



INDEPENDENT BOOK REVIEW

A CELEBRATION OF SMALL PRESS AND SELF-PUBLISHED BOOKS



Dagny

By Matt Luedke

Genre: Fantasy

Reviewed by Audrey Davis

A whirlwind expedition of mystery and discovery

Left behind to tend their family's cabin and reindeer as her father and brother are summoned to war, Dagny awakens one morning to find the herd under attack. Using every tool she has available, including Elvish rune magic, she ventures into the dangerous forest to rescue the stolen deer—where she discovers she must confront more intense obstacles than just a monstrous thief.

“Dagny closed her eyes and trembled as she let the ice inside her crack further, freeing a penetrating chill that carried a new suspicion.”

This fantasy exposes the author's clear ability for robust and creative storytelling in just a few pages. The author has created a new world, somewhere between ours and a fantasy realm, where a lot of our legends and fairy tales come true, like trolls, magic, ghosts, and more. The plot is fast-paced; the story itself isn't very wordy, but it is immersive and engaging regardless. Though intended to have more of a serious tone, the characters have a sense of humor and don't let their shortcomings stand in their way. The reader gets to be there with Dagny and company as she fights to save her deer, and we experience her deep emotions as well, only as a first-hand account of a companion would.

“Cold chills ran down Dagny's arms, and she could suddenly feel the frailty of her own spine.”

In this same respect, the character development is handled similarly—readers are not overwhelmed by exposition; we are given the pertinent details as they become naturally relevant within the story. There are only three main characters, and as so

many of us often are, they are flawed. Yet, they are still strong, versatile, and somewhat relatable. Their development, both as individuals and as a group, is apparent across their whole journey.

“Ancient echoes of the deepest, darkest forests gathered into a soft whisper from her mother. ‘No.’”

Due to the story’s length, readers may find themselves left with a few new questions about the past, or perhaps left wanting just a tad more from this already colorful painting. This does not detract from the story’s contents in the slightest, however. The choice not to include this information can prompt readers to envision their own version of all the possibilities and create a stronger sense of connection with the characters and with the story itself.

The novella stands alone wonderfully as it is but most definitely leaves itself open to a possible sequel or other installments. The characterization and the narrative give this story its heart, but the imagery and the author’s descriptive style allow the story to shine. Readers will love following along with Dagny for this short action-packed tale.