



The Sword Guest

Martin Chu Shui

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The story centers on Liz, born of half Australian and of half Chinese descent. Growing up in Australia, she isn't very interested in her father's ancient Chinese stories. She is concerned with problems that are far more contemporary such as environmental issues, and particularly her friend's handsome brother who is an environmental activist. But her disinterest in Chinese culture changes when her two worlds collide, after a catastrophic accident sets thousands of ancient monsters loose near her home. Suddenly Liz must learn many new skills and call on all of her Chinese heritage if she is to prevent the monsters from destroying Earth. Helped by her twin brother and best friend, Liz sets out to discover why the monsters exist and how to stop them. When she is injured in a battle, she must travel to China to seek a cure that is spiritual as much as it is physical. But can she find the old man who can help her before the monsters catch her? How will she manage in a country that is so strange and yet so familiar? And can she learn enough about a world she has ignored to stop the monsters in time?

The Sword Guest Details

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From Reader Review The Sword Guest for online ebook

Tahlia Newland says

Imagine an Australian Kung Fu movie in a book and you have Dragon's Pupils - The Sword Guest, a unique and highly imaginative story full of strange creatures, awe-inspiring magic and non-stop action set primarily in Western Australia. I really enjoyed seeing a story where magical aspects of Chinese culture come to life in an Australian context. Given the long history of Chinese immigrants here, (almost as long as the Europeans), I'm surprised it has taken so long for something like this to appear. The writer obviously knows about Tai Chi and his inclusion of Taoist wisdom in the story gave the book a depth that I admire.

It took me a while to get into this book and I almost gave up, not because the story moved too slowly, it didn't, but because the characters initially seemed a little flat, and I was too impatient to wait for answers to make sense of it. In the end, I'm glad I stuck with it, because by the time the story moved to China, I was hooked. The writing improved considerably at that point, with wonderful descriptions of China and more inner contemplation, which gave depth to Liz's character.

In the Chinese context, I was able to accept aspects of the story that I'd had trouble with before, like the teens sudden onset of fighting and magical ability. I think there's a cultural difference here in what is believable in stories, and had I placed the story squarely as Kung Fu style in the beginning, I would have accepted more of it without so many questions. Some of what I saw as stilted dialogue, I also realised was probably not so strange for those of Chinese descent.

I loved the puzzles and the way Liz discovers the wisdom in those 'stupid' old stories. It's a good reminder to us all not to dismiss the pearls of our culture without examination. I also enjoyed the Animal Monster King and his minions, especially C1 & C2 the crocodiles with their touch of humour.

I think the novel is best for younger teens and even though it has a girl protagonist, I think it would be popular with boys because of the many Kung Fu style fight scenes. I especially recommend it to all young Australian Chinese. I give it 3 stars and look forward to further installments. Martin's ideas are excellent and I expect that his writing will improve with more experience, so I urge you to support this self-published author.

Becky says

I was contacted by the author and given a copy to read in exchange for an honest review.

I have a thing about dragons, I love them, so the title alone was enough to pull me in, the beginning of the story really pulled me in and I loved the idea of a magic calligraphy pen that could bring drawings to life, I was instantly like, wow, this sounds great. Then we skip forward and meet Liz and Henry - twins living in Australia but with Chinese heritage. Strange things are happening around Australia, birds flocking together in mass numbers, mice running in hoards down the street, and many other strange occurrences. Henry and Liz are learning Tai Chi, and trying to stay connected to their Chinese heritage, their father is full of old stories and folk tales that he tells them. I actually really enjoyed the stories and found them a good insight into Chinese history. There were a lot of fight scenes in the book and they were well choreographed, lots of tricks and spins etc, but for me there were a few too many fights throughout, it took up a lot of the book. Liz was a good character and embraced all challenges that were thrown at her, but I did find her disregard for her dad slightly annoying, I can understand how the constant stories can become annoying, like visiting a

grandparent who doesn't remember they've told you something and proceed to tell it over and over, but even when she asked for his help she switched off, then wondered why she struggled to remember the facts. I liked Henry as a character, he had a good head on him and thought things through, he was always willing to help his sister and had some good action. Their friend Sue was a massive wimp in the start, screaming at everything, but you get to see her grow as a character throughout the book and I actually came to like her. I enjoyed the book and the plot was exciting and fast moving, but I do wish the idea of the pen had been used a bit more throughout, I felt like it wasn't used as much as it could have been. Overall a good fast paced read that opens up a new world of Chinese stories and fighting. Well researched and a easy read (i read it in one sitting!)

