This raw, shocking view of the human condition, a glimpse of the tormented people who live on the fringe, makes readers confront the dark, mad elements in every society. After a hiatus of almost two decades, the author of *Attic* and *Truck* has produced a novel that everyone will be talking about, a brilliant, suspenseful, heartbreakin tour de force.

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From Library Journal

Guiding us into the world of the grotesque, Dunn produces a novel of compassion, insight, and macabre humor. At its center are Al and Lil Binewski, carnival owners who breed freak offspring through drug use so that they can perform in the show. Over the years, this ghoulish process becomes the norm; indeed, as we share the experiences of the children, we find that for this close-knit family, a child's signs of normalcy are seen as a real threat. What elevates this work is Dunn's controlled, matter-of-fact narrative, her skillful character development, and her relentless insistence that we address these people and their concerns in human terms. Highly recommended.

- Joseph M. Levandoski, *Free Lib. of Philadelphia*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandon Adams:

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Ronald Searle:

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Terri Brown:

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Ian Hall:

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