



Nickel Plated

Aric Davis

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Nickel is a survivor. He has to be. For as long as he can remember, his life has hinged on the flip of a coin. Or, rather, the scribble of a social worker's pen. He's been through the system, even had a good dad for a few years, until he was gone, too. But Nickel remembers everything he taught him, and since the day he escaped from foster-care hell, he's put that knowledge to good use. Just twelve years old, he makes a steady living by selling marijuana to high schoolers, blackmailing pedophiles he ferrets out online, and working as a private investigator. When a beautiful girl named Arrow hires him to find her little sister Shelby, Nickel figures at best the kid's a runaway; at worst, some perv's gotten a hold of her. He scours the internet and the streets of Arrow's suburban neighborhood, and what he finds there is as ugly a truth as he's ever seen. For beyond the manicured lawns, Nickel discovers children for sale, and adults with souls black as the devil. And people like that aren't about to let some kid ruin their game. This edgy thriller introduces a canny, precocious antihero, the likes of which young-adult readers have never seen.

Nickel Plated Details

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Author : Aric Davis

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From Reader Review Nickel Plated for online ebook

Doret says

Finding a good YA mystery is not always easy. Usually I like the premise but not the story. That was not the case here. 12 yr old Nickel is a runaway from abusive foster homes. He vows to never to return and is living on his own.

Nickel tracks down pedophiles online and works as a private investigator. Adults must pay for his services but Nickel helps other kids for free. Arrow goes to Nickel, she believes her younger sister Shelby was kidnapped. Nickel takes the case and discovers an ugly crime ring.

The author does a good job of establishing his main character (Nickel isn't his given name) and revealing a little of his background story. A 12 yr old PI sounds a little far fetched but the author makes it work. A few things do need to be tweaked but overall a solid debut.

The strength of this story lies in the believability of the main character. Some of the best PI's have a dark troubled past, Davis successfully establishes Nickel's demons.

Though I wish Nickel was at least 14 yrs old, 15 would've been ideal. With the selling of marijuana and the blackmailing of pedophiles, I'd place Nickel Plated at the older YA spectrum. I believe there' s an audience for Nickel Plated but I also think the young age of the protagonist will keep some older teens who would like it from picking it up.

I just can't see a lot of older teens wanting to read a novel featuring a 12 yr old. Also Nickel's age limits the chances of possible relationships. Nickel's client Arrow is a few years older and they work well together but you know nothing is going to happen between the two because Nickel too young.

Age aside, this is a good mystery and Nickel is a wonderful new protagonist. I am looking forward to seeing where Davis takes this series.

Liviania says

Another novel I've been having trouble with is the more obscure NICKEL PLATED by Aric Davis. Nickel is a 12-year-old runaway who makes his money as a detective - and a drug dealer and blackmailer. The blackmail is fine, since he's blackmailing pedophiles and turning them in. The drug dealing is less fine, but at least it's only marijuana. Still enough to get the poor kid he has selling it in trouble. (I don't just mean with the law. I mean with other people who might consider the high school their territory.) But a good detective does need some gray shading, especially in a noir-style novel.

Nickel has just been hired by a teen girl to find her younger sister. The girl was kidnapped, but her parents thought she just ran away. Interspersed with the mystery are scenes from Nickel's day-to-day life and infrequent explanations of his past. Pretty intriguing stuff until he agrees to help a woman launder counterfeit money.

Not cool. There's a reason some governments execute people for counterfeiting. It kills. It destroys

economies and the poor are always hurt the worst. That's not a shade of gray. It's wrong. And the text doesn't acknowledge how wrong it is. There's no hint that we're supposed to see Nickel as anything other than a struggling hero. It really turned me off a book I was enjoying. The reviews on Amazon are good, so clearly others were more charmed by Nickel's ambiguity in NICKEL PLATED.

There you go. I just keep coming across books with stories I love but other aspects I find repellant.

