

## Snotty Saves the Day: The History of Arcadia

**Tod Davies**

**Gary Zaboly, Illustrator**

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Despite having wisdom that can often be applied to reality, some people firmly believe that folk and fairy tales are in the realm of fiction and fantasy. Some might even discredit them entirely, or write them off as stories merely for children. The people of Arcadia, however, know very differently, as we see in Tod Davies's latest work, *Snotty Saves the Day*.

Davies presents *Snotty* as a mysterious work that was delivered to Exterminating Angel Press by owl. An annotated version of a famous legend of Arcadia, a world that may be universes away, the notes by a Professor Devindra Vale give glimpses into the present-day conditions of that world as well as background into other Arcadian fairy tales. The references to other academic works show that Arcadia studies and values fairy tales far more than its neighbor Megalopolis, and Vale's comments also demonstrate the political strife between the two lands.

A rather unlikable *Snotty* travels into a strange world through an abandoned garden, and gets involved with an army of gnomes and a band of teddy bears. Ultimately, a confrontation with a powerful enemy forces *Snotty* to realize his own past and mistakes and brings about a magical transformation. As Vale hints in her notes and introduction, *Snotty's* story could be much more than legend, and could hold the secret to Arcadia's whole history. Similarly, the story and notes have further implications for the reader. Fairly apparent themes about power, greed, prejudice, and the impracticality and illusion of abstract rhetoric allow for further thought and subtler themes, perhaps unintended, of gender stereotypes and the loss of childhood, lend additional depth.

Even with the numerous themes the book isn't heavy-handed or overly contrived, although, like many folk and fairy tales, some of the vehicles for conveying the messages are a bit obvious. *Snotty's* character is sometimes humorously obnoxious as he goes about his adventures, but, it is the professor's notes that make Arcadia come to life. Readers can almost imagine an anthology of Arcadian fairy tales based on her references, and the political tensions between various schools of thought are fascinating.

The combination of story and thematic elements make *Snotty Saves the Day* a quirky, intelligent, and imaginative read for mid-teens and up. No matter the age, anyone who enjoys reading or studying fairy or folk tales and fantasy will especially enjoy this.

ALICIA SONDHI (March / April 2011)

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