

## **Todd Strasser's "Y2K-9"**

by Ridley Tankersley

It's not that I had high hopes for a kids chapter book about a crime-fighting, chatroom-lurking Labrador Retriever, but I was utterly appalled by how disappointing of a read *Y2K-9* turned out to be. With cliché, unrealistic dialogue and blatant, embarrassing pandering to children through the use of "cool" and "hip" turn-of-the-century internet slang, Todd Strasser has weaved together a dull frame of a story which was able to occasionally hold my attention only long enough to suffer through a chapter or two.

The novel (a word I use simply because I assume that's what it was intended it to be) follows Byte, a retired Animal Intelligence Agency operative and human pet, who is contacted for an urgent anti-terrorist mission by Lassie, Byte's former case officer and current non-dog. PHLUSH, an anonymous group who communicate by magazine letter cut-outs, has threatened to send the country "down the drain" unless its demands are met. After a secret meeting with Lassie at the doggy doctor, Byte reluctantly accepts the job and enlists the help of his only three friends whom he knows solely through online chatrooms. He arranges an in-person meeting and to his surprise\_ (not mine) Foxybabe, Buffhunk, and Richgurl each possess the opposite characteristics that their usernames suggest and are disgracefully under-qualified for a top secret intelligence mission. However, Byte realizes he has no other choice and starts work on finding the bad guys with his rag-tag, know-nothin' team of losers by holing up in a crummy apartment, ordering takeout and researching who the bad guys might be by, I guess, Googling stuff?

At this point during my torturous experience of reading this book, I realized I was already halfway through. My mind filled with panicked, exhausted thoughts: When will anything happen? Couldn't these characters have been given some depth? Do I have to finish this? Amazingly, Todd "Pulitzer" Strasser, as I like to call him, ends up scrambling together an ending. The story ends in the way you'd expect. The team is at their breaking point and about to give up, but a convoluted combination of each of their "unique" talents is somehow enough to defeat the powerful mastermind behind the terrorist threats. All are congratulated and rewarded, Byte returns to his family, yadda yadda, blah blah blah. Oh yeah, did I mention his family's surname is Barkley?

1/5 stars.