



The Watchers' War

John Montgomery

iUniverse (Mar 22, 2019)

Softcover \$20.99 (292pp)

978-1-5320-6614-6

The Watchers' War is a deep, dynamic fantasy adventure with promise for its sequels.

In John Montgomery's high fantasy *The Watchers' War*, an ancient evil threatens the land as a young man comes into his power.

In a land filled with magic and mystical creatures, humanity has settled into a semblance of peace. An ancient dark wizard remains trapped in the frozen wastes of the North, granting the land a respite. But then the land is besieged with reports that the wizard, Broeden, and his forces are destroying towns and abducting citizens.

In response, the benevolent god Bhre-Nora calls upon his chosen warriors, a scattered group of faithful soldiers armed with magical weapons and other gifts bestowed upon them. Evlitt is one of the chosen, a Watcher armed with a legendary sword, but he suffers from memory loss. As the Watchers gather, Broeden and his forces continue to spread and gather power. Evlitt, his friends, and all the citizens of Erathe must face Broeden or risk losing everything.

As this book is the first in the trilogy, the story sets the stage for what's to come and introduces the major characters. In between world building and exposition, the narrative includes realistic, everyday events that round out the story. Small occurrences, such as Evlitt's attempts to restore an abandoned garden, flesh out the world more than pages of exposition could. Evlitt's reverence for the figures depicted in statuary and the care and effort he devotes to replenishing the garden highlight not only his character but the world at large.

While Evlitt is the primary character, an unexpected character steals the spotlight early on and remains one of the book's more engaging personalities. Rendaya appears in the prologue as one of the innocents abducted by Broeden, and she becomes his right hand, one of the most feared people in the world, going by the moniker Huntress. Rendaya's magic is fueled by darkness and hate, but when she's forced to do something she can't abide, her worldview shatters and she begins to doubt everything. Her arc goes from that of a scared teenager to one of a powerful mage to that of an empathetic victim. Hers is a compassionate narrative.

Every character benefits from strong development, including Broeden. His motives are clear and his drive feels authentic despite being anathema to the heroes and, most likely, the audience. Good and evil characters alike are painted with a deft hand, resulting in a large cast filled with believable people.

The writing flows with a colorful voice that makes even its exposition elements engaging. Scenes wherein characters exchange history and discuss the current status of the world crackle with life and feel realistic. Attentive dialogue complements the prose, and the book transitions between its dialogue and prose with an engaging rhythm.

As it is the first book in the trilogy, the story ends on a massive cliffhanger. The fate of the world remains in doubt, the climax is tantalizing and earned, and the epilogue is electrifying.

The Watchers' War is a deep, dynamic fantasy adventure with promise for its sequels.

JOHN M. MURRAY (August 12, 2019)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.