



The Mad Wolf's Daughter

Diane Magras

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A Scottish medieval adventure about the youngest in a war-band who must free her family from a castle prison after knights attack her home.

One dark night, Drest's sheltered life on a remote Scottish headland is shattered when invading knights capture her family, but leave Drest behind. Her father, the Mad Wolf of the North, and her beloved brothers are a fearsome war-band, but now Drest is the only one who can save them. So she starts off on a wild rescue attempt, taking a wounded invader along as a hostage.

Hunted by a bandit with a dark link to her family's past, aided by a witch whom she rescues from the stake, Drest travels through unwelcoming villages, desolate forests, and haunted towns. Every time she faces a challenge, her five brothers speak to her in her mind about courage and her role in the war-band. But on her journey, Drest learns that the war-band is legendary for terrorizing the land. If she frees them, they'll not hesitate to hurt the gentle knight who's become her friend.

Drest thought that all she wanted was her family back; now she has to wonder what their freedom would really mean. Is she her father's daughter or is it time to become her own legend?

The Mad Wolf's Daughter Details

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Author : Diane Magras

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From Reader Review *The Mad Wolf's Daughter* for online ebook

Diane Magras says

News

Thanks so much to my readers this year for your enthusiasm. I'm grateful for the many kids and teachers and librarians especially who read this, my debut book. It was a year full of wonderful surprises, including this one:

I never expected to see my book in *The New York Times*, reviewed by the amazing Soman Chainani.

I also never expected to see my wee lass in Edinburgh, my favorite city (by the way, I was in Scotland in 2015 when I first heard that Kathy Dawson Books at Penguin Young Readers wanted to buy this book and other works of mine).

And I certainly didn't expect to find a huge Scottish dessert spread at a book talk I gave at a student reading club (the desserts included this quite scrummy shortbread:

It's been quite the year, indeed.

So here's a bit of news:

I got my first author copy!!!

Here it is, in all its glory, on a saltire, no less, with a claymore letter opener (I know, I know, it's a sword from the wrong era, but it's Scottish and it's what I have on hand):

And then there's also this lovely piece, a starred review from *Publisher's Weekly*, which states:

"Empathetic, bold, and entirely herself at a time when women were dismissed as weak, Drest shines in this fast-paced adventure."

The book will be in print in a bit more than a month, and I'm feeling quite honored and humbled by all this.

This was quite something to see on *Publishers Weekly*:

"If the promotional language on ARCs was universally accurate we should all need larger bookstores, that's certain, but if any galley were to be held up as a model of truth in advertising it is *The Mad Wolf's Daughter* by Diane Magras. And yet the character of the book transcends the simple truth of its descriptors.

"Why? A rising tide lifts all boats, they say, and it is apropos to storytelling as well. A great story elevates all its constituent parts. Sure, it's true that *The Mad Wolf's Daughter* is a middle grade fantasy with feminist elements, a strong young heroine, an informed exploration of relevant social issues, and the transposition of established gender roles, but it is the book's great storytelling that makes all its components shine."

Here's the full review.

So I have a new cover. Isn't my wee lass absolutely...well...tough as steel? (She'd whack me with that sword if I called her anything else.)

Art by the incredible Antonio Javier Caparo.

A bit of the text is changing from the ARC too, with a tweaks to a couple of scenes. So, with the map (in progress; I'll share it when I can, but I saw the first draft today and it is BEAUTIFUL!) and those tweaks, there will be some new material for readers, even if you've snagged an ARC.

And that, the final version, will be in print four months from Monday!

Want to be up in the news of what's happening with the book, read my writing prompts for students, or take a glimpse of my beloved Scotland? I've a blog in in which I do all that and more, and for that you may sign up [here!](#)

The ARCs are in!

And here's a wee pic of those lovelies...

It's truly an incredible feeling to holds my very first book (even in ARC form) in my hands. The feeling is pretty much a mix of awe, wonder, delight, and utter gratitude for the work of my incredible editor.

And for something else to send a shiver of delight down my spine: Said editor send me these lovely snippets of advanced praise not long before the ARCs were printed:

I hope other readers enjoy it as much as these two heroic authors did!

Scrill says

“Sometimes words alone can save your life.”

I received an ARC from Penguin Young Readers Group for a fair review and a blog tour.

The Story

What an exciting story about 12 year old Drest as she journeys to save her family after she is the sole survivor of a raid that has taken them captive. I think my favorite part about this book was that when she was processing a situation it wasn't told in a way that she was thinking it out...even though she was. In multiple scenarios Drest imagined her various brothers giving her advice on how to handle the situation. Even though it was her own thoughts it reflected how much of her own training came from each of her brothers and dad, but also how she herself branched off as her own courageous person.