Jessica says

Nickel Plated was definitely a lot different than anything I've read lately. Nickel is the type of character that only comes along once in a while, because he's a little bit tough to love. In fact it took me a few chapters to really get into who he was, but once I was invested in him I learned a lot. He's self-sufficient and has financial freedom that most people my age dream about. On top of that he is so multi-faceted. A hard kid on the exterior, but a lost little boy who just is looking for something to hold onto on the interior.

I'm not really sure what to say about this book other than that I enjoyed it. It's a different kind of read because I was following Nickel on his money making ventures and sleuthing most of the time. He's a great kid. Granted he often uses people for money, but he does some really touching things in this book to help other people out as well. Watching him lead his own life was really fascinating. Nickel has to fly under the radar to stay out the foster care system. To say he is a smart kid is an understatement.

The point is that I enjoyed this book, but I also think that it wasn't really for me at this time. I'm kind of torn between enjoying Nickel and feeling like he was kind of a hard character to love. I see that he has to act like an adult because that's the situation that he's been put in, however he just felt so tough sometimes. It's a hard read for sure. I really just wanted to give him a hug. This book contains some tough subjects, as well as some "colorful" language. Perhaps it just wasn't the right time for me to read it.

I'm going to keep this on my pile and pick it up again in a bit, but for now I'm going to give a middle of the road rating. I liked Nickel, I liked his story, I think my mind just wasn't in the right place to really appreciate this book.

Leslie says

Aric Davis has pulled off quite a feat with Nickel Plated. If Raymond Chandler were alive and jumping on the YA bandwagon, this is the book he'd have written. (And I bet Andrew Vachss wishes he'd written it.)

Nickel is a fixer. You got a problem? He's got a solution. And while his rates are high, he's got a soft spot for kids in trouble. Probably because he's a kid. Yep, you got it. Nickel is an eleven-year-old Sam Spade, with the tools of a modern era. School and home life don't get in his way, because he lives alone, passing under the radar of adults who'd put him back in the seriously flawed foster care system from which he escaped. Money? No problem - by growing pot, scamming, and blackmailing pedophiles, Nickel manages to get plenty of bread for his needs.

Despite Nickel's tender age, this isn't a book for middle grade readers. It's YA all the way, with plenty of references to drugs, violence, and sex. Most of the sexual references are veiled and usually refer to the perverted passions of pedos, whom Nickel and a few of his buddies are more than happy to turn over to the authorities. While the main plot centers around Nickel's search for Shelby, a kidnapped younger sister, the

real meat of the book lies in reading about Nickel himself and his vigilante mission. Better than Batman, Nickel doesn't need a fancy car and over-the-top weapons. All he needs is a good bike, Facebook, and some Mace.

Thoroughly enjoyable - give this to teens looking for something outside the popular paranormals.

Deborah says

We never learn Nickel's real name, and the author only gives us spare insight into his past. But from what hints he does drop it is easy for us to put together what happened: a sexually abusive mother, a heroic foster father who was murdered before he was eight, and horrific sexual exploitation when he was ten. We meet Nickel when he is twelve and has managed to create a life for himself that is financed by blackmailing pedophiles he scams on the internet and supplying drugs to a high school dealer. This not only allows him to live without adults, but also gives him the financial ability to help other kids in need, like Arrow and her kidnapped sister Shelby.

Nickel is quick on his feet but also cautious and cynical. He's not given to bursts of temper and prefers to use violence as a last resort (and preferably only when he can bring in other muscle). He is well-versed in the ways of the world and there is little that can shock him, but he has a code of honor that demands that he find a kidnapped child while he's running a scam to distribute counterfeit money. Which is not to say that he can't get spooked, but he dusts himself off pretty quickly.

Just when you feel like Nickel is stretching the bounds of plausibility, we're introduced to an adult character that lived through what Nickel did, and possibly worse. We don't like to think of the children who are everyday exploited and abused, but it's nice to believe that of those there are some who have survived half as well as Nickel.

The writing style is a little plodding: "I did this. Then I did this. I went here to do the next thing." However, there is enough action and interaction with other characters that the writing usually flows more smoothly.

I'd be interested in reading more about this young man and seeing how he grows up.

