



The Civilization

K.M. McKenzie

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In K. M. McKenzie's spirited fantasy novel *The Civilization*, a skeptical girl with a heroic destiny learns about dark magic threats to the enchanted, hidden world of her ancestors.

Raised by her rambling, nomadic grandfather in North Africa, seventeen-year-old Kadsa is fed crazy-sounding stories: she hails from the land of Marut, to where her grandfather yearns to return, and she is the god Abnr's gift, destined to bring back light to a land encased in darkness. When Kadsa's grandfather goes missing, the glowing pendant he gave her transports her to the haunted forests of Marut. With the help of a wolverine creature trapped in the forest and Marut's desperate leaders, Kadsa seeks to rescue Marut from the dark goddess's grasp, find her grandfather, and return to Earth.

At first, the Maruti language barrier is Kadsa's greatest obstacle. Her struggles with the lessons the kind royals offer to prepare her for her destiny mirror her reconciliation with her ancestral identity. Her frustrations delay the start of the mission, but her determination and renewed faith in her grandfather's stories propel her creative problem-solving.

The worldbuilding is lush and robust. There are plenty of revelations about what Marut's transformative magic can do, including enhancing mental abilities and shape-shifting. But there are no cure-alls for Kadsa's problems. To succeed, she uses her wits and mistrustful attitude to connive against the king's wily advisor, shelter the virtuous queen when the king succumbs to his ill health, and partner with the cursed prince to destroy the dark goddess. The large cast of Maruti nobles, subjects, and magical creatures enhances Maruti's cultural lore.

A riveting fantasy novel, *The Civilization* incorporates African mythology into its story of a whip-smart heroine who learns to claim her destiny and newfound ancestry with pride.

AIMEE JODOIN (September / October 2024)

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