Clarion Review

Fantasy

The Tale of the Wulks: A remarkable man on a remarkable journey

V. K. Green
Fremont Books
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Four Stars (out of Five)

The autistic young hero of this novel for middle-graders brings a human side to a well-thought-out fantasy world.

A sweeping epic that explores themes of friendship, loyalty, and sacrifice, *The Tale of the Wulks*, by V. K. Green, will entrance adolescents who like fantasy such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, or the Harry Potter and Percy Jackson series.

The novel tells the story of a monkey-like race known as Wulks and their friends the Dragons, who live generally unseen by humans; however, the Wulks and Dragons have made it their sworn duty to protect Earth from menaces. When the evil lord Vanko threatens to overtake Earth and kill its inhabitants with his armies of Japanese-speaking monsters, an autistic teenage Wulk named Rilk and his companions band together to defeat this foe.

With his extremely detailed descriptions, Green quickly draws the audience into the well-constructed world of Wulk Land by describing its geography, topography, currency, military, and modes of dress. The Wulks even possess their own ballads and songs, and the author includes verses to lend the country a sense of nationalism and oral history.

In an interesting twist on history, the Wulks were driven from their ancestral lands along with the Native Americans. Instead of going onto reservations as the American Indians did, however, the Wulks concealed themselves at the base of Mission Peak in California, after which a Dragon appeared before them and helped them establish a country the human invaders could not destroy. It's this ingenious intertwining of actual human history that makes Wulk Land more vivid. That said, a map to accompany the precise descriptions of Wulk geography would be welcome.

Green's precision and level of detail sometimes slows the pace of this otherwise rousing

adventure. There are many descriptions of exactly how many minutes it takes for Rilk and his friends to walk from one place to another, as well as blow-by-blow accounts of every single maneuver during battle scenes: “Englar landed in the small crater he caused with the sphere, and the two combatants faced each other. While Englar charged up his sword, he left the small crater and stopped moving when he was ready.”

Green is autistic, just like the story’s hero, which allows the audience to learn about the condition from an insider’s perspective: “Rilk, as was common with autistic children, wanted no change in the path, preferring to adhere to strict order.” Refreshingly, Rilk’s autism remains incidental throughout the story; it is mentioned but does not define him.

The Tale of the Wulks represents a solid debut with thrilling adventure that fantasy readers young and old will find captivating.

Jill Allen