The story itself had consistent pacing that started off in a way that sets the vibe that Drest is the youngest and not the most experienced. By the end she has grown, learned, and experienced so much more that she has readily earned the appreciation from the whole war band. The book is an ode to little girls who can be just as brave as any boy.

The World Building

Though the story itself isn't an epic fantasy I felt that I could easily escape into the world. Through the language the characters used, to the subtle descriptions of the surrounding, weaponry, attire, and even the actions of the towns people, I was able to imagine the world that Drest was traveling through. There were only a few times that I thought the scenario a stretch, but for the most part I thought it all a story that is entirely plausible.

The end of the book included a glossary as well as an author's note that included research that would help any young reader understand with background information about historical Scotland and even where inspiration from names came from.

The Characters

I am only going to express my love for our hero Drest here. What a tough cookie! I love that though she may let some people assume she was a boy, she still was proud to be a girl and to not let it affect her concept of her abilities. Never once did she think that she couldn't accomplish such an impossible task because of her sex or even her age. Even though she had never gone off to battle herself, she thought herself just as much a part of her fathers war band just as any other brother of hers, declaring herself to be a legend. She is such a brave and snarky character that you can't help but cheer her on.

The Soundtrack

Phil Good – Better

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K.A. says

If you're looking for a strong MG female heroine, Drest, from *The Mad Wolf's Daughter*, is it! I loved this

fast-paced Scottish Medieval adventure of sword and legend. Can't recommend it enough!!!

Laura Mossa says

A very special thanks to Diane Magras for providing our #bookexcursion group with an ARC of *The Mad Wolf's Daughter*. It publishes on March 6, 2018. All opinions are my own.

Wee lass Drest and her family are attacked by knights from Faintree Castle. Drest desperately wants to join her father, Mad Wolf of the North and her five brothers in this battle, but Mad Wolf orders her to hide. She witnesses her family bound, captured, and sailing away from her. Her only hope of finding her family is a young knight named Emerick who Drest witnessed being attacked by one of his own men. She strikes a deal with Emerick to take him to Faintree Castle and in return, he will release one of her brothers, although Drest plans to rescue her entire family.

Throughout their journey, Drest hears tales of her family's brutality from Emerick, which she does not believe to be true. In addition, a bandit by the name of Jupp shares his own story of her father's cruelty. Drest begins to realize that words are strong weapons because not only is she beginning to doubt her family but also she is struggling to figure out her own identity. Can a warrior be brave and kind?

The Mad Wolf's Daughter is an adventure that has action and heart. With each chapter, Diane Magras kept me on the edge both excited and afraid to read on. I absolutely love Drest who learns that you can't always control our own legend, and sometimes words not swords can save lives.

Betsy says

Sometimes you just want to read a book that knows how to run.

There are many ways to define the term "great writing" as it applies to children's literature. Eloquent. Ennobling. Distinguished. These terms all work. Here's another one. Booooooooooring! Tell me you didn't read at least one book as a child deemed a "great work of literature" only to find yourself snoring by page four. We've all been there. I do believe that there is a mistaken understanding out there that the slower a novel moves, whether it is for children, teens, or adults, the more worthy it must be in terms of literary achievement. Lest we forget, books with speed and velocity on their side can contain just as much emotional resonance as even the slowest of tomes. To back up this claim I present you with today's book. It may be set in 13th century Scotland, the land of bogs, but nothing in Diane Magras's high-spirited tale is ever (forgive me) bogged down. Fast on its feet, never slowing, never stopping to catch its breath, and yet filled to the brim with complex character development and personal growth, Magras pulls off one of the trickiest conjuring tricks I've seen. Behold! A book able to pull depth and meaning out of frenzy. Come one! Come all! You never saw the like.

12-year-old Drest is small and female, but underestimate her at your peril. She's a canny lass, living as she does with her war-band brothers and her father, called The Mad Wolf. But even a canny child can be caught unawares. Without warning Drest's father and brothers are captured by invading knights while she escapes

unscathed. Left alone with one of the knights (wounded by one of his own) the girl cooks up a plan to exchange the man for her family. That means trekking off to Faintree Castle, a journey fraught with peril. Along the way Drest makes allies (the boy Tig with his crow Mordag and the accused witch/healer Merewen) and enemies (a ruthless bandit bent on pursuing Drest, a mob of villagers) alike. On her side Drest has stamina, cunning, and strength enough for all her companions. Yet she still has a lot to learn about the world, about her herself, and even about the family she believes to be so just. An Author's Note at the back contains extensive information about the state of Scotland in 1210, Feudalism and Village Life, Women, Healing, Castles, Swords, The Landscape, and even the basis behind The Characters' Names.

