ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

A Knight of Magic
Dan MacGregor
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With a mouth foul enough to match her appearance, Billimba the Witch shatters Allen Jenson's hope of a quiet retreat at his mountain cabin. She crashes on his roof and decides to stay because Allen is the first mortal who has dared to match her insult for insult. When she tells him she is a witch, he responds, "I can certainly believe that. You're too damn ugly to be anything else."

Allen is sure he's in the middle of some weird nightmare until Billimba introduces her sister, Saleena. "Tall, slim, and regal, with a mane of blue-black hair," Saleena is beautiful enough to be a figment of his imagination, but the things she does to his body are very real.

When Saleena is kidnapped, Billimba convinces Allen to embark on a rescue mission. She labels it A Magical Adventure, and informs him they must register at the Oracle, which is housed in an abandoned oatmeal factory. Allen's aversion to the mush he used to have for breakfast doesn't endear him to the place. Nor does the official definition of their quest: "An Adventure is a long trek or journey involving Torture, Suffering, and Death."

What does have appeal is the Official Reason for a Magical Adventure: "To rescue a Damsel in Distress, a fair, innocent, beautiful young Maiden of Epic Proportions who is Universally Delectable and almost always Half Naked."

That Allen can deal with.

On their way to a post-nuclear era Detroit, which has been rebuilt from junkyard rejects, Billimba and Allen pick up a few odd allies. These include Theodore, an ancient dragon who suffers from dementia, and Queen Electra, the "Valley-Girl" of elves.

Billed as a modern-day fairy tale, A Knight of Magic is a rollicking adventure complete with ghouls, beasts, and sorcerers that the knight, Allen, must defeat in his quest. The battles are vividly described and the narrative is strong in most places, although some careful editing would have enhanced the writing. Instead of relying on the strength of his sparse prose, MacGregor occasionally included that little extra phrase that wasn't needed: "The whistling, screaming sigh announcing the object's arrival ended abruptly with a crunching bang from somewhere near the chimney of the cabin."

Otherwise, there is little to flaw this bawdy tale that spoofs everything from Star Wars to Dungeons and Dragons and hearkens to the magic of Arthurian Legend.

Maryann Miller