Kathy Martin says

This was an interesting and entertaining young adult book. The main characters are all fourteen. Liz, her twin brother Henry, and best friend Sue find themselves battling monsters out of legend to save the world. They are pretty ordinary Australian kids. Liz and Henry are half Chinese. They have grown up hearing but not listening to their father's Chinese legends and folktales. They, along with their friend, have studied Tai Chi since they were little. They are concerned about the environment and attend a lot of protests.

One day they attend a protest at an Aboriginal site that is going to be opened for mining and witness an explosion. They think they see monsters escaping from the new hole in the ground. But most others dismiss this as nonsense. Their Tai Chi teacher Li Ping and a few others believe them. Li Ping prepares them to battle the monsters in what the kids call the Long Dream. They have three years intensive training in using Tai Chi, Gong Fu, and Qi as a way to fight during the course of one night's sleep.

It is a good thing they did too. Because during the first battle with the Vampire King Li Ping is so badly hurt that she that she flies away on a yellow crane which the kids realize is the Chinese way of saying that she died. The kids are left on their own to battle the monsters.

What I liked about this story besides the Chinese mythology which was new to me was the fact that the kids aren't your typical superheroes. They aren't seven feet tall and bulletproof. They can be hurt. They can wander around and not know what to do. They can make mistakes.

After Liz is hurt in one battle, she goes to China to see if she can find some help. There she learns a number of things that will help them in their battles.

This was a good story with lots of action. I think young readers would enjoy it. The characterization was a little thin. We learn mostly about the characters quirks - Liz's crush on Fred, Henry's over-willingness to fight, and Sue's fears. The characters are a little one-dimensional. However, in this one, the action carries the day. Even though Liz gets most of the emphasis, I think that boys would like this one because of the action and battles.

Jerry Huang says

Embarking on an adventure that brings you halfway across the world and back, slaying evil monsters with magic and gaining magical superpowers from a dream. Sounds pretty awesome eh? The excitement, the suspense, and the fight for all of humanity: why wouldn't that be exciting? Actually though, there is a book

for it, and it actually isn't that good... The book, *Dragon's Pupil: The Sword Guest*, by Martin Chu Shui, was actually a pretty poorly written book though it did have an interesting concept. The main thing that made it bad wasn't the story itself; it was the little tics in the writing that just made your OCD explode.

However, even though it does have an interesting concept, it does have some illogical things in it. Take how they were going to the hospital to visit their father; wouldn't they be stopped at the front desk because they are only 14? In many books, it's really the little things that count for a lot. One of these little things is what one of the antagonist's ally says, saying that "I don't like to eat humans, not my cup of tea." This statement would be completely normal (except for the eating humans part...) except for the fact that this person was stuck in a prison for thousands upon thousands of years, so it wouldn't make sense for him to know such a common phrase from today. Also, when one of the main characters, Liz, ate a medicine ball which empowered her, it stated in the book; "she felt a hot current start from her stomach..." This was immediately after she ate it, but it takes around 10-15 seconds for food to come down your esophagus, so this was just a head-scratching moment. Mixed in with that, the stomach doesn't even absorb any nutrients, but dissolves it to be absorbed which takes 3-4 hours...

When reading the book, there were some things that just kind of annoyed me, mainly because the author grew kind of lax in his writing. In the book, many parts of it had parentheses to explain rather than integrating it into the actual story. Even something relatively simple and easy to incorporate was reduced to this: "It'd be fun to know some Far Shu (Chinese words similar to spell and curses)." The grammar mistake was actually in the book. Along with that, the author spent some time writing about how the main protagonists trained their combat skills, before realizing that it didn't make sense for their parents not to notice, then hastily fixing it up. Or at least, that's how it felt like. The author cleared it all up with a clichéd "long dream" where they learned massive powers, and even becoming lazier as to call it the Long Dream instead of something creative. Really, it was things like this that made me put the book down in the middle of the night in frustration at the author.

Reading this book wasn't exactly a memorable experience and I won't be surprised if I don't remember the name in a few months. That is why I rather this book two stars. If you are a person who can just pass by these things in a breeze however, you will actually really enjoy this book. However it is my honest opinion of two stars for this book because it just annoyed me so much. For those who are OCD, you must be warned; DO NOT READ THIS BOOK YOU WILL DIE.

