The Curse of the Elf King

Der Zauberfluch des Elfenkönigs

by Vanessa Walder
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Children's & Young Adults'

This book is outside of the five-year window for guaranteed assistance with English language translation. We suggest getting in touch with the relevant funding body for an informal conversation about the possibility of support. Please refer to to our recommendations page for books that are currently covered by our funding guarantee.

review

During a hot summer night, ten-year-old Ariane is abducted by a dragon, who bundles the girl and her pillow into a sack and flies off with her to an enchanted forest. Not all the fantastical creatures who inhabit this forest and masterminded the abduction are well-disposed towards Ariane – why else would Leandro, the Elf King, cast a spell on her which will prevent her from ever going back home? But some of the forest creatures become her friends, among them Knaster and Theodor, a goblin and a young hare, who get themselves into all manner of scrapes, including being hunted by a pair of terrifying griffins while trying to get the magic twig that was used for the spell into their possession. Their luck changes when Obligo, the dragon, comes to their rescue. And then there is Elvira, a warm and caring she-wolf, who shares her lair with Lucretia, a snake, gives the little girl food and shelter, and hatches a daring plan which turns into a dangerous and hair-raising adventure, filled with hazards and often precarious encounters with, for example, a rather vicious snail and a cantankerous witch.

The cause of Ariane's abduction was a mistake by her half-brother Erik, a keen entomologist, who inadvertently captured Musella a fairy, when the latter was visiting their mother, Linda (a children's illustrator, by the way), in one of her dreams, mistaking her for a dragonfly. He finally turns up to put everything right and the reader's patience is rewarded – but not without a stirring final section to the book, in which the strands of both plot and sub-plot are brought together and a final

bout of wonders and excitements are put on display.

A gripping storyline, imaginatively described settings, brilliant language and a refreshing sense of humour are among this book's many virtues. Fire-breathing dragons, magic spells, dangerous adventures and heroic acts – all the things that children like are here in abundance, along with witches, elves, water sprites and goblins and (underlying the fantasy) themes that echo present-day issues and inevitable human flaws.

And finally the main character. Ariane herself is just right – a normal ten-year-old showing all the emotions and reactions that one would expect, plus bravery and adaptability. An unbeatable package, and beautifully illustrated too.

press quotes

> *'Amusing dialogue, beguiling fantasy creatures and wonderful entanglements. (…) The protagonists are imaginatively drawn: most of them are likeable and endearing to the reader. The ending is excellent, perfect both for children and for parents reading aloud. A beautiful and captivating book – highly recommended.'– fantasyguide.de*

about the author

Vanessa Walder was born in Heidelberg in 1978. While she was studying law at university she was already writing and publishing short stories and also working as a freelance journalist. After three years as editor of an Austrian magazine for young people she is now writing full-time.

Previous works include:
A series for teenage girls entitled *Sisters* under the pseudonym of C.B. Lessmann (fifteen books in the series thus far, first one published 2001); a series for first-time readers starting in January 2008 with *Die Froschprinzessinnen*.

Translated editions include:
Sisters – Italy; Japan; Norway; Slovenia; Croatia; Czech Republic; Slovakia.

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