



BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	Street Freaks
Author	Terry Brooks
Date	September 2018
Stars	

I struggled with this novel, which is such a shame because I really wanted it to work. I'm a long-time fan of the legend that is Terry Brooks but the story itself is a good one and worthy of a higher rating than 3 stars.

It's the narrative style that didn't work for me. Written in a third person, present tense is fine but it is the decision to use so much Passive Voice that robs the story of the drama that should be there. It means that, as the reader, you don't get the same level of engagement. It feels like a deliberate choice but it turns into the kind of story an inexperienced writer often makes, where exposition is clumsily inserted.

The result was that I skim-read the story. I didn't care about the characters. In fact, at times I found them downright annoying. The protagonist, a 17 year old boy called Ash, is a classic example. The character is supposed to be your typical teenager, rather naïve and lacking street smarts, but it's inconsistently delivered. He reacts one way and then another later on. I didn't find him credible either. When he is forced to deal with an important death (avoiding spoilers here) there is little reaction, to anything. He acts withdrawn. That's it. And it doesn't last for very long.

The story takes place in a futuristic world, in an America that has broken up into territories and we find ourselves in a dystopian Los Angeles. Metro is the main city where the rich and powerful live, most of the story takes place in The Red Zone which is where criminals and low-lives and outcasts live. There's a lot of information dumping in the first three chapters, disguised in a chase sequence, but it comes at the expense of characterisation.

The premise is along the lines of Marvel's X Men. Genetic enhancement, mechanised humans are the order of the day, a mega-powerful conglomerate out to rule the world-kind of story. It sounds trite but it's not that bad. The climax and the motivation of the villain is cliched but it was obvious where the story was going, there are no real surprises. The ending itself was naff, sentimental and overly romanticised.

There were so many times I wanted to give up on this book. I'm pleased I saw it through to the end but it was only out of curiosity to see if anything unexpected might happen. It didn't. But it was the writing style that killed this book for me. Such a shame.