Nicki Markus says

I was contacted by Martin Chu Shui back in June, requesting a review of this book and I have only now had time to get to it.

Let me say first off that I do not like rating books low, especially when it is a new writer trying to start out as I know how that feels. But, I was offered a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review and so I need to be honest.

This book had a number of problems for me. The main one was believability (or the lack thereof). Sure this is fantasy, but the world still has to have a sense of truth so the reader can suspend disbelief and become engaged with the story and that just didn't happen here. The problem was actually not the 'fantasy' elements, but some of the everyday aspects. This book centres on a group of fourteen year-olds. Fine. But we are supposed to believe that these fourteen year olds are environmental protestors whose parents seemed unfazed about them going off to political rallies without adult supervision. Their language at times felt far too 'adult' and dialogue was stilted throughout the piece.

The environmental 'agenda' in this piece also left me cold. It's fine to have a message within a story, but in

this piece it seemed that the story was secondary to the message in places. It also felt like the author had drawn out the piece in an attempt to make it a novel rather than a novella and there were repetitive fight scenes that added nothing to the story.

If I hadn't been reading this at request, I may well have abandoned it without finishing - something I don't do very often. But a sense of commitment kept me reading until the end.

That said, the book was not without positives. The plot was very original and I really liked the idea of blending Chinese folktales with a Western style of writing. I found the Chinese elements very interesting as it is not a culture I know very much about. With some work this could make a nice middle-grade/YA read - but it is not at that stage yet.

I do not mean these comments to be scathing and I hope the author will be able to take something from them that he can use in the future. I wish him all the best in his endeavours.

Holly Full Moon Bites Book Reviews says

~May have some spoilers.~

This book was very different for me as I don't think I have ever really read anything that was centered around Chinese heritage. So I was very excited about that and to see what the author had written.

Our main character Liz, half-Chinese, half-Australian was-- as we read in the blurb-- not at all interested in listening to her fathers old tales. As she was much more interested in environmental issues--which brings up the point of Wave Rock being blasted by a mining company--but somehow it blasts early and monsters that have been trapped inside for a long time come out to take over (Or destroy the world? I am still not really sure on that point.) Not only that but beings from another world seem intent on doing the same. Liz finds herself along with her brother, Henry and her best friend Sue, battling against them--the only ones standing in the way of them destroying the Earth.

Now we have a pretty good start to the book-- we get our details pretty fast, in good order--such as Liz getting this magic pen for her birthday.

Altogether I did like the novel, and almost gave it 3 stars but in the end I couldn't as I think the novel had a lot more potential.

The whole basis of the book, the monsters, vampires, a magic pen, ect. was very good, but there were parts of the book that seemed like it was a stretch, jumping to fast with out really giving detail as to why, how, when, ect.

Also I find myself thinking there was a few loose ends or things that didn't really get explored like Liz's relationship with Sue's brother. At the end it seemed there was something going on there but then the author never really elaborates.

So my final word on the novel is somewhere between I liked it and it was okay but it seems the author got in a hurry during the writing process.

I would recommend this novel to someone who is interested in a little action/adventure.

**I received an Ebook copy of this book for free to review from the author.*

Jolie says

Liz is an ordinary 14 year old girl. She has an annoying brother, boring (and embarrassing) parents and a crush on her best friend's older brother. She also attends environmental protests and takes karate lessons. It was during one of these protests, she, her brother and her friend see two amazing things. Amazing thing #1: When an ancient rock was destroyed, monsters and vampires came streaming out of it. Amazing thing #2: Their karate instructor comes to their rescue and nearly gets killed helping them.

hey brush it off and head home. When they go to sleep that night, all three teenagers are met by the instructor and are schooled in every form of karate/meditation/dialects of Chinese and a personal weapon. Henry, it is a sword that has green light emitting from it. Sue has a golden ring that expands and duplicates. Liz....she wields a calligraphy pen.

Then begins the adventure of a lifetime. From battling backpack vampires and monsters to learning that they were predestined to fight evil to the final scenes, this book takes you on a wild ride.

I did like the book, alot, and thought it was ready well written. I just didn't like the kids' characters until the last couple of chapters. Liz, Henry and Sue got on my nerves. Actually, mainly Sue got on my nerves. All she did (until the end) was scream/cry and have to be rescued. I wanted to reach into the book and go "Girlfriend, you were taught these powers. Flipping use them!!!!!!".