Trinia says

That was more fun than I expected! A young adult version of Jason Bourne is how I would mostly describe this book. Nickel is a kid getting by on his own. He is a bit of a kid PI, helping out those in need. Good action, likable characters... this was a quick and fun read. Recommended for YA action fans!

Jonathan Anderson says

I'm really torn on this one. I think Aric Davis is a decent writer, I just couldn't suspend my disbelief at any point in this book. Nickel seems to live in some weird lap of latchkey luxury that I would have a hard time buying if he was eighteen or older, but at twelve it's impossible for me to believe this kid could pull all of his routines off. The mystery also, sadly, doesn't really add up to an emotionally satisfying ending. The villains

end up being pretty perfunctory.

Still, there's something here. Something that will probably end up leading me to keep an eye open for a second book.

Monster says

Nickel is a twelve year old runaway who's gone to ground. He disappeared from the foster care system two years earlier, after years of abuse, and now he's on his own. Now, if there's a job you need done, whether it's spreading counterfeit money or tracking down your son, he's your guy. Carefully camouflaged as a typical kid, he's rarely noticed and often underestimated. A survivor, he's observant, paranoid, well-armed, and prone to lucky hunches. He's also a risk taker, with no compunction about blowing up a telephone pole with a pipe bomb if he thinks it will get him the information he needs. Nickel also sells pot and blackmails pedophiles to pay the bills. Since he has this money to support himself, he can take on the case when Arrow asks him to search for her missing sister. For Nickel, rescuing other kids from bad situations, and especially sexual predators, is personal.

As an adult reader who's read Robert Parker's Spenser novels, I felt echoes of Spenser throughout: Nickel's wiseguy dialogue, his willingness to take on what seems like lost cases for free, and his stance that you stand up for what's right even at personal cost. The hardboiled language is jarring, since I don't expect any twelve year old to talk like that, and Nickel doesn't seem to have reservations about doing things that are unethical (like actively helping counterfeiters and selling pot) but if Spenser raised a kid, one with technological savvy, violent tendencies, and a survivor's mentality, that kid might turn out something like Nickel. Teens who read Nickel Plated probably won't pick up on this- they'll just be caught up in the gripping story, the environment he's created (he has a serious weapons cache and knows how to use it), and the curious relationships he has with the adults in his life. They may also identify with the struggle to fit in and protect that hard shell, even when you've chosen to step outside the mainstream.

Nickel Plated gets into dark territory. Child pornography, chatting up pedophiles, kidnapping and selling children... these are really stomach-turning, and it's difficult to read. Davis leaves quite a bit unsaid- we can guess, but don't know for sure, exactly what happened with Nickel before he finally escaped foster care, because he's never able to fully talk about it. And there is no real happy ending. While it can be awfully hard to sympathize with Nickel, readers will feel their hearts break with him. Unusual, thought-provoking, and horrifying at times, Nickel Plated is a sharp contrast to much of the fluff in the YA market today. The author, Aric Davis, will be an attraction as well- he is a piercing artist and punk rocker. That combination alone ought to pull in some recalcitrant readers. Highly recommended.

Contains: Violence, implied child pornography, references to pedophilia, references to masturbation, child selling

Review by Kirsten Kowalewski

Jo Sorrell says

Nickel is a twelve year old runaway who's gone underground. He escaped the foster care system two years earlier, after years of abuse, and now he's on his own. Now, if there's a job you need done, whether it's spreading counterfeit money or tracking down your son, he's your guy. Carefully camouflaged as a typical

kid, he's rarely noticed. A survivor, he's observant, paranoid and well-armed. He's a risk taker, with no compunction about blowing up a telephone pole with a pipe bomb if he thinks it will get him the information he needs. Nickel also sells pot and blackmails pedophiles to pay the bills. Since he has this money to support himself, he can take on the case when Arrow asks him to search for her missing sister. For Nickel, rescuing other kids from bad situations, and especially sexual predators close to him. He has taken the name Nickel as a tribute to fellow victims Eleanor and Nick.

