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BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	Spit and Song
Author	Travis M Riddle
Date	April 2020
Stars	

Spit and Song is one of the most original stories I've read in a long time and that's why I loved it so much. It flies in the face of so many of the conventional fantasy tropes, almost as if Travis Riddle has deliberately set out to invert everything the fantasy genre expects. Perhaps it is deliberate! Perhaps he's a revolutionary on a quest to change the world. He's succeeding if so!

Spit and Song is a buddy story. For such a thing to work you need two characters who are not only very different to one another but share enough common ground to get along – the audience need to love them. You can't help but love Kali and Puk. The story is told from both their perspectives and Riddle cleverly captures their distinctive voices and sustains them throughout.

What is a significant achievement and turned this into a five star rating for me, is that neither character is human. In fact, you couldn't get more alien I don't think! The challenge for the writer here is a complex one. Not only are you faced with defining your protagonists but you also need to create a world in which they fit, a world where everything is different. You have to define their physical appearance but beyond that, their physiology too. That is not something required when the protagonist is a human being. Riddle makes the challenge even greater by using two protagonists who are entirely different races – different physically, socially, culturally. And these two characters need to form a symbiosis that sustains them through their adventures.

Riddle dedicates the book to himself because, 'this book was damn hard to write'. As a writer myself, I understand why. It's not just that we have wonderfully vivid characters in this story – there are so many, all of them weird and highly original. (Such as one character who is spherical, with spindly legs and a mouth that takes up most of his body!) It's not just that every location is so clearly defined that you can imagine yourself being there. It's not just that these locations are filled with creatures, food and drink, songs, stories and myths – I could go on. You become immersed in this rich and original story.

I'm going to finish my review by quoting a comment from another of Riddle's novels. It's from Justine Bergman, reviewer at Fantasy Book Critic. *'We need more of this. Fantasy isn't just magic, battles et al. It's about the newness of things. About the strange things you'll never get to see, to feel. To taste and to read.'* Justine is absolutely right. We do need more of Travis Riddle's imagination. He's a revolutionary in this genre and I'm glad he is!