



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Black Blade Blues

By J. A. Pitts

Discussed February 2013

Characters

- Black Briar group – led by Jimmy and part of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA)
 - Sarah Beauhall: blacksmith apprentice and props manager
 - Katie: school teacher, Sarah's girlfriend
 - Jimmy and Deidre: Jimmy is Katie's brother and they are leaders of the Black Briar clan
 - Melanie and Dena: Melanie and Katie dated in college; Melanie is an E.R. doctor
 - Others in the group include: Gunther and Stuart; Susan and Maggie
- Julie Hendrickson: blacksmith master, Sarah's boss
- Jack Marlowe: works at Circle Q farm, dates Julie
- Carl: director of the movie
- Jennifer: Director of Photographer on the movie
- J.J.: lead actor in the movie
- Rolph Brokkrson: extra in the movie, dwarf
- Frederick Sawyer: wealthy philanthropist, dragon, trying to buy Gram
- Jean-Paul: dragon
- Nidhogg: (really old) dragon
- Qindra: witch, serves Nidhogg
- Joe -Homeless guy – Woden/Odin
- Bert and Ernie - giants

Discussion Questions

1. Did you like the book?
2. Who was your favorite character and why?
3. Was there anything in the book that surprised you? Anything that made you want to tell someone else you were so excited or mad?
4. What themes were addressed in the book? Any you thought the author addressed particularly well or poorly?
5. The book contains both the making of a fantasy movie and a Renaissance faire and Sarah's introduction to 'real life' dragons, Gram, etc. What did you think about this plot device?

6. The book is written largely in first person from Sarah's point of view, but it also is in third person. Did you think this mix and switching between the two aided to or detracted from the storytelling? Better to have stuck to one?
7. Use of song and songs – discuss. Sheryl Crow, pages 60-1. page 132: "She rolled down her window and cranked up her stereo. Pink's "So What" blasted over her. Somehow this was screwing with her relationship with Sarah and it was starting to piss her off." –Why do you think the author chose to name contemporary singers?
8. What did you think of the use of Norse mythology? The sword Gram, Nidhogg, Odin, Valkyries, the berserker?
9. Ch. 44: The homeless guy "Joe" is used as a visitor from another world, a shape shifter. He plants the berserker. What do you make of someone who lives on the margins being powerful/magical?
10. Is Sarah believable as a lesbian? As a woman? Was Sarah's coming out story believable? What did you think about the portrayal of internalized homophobia? What did you make of the characterization of her father?
11. Did you know anything about the author before you read the book? Any thoughts on it being written by a man? Is it exploitative in any way?
12. How does this book compare to other urban fantasy works?
13. This is book one of series. Do you plan to read (or have you read) the others?

Norse Mythology 101 (All from Wikipedia, so log on there to fix errors!)

- Berserkers - Berserkers (or berserks) were Norse warriors who are reported in the Old Norse literature to have fought in a nearly uncontrollable, trance-like fury, a characteristic which later gave rise to the English word berserk.
- Fafnir - In Norse mythology, Fáfnir (Old Norse and Icelandic) or Frænir was a son of the dwarf king Hreidmar and brother of Regin and Ótr. ... Regin recounts to Sigurd how Odin, Loki and Hoenir were traveling when they came across Ótr, who had the likeness of an otter during the day. Loki killed the otter with a stone and the three Æsir skinned their catch. The gods came to Hreidmar's dwelling that evening and were pleased to show off the otter's skin. Hreidmar and his remaining two sons then seized the gods and held them captive while Loki was made to gather the ransom, which was to stuff the otter's skin with gold and cover its outside with red gold. Loki fulfilled the task by gathering the cursed gold of Andvari's as well as the ring, Andvaranaut, both of which were told to Loki as items that would bring about the death of whoever possessed them. Fáfnir then killed Hreidmar to get all the gold for himself. He became very ill-natured and greedy, so he went out into the wilderness to keep his fortune, eventually turning into a serpent or dragon (symbol of greed) to guard his treasure. Fáfnir also breathed poison into the land around him so no one would go near him and his treasure, wreaking terror in the hearts of the people.
- Gram - In Norse mythology, Gram (Old Norse "wrath") is the name of the sword that Sigurd used to kill the dragon Fafnir.
- Nidhogg - Níðhögg (Malice Striker, often anglicized Nidhogg) is a dragon who gnaws at a root of the World Tree, Yggdrasill. In the mythology, the Nidhogg is said to be controlled by only one person, the Norse goddess named Hel.
- Odin - Odin (pron.: /'oudin/; from Old Norse Óðinn) is a major god in Norse mythology and the ruler of Asgard. Homologous with the Old English "Wōden", the Old Saxon "Wōdan" and the Old High German "Wōtan"... Odin is a principal member of the Æsir (the major group of the Norse pantheon) and is associated with war, battle, victory and death, but also wisdom, Shamanism, magic, poetry, prophecy, and the hunt. Odin has many sons, the most famous of whom is Thor. Ravens (Huginn and Muninn) bring information to Odin.
- Valkyrie - In Norse mythology, a valkyrie (from Old Norse valkyrja "chooser of the slain") is one of a host of female figures who decide which soldiers die in battle and which live. Selecting among half of those who die in battle (the other half go to the goddess Freyja's afterlife field Fólkvangr), the valkyries bring their chosen to the afterlife hall of the slain, Valhalla, ruled over by the god Odin.