



Runemarks

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Not to be taken
off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Set 500 years after Ragnarok, the Norse Apocalypse, this huge mythological romp of a novel begins in the Middle World village of Inlan, a staid but paranoid environment teetering between the ruins of Asgard and the resurgent chaos of the lower worlds. Maddy Smith is an outcast, linked by her rune-like birthmark to the wild magic of the old gods, a pantheon condemned by the sinister 'Order' who rule Inland through torture and telepathy. When her life-long friend and mentor in magic, the nomad One-Eye, asks her to embark on a quest in the goblin world beneath the mountains near her village, she becomes embroiled in a turmoil of ancient struggles between chthonic and infernal forces that threatens to pull the whole of existence into a ruin more final than that of Ragnarok.

The scope and cosmology of the book are almost as ambitious as those of Pullman's **Northern Lights**. The tone, however, is racier, as the narrative voice switches between the rebellious adolescent heroine, her bewildered fellow villagers, the persecutory devotees of the Order, and an array of Aesir and Vanir squabbling in an abrasive, street-smart vernacular which is both jarring and convincing. As the complex and increasingly carnivalesque action moves towards a climax in a collision of worlds, some readers may, like me, find the pace a little exhausting.

Joanne Harris deploys a big cast in relentless action across a cosmic panorama. This is a mighty feat of storytelling, and a fascinating re-envisionment of Norse mythology.

Running Order:

10

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