

Trinanoch

Alan Wagstaff

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Alan Wagstaff's petite but powerful novel is the first book in a new fantasy series that contains traces of the Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis and the Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien. English twins, Thomas and Katherine Rayner, cross from our world into another dimension, Trinanoch, which is also called "The Second Realm." This crossing may remind readers of the Pevensie siblings, who find access to the world of Narnia in obscure places like the back of a wardrobe.

Thomas and Katherine feel as if they are being called by something. "A very high-pitched hum, which vaguely troubled him all morning, was beginning to reverberate again," Wagstaff writes, "it was faint—but definite...Then Katherine became aware of it too." This unknown force compels them to approach the entrance of an abandoned chapel. Despite their fear, they enter. Through pools of light reflected on the floor, the children are shown images of another world, including heroic pictures of themselves. As they become entranced, they hear strange voices speaking in a startling dialect and unknown colloquialisms. They step into the world of Trinanoch, which is occupied by Hobbit-like creatures called the q'Boldi, and meet the brothers Threm and Deggan Stenwert, master Stone-Wrights. Soon they discover that both Trinanoch and earth are in danger from an evil being, called the Adversary. The Rayner children have been identified as the champions who will help save both realms.

Wagstaff is a teacher in New Zealand and the author of two children's picture books. His prose is often lyrical; for example, describing the occupation of the Stewards and Stone-Wrights, Deggan explains, "Stewards arrange rocks and trees—sometimes whole hillsides...just as we might work on the notes of a song. As a landscape begins to sound-forth nicely, greater Earth-Power is released—and we, Stone-Wrights, fashion craft-pieces which can put it to work."

Readers will enjoy not only the fast-moving fantastical narrative, but also the magic that Wagstaff uses to infuse the story with pure delight. Though it is loaded with "Second Realm" vocabulary, the novel is easily accessible. It doesn't become bogged down with pragmatic anti-heroes or become a platform for the author's ideas or opinions like many recent novels in the genre. Trinanoch provides a fantasy for young adults that never loses its sense of wonder.

LEE GOODEN (May 17, 2010)

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