

Chasing Wren's Tale

J. A. Fales

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In this fast-paced volume, an exciting war between gods begins.

J. A. Fales's *Chasing Wren's Tale* is a fast-paced, mysterious love story that delves into the complicated world of Norse mythology.

Gunnolf Fenric is a Berserker Wolf who serves the god Odin. He is on a mission to kill a descendant of Halvdan, who once murdered a member of his family. He discovers that his enemy is none other than Wren, the beautiful if aggravating owner of the yoga practice next door to the bar that he and his brother Loki own.

Gunnolf moves to buy Wren out of her yoga practice, and their heated encounter begins a passionate love story. Gunnolf must fight his warring needs, which is helped when he learns of an alternate plan for avenging his bloodline: making Wren his mate. Gods with ulterior motives and humans with twisted actions are just the beginning, as forces work to keep the kindred souls apart.

The coy opening is intriguing and leads well into early chapters with Gunnolf and Loki. Their supernatural nature is revealed almost immediately. A conversation regarding Gunnolf's deadly mission is the first that the brothers have. This tendency to give much information away and quickly is continued throughout the narrative, lending the entire story a frenzied pace.

Many of the characters, while relatable, have little to no development or backstory. Loki, named after the trickster god, is the comic relief of the story, lightening every moment with jokes and sarcastic comments. Wren is a spitfire in action, if not in inner thoughts. Gunnolf's character is inconsistent and unpredictable, though, and side characters rely on the archetypes they fill.

Gunnolf and Wren's love story is hard to believe, with elements of magic as its only backbone. They do not so much fall in love as the narration pronounces them in love. Their steamy sexual encounters do not make up for their apparent lack of romantic compatibility.

Prose is engaging, and dialogue, though heavy on exposition, is believable. The Norse mythology element is interesting, but the book seems to rely on preexistent familiarity with these myths. Lineages are hard to follow, and a dramatic reveal is more confusing than surprising.

Unanswered questions left by the gods Freya and Odin, along with some mysterious shape-shifters they met along the way, sets the novel up nicely for a sequel. The exciting, dramatic war between gods has just begun with Fales's *Chasing Wren's Tale*.

EMILY CASUCCIO (December 1, 2016)

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