



## Deja Ross Speaks to Freaks

**Lisa Naffziger**

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A seventh grader meets monsters while traveling with her family in Lisa Naffziger's graphic novel *Deja Ross Speaks to Freaks*.

While on vacation with her family in Texas, Deja is excited to enter the territory of an infamous monster, the chupacabra. She sneaks off at night and finds the chupacabra, whose name, it turns out, is Greg. He agrees to an interview and offers to introduce Deja to other monsters so they can tell their stories, too.

L.W., the Lake Worth Monster, turns out to be a less imposing goat-man than his reputation indicates, while the Rougarou, a werewolf in New Orleans who has difficulty with math, tries to make Deja a monster. Deja escapes the Rougarou and meets with a club of cryptid investigators that made a secret deal with the disreputable curator of a roadside museum, capturing monsters for display. When the club grabs a lizard man along with Greg, L.W., and the Rougarou, Deja and her brother hatch a plan to free the monsters from captivity.

The illustrations are clean, colorful, and fresh in this fast-moving, entertaining story featuring loads of fun and excitement. Deja is a curious, intelligent heroine, and her relationship with her skeptical brother is marked by his gentle, concerned form of antagonism, which makes his eventual support for her plan more meaningful. And the family's road trip brings them into proximity with local legends from multiple geographic areas, leading to illuminating information, as with a brief discussion of voodoo when they're in New Orleans.

Tracking monster myths across the United States, *Deja Ross Speaks to Freaks* is an edifying graphic novel adventure.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2024)

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