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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Aidan of Oren: The Journey Begins

Alan St. Jean
Judith Friedman, illustrator
Moo Press (Oct 15, 2004)
Unknown $19.95 (208pp)
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My child, fear is nothing more than concern for oneself, declares Grandmama to the hero of this young adult fantasy novel. True courage, on the other hand, she says, comes from concern for others.

Aidan sees himself as anything but courageous, but he soon learns how his destiny, a prophecy, and political unrest are all intertwined. His remarkable resolve to overcome his fear and realize his full potential leads him down a pathway of personal enlightenment and salvation for his countrymen.

As the son of a powerful wizard and a mother born of the waters of Loch Myrror, young Aidan learns before his thirteenth birthday that he is the one who will fulfill the prophecythe guardians must be returned to Lionsgate or peace will be lost forever! First, he must venture to the Valley of the Elves, with the help of friends, to learn the ancient ways. Only then will he be prepared to meet the guardians, who were once the lawmakers and enforcers; they have mysteriously disappeared without a word. Little does Aidan know of the dangers he will soon encounter!

The author is the founder of a collectible doll company. In this first novel, he has written a captivating fantasy that not only follows the celebrated heros journey, but also recognizes such virtuous qualities as courage, friendship, and wisdom. As Grandmama encourages Aidan in his struggle with fear, she says, Remember, the building blocks of courage are these: love, compassion, and a tender heart. Its when his dormant character traits (the courage of a lion … the spirit of the wind … the wisdom of a king) are made known that a true connection is made between the reader and the plight of a hero. These virtues rise triumphantly to the surface as Aidan encounters a world of trolls, elves, and the hooded figure who vows to thwart his destiny.

The award-winning illustrator has worked extensively as an artist, designer, and instructor. Her elaborate pen-and-ink illustrations add a nostalgic, enchanting quality to the novel by suspending the storys setting into the storytellers realm of otherworldly adventures.

Aidan of Oren will appeal to children aged seven to twelve. The chapters are short and eventful, encouraging page turning with clever cliffhangers and tension-builders. Sometimes the dialogue reveals too much, telling the reader what would be better served as living, breathing examples shown through character development, but the novels format is structurally sound and especially magical in its quest to draw readers in through the portal of imagination and suspended belief. The plot leads to a satisfying climax, leaving plenty of room for further installments as the journey continues.

CHARISSE FLOYD (August 18, 2009)

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