



# I Am the Blade

Books Reviewed:

[I Am the Blade](#) [1]

Issue:

[189](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Beverley Birch](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

There are typescripts I read and think ? ?this is superbly done; teenage readers will love it?. And there are typescripts ? rarer ? that send such a tingle up my spine, that trap me in their world, hanging around in my mind long after, setting a kind of bench mark of writing for me. **I am the Blade** is one of these. From the opening lines I *inhabited* the story. I could hear the rustle of Tog and his woodcutter guardian moving, their irritable squabbling; smell the pig fat candle, feel the jerk of fear when the stranger knocks at the door moments before the horror breaks, the woodcutter?s vicious murder and their hut in flames.

I shared those moments of slow understanding by Tog ? in shock, in that freezing landscape, that he?s lost everything, that he?s running for his life because there?s a man with a knife on his tail, relentlessly, day after terrifying day. That all he has to survive are his wits and his fighting skills, taught him by woodcutter but never tested. And the garbled message in the woodcutter?s last, gasped words - STONE, ORCHARD, MOON. Clues? The ravings of a fading mind? Some dimly perceived quest Tog must follow?

And I travelled with him as, one by one, through a bitter landscape ruled by robber barons (though they call themselves kings) he gathers a motley crew of companions. There are slaves on the run, including the wonderfully-drawn Jenna, tattooed warrior, but friend or foe? And Roman merchants always with an eye on the main chance. And always there?s the question ? the mystery: what is the destiny - or choice ? ahead of Tog?

It?s wholly original - J.P Buxton playing with Arthurian myth as an echo of something happening to a young teenage boy. It?s full of richness, the landscape living and breathing as a character. The real and spiritual life of the times is so powerfully evoked, yet never gets in the way of the action-packed adventure, the raw, uncompromising fight scenes, the characters in all their complexity, and the mystery at the heart.

I was truly thrilled when J.P. Buxton?s arrival on the teenage fiction scene was recognised by shortlisting him for the wonderful Branford Boase Award - and very proud to have played a part in bringing him to his readers. Look out too for the splendid sequel, **Heartless Dark**, in which Tog?s destiny bites back and pits him against a vicious warlord, byword of evil and depravity terrorising the country ?

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Aug '20):** <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/189/childrens-books/reviews/i-am-the-blade>

**Links:**

[1] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/i-am-the-blade>

[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/189>

[3] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/beverley-birch>