

The Brightness Of Shadows: First Tale Of The Fearchar Legacy

Nikki Nye

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Nye crafts a magnetic love story at the heart of this richly detailed, Camelot-meets-Star Wars universe.

Nikki Nye has created a new fictional universe rich in detail in her debut novel, *The Brightness of Shadows*. The story is reminiscent of Camelot, with a touch of *Star Wars* thrown in. She uses a strong plot involving adventure, love, and the threat of world destruction to create an experience that lingers long after the last page has been turned.

A mysterious band of men arrive at the Fearchar farm and use an energy force called the Flux to attack the father and mother and abduct the youngest brother. The other three Fearchar brothers embark on a quest to save not only their brother, but also their planet. As their journey progresses, the brothers' path intertwines with that of a princess, and together they must fight the evil that threatens her kingdom and all of humanity.

The strongest element in this novel is Nye's thorough development of the setting. Though the world is populated by humans (as well as another race of beings called lameves), it is an entirely different planet in a different universe. A creation story, map, index of names, and glossary help to explain the physical and cultural environment of the novel, rooting it in a comprehensive backstory. Nye has created a rich world of knights, kings, and wielders of magic, and she maintains a remarkably clean continuity of detail throughout the novel.

The characters speak in an elevated language that feels fitting for a realm of kingdoms and knights, but every once in a while a discordant bit of modern slang is tossed in: "Your views on women are whacked." This can be jarring in the midst of otherwise smooth prose. Also, the heroes get into a number of altercations with the evil Shadow dwellers, but too often their escape comes too easily. At one point, for instance, the main characters are hunted by terrifying monsters and appear to be on the verge of annihilation when the beasts suddenly turn and retreat. It just so happens that one of the brothers has a ring that, unbeknownst to him, repels the monsters. While it's a relief to see the heroes live to fight another day, a little more suspense and tension would elevate the excitement level.

While the story itself is rich in detail, the cover of the book is not. The front is bland, with an abstract of black streaking down a white cover, and the back cover copy is vague, giving little information about the story. A more specific introduction to the story and setting on the back cover would help ground it from the beginning, since the chapter that explains the world is in the middle of the book.

This is a case where the old adage "Don't judge a book by its cover" applies. Overall, this novel holds interest with its unique environment and culture, and it has a magnetic love story that adds a sense of urgency to the entire story line. It is the first in a planned series about the Fearchar brothers.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (March 15, 2014)

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