

It's interesting to be reviewing both *Bodies* and *Dead Boy Detectives* at the same time because while both would be classified as mysteries, they prove that there are mysteries and then there are mysteries. For mysteries, check out *Bodies*, which constantly baits you with obscure clues and connections that refuse to be fitted easily together. For mysteries, or more accurately, character sketches with a hint of mystery, read *DBD*. Both have their virtues, but only one is intellectually gripping.\* After all, it's a bit of a cinch to figure out [Spoiler alert!] the real culprit for the death of Charles' mother was Clementine's, especially after #9 revealed that it was a woman who sent the poor ballerina to her death. Since the only other potential suspect was Clementine—who would have made a more interesting villain, actually—your deductive options were pretty limited to begin with. You really don't need a dramatically staged debriefing from Charles and Edwin to put the story of a jilted lover (left as a single mother) together. The bigger problem is the malice of Isolde's crime overshadows how wronged she was by Charles' father, a fact which escapes everyone, even Charles, who had up to this point been obsessed with whether his dad was evil or not. What Isolde did also doesn't clear Charles' father of other allegations, like the weaponry he reportedly so loved to create. Perhaps, since Charles only swore to prove his dad wasn't a murderer, everyone felt they could let the other items slide. They're probably right. The really important takeaway of the issue is that the *Dead Boy Detectives* have eked out an unqualified success, whether it's identifying the real murderer or bringing Rosa back to life. Foiling the baddies at St. Hilaron's and freeing Persephone from the mirror were victories, but in the former Hana lost her soul and in the latter, Persephone and Beatrix were already dead. The triumph here is that actual, living people will benefit from our detectives' good work: Rosa and her parents can resume the family life they've put on hold, and Clementine can finally acknowledge her mother's bitterness ("She hated life. She hated us.") and move on. There are happy endings all around, which is admittedly a nice change of pace from most series. Against all odds, I've grown really fond of our young sleuths, maybe because they're not the snarky, precocious brats who usually feature in comics. Charles, Edwin, and Crystal are just adventurous, goodhearted kids who are each rather lonely and finding comfort in having fun with each other.\*\* I can even sign on to Charles and Crystal's somewhat doomed romance, now that they've thrown angst and caution to the wind and just gone for it. Their first kiss embodies much of the poignant sweetness that will probably always characterize their relationship. "That felt completely weird," Crystal comments afterward. "I'm sorry," Charles says a bit glumly. "I can't help it." "Weird, but not bad," she quickly reassures him, "a bit like trying to kiss an ice-cream... Vanilla." There may be a downside to this special closeness: it turns Edwin into a third wheel. Although he gallantly slinks out of the way for his two friends to have their moment, he's clearly wistful as he waits outside, and I imagine that can only turn into resentment later on. Charles may have a new family and girlfriend, but Edwin has no one except Charles. So, a small confession: I think I left my copy of this issue on the bus somewhere—so enjoy, rider of Los Angeles' Metro transit system!—so I can't give you a super-detailed assessment of the art. But come on. It's Buckingham and Kelly working together, which is Buckingham's best partnership. Kelly's finishes don't exactly transform the art into something spectacular, but it's now crisper, its details more pronounced, so you can appreciate how effortless Buckingham's storytelling is. Some Musings: \* It's exactly the same difference between *Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and *Sherlock Holmes* by Guy Ritchie. \*\* Although Crystal may feel differently if she discovers, as Bing and Tim the cats do, how "[a]trociously" her parents actually adore her. The post *Dead Boy Detectives* #11 appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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