ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

A Touch of Immortality
Vivian Ditzler
AuthorHouse
978-1-4520-2812-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

As the lone Romany, a girl of Gypsy heritage, in her small New England high school, Nadya CooperSmith must contend with her paranormal abilities and being bullied because of her ethnicity. While she possesses a cadre of loyal friends who know of her powers and respect her ethnicity, the appearance of two sexy young men, Walther and Ethan, drastically alters her life. She soon finds herself swooning over both lads as they compete for her affection. To complicate matters, the protagonist discovers her powers are building, and that she holds the key to an ancient prophecy. Vivian Ditzler's debut novel, a finalist for the 2011 International Book Awards, *A Touch of Immortality*, puts an exciting supernatural twist on the standard teenage love triangle.

Refreshingly, Nadya has command of some of her powers at the outset, a welcome change from the trope in which protagonists discover latent magical talents only when puberty hits. The fact that Nadya has a group of friends who accept her abilities and actually beg her to use them presents a change from the common motif of supernatural characters portrayed as loners. Even with her exotic background and knowledge of magic, readers will find the main character easy to relate to as she struggles to keep a level head while juggling her feelings for Ethan and Walther. She first denies and suppresses these emotions, only to have the sight of these young men set off her nerves. She walks the thin line between love and friendship, with many slip-ups along the way. Anyone who has ever faced an internal battle between head and heart will appreciate Nadya's attempts to hide her burgeoning emotions while she tries to understand her true desires. Ethan, Walther, and Nadya's friends are fully rounded characters. It is a shame then that some of the crucial secondary characters seem flat, serving only as plot devices.

Ditzler wisely makes the protagonist the story's narrator, giving readers intimate access to Nadya's ups and downs. However, the author makes the mistake of putting some chapters in the third-person omniscient to provide details about Ethan and Walther. Robbing readers of Nadya's unique voice breaks the flow of the plot.

And there are other problems. The author lends authenticity to the novel by using

Romany words, but she should have included English translations, along with the glossary she provides at the end of the book. Inconsistent punctuation and bizarre sentence structure often make events hard to follow. For example, Nadya describes her friends' feelings regarding a dream she has about a boy in this way: "Yeah they might think that I'm losing my mind and this means extreme measures, like finding a date ASAP against my will. I don't think so, I will keep my secret until I find out what's behind this unknown character." Verb tense switches from present to past, sometimes doing so mid-paragraph. Editing for clarity and punctuation would make this novel easier to read.

Nonetheless, *A Touch of Immortality* represents a lush, romantic debut.

Jill Allen