Nickel Plated gets into dark territory. Child pornography, chatting up pedophiles, kidnapping and selling children. The author leaves quite a bit unsaid- we can guess, but don't know for sure, exactly what happened with Nickel before he finally escaped foster care, because he's never able to fully talk about it. And there is no real happy ending. While it can be awfully hard to sympathize with Nickel who sometimes needs a motherly hug. Unusual, thought-provoking, and horrifying at times,

While the book was a little over the top, I did like the James Bondness of the story. At times my heart raced as Nick's life was threatened as he tried to save the innocents.

Highly recommended!

Jen says

I was not a fan of this book. The only reason I finished it was because I accidentally bought it when I thought I was borrowing it for free. There are small changes that would have made this book more believable. The big one would be having the main character older than 12. I get that his life experiences made him grow up quickly, but the things he was able to get away with now were just unbelievable as a 12-year-old (renting a house, having a cab driver on call, etc.). Maybe he was a bit older, and could at least pass as a young college kid I would find the story more authentic. The voice he was given was also much more mature and advanced for someone who supposedly dropped out of school at the age of 9 or 10. The story itself touched on some very adult topics, which a lot of people would like to pretend aren't real problems. Kudos for addressing difficult topics like that. It was just too hard to get past the character of Nickel.

B.A. Wilson says

I was interested in this at first, but it was rough around the edges, which means my interest declined the longer I read.

It's about a 12 year-old, but the MC sounds more like he's 30. You can trust me on this, since I spent years working as a middle school librarian, and while I know all kids are very different, this just does not ring true with middle school kids or their brain development, especially since he supposedly dropped out of school at age 9 after a rough childhood, which in most cases would have meant both his social development and education were also stunted or delayed.

I'd have settled for a very mature, older teenager, at minimum, so the voice is definitely off on this. Still, I let that go, because something here caught my attention.

There's some definite editing issues with this one, and that also bothered me. It changes tenses sometimes, when it shouldn't. It's not intentional, or stylistic, which means it is just poor editing. However, I also sucked it up and let that go.

Then there's long descriptions about things that just don't matter and don't help the story forward, like what feels like 50 sentences on making or eating dinner, which isn't interesting at all and doesn't speak to the storyline or character development at all. It just ends up being a boring play by play of mundane details in the characters life, but hey, everyone eats, so I tried to let that go.

Then the story tries to tackle too many major issues at once, even though some of the issues were noteworthy and of interest, and the story which started out interesting begins to flail. So I tried to let that go, too.

By the halfway point, I realized I couldn't keep letting things go and was losing ground and interest in the story. The start was definitely the best part. I do appreciate that this was unexpected and different. I also understand that fiction requires me to suspend disbelief, but this is just so unrealistic and unbelievable that at a certain point, that becomes absolutely impossible.

I reached a point where I couldn't play along anymore, and absolutely everything seemed unrealistic and illogical after that. As a result, my interest flagged. I almost had to DNF, but since it was a short book, I powered through. With a decent editor, this book probably could have been more readable, but as it is, it just feels too much like an early rough draft.

Pages: 208

E.D. Martin says

I put this book down not too far along because I just couldn't get into it. For one, the narrator is supposed to be twelve, but his voice was that of a 30-yr-old man - thoughts, actions, and dialogue just didn't ring true for a kid his age (and I should know; I work with teenagers every day).

The tense was jumpy too. For example:

"I unhooked the chain and decided to bike on over to Four Oaks. It was near enough to the park, and I still had some time to kill. I hopped on the bike and got pedaling.

"My city passes by me in the wind; I just hope it ignores me as well as I act like I'm ignoring it. The sun's already drooping in the west--just like the wind, it's trying to tell me the snow is on the way. I can feel eyes tugging at me, wondering why I'm not in school. As long as none of those eyes wear a badge, I'm good to go. I ride through the city and into suburbia--just as many eyes, but twice the secrets. When I get to Four Oaks, I'm sweaty but smiling. There's a cool breeze, a reward. I drop to a lower gear and start coasting.

