Clarion Review

General

Cromwell
John Long
Xlibris
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Cromwell, by John Long and Rhyse Curtis, begins with a legend. Whenever the city of Lustrian is threatened with destruction, stories suggest that the powerful king of the vampires, Alexander Cromwell, will reappear from wherever he has disappeared to for thousands of years. Single-handedly, he will save the city from peril.

Lustrian clings to such a legendary hope as the novel opens. Surrounded by orcs, werewolves, and an evil splinter group of vampires (as opposed to good vampires like Cromwell), the people of Lustrian barely believe that Cromwell will rescue them. To lift their spirits, an old man tells them the story of how Cromwell came to the city's aid before. Though menaced by pretenders to his throne (the splinter group of vampires) and an evil wizard bent on exploiting the secret city of vampires for his own purposes, Cromwell nevertheless came through when the city was besieged by orcs.

Cromwell makes the most of its simple plot, which is the major battle, told in flashback form, of Cromwell and Lustrian versus the orcs. Physically imposing and flamboyant, Cromwell makes for an interesting hero: a sympathetic vampire who defends humans, but is nevertheless a bloodthirsty killer (though we barely see him sucking anyone's blood). He and his friend Boulder, a giant warrior made out of rock, move at top speed in all their feats, revving the plot to a relentlessly fast pace. Cromwell does not have a sophisticated story, but it is easy and swift to follow.

That being said, Cromwell needs work in many areas. It is poorly proofread, with erroneous use of quotation marks and many misspellings. Despite its quick pace, it can also be tedious and repetitive in spots, for example, when the same adjectives are used over and over to describe its many characters.

The character of Cromwell also raises questions. The text explicitly tells readers that, as

a vampire, Cromwell's weaknesses are sun, garlic, and crosses, but he walks in the daylight and enjoys sunsets without being hurt. Additionally, he is supposed to be undead, but he apparently breathes and blushes like a living human being. Cromwell's vampirism does not seem to be an integral part of the story, so readers will wonder why the author did not make him just a magically preserved and powerful human wizard.

Cromwell seems to be written for young teens who like adventure and fantasy stories, although the frequent use of swear words belies this idea. Too simple for older readers and too mature for younger readers, Cromwell finds itself in an awkward position. Not recommended.

Elizabeth A. Allen