

The Blue Moon Narthex

N. J. Donner

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Dystopian elements and characters whose interactions speak to inclusivity make this an appealing adventure for young adults.

A rollicking young adult adventure with solid plotting, likable characters, and plenty of imagination, *The Blue Moon Narthex* is the beginning of a fantastic new series by N. J. Donner.

Thirteen-year-old Cole McCarthy is unaware that he is anything but a lonely teenager who misses his recently deceased father—until he's involved in a suspicious train accident and comes into possession of an object that once belonged to his father. The object, known as a narthex, not only allows him to “slide” between destinations in an instant, but it also connects him to the Karmanic Sovereign Legion, an ancient society that helps keep the balance of good and evil in the world. As Cole and two of his best friends enter the world of the KSL, he begins to learn who he truly is—and that his father was much more than he ever knew.

The world created here is complex, yet familiar enough to hold attention, and is evoked without saturating the text with detail. The first in its series, the book does a perfect job of creating an adventurous tone, introducing characters, and setting the scene for an epic battle between good and evil.

Cole and his friends are appealing protagonists, and it's easy to root for them as they learn more about the new world that they are thrust into and as they defeat enemies. Cole himself is relatable, with just enough exceptional abilities and hints at otherworldliness to make him an excellent hero. Introducing a main character with a magical background and two supporting characters who are “normal” becomes a great device for exploring inclusivity and the nature of friendship within the story. Enemies themselves are touched on only briefly, and while they could have been better fleshed out, they are sufficiently mysterious and vengeful.

The Blue Moon Narthex is a page-turner with well-paced, witty dialogue. With little downtime, there's always a compelling reason to start the next page or the next chapter. Its three heroes are constantly faced with new challenges, some of which are contained within this book, and others that will clearly be continued throughout the series. This makes the book a satisfying read on its own but leaves enough open-endedness to create anticipation for the sequel.

The time frame is less well attended to. The book is set during World War I, though other than brief discussions of KSL involvement in the war efforts, it might have been set at any point in history. The war itself, and other atmospheric devices, do not weave into the story.

The Blue Moon Narthex is an appealing beginning to a new series that will speak to readers who like dystopian fiction or magical adventures.

ANGELA MCQUAY (January 18, 2017)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

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