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TITLE INFORMATION

THE SCEPTRE

A Jonster the Monster and the Bear Adventure

B.E. Boucher

Mindstir Media (358 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

This first installment of a YA fantasy trilogy revolves around a 16-year-old boy who, with the help of some good friends, embarks on a quest to a magical realm to find his mother, who has been missing since he was a toddler.

Geof—nicknamed the Bear because of his 6-foot, 4-inch frame—and his best friend, Jon, aka Jonster the Monster, are looking forward to starting another year at their Sheridan, Wyoming, high school. The area is described as “ground zero for some of the best Native American culture in the country.” When Geof and Jon locate a revered, older Native American storyteller named Donald Deernose who knew Geof’s mother, his revelations change the course of the boys’ lives forever. Deernose tells the teens that Geof’s mother was suffering from a terminal illness and escaped into a magical pond with healing properties and also that she may still be alive. Geof and Jon—along with high school crushes Debbie Marshall and Patricia Chamness—follow Deernose’s instructions and travel to the Medicine Wheel in the Big Horn Mountains. There, after a powerful ritual, they are inexplicably transported to a magical world inhabited by nightmarish monstrosities and wondrous creatures—like a talking cocker spaniel named Uriah, who happens to be a prince. But the quest to find Geof’s mother is temporarily sidelined, as he is identified by the inhabitants as a prophesied hero known as Searcher—“one who can defeat the undefeatable.” In the realm, the evil King Bu-usah has decimated entire regions and starved populations and plans on attacking an idyllic, awe-inspiring place known as the Secret City. With the help of a massive two-headed snake and a magical artifact called the Sceptre, the tyrannical Bu-usah is on the brink of subjugating the entire world. With the group of teens from Wyoming the magical realm’s only hope, Geof and company attempt to steal the Sceptre and stop Bu-usah and his nefarious scheme.

Boucher excels at capturing the YA tone—the dialogue is appropriately witty; the teen angst regarding budding relationships and finding one’s place in the world is authentic; and the insightful description of the high school setting at the beginning of the novel is spot-on: “The bell rang for lunch. Teacher grades were fine for parents, but the lunchroom was where kids received their crucial peer grades. A good peer grade was far more important to any high school student than an ‘A’ in Biology. Lunch was truth serum, where every kid’s place in the pecking order was either earned or assigned.” But the real power here lies in the action-packed storyline, which is not only chock-full of fantastical creatures and locales, but also includes more than a few bombshell plot twists. The author creates a character-driven narrative filled with so many thrills and adventures that fantasy fans will find it difficult to simply stop reading. And although some storyline revelations are a bit predictable, the preponderance of genuinely jaw-dropping plot twists (particularly at the tale’s end) will have readers looking forward to the next installment of the saga.

A bracing adventure—fun, fast, and with themes like love, friendship, and the power of family.

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