Will I reccomend this book to family and friends? Yes

Will I read this book again? Yes.

Kelly/ylllektra says

I think this is between 3 and 3 1/ stars for me.

The story takes place mostly in Australia - although we do get to see a bit of China as well and it involves primarily three fourteen-year-old kids, twins Liz and Henry and their friend Sue and of course their families.

Out of the three, Liz seems to be the most driven, especially when it comes to the environment and protecting it and of course Tai Chi. Early on in the book, we find out that all three of them are "activists" despite their young age and take part in protests seeking to prevent a mining process to an Australian Landmark, Wave Rock.

What they don't know though, is that Wave Rock is not just a landmark, it's what kept the "monsters away" and now there's a "hole" through which they can escape their prison.

When her father gives Liz a special calligraphy pen for her birthday, she feels there's something special about it, what exactly she can't tell, but when strange things start happening around Perth and weird people with backpacks and torches appear with more than hostile intentions and even vampire characteristics, Liz realizes that it's her destiny set in motion.

The three kids are attacked by those strangers and it's their Tai Chi instructor that rescues them, manifesting amazing skills in battle and magic.

She is injured, however, but before she "ascends", she manages to magically give them fighting experience and knowledge they need for the upcoming war. She also gives Henry and Sue powerful magical weapons, a sword and magical rings.

Through their lessons with Li Ping, their extraordinary female Tai Chi instructor, all three have already mastered not only fighting techniques but also breathing and meditation routines that significantly enhance their strength, agility and speed beyond their fourteen years or even their human nature.

Gradually, they find out that the strange men are intruders from USB (Universe of Supreme Beings) with superior technology and powers and the only thing that can help them destroy them is Tai Chi and the Qi power within them, which they can only harness and utilize because they get help along the way.

Sound complicated? It is, but in a good way.

The novel is packed with action. It's page after page of movement and something new and interesting. The plot flows swiftly and the characters are well defined and believable. Liz's character and Henry's is consistent throughout, with Liz being impulsive, yet heroic and strong-willed and Henry being level-minded and strong.

It is Sue's character that comes full circle by the end of the book though. She starts off how you'd imagine a 14-year-old girl, somewhat shallow (she wants to be a fashion model) and easily scared, but loyal to her friends and by the end of the books, she takes her friendships to the next level, by actually putting her life on the line to save her friends, even if it could cost her her life's dream too.

The novel is filled with Chinese proverbs and stories and one is more interesting than the other - if somewhat cryptic and vague - it's gradually within the book that we understand what each one means and what its usefulness is in the battle against the monsters.

The description of the battles and the fight sequences is detailed and very exciting and these alone really get you into the story.

I really enjoyed the scenes with the Monster King and the challenges the kids had to complete in order to be released, got a bit of a "Doomsday" vibe out of it.

What I enjoyed the most is that it seems that the book seems to target more of a younger reading group, but in it there are useful and meaningful life messages having to do with the importance of friendship, patience, family, love and many other things.

On the other hand, I have to admit that sometimes the ending of the fight and the resolution of some scenes seemed a bit too easy (i.e. the monsters ending a fight) and Liz, Henry and Sue had a lot more freedom than most fourteen-year-olds usually have. They are out of the house a lot and I mean a lot and we don't have scenes of their parents looking for them or questioning them about it. Also, when Liz and Henry's father ends up in the hospital, they don't pay a lot of attention to him, they are away all the time and their mother is nowhere to be found (she isn't depicted to cook for them or ask where they are). Also, at some point Liz talks to Sue's mother on first-name basis which I thought was unusual for a 14-year-old towards an adult, but maybe it's something usual in Australia. (it's not very usual in Greece, though, so maybe that's why it seemed weird to me).

Overall, though, it is a very entertaining book, one will truly enjoy and have fun with, not only because of the exciting battles and Tai Chi techniques, but also for the real-life lessons and the wonderful insight into the Chinese culture.

* Offered by the author for an honest review.

Missy (Missy's Reads & Reviews) says

I have to say that this book surprised me quite a lot. Although it's written for a younger age group, the story itself was interesting enough to keep this 20-something entertained from the very beginning to the end.

