



Helga: Out of Hedgelands

Rick Johnson

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Twelve-year-old Helga has more danger in her life than most beasts her age—Wrackshee slavers after her, a vicious attack by bandits that nearly kills her, a race against dragons pursuing her, and leading a daring rebellion to save her life and rescue friends and family from the insidious WooZan. And that is just the beginning. But what do you expect when you are a young beast who just can't see the stupid rules of the world making any sense? Helga can't accept things as they are and ends up taking on not just one, but two all-powerful, supreme tyrants in two different realms.

Helga never intended to lead a revolution. It just sort of happened because she wouldn't go along with the "rules of normal" that keep tyrants in power and entire societies enslaved. Beginning on a dangerous quest to solve some mysteries in her own past, Helga leads her quirky comrades on a journey that will not only forever change them, but upset ancient civilizations.

As an author, I'm drawn to eccentric, unexpected characters: those who surprise because they hear a distant galaxy, see a different music, create their own fragrance rather than get hooked on a soundtrack; the child who has her own ideas about how the emperor is dressed; the lunatics and rebels who tell stories on the boundaries. Helga's unusual story will take readers to worlds they never imagined—definitely a whole new ride.

Time and again, the unconventional heroine and her eccentric comrades overcome ominous tyrants and black-hearted slavers, not by battling to the last beast standing, but by being the first beast to think differently.

Helga: Out of Hedgelands is divided into three books which introduce the epic saga of the Wood Cow clan and their role in overturning centuries of slavery and tyranny. This story will continue in additional volumes of the Wood Cow Chronicles now in development. Over the series of current and future volumes, the entire history of the Wood Cow clan, the fall of Maev Astuté, and the coming of Lord Farseeker to the Outer Rings, will be told.

Helga: Out of Hedgelands Details

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From Reader Review Helga: Out of Hedgelands for online ebook

Heidi Kneale says

A fun set of serial stories about Helga and the other beasts she meets. These YA anthropomorphic animal tales are fun, bold and two shades on the fresh side of delightfully ridiculous. An entertaining read.

Sarah Wilson says

I never could get into this book. Not sure why...

Rick Johnson says

I am the author of this book, simply providing some additional information about the story beyond the description.

"Moving with horrific speed, the kayaks approached Helbara and Helga's hiding-place. Suddenly they slowed, pausing about fifty yards away. Using only hand signals to communicate, the Wrackshee slavers silently peered here and there for any sign of their prey. Each time a slaver's gaze seemed to fix on their hiding-place, Helbara's heart raced wildly.

Slowly, the Wrackshees again moved forward. They were now close enough that their stench nearly made Helbara gag, but, to her relief, their slow advance and darting looks indicated that she and Helga were not yet discovered. In the shadowy moonlight the deeply sunken eyes of the Wrackshees stood out like deep bowls against their pasty, pale faces. Even across the distance that still protected them, the moon set the dark sockets in sharp relief against the evil milk-furred faces. Living skulls. Helbarba shuddered. She could now make out the individual razor-sharp tips—glinting like pale vicious teeth—of the dozens of small throwing lances the Weasels carried on bandoliers slung over their shoulders."

So begins a chain of events by which Helga is torn from her family, not once, but twice, and sent on an amazing search for those she has lost. Helga's quest leads her on a mind-twisting adventure of astonishing discoveries. 'Common sense' is often revealed to be nonsense and the meaning of family itself transforms. In paradox, contradiction, and enigma, she is able to escape from her own terrors and brings liberation to entire societies. In a climactic race against time, Helga bends 'reality' to thwart a death sentence, turning the tables on the insidious WooZan, and winning a breathtaking reunion with a family larger than she dreamed.

