



The Story of the Hundred Promises

Neil Cochrane

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Touted as “a loose retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*,” Neil Cochrane’s *The Story of the Hundred Promises* blends fairy tale magic with unabashed “queer optimism.”

After ten years, trans sailor Darragh thought he’d left the pain of his exile behind him. He built a new community among people who love and accept him as he is. When his sister urges him to reconcile with their ailing father before he dies, however, memories of his bitter departure return in force.

Determined to find a path to true reconciliation rather than just assuage their shared guilt, Darragh goes in search of the enchanter who helped him become his true self. He hopes to heal his father and give them both the time they need. But no one but Darragh has seen the enchanter for centuries, and the stories that persist suggest that someone far less benevolent than Darragh remembers.

Multiple fairy tale references weave into the novel, lending their magical touch. But the book’s true magic lies in its close studies of Darragh and his allies. Darragh’s purpose for undertaking his quest is clear, if complex; others’ motives are slow to reveal themselves and defy assumptions. Here, heroes face peril not in search of power or wealth, but to find purpose and redemption. Questions around generational trauma and the burden of forgiveness arise; quiet, soulful, and philosophical Darragh’s struggles are resonant.

The prose is accessible while maintaining a lyrical quality befitting the fairy tales it draws from. This is most evident in the lush descriptions of natural settings, which come complete with enchanted silver trees; menacing, thorn-wrapped vines; and a wise, albeit cryptic, fox.

A trans- and queer-fronted fantasy novel infused with fairy tale magic, *The Story of the Hundred Promises* reflects love in all its forms.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (September / October 2022)

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