I wasn't kidding before when I said that this book moves at a sharp clip. My six-year-old daughter has taken to watching me as I read middle grade novels for 9-12 year olds, asking every 30 seconds or so, "So what's happening now?" (apparently actually *reading* the book to her is out of the question). With most stories that amount of time wouldn't yield a lot of change. With this book, I honestly had new information to impart with every update. Then I read ahead 30 pages or so, so when she asked for a summary I had to tell her about the rescued boy with the crow and the witch who's about to be burned and the bandit that almost catches them and more and more and more. All in 30 pages! Considering the fact that the book could potentially have come across as a long slog across the Scottish countryside, the fact that Magras is able to zip the reader from point to point effortlessly without sacrificing character development along the way is more than admirable.

There is another way in which the writer is able to keep the book moving. As an author, Magras utilizes a clever trick to keep the reader from dwelling too long in Drest's head alone. To guide her choices (and her chances) Drest imagines the voices of her brothers and father in times of strife. What this means for the reader is a continually amusing, and very comforting (in its way) stream of advice and counter advice from men that won't always agree with one another, even if they're merely imaginary. And you're certainly not bored.

Writers are often told that you should create characters with agency, and that reject passivity as part of their hero's journey. Usually the hero will hear the call, reject the call, and then find something inside of themselves that makes them follow the call. Drest isn't really like that. Pretty much from the get-go she is determined to use Emerick (the knight) to get to Faintree Castle to rescue her family. There are some moments later on when she feels a bit down, but at no point does there come a time when she thinks better of this plan. It's interesting to be placed so squarely inside the head of someone with so few doubts. Of course, that's Magras's secret plan on the sly. Drest at first is steadfast in her vision of right and wrong. Then, through a series of events, she comes to doubt everything she took for granted.

One of the central themes of the book is the question of morality in the face of family loyalty. Separated for the first time in her life from her brothers and father, Drest encounters but the outward perception of her family by the masses. In some cases villagers are sympathetic towards her on behalf of what they owe her family. In other cases, quite the opposite is the case. As she collects stories about her family's actions, some are true and some are not but it is often impossible to distinguish. This places Magras in a tricky situation. If Drest's family really does consist of true brigands, then the only solution is to permanently separate her from them in some way by the story's end. So the author must play it both ways. The family must be vindicated for the most part, but be guilty of some kind of horrid crime as well. Drest's father, it turns out, admits to some innocent deaths, albeit unintentional ones. So Magras is able to maintain the theme of Drest learning that her family is fallible while also keeping her with them (for the time being).

I won't say it's flawless, of course. Few books for kids are, let alone debuts. So I was, admittedly, somewhat baffled by the fact that at no point Drest (or anyone else for that matter) raises any questions about of her mother, except for a very brief mention that she never knew her (or, it is implied, cared to). Yet for a story

set in 1210, it is strange that no mention comes of Drest's closest familial relation. Mind you, the ample Author's Note at the back does a very good job of distinguishing the roles of different kinds of matrons and maidens in the medieval era. Readers can read into those what they will. Or just assume that Ms. Magras is saving the info for a future book in the series.

I was trying to think of books similar to this one and a title that sprang immediately to mind was Tamora Pierce's *Alanna: The First Adventure*. When it comes to girl-with-sword tales, nobody tops the Pierce. Yet as I thought about it I came to slowly realize the pop culture character that sits even closer to Drest's soul. Rey from the new Star Wars films wield a light saber and not a sword, but deep down she and Drest are mighty similar. So to the librarians of the world I say this: Know a Star Wars girl hungry for some strong female characters? Hand them this, hand them *Alanna*, hand them *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and then just keep on going. Girls with swords unite!

You know what's hot this year? The 13th and 14th centuries in Europe. Boy, kids today that hunger for a little horse dung and serfdom are certainly in their element this year. Between this book and the also charming *The Book of Boy* by Catherine Gilbert Murdock, I don't think I've seen Medieval life encapsulated so beautifully and so frequently. This book, being historical fiction, has a distinct disadvantage when held up alongside Murdock's book or *The Inquisitor's Tale* by Adam Gidwitz. I might be wrong but there's not a single heavenly body in disguise on any of these pages. Kids sometimes get the impression that historical fiction is dull on some level. To those kids I hand Drest. Dirty. Filthy. Dead set. Warrior. Drest. A book for those kids that yearn for adventure, as well as children that would prefer their adventures to be played out by somebody else. By the end of this book Drest learns that "sometimes words alone can save your life." The words on these pages may bear that out. A magnificent debut.

