

**Farworld: Air Keep****J. Scott Savage**

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Either his oblivion or the death of his closest friend—it is a terrible choice to make for young Marcus. But better to have never existed than to one day murder his closest friend, and only the Void of Unbecoming can alter the terrifying destiny Marcus has foreseen. As he relinquishes himself to eternal blackness, a world away, Kyja feels his torment and reaches out across the shadow realm to pull him to safety. With the future now set in stone, Kyja has unknowingly sealed her doom, and Marcus can only greet her with a scream of utter anguish.

In *Farworld, Book 3: Air Keep*, a continuation of two prior books in the series, the two unlikely friends raised in different worlds—one with magic and one with none—must once again journey between Earth and Farworld to save both realms from domination by the Dark Circle, a cabal of evil wizards determined to kill the two foretold saviors. Joined in their quest by Riph-Raph, a wise-cracking winged lizard, Marcus and Kyja are never certain who they can put their faith in. Yet it is only unflinching trust that can ultimately help them enlist the aid of the secretive air elementals and save Farworld from destruction.

Author J. Scott Savage unfolds the complex tale expertly. Plenty of action sequences involving a myriad of fantastic magical creatures are juxtaposed with the all-too-human angst and emotional travails experienced by the teenage protagonists. As Marcus and Kyja encounter obstacles on their journey ranging from near-certain death to solving silly pun-puzzles, their wits and stamina are stretched to the breaking point, with the threat of failure always at their side.

As they continue their desperate quest, they are often helped, and sometimes hindered, by complex characters. Among them is Mr. Z, a capricious little man “of pure magic” who travels on a racing snail. Master Therapass is Kyja’s ultra-cautious shape-shifting mentor. Graehl is a formerly bewitched cave troll once called Screech. There are also minions of the Dark Circle, including Bonesplitter, a fearsome dragonlike creature who has forgotten he was once an evil wizard.

Marcus’s journey, however, is more than one of miles and mystic realms. He must also conquer his dread of confiding in Kyja about what he has seen in her future, and his role in her foretold death at his hands. Kyja’s unwavering devotion and trust in her dear friend gives Marcus a faint glimmer of hope that he can somehow change their bleak future, but he has to first learn to trust himself.

Though Savage’s *Farworld* series is written with the teenage reader in mind, it should appeal to anyone who enjoys stories similar to the *Harry Potter* series, including adults who like fantasy tales set in mystical realms where good ultimately triumphs over evil.

ALAN COUTURE (March 11, 2013)

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