The three main characters - Liz, Henry and Sue - are all fourteen years old. While in most instances these characters act their age very much so, there are some points where they seem a little more mature. Liz seems to be more driven. Sue, on the other hand, seemed a little less mature at the beginning then did a complete turn-around at the end. Honestly, I think she really popped out as a character - very redeeming. I think the only thing that confused me was how much freedom the kids had. They were gone from home all the time, yet there was no instance in which a parent said anything about it? Then again, that could just be a personal thought resonating from my own childhood... plus, this IS a fiction story - I just thought that specific aspect was a little... off.

That aside, the story itself was quite remarkable. There was tons of action thrown into the story, which I absolutely loved. The story moved with a decent flow at a good pace, which made for a pretty fast read. There was a lot of Chinese culture mixed into this book as well that made it all the more fun to read. This one for me was definitely more plot-driven, though the heavy character developments throughout cannot be ignored.

To be honest, I'm flip-flopping between a 3.5 and a 4.0 on this book. If I look at this critically enough, then I cannot overlook the fact that there were some things that may not have been explained enough and just kind of left you hanging. I think I would have been happier with a little more detail added into the story to explain things a little better. However, if I look at this as a YA book meant for younger readers (not older teens and up), then I can justify the dismissal of some details because when you're dealing with younger kids.. it's more about how to keep the ball rolling, and less about what color and weight the ball is - if you get my meaning.

So, I'm going to rate this how I see fair and give it 4 stars. Yes, there were some things I would have liked to see elaborated on a little more. BUT the story IS really good and has a lot in it to keep you interested from beginning to end. Sometimes, that's enough. It is in this case.

Avery says

May contain spoilers

When I first read the synopsis of this book I had two thoughts, one being, that the book sounded to be completely out of my comfort zone (typically I read YA PNR/ UF, I cannot recall ever having read, what I could like to call, a 'foreign fantasy' before- a fantasy story which takes place entirely outside of North America and focuses intently on a foreign culture- their behaviours, practices, histories, and so forth), the other, that there seemed a lot to be going on in the story, with all of the talk of magical instruments, environmental issues, monsters, and warriors, but since I am one to rarely turn down the opportunity to read and review a book for an indie author I figured I would give the book a chance and try to go into it with an open mind. And after reading the book I personally don't find it to be my cup of tea- usually when I start a book I can read it in a day, two at most, however this book took me over a week to read because I could only handle reading it for half an hour, or an hour, at most.

While all of Chinese folklores which were scattered throughout the book were extremely interesting I just felt that they added very little to the story- they seemed more like an "Hey, let's have an educational moment in the middle of this fight scene" instead of "This ancient story is necessary to the book as it is the sole fuel

of the story". Also, as this book is fantasy-based, and unrealistic or seemingly impossible plot elements are a component of fantasy books, this book seemed beyond unrealistic (and highly unbelievable) at moments (for instance, a fourteen year old character hopping on an airplane all by herself with very little thought, knowing that she most likely faced certain death in doing so or vampires who run around wearing backpacks- who are dubbed "backpack vampires"- who actually turn out to be aliens hellbent on destroying landmarks on Earth in order to get rocks that they desperately need to continue fueling their planet/ way of life) and in those moments I felt that way too much seemed to be going on at one time.

In addition, I felt that in some points of the story the characters were extremely melodramatic at the simplest of things (or things that didn't seem to be all that great of a concern- ie. when one of the characters shirts gets ruined and she is totally distraught it), though at other times, when events which deserved to be somewhat overdramatized (ie. when a character lost an arm), the characters kind of brushed them off with a "Meh".

All in all, while the book is grammatically well written, I think that a bit of editing to the storyline would serve it justice, allowing the book to reach its full potential.

Rating: 2.5/5

I received this book from the author to read and honestly review. I was not compensated in any way for said review.

Jamie says

The Sword Guest was a fun and interesting read. I wasn't sure at first what I thought of this but by the end I enjoyed reading it.

Liz, her twin brother Henry and their friend Sue are 14 years old. In their spare time they take karate lessons and are concerned with environmental issues. Since they can remember Liz and Henry have been listening to their father's stories about Chinese culture. One day when they are out enjoying a picnic with their families they find out that things are not what they thought. They discover things about their karate teacher, themselves and their culture. As the story goes along Liz leaves Australia for a few days to see what she can find out in China. This all leads up to the dramatic ending. Will they be able to save their families and themselves? I don't want to give anything away so I suggest you read it, I think you'll enjoy it.

This is geared to a younger reader but I'm in my 30's and I enjoyed it. It was somewhat of a change from what I normally read. This did not have romance which I love in books but it was not needed in this one. There was not a lot of character background or development but the action and adventure kept me happily reading to the end.

