



Princess traverses icy terrain, battles a dragon to save mom

Olympia writer Gabrielle K. Byrne weaves a wonderment of a tale in her debut novel for children ages 8-12.

In "Rise of the Dragon Moon," the skies over the frigid Queendom of Gall are roamed by fearsome dragons and ruled by feuding moons.

In the desolate icescape below, Princess Anatolia – Toli, for short – is training to be a hunter. Although she is first in line for the throne, Toli is less interested in learning the

This Week's Book

"Rise of the Dragon Moon" By Gabrielle K. Byrne

Imprint – 320 pp – \$16.99

duties of the monarchy than she is in procuring food for her widowed mother, Queen Una, and little sister, Princess Petal.



And because her father died while defending the realm from a dragon attack, Toli is also resolved to become the warrior who will protect the Queendom from any future offensives.

This is a source of contention between the heir apparent and her mother, but when the Queen is plucked up and carried off by a dragon in a stealth raid, Toli realizes that her juvenile dreams of defending the realm have manifested as a much starker reality.

With conflicting advice given to her by her own hunting mentor, and by her mother's trusted aide, Toli vacillates over how to proceed. Slipping outside the walls of the Queendom to get some fresh air and to clarify her thoughts, she discovers a unique stone buried in the ice.

The find helps her determine a course of action. She will journey across the ice barrens to Dragon Mountain, confront the beasts and negotiate for her mother's release.

Over Toli's objections, her best friend Wix and sister Petal join her on this quest. They travel across the exposed ice in a sled pulled by fleet white foxes. There is one additional sojourner along for the ride, an outlier who may be the key to gaining access to the Dragon-Mother who rules over all.

This band of young travelers braves harsh weather, gigantic ice beetles and rav-

enous bear-cats. At one point they narrowly avoid drowning when they plunge through a thin spot in the ice, then come close to freezing to death when they scabble back onto land. One member of the party falls deathly ill.

They push on, and have hair-raising confrontations with dragons who regard them as "puny bites" but nonetheless refrain from killing the travelers.

By the time their little band finally reaches the flanks of Dragon Mountain, Toli has begun to learn just how much larger and more complex the world is than she had understood until now.

Byrne develops that world for the reader through evocative descriptions of the landscapes, the skies, the chilly built environment of the Queendom and, in contrast, the hot and fuming dragons' lair. You can almost taste the rudimentary foods the characters eat (roasted lizard, boiled beetle eggs) and feel the clothes they wear. The author leads readers into frozen forests of "stonetrees," through an eerie Necropolis, and into roiling "seethes" of dragons.

This is an enthralling adventure and – mark my words – there will be more to follow.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com

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