

The Adventures of Horace, George and Ingle: The Rise of the Black Knight

H. W. Cumming

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Myth and adventure lie at the heart of this creative and enjoyable story of three brothers on a quest to save their kingdom.

The Adventures of Horace, George and Ingle: The Rise of the Black Knight, by H. W. Cumming, is a lively fantasy adventure that is sure to entertain children ages seven to ten. The story follows three brothers who go on a quest to solve a mystery and maintain peace in their father's kingdom. As they encounter magic and treachery in equal measure, they grow from innocent youths into young men.

The Kingdom of Galray is peaceful and prosperous under the rule of King Reynold. When a storm sparks an unnatural fire, the king's three sons are called on to help determine the cause of the destruction. Together with Roland, a prince from a neighboring kingdom, the boys set out to gather information and report back.

The Adventures of Horace, George and Ingle has all the myth and adventure a young reader could want. As the brothers seek answers, they encounter a mysterious woodland creature, an oracle, and dragons, and they must deal with riddles and magic as well as physical danger and the betrayal of someone they trust. The plot is engaging and quickly driven forward by the mysteries of the fire and of the dark figure the boys saw the night it was set.

Cumming has included five full-page illustrations. Though the simple black-and-white drawings are somewhat amateurish, they are lively and add to the sense of adventure in the book. The writing, however, is uneven. Sentence structure and word choice are often awkward, as when the author writes, "The dragon king offered them to stay the night," and "None of the stories had ever mentioned her unsurpassed beauty and breathlessness that left them speechless."

More significantly, the characters are underdeveloped. For example, in the beginning of the tale, it is mentioned that Ingle loves to bake—an interesting and unusual hobby for a future king—but that part of his personality is never mentioned again. Additionally, the brothers have very limited emotional responses to their situation, with no mention of their inner thoughts and feelings; for example, in one instance, they come across a friend who has been wounded in battle and is on the verge of death: "Horace, George, and Ingle had known Hamble their entire lives. Upon seeing him, they started to cry as he struggled to breathe."

The Adventures of Horace, George and Ingle is a creative, enjoyable story that will appeal to both children and their parents. Though the brothers are not terribly compelling, the author has left the ending open for more tales in which their characters can be developed. There is a great deal of potential for future adventures.

CATHERINE THURESON (October 13, 2014)

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