For ages 9-12.

Kara says

There are so many things I loved about this medieval middle grade novel; the historical Scottish setting, the fast paced action, the strong main character, Drest.

The attention to historical detail was quite fascinating to read and I learned a lot I didn't know about this particular time period, especially with the author's note at the end. Drest is a fiery lass and her dedication to her family and relationship with her brothers is what endeared me to her. This is a perfect book for middle grade readers looking for great fiction based in real history.

Juliana Brandt says

I cannot say enough about *The Mad Wolf's Daughter*. I read this in one sitting, and much later, I'm still vibrating with the excitement and perfection that is this book. I wish...ack, I wish I'd had this book as a kid! This is *Alanna*, but in a world and family where *Alanna* hadn't needed to disguise herself as a boy. Where *Alanna* could, unquestioningly, be herself from start to finish. And be taken *seriously* as a force from start to finish.

This is what angers me: that often in fiction, we must disguise boys as girls to allow them to *do* anything.

It is terrible how that trope erases so many children, how it trains them to think that they cannot do miraculous things, cannot *be themselves* unless they pretend to be something they're not. Yes, sure, some worlds (our world, I know) do not allow females to be empowered as they are. But too, there are ways to subvert this! THE MAD WOLF'S DAUGHTER does it brilliantly and cleverly, and oh how my whole heart is in love with Drest's family for this very reason.

Drest has teeth. Clever teeth. Brave teeth. Teeth she sinks into conflict that she should not win, and yet, she finds a way to do so! I cheered for her from start to finish, and was unreasonably thrilled to watch her take ownership of the shape of her heart at the end. And when I got to the end and found hints of a sequel layered in, I shouted from the couch, "YES, MORE DREST!" I am going to be shoving this book into the hands of every Middle Grade-reading kid I know.

sighs happily forever

Avery (Book Deviant) says

See more of my reviews on my blog the Book Deviant

There is just something about middle grade novels that makes me feel so happy and safe and I just can't get enough of them. The Mad Wolf's Daughter is no exception. I read the entirety of the novel in less than a day, so engrossed in the story that I just had to finish it then and there. It was a fun read, but that doesn't stop the story from being meaningful. It gave me nostalgia for Ranger's Apprentice, and makes me want to read more MG at the moment.

I really enjoyed the story. It was straight-forward, but Magras added enough twists and turns throughout the narrative so that it didn't seem that way. The count down had me at the edge of my seat, and Drest's adventures on the way to save her family were very heartwarming and entertaining. I love how Drest was so adamant to follow her father's code, despite her father not even being there. Each twist of the plot was because Drest chose to be a good person, putting others before herself and her needs. Even when it would have benefited her to walk away, Drest recognized that something was wrong and that it had to be remedied.

Each character was very entertaining and lovable. I probably loved Drest and her relationship with Emerick (the injured knight) the most, mainly because there was no forced romance between them. I was so thankful for that, because the friendship that develops between the two of them is beautiful. I especially enjoyed Tig as well, with Merewen coming in a close second.

The last thing I want to mention is that ending!!! I was honestly shocked, and hadn't been expecting it, so I was emotional for a little while? But I especially loved how it ended, and how Drest took things into her own hands.

Final Rating: ★★★★★

Overall?

I really need to read more middle grade. The Mad Wolf's Daughter is an amazingly fun novel that was full of twists and turns. I love how it centered friendship and doing what's right, while also standing up for yourself. Magras focused on important lessons while also making the story fun and interesting.

Would I Recommend?

Yes! Especially if you're looking for middle grade fantasies. I really hope Magras decides to write a sequel, because the ending was left very open for the possibility. If there is one, you can bet that I'll snatch it up with no hesitation.

Billie says

This is one of the rare books that lives up to the hype. It would have been a five-star book if the ending had been more of an ending and not felt like it was just a convenient stopping place. Drest, though, is an amazing character and her companions, Tig and Emerick, are worthy co-adventurers. The three face danger, betrayal and menace on their journey, but they also experience people at their best and most helpful. I'm always a fan of a girl-with-sword novel and this is a strong entry in that sub-genre and, I hope, the opening to an equally strong series.