Escaping from the Wrackshee slavers, but losing her mother to them, Helga is rescued and raised by good-hearted beasts in the Rounds of Deep Springs. Questions about her lost family, however, urge Helga to leave the Rounds at age twelve. Most of the book is an account of the epic adventures and magical mysteries Helga encounters after she leaves the Rounds. In her quest to find her lost family, she endures a brutal exile by the half-mad ruler of the Hedgelands, where she came to reside after leaving the Rounds; survives a deadly attack by bandits; and escapes several more close calls; as she ultimately unlocks the secret of the hidden worlds beyond the Bone Forest.

As Helga's own dire circumstances move toward a climax, they inexorably reveal the deeply entwined strands of Helga's life and those of her lost family. Forced by a cascade of circumstances to confront deep prejudices and hatreds such as led to her own exile, Helga enters a surreal underground realm where her own survival, and reunion with her family, depends on breaking the ferocious power of mere illusion.

Breaking this power is so terrifying to the very creatures it imprisons, that Helga discovers the true weakness of that power. This paradox is but one that unlocks the worlds of perception where flight from undeniable truths may be the only pathway to truth. Enigma? Yes, and that is the delicious point. Find out what your mind cannot do. Find out why.

Calhoun Dyer says

Spoiler Alert: Very early on in this book the entire plot goes from peaceful kingdom to a kingdom built on slavery and a mad tyrant and his family. Quickly the main characters family is forced to flee the kingdom and learn the hidden truth. That the castle of the High One is built with the blood and tears of slaves imported from the lands outside the hedge. Yet the High One is still believed to be a god.

Jenn says

A great escapist read. The author has created his own world with great characters and storylines.

Denise says

A really good beginning to the Wood Cow Chronicles series. I read this volume because I was chosen a Goodreads winner for the second book in the series, The Overending, and will post a more detailed review there.

Cecile says

A great find, not to miss--would definitely recommend.

Deborah Taylor says

Ok read

I found some characters were a little disconnected. And some of the ways they spoke slowed down the storyline a little. I believe this is more of a child's book, but it was somewhat enjoyable as an adult.

Nora says

4.5 stars. Perhaps i deal with fantasy adventure books about animal people well. Or perhaps they say something to me that would be less palatable if they were people? Or maybe i just like the audacity of the authors.

Helga is a marvelous heroine. Lots of bad guys and good guys. Give me some time to think about how to describe the long and somewhat complicated story with loads of characters.

Tracey says

Kindle Freebie -2nd book listed eReader newsletter - grabbed both to start at beginning.

Itsy Bitsy Book Bits says

Before we get started I thoroughly enjoyed the story! Now to my ridiculous account of reading it. I don't know what I was expecting when I opened this book, I did no research and did not read any reviews. I don't normally do more than read the blurb, so this was not out of the ordinary. I was so surprised by this collection of books, I don't know where to begin, to express my feelings about what I found!

The first thing that surprised me was that this is a children's book. When I saw the name Helga I thought Vikings or something along those lines, boy was I delightfully mistaken! Second surprise, it's about forest beasts as the author calls them, at first I thought the names the people were calling themselves such as Wood Cows were clan names. Nope, they were forests creatures. (I am completely guilty of sneaking a child book series or two, emm Percy Jackson or Harry Potter.) So moving on...

The first book of the Chronicles was an intelligent, wistful, fanciful, adventure. The author builds the story wonderfully. Helga's brother is out trading at a market far from home when, he needs to rest he ends up at a rough establishment were his kind (wood cows) are not usually welcome. There he meets an old sickly coyote that plans to make a required journey, that most of the kingdom makes at least once in their life time, not to make this journey is considered dishonorable. Well knowing how old and ill the beast is Helga's brother decides to take his place so his honor remains intact, and so the ill beast doesn't die attempting it. Well While doing this he causes a huge commotion is arrested and brought before the High one. In front of the High on the processed to battle guards insult generals and steal a prized possession from the High one. Managing to escape and bringing down the wrath of the High one on all of the usually peaceful Wood Cows. The High One decrees that all wood cows are banished from the Hedgelands, and that is where Helga's adventure begins. Creative and intriguing, I can't wait to share it with my daughter.