This e-book was provided to me by the author for review. This did not affect my review in any way.

Lucy says

I was given a copy of this book free in exchange for an honest review.

I really respect the author of this self-published book, I think it must take a lot of courage to put yourself out there in the way he has by choosing to self publish. I really, really wanted to like this book because I am all for supporting new writers and self published writers.

When I first read the synopsis of this book I thought it sounded a little strange but it did sound unique and so many books are just same old, same old these days. I thought the plot did sound interesting if a little hard to pull off, and if it was done well it could make a fantastic book. I'll give this to Chu Shui, the element of the book that I was most unsure about, that of the magic pen, was done pretty well. When it was first introduced I thought it could give lots of opportunity, even if it did remind me a bit of Penny Crayon! Unfortunately I don't think the magic pen idea was utilized very well, in fact the initial idea of it was barely used, and I did think it could have been used to great effect and made a unique plotline. In some way it gave me the impression that the author didn't really know what to do with the idea, or if he did that it wouldn't make enough of a story so he decided not to make it a major plot point.

When it came down to it I felt that a lot of the time Chu Shui was trying to stretch the story to make it into a full book. The fight scenes became very repetitive which made them somewhat predictable. After a while I became bored with what should have been the most exciting parts of the book and I began to get the impression that the battles were added because the author felt that the story was getting boring. If my impression is true it's a real shame because I generally preferred the sections between the battles. I liked the way that Chu Shui used old chinese tales to link to how Liz and her friends should fight, I particularly liked Liz meeting the Grandfather and finding out about the history behind her methods. I know the whole book couldn't be made of that, she needed to be able to apply what she had learnt, but I think sometimes it was cut down in favour of battle scenes.

I think this book could have been so much better. The premise was good but it felt like I was reading a first draft (and not an especially good one at that). With a bit more work and editing it could have been enjoyable, but I began to wish I had another book with me by the end.

But hey it didn't bring out the feelings of hatred that I have for Twilight, so if you think it sounds good download it, it's not expensive. Just don't bother spending your money on the paperback.

B. Barron says

First, a comment about the author. Mr. Chushui is a total class act. I already felt bad in giving the book a poor review, and when I informed him the review would be unfavorable (this is my custom. I will always let the author/requester know of my review and I will let them read it if they wish before I post it at GoodReads. I will not alter it, and unless they request otherwise I will post it no where else on the Internet) he thanked me for my honest review.

Damn, I love the man already.

Anyway now on to the unfortunate task of critiquing his book:

The idea is great, melding eastern and western storytelling. The execution is lacking.

The protagonists are not believable. They act more like college kids rather than fourteen year old's, or rather more how a college kid might think a fourteen year old would act. They are never in school, always attending

environmental protest rallies – and on that what kind of parent would tolerate their kids chaining themselves up to a rock, even for a good cause? If my kids did that I would be proud of their passion but I would also ground them for months. Part of a parents job is to keep your children safe, and frankly any parent that didn't have a conniption about a stunt like that isn't a very good parent. In the story they almost got arrested and could easily have been hurt. And while the author seems to try and stress the twins parents are good parents, they seem awfully uninterested in their children activities.

The enemies are muddled – we have vampires and monsters and aliens (oh my!). I like the vampires and monsters, but the aliens seem overkill; plus they intentionally allow the protagonist to 'overhear' them talking about who they are and what their nefarious plans are! I know this kind of crud is a staple of 70's era Saturday morning cartoons, but it is not logical. This kind of pandering is offensive IMOP and should be relegated to the dustbins of history along with the other detritus of idiocy such as Reality TV and Celebrity Worship. I realize the author wants us, as the reader, to know these people come from another universe and have plans to cause immense ecological damage to the earth for a relatively short-term goal; and he wants us to know not all of these aliens are dishonorable – but even Bond Villains wait until they are sure they are winning and Bond will die shortly before blabbering off their plans. Hades Dr. Evil has more sense than this.

Also there is an obvious story-driving habit of the kids allies passing on to them important information and scads of cool, powerful magical toys just before they die. Once can be clever, twice a little predictable – but at the third instance its become a trite habit.

One of the hero's, Liz, is poisoned at one point – but it seems to happen just to make her travel to China for a cure. It does affect her for the rest of the book, and as its a kind of spiritual poison. I didn't like it at first, but as the story progressed it made more sense.

