




BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	loth, City of Lights
Author	DP Woolliscroft
Date	June 2019
Stars	

I cried at the end of this story. It's a confession I make to point out the strongest element of this book – its characters. Technically, this is the third story with these people, if you include the short story compilation, *Tales of Kingshold*. In my reviews of both the other books, I've commented about Dave's ability to create normal, credible people and then put them in the middle of exciting, terrible and lethal situations. That is one hell of an accomplishment. And, to be clear, we're not just talking about one or two 'normal' people – there are over a dozen. By the end of this novel, these people are your friends. The things that happen to these caring, humane, brave folks have you on the edge of your seat.

The creation of tension isn't achieved by ramping up the dramatic level of events. It may be an easy option to some writers, but DP Woolliscroft is not your typical writer. Tension arises from the reader's concern for the *threats faced by people they care about*. For that to happen, the reader must invest their belief, their conviction, in the *reality* of these characters. The deeper that investment, the greater the tension.

loth, City of Lights, has a narrative that is told through the eyes of several people – Montega, Neenahwi and Alana primarily. Each perspective includes other characters who are integral to their section of the story. To illustrate: Montega's involvement in the story is complemented by his camaraderie with Trypp and Florian. They're like the three musketeers, their bond is unbreakable. They face so many threats but always, at the root of their adventures, is that deep friendship. On a couple of occasions, Trypp questions their involvement with these adventures. Any of the people in this story could ask the same thing and, without exception, their motives are not those of your conventional hero. Nor are they anti-hero motives either. They are the factors that cause normal people to be dragged into moments of great drama, where they lack any control over the outcomes, but it never stops them from engaging anyway. These are just good people doing the right thing and well as they are able.

It's one of the reasons why I love these stories; they are life affirming. You hope that, in the real world, people would do the same thing.

All that said, loth is a more dramatic, tense, darker version of the original story. And, for me, I like it even more for that reason. I could not put this book down. I mean it! The task of managing expectations when you continuously ramp up the drama is massive, it's a brave writer that faces such a challenge. But, oh boy, Dave Woolliscroft manages with it with style. I'm not including any spoilers here but suffice to say that the ending did two things to me: firstly, like I said, it made me cry. I didn't expect the things that happened, to happen. It



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came out of nowhere. And the investment levels were the price paid. But the decision to end the book the way it does – wow! It came as such a shock I reacted physically. A loud “Oh no!” – which made my wife, who was sat next to me, ask what was wrong. My answer? “He can’t do that! He can’t!”

I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Six months in to 2019 and *loth, City of Lights*, goes straight into my top spot of Favourite Books of the Year. For all the reasons outlined but with one more; this book made me think and that investment I mentioned, stayed with me long after turning the last page. I kept going back to certain events and marvelling at the way they played out, to the growth of certain characters and how cleverly handled they were. And how, as a reader, I realised I’d been managed too. Such as how Foreshadowing is used – in such subtle ways you don’t realise it of course! But it’s there and it illustrates what a skilful and complex story has been woven here. For me, it established DP Woolliscroft as a first-rate fantasy writer who deserves wider recognition. I hope this story helps him achieve it.

Go buy ‘loth, City of Lights’. You will love it!