



The Wren Hunt

Mary Watson

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In Mary Watson's *The Wren Hunt*, druids are still in the world, but they're hanging on by a thread. Once a powerful group, their unity is long gone, victim to internecine factions that have divided their three branches into autonomous groups based on magical affinities. One group is extinct, and the two that remain are in a turf war for dwindling magical resources.

Like all modern druids, Wren and her grandfather, Smith, are hiding. But unlike others of their kind, they're hiding in enemy territory. With every year that passes, it seems more and more likely that Wren will be caught in the village of Kilshamble—literally and metaphorically.

The first book in a new young adult contemporary fantasy series, *The Wren Hunt* is a compelling take on druid mythology combined with a dash of family mystery. The stakes steadily increase over the course of Wren's quest. But the crisis action is where the novel finds its stride, as all the carefully established factions and loyalties are upended and destroyed.

Character development is essential to the story. Although many of the genre's familiar impediments crop up—a male love interest, strained friendships, divided loyalties, and family secrets—there's restraint in how they play out. Wren is centered in her own narrative, and her unfettered development allows tremendous freedom for supporting characters to be as complex as she is.

Amid its thrills, *The Wren Hunt* maintains a subtle insistence on moral ambiguity and Wren's agency. Watson lays the groundwork for interesting, unresolved tensions and lingering questions between many of the novel's characters. The novel asks how knowledge not only defines but also changes someone, engendering interesting surprises.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (November/December 2018)

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