ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SCIENCE FICTION

The Prophecy of Zephyrus
G. A. Hesse
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Steve Roberts, illustrator
AHAH Press Books
978-0-9824693-0-9
Four Stars (out of Five)

Shrouded in mystery, Ghostrise Valley becomes a gateway to another world for Oberon "Obie" Griffin, a sullen seventeen-year-old with more than one chip on his shoulder and a marked lack of confidence. His journey leads him on an epic adventure which ultimately affords him a greater sense of self-acceptance and purpose.

The advice of a trusted mentor and his own desire for inner peace send Obie to the valley, where he is swept up on the tail of a comet and dropped back in time. He arrives in a medieval land where magic abounds and the sun, moon, and stars are growing shockingly, dangerously dim.

Obie soon learns he is the key to an ancient prophecy affecting the future of all mankind. The "Celestial Dimming" brought about by an evil sorcerer's black magic is rapidly worsening. Obie must guard and protect the Moonriders, Gabrielle and her "windlord," a winged horse named Mara, on their quest to retrieve the Dark Crystal from the moon. The fate of the world depends on the joining of the Light and Dark Crystals, which will restore hope and light. In fulfilling his role in the prophecy, Obie learns to overcome his own demons.

Windermere Kingdom is full of intriguing places and unusual creatures, some enchanted and some merely gifted with supernatural abilities. Obie encounters strange hybrids of lions and men, as well as spiders and ants that have been warped with human characteristics to form frightening dark warriors. Characterizations are solid for the most part, but inconsistencies and stereotypes sporadically intrude. Telepathic powers among animals in the story needs more development, and a few characters are derivative or hackneyed; a small, strange looking creature in a subterranean cavern speaks in short, repetitive sentences, evocative of Tolkien's well-known Gollum. Native Americans dress in deerskins and possess great knowledge they share only after the mutual smoking of the peace pipe.

Author Hesse, a former English teacher, creates a world both whimsical and exciting, though novice mistakes cause the story to falter at times. Whether due to a lack of trust in the reader's ability to discern subtleties or a lack of confidence in writing that is already clear, a tendency to tell what she has already shown is an occasional distraction in an otherwise worthy tale.

Hesse has definite talent as a storyteller and a true flair for description. The world she builds is varied and vibrant, and Obie's transformation from insecure, angry teenager to confident and competent warrior is believable, even if his unflustered acceptance of all that happens to him is less so. The plotline flows fairly smoothly toward a satisfying conclusion and engages the reader.

With *The Prophecy of Zephyrus*, author Hesse makes a promising debut into the fantasy genre. Though it could benefit from more meticulous polishing, the story proves an appealing, inventive, and enjoyable read for young adults.