

The Soldier's Oath: A Sediton Rising

Christopher Lewis

iUniverse (Apr 24, 2012)
Softcover \$15.95 (230pp)
978-1-4697-4477-3

A mysterious hooded enemy, garbed in “unfamiliar uniforms,” is ravaging the land, raping, looting, killing, and burning everything in their path. “Who are these guys?” asks a puzzled defender of the crown in Christopher Lewis’ tale of medieval mayhem, murder, and mystery, *The Soldier’s Oath: A Sediton Rising*. Discovering the answer to that question will not overly tax readers’ deductive powers, but it will provide a bit of good fun.

The Soldier’s Oath is a quirky novel set in the late Middle Ages in a mythical (but not magical or fantasy) land of knights and assassins. Lewis is very light on the flavor and detail of his period, so much so that readers may forget exactly in what era this adventure is set, especially given that his characters speak in a modern vernacular. They speak of “booby traps” and “scream therapy” and use other modern phrases that further confuse the reader as to the period in which the story takes place.

The story itself is a fairly good, if standard, soldier’s tale, although the requisite training reel takes up a full third of the book. There is the plucky Arathin, his burly, if a bit dim sidekick, John, and the great commander they serve, General Bennett. The hero has a love-interest and a wise war-weary veteran of a father-in-law to keep him on the straight and narrow. There are no shortage of speeches reminding Arathin of the nobility of his martial calling and the duties of belonging to a military brotherhood. The author, who served in the US armed forces, obviously draws from his own experiences in the service.

The story bubbles on quite nicely, especially once the training episode is complete, although about three-quarters of the way through the book the hero inexplicably disappears. After a day of guard duty, Arathin and John go home, as if the author simply wrote them out. The hero is completely absent from the final quarter of the book, which happens to be the best and most exciting part of the story. It is the part which contains most of the swordplay, skirmishes, and battles, as well as the major confrontation with the key villains. Fortunately, Lewis’ General Bennett takes up the slack.

This lack of resolution is not limited to one character, but also to the plot as a whole. The book ends without tying up any of its loose ends. While this may be the first book of a series, it would be nice for the author or publisher to make note of what, if anything, is forthcoming.

If *The Soldier’s Oath* is the first book of a set, all the better, as it is an entertaining adventure with likable characters. If not, then it is an unfinished novel, with principal characters who disappear and story lines that lack a satisfying conclusion.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (September 14, 2012)

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