



The Ooodle & Snipp Giants

Chancellette Rumble

Peter Searle

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An intrepid Smurfette journeys solo beyond talking trees into Helm's Deep where the good wizard and the diabolical warlock are destined to clash... Oops no those are pieces of other stories. This one establishes a community of peaceful bear-like Ooodles who live in fear of a race of horned giants 10000 years into the future. It is an era when magic is pretty widely understood but used only during sanctioned periods.

The Ooodles grow to about four feet tall; they're enamored of berries and enjoy telling stories—spiritual fictional and accounts of real events. Young Chancellette Rumble the best-liked of them is disturbed when her mother and brother go missing so she ventures into the Unforgiving Forest to search for them. She doesn't fear the giants or much of anything; Chancellette befriends Snapping Turtles Bookworm Squirrels sentient trees and others in her happy-go-lucky travels. Meanwhile unbeknownst to her Chancellette's mother and brother returned home only a day after they went missing and her alarmed loved ones and King Abracadabra organize a search.

A castle-dwelling Warlock's job is to calibrate his evil in exact balance with the good produced by the Wizard of the Trees as proscribed by the Infinite Connector (a clock-setter sort of God). Neither of these seemingly important characters is much involved in the wanderings of the lost Ooodle girl. In fact the author's decisions as to which aspects of the story to emphasize appear inscrutably random.

Overall this dialogue-dominated tale reads like a bedtime yarn invented by an affable but tipsy grandparent who is more concerned with couching it in cute language than working out a coherent narrative throughline. Although it's intended as the first book in a series the writing assumes an insider audience already somewhat familiar with the creatures and terms used.

In a fairly representative sample of the prose Chancellette meets a friendly animal: "Oh shutters oh well let me introduce myself I'm *Turtle Two* how do you do Miss Bear? I'm an *Ace of Diamonds* card' exhales the turtle as an underground window shutter slams shut. A magical face smiles across it." That variety of jumpy Wonderland caprice is unfortunately prevalent. But every so often the author produces graceful sentences thereby increasing empathy with the characters such as this one about the heroine: "She is skipping along in the high prairie grasses with dozens of yellow calling birds silently flying above her."

The Ooodle & Snipp Giants is disorganized and outright challenging to follow for younger elementary readers and too cloyingly thick with nearly nonsensical lines for older children to stick with. Philosophically stimulating ideas and heavenly physics controlling the future world raise speculative curiosity however the book simply isn't cogent enough to make a lasting impression.

TODD MERCER (September 10, 2008)

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