

Clarion Review ★★★★☆

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

The Words of the Wandering

D.E. Night

Stories Untold (May 30, 2020)

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The Words of the Wandering strikes a perfect balance between fun and danger, school and socialization, and friendship and romance.

D. E. Night's *The Words of the Wandering*, the third novel in the fantasy series *The Crowns of Croswald*, is a captivating story about magic, friendship, and destiny.

Ivy Lovely is in her third year at the Halls of Ivy, a school for those with inherent magic to hone their skills in spell-casting, potions, and scrivening. The Dark Queen is plotting to destroy Ivy, who is the true heir to the magical throne. Ivy has acquired two out of the three Kindred Stones that she needs to restore her power, but she needs help. Her best friend Rebecca enlists the school's Quality Quills Club to help her capture the third stone, move closer to defeating the Dark Queen, and solve some mysteries along the way.

The story is slow to start, but its intriguing mystery and explosive action take it over. Ivy spends the summer with Rebecca practicing riding dragons, as the Wandering Curse placed on her family prevents her from returning to her home. When the school year begins, Ivy focuses on her classes and the Quality Quills Club, dealing with formidable enemies: the snobby class bully is assigned to be Ivy's partner for a semester-long project; a monster in the lake near the school almost drowns a classmate; and the headmaster sends the school's invisible guards away to fight an unknown force in the woods. These obstacles are tense, as is the suspense concerning the Dark Queen. The last few chapters pulse with intense drama as secrets are revealed and battles unfold. A cliffhanger ending generates much anticipation for the next volume in the series.

Inventive character names contribute to the book's whimsical mood. Belzebuthe's magical shops and Halls of Ivy's campus are eccentric, too: magic is performed using quills instead of wands, and "ganagerie science"—conjuring real-life scenarios in bottles for the students to practice what they may do in the same situation—results in many opportunities for adventure.

Events from the previous books are implied, as when Ivy contemplates the strangeness of seeing the once-hidden city of Belzebuthe exposed to the world, and when she comments on how unsettling it is to see her friend without her shadow, which was taken by the Dark Queen. Best read as part of its series, the book builds on the overarching plot of Ivy's destiny as queen, enhancing it with entertaining side quests. Ivy's many quirky friends complement her seriousness. The story strikes a perfect balance between fun and danger, school and socialization, and friendship and romance.

Like a feminist *Harry Potter*, *The Words of the Wandering* is an absorbing fantasy with high stakes, fun characters, and extraordinary magic.

AIMEE JODOIN (May 12, 2020)

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