

## The Knight and the Butterfly

**M. Francis Schmidt**

Scriptor House

(80pp)

979-888692292-9

*A heroic knight who's feared by those who don't understand him receives his long overdue rewards in the triumphant fantasy novel The Knight and the Butterfly.*

In M. Francis Schmidt's heartfelt fairy tale *The Knight and the Butterfly*, a lonely, grief-stricken knight transforms into a blissful hero with the power of true love.

Sitting on the porch swing one evening, Vinny asks his grandfather to retell him the story of the unknown knight. In this cherished story, a wandering knight and his horse, Hurricane, rescue a village's livestock from bloodthirsty trolls, but the knight's request to settle in the community afterward is denied. Soon after, the knight saves a maiden from a dragon; Hurricane is killed in the fight. The knight is rewarded with chain mail and another rejection.

Craving friendship and rest, mourning his horse, and clinging to life after a herd of serpopards maims him, the knight collapses into a stupor, remaining undisturbed for one thousand years. Then a magical fairy disguised as a butterfly breathes new life into him; they fly off together to explore rainbows for the rest of their happy lives.

The knight is a solitary lead who is characterized as the epitome of selflessness and bravery. Both celebrated and rejected by others, he also epitomizes those who are feared because others don't understand them. But while this is treated as an unsubstantial reason for holding someone at a distance, the theme is not teased out. Links are drawn between Vinny's grandfather's limp and the knight's, and Vinny's grandfather has premonitions about Vinny being destined for greatness, but such elements are also not explored at sufficient length. And the butterfly fairy, a mystical embodiment of goodness and beauty, is quite archetypal. She is not fleshed out beyond her role in demonstrating to the knight that all good deeds are rewarded in time.

The prose is too often vague, undermining the book's heftier development. For instance, on meeting the fairy and falling in love, the knight is said to have "felt things that he had never felt in his entire life, and they were wonderful things" without further explanation; the proclamation that "no two people were ever more in love since the beginning of time" falls flat. Misplaced and missing commas also undermine the book's delivery.

In the book's illustrations, the sandy-haired, blue-eyed knight is approachable and friendly. When grieving Hurricane, his downcast eyes and frown showcase his despondence. Elsewhere, the long-necked, feline serpopard and the magisterial dragon are rendered as fearsome opponents, and the gorgeous two-page spread of the slumbering knight ensconced in dirt and vines is illuminated by the delicate butterfly's enchanting glow. Still, despite such standouts, the book's illustrations become repetitive: They show variations on the knight fighting creatures or conversing with the butterfly, and Vinny and his grandfather sitting on their porch swing, resulting in monotony.

A hero is pulled out of his suffering after a long wait in *The Knight and the Butterfly*, a charming fantasy novel about love and good deeds rewarded.

AIMEE JODOIN (December 5, 2024)

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