

The Games Master: Rise of the Black Knights

David Brosbell

Writers' Branding

(576pp)

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The Games Master is an exciting fantasy novel set in an immersive world of magic and adventure.

In David Brosbell's epic fantasy novel *The Games Master*, stirring adventures, medieval warfare, and fantastical creatures are centered.

Four comrades who survived a dangerous labyrinth and defeated a mystical overlord are now caught in a struggle between two powerful kingdoms, the Silver Allegiance and the Dark Realms. They are led by a warrior, Kruno. They work to negotiate as the conflict brews. In addition to these challenges, they battle creatures including a dragon and go up against Zoran, a warrior sorcerer from the Dark Realms. Zoran may be auditioning to be the next Games Master.

Set in a layered, textured world, the novel is vivified by concrete details, as of the number of chickens that are slaughtered for a sacrifice, and of how that is an economic indicator of an event's importance. Dramatic descriptions of castles and landscapes further flesh the fantasy out, while realistic interjections, as about plights of smaller towns and villages that are caught in the battle between the Dark Realm and the Silver Allegiance, become akin to allegories about geopolitical struggles. Indeed, townspeople who have no connection to either nation prove to be those who suffer the most as the battles rage.

Imaginative creatures, including cryptons (dark-hued, winged nightmares that combine human intelligence and military organization with bloodthirsty savagery), make the book all the more memorable. Such creatures pluck up innocent villagers at random and feast on them, even as they plan organized assaults on the town. A battle between Kruno, his warriors, and the crypton army is an early highlight. Meanwhile, the dragon is a hinted-at threat, described via accounts from witnesses before being revealed during an exciting battle scene. That battle validates the build up to it; it is both long and exciting.

Kruno is an engaging hero—a barbarian knight who is cynical and world weary, but still capable of bouts of idealism. When he first hears a local politician's speeches, for example, he mocks them, but then he begins to listen and to give the political hopeful the benefit of the doubt. His openness makes him feel like a singular warrior—a hero whose decisions will always be interesting. However, conversations with him and others sometimes slip into contemporary slang, and the resultant anachronisms are distracting.

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MATT BENZING (March 15, 2022)

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