

Bonded: Discovery of the Unicorns

McCal Roberts

Trafford

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McCal Roberts' debut novel, *Bonded: Discovery of the Unicorns*, begins with the introduction of Mosaic, who rules the planet of Htrae and collects magical powers. Mosaic is determined to acquire the rumored platinum unicorn, said to be the powerful mother of all unicorns. Mosaic finds some measure of success when one of his messengers, Juvenile, comes to him and reveals his discovery of a realm of the creatures.

Had Roberts' novel continued to follow the story of Mosaic's greedy search for power, readers may have had the opportunity to become engaged in the author's tale of fantastical creatures and the world in which they live. However, the novel takes a regrettable turn away from the introductory storyline and meanders seemingly aimlessly for the remainder of the book.

After describing a bit of the world of Mosaic and Juvenile, Roberts switches abruptly into a retelling of the story of Adam and Eve, which escalates into a battle between tigers and unicorns who wish to become the new gatekeepers of the Garden of Eden. Many new creatures are then introduced, and nearly all of them possess some sort of power that's never fully explained. They all proceed to embark upon constant battles against one another. Roberts' armies of animals engage in similar skirmishes, each prefaced by nearly identical speeches from their respective leaders. Many of these battles remain unsettled as the story switches quickly from scene to scene.

The author's confusing style fails to provide the book with a cohesive structure. Chapter breaks seem arbitrary, often occurring in the middle of a conversation between characters. Roberts frequently misuses words; for example, the use of the word "parish" rather than "perish." His character development is nearly nonexistent, as he pays very little attention to each group of characters before another is introduced. Roberts' dialogue sounds unnatural and his description of events is generally vague, as in a scene involving a battle between wolves and mandrills, where an unidentified "fighter" cries, "Take that, you, and that and that!" There is no indication of who is speaking in this scene, or what type of fighting is occurring. This overwhelming lack of narrative structure and incomprehensible writing will likely leave readers bewildered, frustrated, and unable to engage in the story.

At the end of the book, the author chooses to introduce yet another creature and repetitive battle scene, and Roberts abruptly ends the novel with a short paragraph requesting that the reader seek out the author's next book.

It is clear that Roberts has a vast and vivid imagination, which could lend itself well to the fantasy genre. Writing workshops and some basic research into coherent novel structure and plot development might help to focus his creativity into a worthwhile novel in the future.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (February 9, 2012)

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