



The Good Hawk

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Set in an alternative Skye, Scotland (Scotia), and Norveg (Norway) this story is told by three protagonists, notably including Agatha, who has Down's Syndrome. Although this is not specified in the text, the fact is mentioned in the blurb, and new characters that she meets notice immediately that she is different. Their low expectations of her and her abilities are soon shown to be unjust - she is the 'Good Hawk' of the title who is very good at being a lookout for her tribe and the sub-group, the Hawks, and ultimately it is her skills and actions that bring this part of the proposed trilogy to a satisfactory conclusion. Another important storyteller is Jaime, a young man who is full of fears and worries, specifically of the sea, which, as his designated sub-group is the Anglers, is embarrassing, but he discovers courage he didn't know he had, and emerges, with Agatha, as heroic. The third person, Nathara, only appears with strange poems in Part Two, when the action moves to Scotia. Her identity, and her importance, eventually become clear, but her part of the story ends in Norveg.

The tribe of the Clann-a-Tuath, divided into Hawks, Anglers and Wasps (builders), has long been self-sufficient, but the elders decree that a marriage must take place, something that has not happened for many years. (Children are brought up communally). Jaime has to marry a girl from the neighbouring island of Rasaay, in a deal that means that his tribe will get good weapons to defend themselves from the rumoured threat of the deamhain, who sound rather like Vikings. After the marriage, Jaime and his new young wife are set adrift to get to know each other, only to find that Agatha has smuggled herself aboard in an attempt to prevent the marriage that she knows Jaime does not want. On their return to the island they discover that the tribe has been betrayed, and the deamhain, people of Norveg, have killed the elders and captured the remaining people for slaves. They rescue an almost drowned Knutr, a Prince from Norveg, and determine to use him as a hostage to rescue the clan from captivity. He is dangerous and has to be kept tied up, but his knowledge is useful as they make their way to Norveg, across part of Scotia, where they encounter a friendly clan of Bo Riders (Highland bulls) and later, Nathara. Their adventures are scary, and characters do die, so this is definitely for Young Adults, and the blurb recommends 12+. Some of the dialogue is in an invented version of Old Norse, and this is as it would be when a person speaking one language meets a 'foreigner?', but this adds to the authentic feel, and there is enough context to work out what is happening. This book ends at a pause in the longer story, but it is clear that there are loose ends to follow and more adventures to come.

Joseph Elliott's mother is a teacher specializing in Special Educational Needs, the family provided respite care for some of the children, and he worked in a SEN playscheme as a holiday job before graduating and becoming a teacher at Westminster Special School. The character of Agatha was inspired by some of the children he worked with, and he hopes that readers will learn not to judge by first appearance, but to understand that, whatever a person's strengths or weaknesses, they can achieve remarkable things. He writes well, and this is an absorbing story.

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