"I found 1138 Oakway without much work. Nice house, big yard, and well kept too. If it wasn't missing a child, it would have been just fine. It would have been honest to sit Arrow down and talk statistics, specifically on the chances of her sister surviving being kidnapped by a stranger. I set the thought aside. It might have been honest, but it would have been cruel."

The jump from past to present and back, seemingly without notice, was very distracting. Perhaps this is just nitpicking on the part of a former English teacher, but if an author is going to self publish, as Mr. Davis did, then he needs to make sure his grammar is stellar and not full of amateur mistakes.

Chad Eagleton says

I really wanted to like this book. I love the concept of a young runaway trying to make it on his own, acting as a sort of under-the-table PI for adults and helping kids out for free. It's a concept Aric Davis manages to write about with a lot of heart.

The problem, however, is everything else.

First, it needed a much stronger editor. Davis's prose ranges from workman-like to bad. He's overly fond of trying to write in Chandlerisms, most of which made me groan. Frequently too, he gets bogged down in these unnecessarily detailed descriptions of some mundane activity, lavishing one awkward step after another until you have a huge paragraph just so Nickel can prepare a plate of food. Mostly though, the entire thing fell apart for me in terms of believability. Crime fiction does, honestly, ask for a lot of suspension of disbelief, but this book wants you to take your disbelief, strangle it, and bury it where no one can find it.

Amanda says

I try really, really hard to find something to like in every book I read. Writing a book is such a difficult process, and I really don't like giving negative reviews. Unfortunately, I did not find anything to like in this book.

I do appreciate that the author attempted to draw attention to human trafficking, which is a very real crisis that most people either don't know about or don't want to acknowledge. But this book could have been much better.

To begin with, the writing style is extremely choppy. For example, in describing getting Thai take-out, Nickel gives a play-by-play of assembling his plate, which goes something like this: "I put rice on the plate. Put a spring role on the rice. Put sauce on the spring roll. Put the fork in the plate." Who actually talks like that?

The biggest problem, I think, is that Nickel (our hero) is so unrelatable. This is supposed to be a 12-year-old orphan boy who has dropped out of school when he was around 9. But somehow he knows how to read and write perfectly -- so well that he can blackmail pedophiles with a single email. He can also hack into computer systems, grow his own weed (only to sell, never to smoke), and track down kidnapped children. There is nothing remotely realistic about him. At times it borders on the ridiculous. Somehow he has managed to find all of the dumbest adults on the planet to do his bidding for him, no questions asked. He has a cabby that is always available to pick him up whenever he calls. He is renting a house from a landlord that believes his dad just works all the time. He moves thousands of dollars in "funny money" and sells tons of pot and no one ever suspects a thing.

There was also a flailing romance between Nickel and his client Arrow, who is all of 14. They've only just met, but that doesn't stop Nickel from wanting to marry her and have two kids so she can name them whatever she wants.

I wish the author luck in his future endeavors, but I will not be recommending this book to anyone.

Chibineko says

I have to admit that for reasons of my own, I've really been looking forward to reading this book. The premise was interesting & I have to admit that the excerpt was pretty enticing. Nickel is an Artemis Fowl type character as far as his intelligence & street savvy go. (Of course there are no supernatural creatures in this book & Nickel isn't rich like Fowl is.)

I really enjoyed reading this. It might have had some pretty adult subject matter but it proved to be a nice easy read that I was able to finish after only a day. It was fun reading about Nickel's abilities, although I will admit at times I kind of felt like he seemed to be just a little too good at these things for how young he was. Davis does explain Nickel's prowess later on in the book but I just would have liked to see a little more description about his learning process when it came to his skills. This wasn't enough to ruin my enjoyment of the book, however.

Overall this really was a fun read & this could easily turn into a series if the author really wanted to pursue that route. As far as objectionable material goes, the book is surprisingly clean. Yes there is mention of pedophilia but there are no actual acts or descriptions of it in the book (thank goodness). There are a few action scenes, but no actual unwarranted violence. I would suggest, however, that parents of especially young kids read this book before handing it off to their children.

(ARC provided by Amazon Vine)