Laura Gardner says

5/5 for Mad Wolf's Daughter by @dianemagras; thanks to @PenguinKids for sending me this book to share with the @kidlitexchange network (#partner). All opinions are my own.

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Swipe for the back!

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Wow! I completely inhaled this historical fiction tale set in medieval Scotland. Magras is a master at character development; I was strongly attached to Drest, Emerick, the enemy knight she takes captive and eventually befriends, and Tig, the young lad who helps them on their quest. When I saw that both Karen Cushman and Kristin Cashore (Graeling! still one of my faves!) had blurbed for this one, I knew I had to read it despite that it's a genre outside my usual comfort zone. I AM SO GLAD. Drest is possibly the bravest, kindest, most daring heroine I've seen in a long time. Her feats are awesome, but also completely believable and the imagined inner narrative she has with her captured older brothers is just wonderful. I read this in less than a day and raced through the last two thirds. I even cried! Let's just say I often find that reading these middle grade books as a parent makes me especially sensitive to parent-child scenes. Does that happen to any of my fellow adult friends who read middle grade books? Do not miss this book! It is a must-buy for all elementary and middle school libraries. I can't wait to put it in my historical fiction section and I'm really glad I read it because I do think it's one that will need a bit of booktalking to start flying off the shelf.

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#kidlitexchange

Susan says

This debut historical fiction middle grade novel is a fast-paced, page turning adventure! Drest's strong 'voice' was refreshing & the plot line intricately woven with lots of twists and turns!

Sarah Glenn Marsh says

If you're looking for action, adventure, and lots of heart in a story helmed by a strong young warrior, this is an absolute must-read!!!

THIS is the book I longed for when I was younger, and was still longing for until an early copy landed in my hands. And it not only lived up to my long-held hopes; it smashed and surpassed them, delivering an unforgettable story of family, friendship, and bravery.

I loved every page!

Amanda Rawson Hill says

This book will suck you in. Drest is a kick butt female heroine who also wields the weapon of mercy even when it's hard. I loved it.

Heidi says

I received an ARC of this book, and was so happy because I've been looking forward to it ever since I first saw that cover. Here is my honest review:

What a page turner! An epic adventure through a vivid world, I enjoyed every minute of this book. Drest is a fantastic character, strong and fierce and full of determination, yet still vulnerable, still a girl left fully on her own for the first time. I loved watching her grow, from frightened and uncertain, trying to imagine what her family would do, to a legend in her own right. Can't wait for the sequel!

Lola says

I don't find anything about this story original.

It's the sort of over-published book you find in your packed boxes two years after moving into your new home. You take it out of the box, as you finally decided to unpack some of the old stuff (yay you!), and you can't help but ask yourself, "Ugh, why did I buy this in the first place? It seemed like such a good idea at the time but it's so not worth the money it cost."

It begins in a confusing way: there are enemies invading Drest's father's territory and her whole family is being kidnapped. Who are they? We don't know. Why? We don't know. It sounds straight-forward when I explain it, but the reading part is different, especially since we know nothing about the characters in the beginning. It was too much, too soon. But anyway, Drest, the passionate and overconfident girl that she is, decides to journey for six days to a castle in order to bring her family back with the hope that they are still alive by the time she gets there.

I'm fine with this sort of story arc, regardless of the fact that it's been done a thousand times before. I don't

think I could ever get tired of characters setting off to an unknown place to save their family, friends or loved ones, because it is such a noble course of action. These storylines keep you guessing, usually, and they can be emotional and even fun to witness.

But for that to happen, the one doing the search must be determined (Drest is), have a great sidekick (Drest doesn't) and make us care for the ones needing a rescue team (of which Drest does a so-so job). We barely start to get to know Drest's father and brothers when they suddenly disappear. And while it was charming for Drest to hear the voices of her family members in her head at first, it became unnecessary after some time. Her thoughts are often... not her own.

She is traveling with an enemy knight, supposedly her captive, but more like a companion is my opinion. I enjoyed the writing style as well as the short and structured chapters. I felt like this story was indeed going somewhere and I had no problem following Drest's adventure once it began.

However, I could not bring myself to care very much for Drest herself, her brothers or her father, who we quickly learn is not who she thought he was. It also takes a while for us to even learn why he was taken in the first place. Normally I could accept that, but I truly was confused in the beginning. No one invades another territory and takes captives without a reason in mind.

Last thing: Am I the only one who was disappointed to learn that this is in no way connected to the Big Bad Wolf?

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