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Clarion Review ★★★★½ FANTASY

Revenge of a Queen: A Legacy Series Novel

Charlene Sponsel
iUniverse (Sep 10, 2019)
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Revenge of a Queen *is a character-driven medieval fantasy focused on love and political intrigue.*

In Charlene Sponsel's intense coming-of-age fantasy *Revenge of a Queen*, a romance set in a medieval realm is tinged with magic.

Cam settles into a life of relative domestic bliss, though his unofficial marriage to the woman he loves, Lili, requires hiding from the queen. Cam and Lili find a measure of happiness together until Lili, targeted by an assassin, ingests poison. Cam jumps into action, sending her children to neighboring countries for their protection. But then he's captured by the queen's men and framed for Lili's murder. His sham trial kicks off a treacherous series of events for both Cam and Lili, whose "death" was an elaborate ruse.

The abiding love between Cam and Lili spans years and dwarfs even death itself. The origins of the relationship were established in a previous title; still, this series entry takes ample time to showcase the couple's affection for each other, despite the costs of their bond.

Their world is a blend of feudal and medieval qualities with subtle magic; Cam belongs to a race of humans gifted with long life and unique coloration. Cam is at the book's center, though it takes occasional interludes to focus Lili and her captivity, while as far as Cam and the world at large know: Lili is dead and buried. The queen turns the people against Cam; he's forced into dire situations. His conflicted feelings are ably conveyed, with the constants in his characterization built around his love for Lili, which he maintains even at his lowest point. Lili's heart-wrenching narration stands in contrast to Cam; the circumstances she's in push her toward a mental breakdown.

Within the book's dynamic conversations, characters' actions help to convey their tones, as when Lili asks Cam about a dangerous decision with "no humor in her question and dread glistened in her eyes." Snappy exchanges involve rapid back-and-forths that are broken up with concise scene details, conveying the closeness between Cam and Lili and the looming threat of a blade against someone's neck.

The story skips over lengthy journeys and stretches of time, mentioning just their key events, as with the immediate period after Lili's death and Cam's imprisonment, its sections condensed but fluid. Elements of intrigue are plenty—Lili's faked death is only a minor example—as shifting allegiances and broken contracts pile up. Within this complex mix, the anchoring question is of whether Lili and Cam will reunite, and at what cost—a question that's answered in the powerful cliffhanger ending.

Revenge of a Queen is a character-driven medieval fantasy focused on love and political intrigue.

JOHN M. MURRAY (February 3, 2020)

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