

The Rescue of Demistrath

Rose Stauffer

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The Rescue of Demistrath is an exciting fantasy novel that's set in an expansive world where underdogs defend what's right.

In Rose Stauffer's magical fairy tale *The Rescue of Demistrath*, a young woman transforms from a handmaid to a queen.

On a grand estate in Virginia, Eva takes care of an elderly socialite, Bernadette, who is on her deathbed. One day Eva discovers an odd stain on the carpet; it drives Bernadette to lead Eva into the forest, where they are greeted by Mr. Dabbs, a dwarf from a land in the fourth dimension, Demistrath.

When she was a child, Bernadette traveled to a land of fairies, dwarves, and elves and befriended the queen. That land is calling her back; the queen has died, and her sinister, half-human son, Sinnott, has taken over. Sinnott hopes to integrate human technology and agriculture into Demistrath, though the technology is incompatible with the Demistrathians' focus on connecting with nature. Eva is tasked with rescuing Demistrath from Sinnott's clutches.

The book is set in the 1980s, though Eva is introduced as a handmaid and Bernadette uses a chamber pot. Before the timeline is established, the book's idioms seem anachronistic. Demistrath is a vague setting, though its palace, and the rooms wherein most of the story take place, are evocative places that mirror the values of the characters who inhabit them. Sinnott's office, for instance, is full of sleek, modern furniture that emphasizes his belief that human technology and lifestyles are superior to those of the Demistrathians.

Eva acts without agency for a good portion of the book. She is kidnapped and held captive for several chapters, preventing her from taking part in the action of a battle. Nevertheless, her personality is strong. She is confident in herself but humble and caring toward her mentors and those who rely on her. However, the book's front cover does not reflect the internal description of Eva as a biracial girl with an afro. The supporting cast is diverse and full of personality, including Eva's dimensional romantic interest, Lurien, who is Demistrath's nonbinary military commander—an appealing addition brimming with personality.

Though the book is at first narrated by Eva, the narration later shifts to follow the members of the fairy council. The events of the connected chapters are pivotal to the story, and their engaging adventures smooth the jarring transition away from Eva's perspective, connecting her actions at the forefront of the story to those going on behind the scenes. A battle that druids, trolls, and members of the fairy council take part in, and that Eva does not, is brutal, and its resolution is too convenient. The results of that battle, though, contribute to the book's tidy, satisfying conclusion.

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AIMEE JODOIN (August 7, 2020)

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