All of their purported allies toss toys of great power at them, trusting that they are not agents of evil. Often in youth fiction the heroes gain fabulous abilities, but only in the bad ones are they handed out like candy on Halloween. Kids are smart, smarter than most adults like to think – and this kind of silliness is demeaning.

Near the end of the book one of the characters preforms surgery to remove a piece of a monster snakes liver using his magical sword and his obvious years of medical training! Wait, sorry – he can do this simply because he knows that it can be done! I am sorry, I could have bought he used some Chi ability and performed psychic surgery (you know, massaging someones stomach while squeezing blood onto them and pulling chicken guts out of a fake thumb. Sorry, being snarky), but to remove part of a vital organ without killing the donor with a SWORD! No, I do not buy that at all.

I did like some aspects, particularly the fights in the cavern of the monsters – much of which had a real Dragonball feel to it. I liked how the paper and drawn creatures would return to their true form when damaged, and I liked how the Ring wielder felt pain whenever her flying rings were hit.

Still, overall its a bust and deserves the 2-star rating.

Miranda Wheeler says

I'm generally not big on dragons, or the "straight stuff" of the fantasy genre, and I haven't read the whole "magical object" focus since His Dark Materials by Phillip Pullman, so this was another unusual read for me. As I've again been proven in this instance, sometimes it's a really great thing to step beyond the boundaries of a comfort zone. The main characters, Henry, Sue, and Liz, at fourteen, are all younger than the steady 17-19 that the YA genre is crowded right now, and it was also really interesting to see the vast differences in

their relativity.

A calligraphy pen with astounding abilities, fearsome dragons, Chinese culture and classic hero-fighting (combated with the level-headedness of Tai Chi instruction rather than a grand mentor) are a fierce and stark contrast with Australia, protests/activism, terrifyingly odd animal behavior, and a couple of fourteen year olds, but that bold mixture actually worked -- and fantastically so.

The tone of the story is really unique. It's observational and funny, but also kindling the scent of "wise retelling" and fresh material. The author definitely harbors an uncanny ability to embody the classic "ole' storyteller" voice, but also manages to relate to the main characters in their youth, capturing unique and interesting personalities in a very creative way. Sometimes it's a bit too excitable, but it suits the piece nearly seamlessly. Aside from that, the writing is very realistic. It captures scene and time well, especially jumping between cultures, countries, and eras.

It really is a great story, embracing two very important reader needs: quick pacing and easy to understand. They contribute beautifully to the anticipation, and the reader is constantly on the edge of their seat.

The Sword Guest is an engrossing tale told like a hurricane: though sometimes it's hard to catch exactly what's going on at first, it's still fierce and engaging. It begins in the calm prior, then darts between the borders and the eye. Something exciting is always happening, and the reader totally feels that. The story starts with what is first interpreted as a parable and later recognized as warned foreboding, and keeps moving.

The premise is absolutely creative and different, and the themes are curiously combined. Paired with genuinely interesting and quirky characters, the Australia-meets-Chinese setting-meets-girl folds in a fascinating dynamic. The culture spun into it all is amazing. Adding in the subplots of environmental issues, protesting and noble causes, heritage, and being made unafraid to embrace one's roots, and there's something special there. It erects an encompassing world, pulls off a lovely cliffhanger, and constructs a piece like no other I've seen. It was different, and simply a fun book to read. It's definitely worth getting caught up in.

Though at times it can feel a little childish - as in recommended for a younger YA, which isn't necessarily a bad thing - but the attributes that hint towards a more middle-grade audience still resonate accordingly, and fit the story quite well. Plus, it was balanced out by a great vocab and real-world-dynamic woven throughout the fantasy. Unique and enjoyable, but simple and classic too, it's a great pick for transition, cross-over readers. It's a fantastic way to leave behind Karate Kid, Avatar, Jackie Chan's Adventures, and "The Mummy" phenomena and move into an awesome genre with a lot to offer.

For an indie read, the eBook is surprisingly well formatted and properly edited, giving it the smooth feel of a traditionally published piece. It's recommended :)

I recommend this for fans of The Maximum Ride Series by James Patterson, Weaver by John Abramowitz, Rapture by Phillip Simpson, and any recently-graduated MG-to-YA reader interested in culture or fantasy.

View original review here: <http://ricochetreviews.blogspot.com/2...>

Martin Chushui says

Reviewed by Miranda Wheeler and translated by Martin Chu Shui

