

Quest for the Neptius

A. H. Benjamin

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Quest for the Neptius is a delightful fantasy novel in which an ordinary girl is awed by her encounters with good, evil, and her personal power to achieve greatness.

In A. H. Benjamin's captivating fantasy novel *Quest for the Neptius*, a girl embarks on an adventure to save the undersea world from sinister forces.

Eleven-year-old Marissa is spending the holidays with her aunt. While collecting seashells along the beach, Marissa is struck by a shell unlike any that she has seen before. Drawn to its beauty, she picks up the shell and is shocked to find that the object is able to speak. Referring to himself as Periwinkle, the shell grants Marissa's wish to be able to explore the world beneath the ocean's surface.

Soon, Marissa learns that she was brought to the underwater world for reasons beyond her desire to be among the creatures of the deep. She was selected for a special mission: she is tasked with saving the undersea world from evil forces and restoring the Sea Queen as the rightful ruler.

As Marissa's adventure unfolds, the book uses beautiful language and exquisite details to depict the many marvelous characters and settings that she encounters. When Marissa first arrives under the ocean, for example, she is greeted by numerous fish and other creatures of various colors, textures, and sizes. Elsewhere, she is brought to the queen's palace and finds it to be a crystal-like dome encrusted with pearls.

In comparison, Marissa herself is underdescribed beyond factors like her age; her history, her personality, and even her appearance are kept vague. Still, she's an engaging narrator who observes both creatures and places in vibrant terms. She does an able job of drawing connections between the various pieces of the fantasy world that she finds herself in. Further, she serves as an effective lens for noticing the good and evil natures of the creatures that she meets throughout the story.

The fast pacing of the plot, which sees Marissa encountering new potential threats and unfamiliar creatures and places in each chapter, captures the urgency of her mission and maintains the excitement of the story until its end. Though little prose is dedicated to exploring her transitions from one setting to the next, there are some notable moments in which Marissa reflects on her choices, as when she wonders why she was so willing to agree to participate in a dangerous mission to save a world that is not her own.

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GAIL HOFFER-LOIBL (February 22, 2023)

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