

## Lucy and Dee: The Silk Road

**Kirsten Marion**

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*Lucy and Dee is an appealing fantasy novel in which two friends go on a wondrous adventure in a magical land.*

In Kirsten Marion's absorbing fantasy novel *Lucy and Dee*, two friends help a young royal to fulfill his calling, despite obstacles put in place by his cruel stepmother.

Lucy is an avid travel and exploration aficionado. Dee, her cautious, science-minded companion, wants to transmute lead into gold to help fund his search for his missing parents, who are archaeologists. Together, the friends stumble upon the Silk Road, whereupon they agree, at the behest of Lord Petram (who controls all uncut, "living" rock) to help Yidi, the future emperor of Sericea.

On their travels deep into Sericea, Lucy and Dee are energetic, engaging in inquisitive conversations with the creatures and people whom they meet. Rich details flesh the fantasy world out in concert with the children's sense of wonder. There are chimerical, horse-like creatures that possess ancient wisdom; there are tanks of translator worms that help Lucy and Dee to comprehend Sericean, too. The outskirts of an imperial palace are a vibrant setting, as are its ornate carved interiors. There are elements both of invention and history, with light nods toward the historical Silk Road's commerce. And a mysterious sense of magic pervades the world, leading to intrigue—and instances of happy rescue.

The friends contend with the challenges raised by their personal differences—Dee is prudent, and Lucy is impetuous—but also reach mutual understanding, growing together. And Lucy, Dee, and Yidi's dynamics are also involving: on first meeting, they are reserved; there are questions about what the two friends could have in common with the royal; and Yidi at first behaves in imperious, self-centered manners, though he warms up to Lucy and Dee as the novel progresses, beginning to accept that being a good ruler requires showing compassion to ordinary people.

Hints about evil within Sericea result in suspense, while the designs of Yidi's icy stepmother remain a source of narrative urgency. There are unpredictable twists as the friends confront these challenges, learning new information at an inviting pace: insights come only when necessary. The trio's efforts to evade the queen occur by land and involve river travels; even as each challenge arises, they remain a plucky team.

Introducing a fantasy world in which there remains much left to discover, *Lucy and Dee* is an appealing fantasy novel following two friends on a wondrous adventure, during which good and evil clash, leading to memorable lessons about personal responsibility.

KAREN RIGBY (February 4, 2022)

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