Clarion Review

Fantasy

Dragons & Dreams and Other Stories
David Frankel
AuthorHouse
978-1-4685-0340-1
One Star (out of Five)

Tree nymphs and a banshee are joined by anthropomorphic lizards, flowers, and monkeys in David Frankel's unusual book, *Dragons & Dreams and Other Stories*.

Dragons & Dreams and Other Stories is a compilation of three individual tales. The first, entitled "Dragons and Dreams," introduces two fishermen who happen upon a mysterious island where they witness strange events involving both humans and Komodo dragons. Part two of this first story leaves the fishermen behind and focuses primarily on one of the dragons and its wish to become human. The second story, "Tales from the Safid Kuh," introduces another character, a young man named Holly who sets off on his own fateful adventure, meeting strange people and animals along the way. The final story, "Desire," involves a woman named Lysistrata, sometimes strangely referred to as Lysol, whose trip to a Russian city sets off a chain of violent events.

Incomplete character and plot development are endemic to each story. Poor transitions result in confusion, and readers will likely have difficulty following the muddled story lines and underdeveloped characters. Most of the dialogue has a curious tendency to begin with an almost lyrical tone that quickly digresses into inexplicably angry and often profane language.

Characters in each of the stories undergo rapid personality changes, but their motivations are unclear. For instance, one character wishes for parents and invents them herself, but she soon begins to plot their murders. The author provides no reason for her abrupt change of heart. Much of the book follows the same pattern of inconsistency, initially creating interest and then quickly shifting gears, leaving readers bewildered and ultimately unaffected.

The author has attempted to weave mythology and other more obscure references into his stories. For example, Lysistrata's name is likely intended as a reference to a character of the same name in a fairly well-known Greek play. Both the Lysistrata of the play and the version of

her developed by Frankel attempt to broker peace in the world around them. However, while the play maintains a comedic tone, there is nothing humorous about Frankel's tale, which is filled with violence and tragedy, including rape, murder, and ethnic victimization. Any parallel the author may have attempted to make falls flat, and many such references in the book are equally vague and unlikely to provide the impact that may have been intended.

The book contains several typos and misused words, and improper sentence construction is common throughout. There are also some passages, including one where a young man is molested by an older woman, which many readers may find distasteful and gratuitous.

The fantasy genre offers writers a great deal of room to indulge their imaginations to nearly any degree. However, even the most imaginative of fantasy stories must come together clearly and cohesively, and *Dragons & Dreams and Other Stories* is too convoluted and unstructured to be effective.

Jeannine Chartier Hanscom