



# Arrowhead

Books Reviewed:

[Arrowhead](#) [1]

Issue:

[206](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

In a small Norwegian town, as the annual midsummer Viking festival approaches, a boy is being bullied after school with more than casual vindictiveness. Skuli, the victim of the bullying, is befriended by Jack, an English boy returning to his parents' birthplace to stay with his grandparents for the summer. And together they engage in the perilous rescue of the body of a Viking boy from a steadily melting glacier. Clutched in the Viking boy's hand is a golden arrowhead of extraordinary powers. So begins a tale in which an ancient curse brings an apocalyptic fate on the town and its people. The story is based on Viking mythology, and quotes from Viking texts are scattered throughout. The author's enthusiasm carries her as far as creating a Viking style ballad and verse Saga which form the key to her tale. At the end of the novel, she appends a short historical note about the Vikings, a list of website links and a list of references to the works quoted in the novel. However, this faintly scholarly preoccupation is in the service of an action thriller. A girl, Emma, joins the two boys and they discover, as each succeeding mystery is revealed and each mounting danger confronted, that only they can save mankind, particularly as one of the plagues visited on the town has rendered all the adults helpless with sickness. I was not entirely convinced by the story of the origin of the arrowhead, a leaf stolen from Valhalla's roof, and its subsequent discovery by the Vikings in an English monastery occupied by fighting monks. I wasn't really clear about what the ravens were up to in their interventions in the story. And I could have done with some quieter moments in which we had the opportunity to get to know and care about the characters a bit more (there was the hint of a significant back story in the death of Jack's father that wasn't developed). But, at the level of sheer non-stop excitement characterised by a fascination with the Vikings, it works very well.

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