



The Rampart Guards: Chronicle One in the Adventures of Jason Lex

Wendy Terrien

Camashea Press (Feb 26, 2016)

Hardcover \$25.00 (264pp)

978-0-9969031-0-3

Terrien has created an intriguing world that seamlessly integrates the fantastic with the realistic and is supported by a relatable cast of characters.

Exceptional characterization and vivid storytelling make Wendy Terrien's *The Rampart Guards: Chronicle One in the Adventures of Jason Lex* an enjoyable and imaginative beginning to what is sure to be a fantastic series.

Jason Lex has a lot to deal with the summer he turns fourteen. His mom, who had begun behaving strangely, suddenly disappears, throwing the family into turmoil. Then his dad decides to move the family to a quiet, boring farm town that comes complete with a resident oddball who wanders around filming the sky and mumbling to himself. As if that's not bad enough, Jason has recently begun seeing strange "Skyfish" that no one else can see and feeling odd surges of electricity in his hands. He thinks he's losing it, but soon learns that his family has been holding on to a great many secrets related to his experiences —secrets that will change his opinions, his beliefs, and his loyalties.

Terrien has created an absorbing and intriguing world, seamlessly integrating the fantastic with the realistic, supported by a relatable cast of characters. Jason in particular is well developed; his growing friendship with a girl, Sadie, is conveyed well, as is his protective and sweet relationship with his little sister and his occasionally rocky relationship with his father. His growth from a typical fourteen-year-old struggling with life challenges into a young man who learns to overcome them is well realized. Jason's journey is engrossingly conveyed. He deals with loss, betrayal, and disappointment before learning to embrace a destiny he never imagined.

The writing style is smooth and the plot's progression is well paced, making it easy to become invested in the individual fates of members of the Lex family and their friends, including a uniquely trained dog that plays an integral role in the story. The intriguing fantasy aspects are vividly drawn, and the overall premise is credibly introduced. The different layers of the world-beneath-the-world that Terrien creates are revealed slowly and inventively, and skillfully set the foundation for the adventures to come.

Themes of good versus evil and the importance of family bonds are smoothly interwoven throughout, and the narrative tension builds at a good pace, flowing toward a satisfying conclusion. This appealing novel is sure to find an appreciative audience.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (January 14, 2016)

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