

New Age Lamians

Didi Oviatt

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Oviatt has created a compelling world with terrifying monsters to fight and personal trials to overcome.

New Age Lamians, by Didi Oviatt, introduces Jackson Bellony, a young man on the cusp of adulthood. Jack is content with his simple life, but his destiny lies in a different and far more complicated direction. The plot combines elements of science fiction and fantasy with a coming-of-age story that is entertaining and original.

Jack lives in a small community, eking out a meager existence in a post-lightning apocalypse world. One day, a stranger comes to his village with an enormous, scaly animal skin and a story about terrifying monsters called Lamians, heralding a coming change that will alter the course of Jack's life. Jack is taken away from his home and family by the Company, an organization that developed out of the single electric company that was able to continue to supply power when the lightning came. He is given a serum that transforms his body and mind, giving him incredible strength, enhanced senses, and an unparalleled ability to learn. As he transitions from child to adult, Jack also becomes a leader in the fight to save the human race.

New Age Lamians is clear and well organized. Dystopian novels are very common in young adult literature, as are stories about mythical creatures. Oviatt has successfully combined these two elements in a tale that feels surprisingly fresh and unique. The Lamians are scary, evil creatures, and the imperative need to see them destroyed makes the plot compelling. This is the first book in a planned series, and the author does a fine job establishing her world and setting the groundwork for the next installment.

Frequent grammatical errors and awkward word choices distract from the narrative, as in the following: "My father had told me stories of guns and bombs, but I had never saw them." Also, "Leaving me alone, Judy informed me to take my time washing up." These problems could be easily fixed with careful editing.

A more significant issue is character development. Jack starts out as an ordinary, happy young man. His transformation into a soldier and leader is sudden and unearned. Without ever having seen battle, he assumes leadership. The narrative would be far more satisfying if Jack were forced to learn the skills of leadership through the trials of training and of fighting the Lamians. Additionally, a secondary character, Amber, is clearly intended to be Jack's love interest. Rather than letting their attraction to one another develop out of their shared experiences, their connection is instantaneous: "Perhaps it was because I could relate to her, or maybe it was the ease of our conversation. Whatever the reasoning, I was drawn to her."

New Age Lamians is a promising first book in what has the potential to be a very entertaining trilogy. Though the characters are not fully developed in this installment, it will be interesting to see where Oviatt takes her story next.

CATHERINE THURESON (July 21, 2014)

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