

Legend of the White Dragon: The Newborn

Albert James

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In the science-fiction world created by Albert James in *Legend of the White Dragon: The Newborn*, the familiar old-world religiosity of Jerusalem coexists with futuristic flying machines, interplanetary travel, and an evil emperor reminiscent of the villain from *Star Wars*. Countries in James' realm include the United States and Atlantis, and there are planets named Earth and Delta-Free. Thirty-something female friends Sheena Steele and Tish Bach are the protagonists. When circumstances and violence force the pair to go on the run, will they be able to stay alive, defeat the emperor, and find true love?

James, the author of *Legend's* prequel, *Eve's Trial*, throws readers into his story with little preamble. The old-world and futuristic aspects mesh well, so readers do not feel jerked between either extreme. The notion that a power-mad emperor has named himself ruler of the world coexists easily with sovereign countries governed in ways familiar to readers. The action moves at a pleasing clip, with constant unfolding drama, inner turmoil, and external battles to keep the audience engaged. Multiple cliffhangers exist in each chapter, making the book a true page turner.

It is refreshing to see a male author write about two assertive, strong women who care deeply for one another. Even as they undergo hardships, Sheena and Tish remain physically and emotionally hardy. Indeed, the strength of their love for and devotion to one another suggests a lesbian love connection. Thus, it is a surprise, and, indeed, a distraction, when Tish and Sheena fall for men. The interaction between the women and their male lovers feels forced compared to the chemistry between the two friends.

Although the old world, modern, and futuristic blend nicely here, James does not adequately explain relationships established in *Eve's Trial*. More summarizing of the prequel would have helped *Legend* stand on its own. Additionally, the author has a tendency to introduce secondary characters without explaining how they relate to Sheena or Tish. Because these supporting players are insufficiently introduced to the audience, the heroines' joy and sorrow in response to what happens to these people seems overblown because readers know little about the one-dimensional individuals from the get-go. In addition, profanity-laced scenes with incredible sexual violence as well as steamy sex scenes seem more at home in pornography than in this science-fiction action novel.

James clearly has the talent to develop worlds and characters, and one hopes this skill will continue to blossom in future books.

JILL ALLEN (October 16, 2012)

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