

THE LEGEND OF JERROD

By D.M. Stoddard

Move over, J.R.R. Tolkien. There's a new fantasy author that's arrived on the sword and sorcery scene, and his name is D.M. Stoddard. He's crafted a promising beginning to a new epic quest, one that takes readers on a fantastic journey through a magic realm.

Our story begins with Jerrod, the son of a humble miller, leaving his small town home to seek his fortune. He heads to the capital city of his realm, Torrence, there to hopefully become a knight in training. Along the way, he stumbles upon the long-dead body of a slain knight and acquires a magic sword.

Once arrived in the capital, he meets several companions: the knight apprentice Drin, the mysterious Amanda, and the clever wizard Nathaniel. They also connect with Fraum, a scholar. Together, they set out to find a lost treasure that Nathaniel promises only he can locate. In their travels, they meet up with elves Rhonda and Imelrin.

But as with all good fantasy adventures, the team's journey will not be without complications. There are secrets behind Nathaniel's quest, and the team is followed by mercenaries enlisted by Nathaniel's colleagues whose mission is to stop them at all costs. There are also the dangers of the realm to contend with, including living skeletons, forest creatures and the ever-popular trolls and giants.

Together, it makes for a compelling epic story that will be enjoyed by any fantasy-loving reader. And the best news of all is that the first book is merely the beginning of the tale, with author Stoddard nicely setting up what promises to be a long-running adventure for a group that is sure to become a staple of the fantasy genre for a long time to come.

THE WRITING:

Stoddard avoids bogging down his work with the usual problems that beset fantasy writing, eschewing lengthy character lists and windy back-story in favor of moving the narrative along. His writing is clear, descriptive and compelling, making the story easy to follow even for novice fantasy fans.

While there are some areas that could have used sharper editing – how many times does Amanda need to pull her hair back in a ponytail? And why aren't there more questions asked before setting out on a long and dangerous quest for treasure? – it's a minor quibble, quickly dismissed as the reader gets caught up in an exciting tale of fantasy realms.

The author thoughtfully provides a glossary in the back for anyone needing clarification, making it very simple to keep our increasingly complex narrative on track. This is definitely a series to watch, and should gain traction with its audience with the right marketing.