

The Stars of Mount Quixx: The Brindlewatch Quintet

S. M. Beiko

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In S. M. Beiko's fantasy novel *The Stars of Mount Quixx*, inner truths and love come to the fore in a remote, unusual countryside setting.

Constance and Ivory are on a summer trip in Mount Quixx, where a mysterious fog has settled and monsters lurk. The sisters have differing life philosophies: Constance is uptight and focused; Ivory is chaotic and honest. In town, they encounter colorful people, like an eccentric hotel host, Ms. Bougainvillea, and flashy Slanner. Ivory is determined to understand the past tragedies of the mountain, including the fire that occurred there fifty years ago. Meanwhile, Constance is annoyed by her sister's tenacity; she and the residents of Mount Quixx are also fearful about what Ivory's openness and curiosity will uncover.

When Ivory disappears into the crater at the base of the mountain, Constance sets out to find her. She faces a terrifying creature to do so; both sisters are saved by Derrek, who is giant and spidery. Derrek's gentle demeanor catches Constance off-guard. Still, she is resistant to Ivory's proposition that they help Derrek maintain the Mount Quixx observatory.

The mountain's foreboding sentience is personified via imagery, as of the trees that jut "horizontally like broken teeth." The alluring monsters that emerge from the fog evoke a sense of cosmic horror with their inhuman countenances and behaviors. Further, there are manifold revelations about Mount Quixx and its inhabitants; these are revealed at a gradual, charming pace. As others' true intentions and histories come to the fore, Constance and Ivory reflect on their relationship, their quaint hometown, and their suffocating upbringing.

In the fantasy novel *The Stars of Mount Quixx*, two sisters find the courage to change each other and their community.

ALI ORTIZ (May / June 2023)

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