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Young Adult Fiction

Erec Rex: The Dragon's Eye
Kaza Kingsley
Melvyn Grant, illustrator
Firelight Press
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For the millions of Harry Potter fans desperately waiting for the next installment of the famous series, this novel will provide a worthwhile diversion. The first book in what promises to be an ongoing fantasy series, *Erec Rex* contains elements of magic, conflict, and otherwordliness reminiscent of the Potter series, and Kingsley delivers her tale in a light-hearted yet compellingly style like that of J.K. Rowling or Diana Wynne Jones.

Erec Rex, resident of New York City, wakes up one morning to find the world gone horribly wrong. His mother is missing, a creepy guardian won't let he or his siblings leave the house, and his efforts to figure out what's happening turn up even more questions. Eventually, Erec makes his way through a secret entrance in Grand Central Station to a magical world where a contest to discover the next rulers of the lands just happens to be getting underway. The contest is comprised of a series of events, reminiscent of the competition in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Participants test their knowledge of magical creatures in the maze-like MONSTER, "multi option non stop to end race," try to work as a team in the debate like "Pro and contest," and compete head to head in three-phased "Tribaffleon." Caught up in the competition, Erec finds friendship and bullies, magic and trickery, and clues to his own identity that make for as compelling a read as any Hogwarts adventure.

The quirky setting is as much a star of this fantasy as any of the characters. A castle tipped onto its side, mazes and magical creatures, and cleverly devised competitions create an atmosphere any fantasy fan will long to visit. The story is peppered with delightful gadgets like anibals, colorful balls that burst to reveal a real animal inside and an Identdetector that "shows your true identity and appearance and exposes people who changed shape," and nitrowisherine, an explosive substance that also grants wishes. This is Kingsley's first novel, and she is currently working on the second book the *Erec Rex* series. Notable fantasy illustrator Melvyn

Grant pens illustrations for each chapter that illuminate aspects of the setting crucial to the plot, like the side-lying castle, and the magic glasses Erec uses to speak to his missing mother.

Grant and Kingsley are also collaborating on a forthcoming musical CD linked to the Erec Rex series. The book concludes with the news that Erec has more tasks to fulfill, followed by a cliffhanger of an epilogue that contains clues to his mysterious past—good news for fantasy readers of all ages.

Carolyn Bailey