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The Crystal Scepter: A Fairy Tale

C.S. Lakin
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The land of Elysiel is under a curse of bitter ice, its king dead, its denizens frozen in time. Treacherous Pythius, the tyrant of distant Paladya, has stolen the magical Crystal Scepter and is determined to master its charms, no matter the terrible cost. His lust for power consumes him to the point of madness, and when his own infant son is prophesied to one day kill him, Pythius gives the order to have the babe murdered. Given warning, Queen Callandra flees with her son and sends him across the sea in a waterproof trunk, with only a prayer that he will live to one day complete his destiny and restore Elysiel to its former glory.

The story borrows freely from the mythical Greek tales of Oedipus Rex and Perseus and the Gorgon, as characters as diverse as kings and simple fishermen are juxtaposed with such fantasy staples as a mammoth sea serpent, royal ghosts, and hideous trolls who were once beautiful princesses. That the book so smoothly blends all these characters, some of whom are quite complex, into a compelling tale that leads to an ending that the reader may well predict while still enjoying the journey, is a credit to the author's considerable skill. Villainous King Pythius, for instance, has the love for one person, his daughter, as his sole redeeming quality, and even that may not be enough to spare her from death at his hands.

The author has written twelve novels, including the award-winning drama *Someone to Blame* and *The Gates of Heaven* collection of fairy tales for adults, of which this book is a part. Her novel *Innocent Little Crimes* was one of one hundred finalists in the 2009 Amazon Breakthrough Novel contest. Soon to be published is *Writing the Heart of the Story*, an instructional nonfiction book.

This title will appeal to older teens and to adults of all ages who enjoy fantasy fiction or novels that explore the black depths of a maniacal tyrant and the heroic hearts of those arrayed against him.

ALAN COUTURE (February 26, 2013)

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