

Clues of Chaos

Gary Caplan

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A wizard and a knight do some detective work in this action-packed fantasy novel.

Clues of Chaos, by Gary Caplan, is an action-packed book overflowing with fantastical creatures, humanoid species, and magic-wielders. The plot moves rapidly, revealing a story that is sure to entertain those who love fantasy novels.

When the sister of a powerful senator is murdered in her own home, master wizard Leozanthicus is asked to investigate. He is joined by his friend, the mystic knight Erios Keldarion, and the two quickly discover that the murder is not an isolated crime. A large stockpile of weapons has been stolen, which proves to be the first significant clue in understanding why the senator's sister died. Each step in the investigation reveals more scheming and treachery until details of a dangerous plot are revealed—a plot that could lead their whole world into war.

Caplan has crafted a complex tale. Many recognizable elements and themes of the fantasy genre are woven together into a highly imaginative whole. There are multiple planets, peoples, and political groups, as well as shamans, wizards, knights, and vampires. The plot is fast paced, and Leo, Erios, and those who help and hinder them on their journey keep the pages turning with high energy and intrigue. The fight scenes are particularly well-thought-out, with details about specific spells and martial-arts moves to create a vivid picture of what Caplan is trying to convey.

Though the book is generally well written, there is a lack of emotional depth and character development that prevents the story from being truly satisfying. For example, Leo and Erios are presented as friends, and though it is clear that they trust one another, there does not seem to be any emotional connection between them. When Leo first contacts his friend to ask for help, Erios's response is, "It's been several months. Do you have a project I might be interested in, or do you have a material you are looking for that we might trade for?" There is nothing friendly in this interaction; it is just business. This flat tone is consistent throughout the novel, and in other characters' relationships, as well.

The fantasy world the author has created is so vast that it is easy to lose track of the plot, getting lost in the myriad details. An appendix explaining the many different factions at play might make it easier to understand what is going on. Those who are able to follow through to the last page will find themselves anxious to learn what comes next.

CATHERINE THURESON (September 11, 2015)

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