ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Rafters
A.C. Montgomery
IntraSomnium Publishing
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Three Stars (out of Five)

The Rafters is AC Montgomery's first book in an anticipated seven-volume fantasy saga series. The story is centered around Rhyus Delmar. He belongs to a race of people called the "somn," some of whom are blessed with unusual telepathic powers. Rhyus shows up on the shores of Lux Lemetia, the City of Light, with no memory of how he got there or where he came from. He is taken in and cared for by Venn and his charge, the young and beautiful Marion. Rhyus tries to get his bearings while staying at Venn's opulent Umbra Halls, but he's haunted by a dream of a robed man telling him to leave. Amid rumors that a Calling has been awakened who will determine the "balance of realms," Rhyus sets out on a voyage across the forbidden seas in search of his true identity, beyond the ominous Darkness, on a course that follows the mythical Rafters. Without fully understanding who or what he is, Rhyus must navigate a world filled with characters, some who wish to thwart his destiny and take control over his extraordinary powers for their own selfish reasons.

Though Montgomery has succeeded in generating a workable plot focused on the warring forces of good and evil, some readers may feel overwhelmed by too many threads woven into a gnarled weave. What's missing is some historical context to explain how events have come about and what fulfilled destinies might mean to the realms of Atrum Unda and Lux Lemetia. Even the nature of the powers of the Ancient could have sated the reader.

Furthermore, Montgomery adds an unnecessary dose of banter throughout the story, which only serves to slow down the action. Characters who wear denim and leather jackets, sport lip rings, eyebrow barbells, magic tattoos, and use adolescent lingo are intended to appeal to a young readership. The mystery of the somns—their history, beliefs, culture, and abilities—is far too sketchy, leaving readers with much uncertainty as to what will follow in the next book in the series. For example, how are Messengers and Callings inextricably joined? Is the magical power of the travel portals and the significance of the glittering blue granules to be revealed? And what is Chrem Larose? Even with its many unanswered questions, *The Rafters*

appears to hold enough action to take Montgomery's collection of heroes and villains to another exciting level in the books to follow.

Gary Klinga