

The Fate of Our Union

Hildebrand Hermannson

The Bull's Light (Sep 24, 2024)

Hardcover \$19.99 (426pp)

978-0-9970224-6-9

An adventure-filled epic with moments of pure fun, The Fate of Our Union opens a fantasy series with excitement.

Hildebrand Hermannson's epic fantasy novel *The Fate of Our Union* is about friendship, war, and destiny.

Sunu, a young member of a hunting clan, embarks on a destiny-revealing adventure alongside a divine seven-headed horse, Long Ears. On his travels to find truth, meaning, and a better life for himself, Sunu crosses paths with a reclusive philosopher, Rufus, and a mysterious warrior, Keresaspa. As Long Ears brings the trio together, events are set in motion that lead them onto a path toward changing the world for the better by intervening in unjust acts and wars and dethroning power-hungry tyrants.

The book borrows elements from extant mythologies, crafting its own mythos from them. Norse gods including Thor are present, if with variations in their names and details (here, Thor is Thunor, and valkyries are waelcyries). World history is also evoked with references to the fall of Caesar and other events. Indeed, Sunu's world is vast, diverse, and lively. Its clans pride themselves on self-reliance and storytelling; in contrast, people in far-off cities prize the thrill of conquering others and taxing their less fortunate citizens.

But the book's reliance on relayed legends and poetry also leads to repetitiveness, and its focus on fate and divine intervention means that some developments strain credulity, as with a few abrupt events at the book's halfway point. Sunu, for example, falls victim to temptations of greed when his priorities should be elsewhere. While such instances are explained, the growth they prompt is inorganic. Indeed, the book is at its most involving when the characters are given room to make their own choices. Still, balance is achieved: The story is thoughtful when it needs to be but also carries a lighter sense of adventure and includes moments that are pure fun.

The central cast are developed in terms of their virtues: Sunu is tough but noble, and he's motivated by feelings of responsibility. Rufus acts as his confidant, relaying guidance as a supporter of peace and higher thought during tense moments. And Keresaspa—a woman warrior in a world wherein gender diversity seems foreign—is fierce, strong, and duty-driven. Long Ears is a more intermittent presence, but a rewarding one. Their strong relationships carry them through the trials they face, making for a worthwhile adventure.

The first entry in a fantasy saga, *The Fate of Our Union* is an engaging story about unfolding battles between good and evil on Earth and in other realms.

BRANDON PAWLICKI (December 26, 2024)

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