



BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	Symphony of the Wind
Author	Steven McKinnon
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Stars	

Symphony of the Wind is epic fantasy, literally. Everything about it is huge and yet at no time does Steven McKinnon lose control of this narrative juggernaut. In fact, he takes every tight corner, every twist and turn of the plot with the skill of a downhill racer. This is a story that leaves you reeling because no sooner has one threat been met, others are lining up to take its place. This is not a restful read!

What is equally impressive is the imagination that underpins the story. World-building is so detailed and dense you are immersed in it on so many levels. For instance, the geology of the world that drives much of the story is so precise, so well thought-through that its credibility is astounding. The world has a grimdark feel, it's filled with corruption, crime and ultimately death. Water is a highly-valued commodity and we're shown how it drives much of the early part of the story but then the world expands as we're introduced to ruthless politicians and gangsters, genetically-modified monsters and things from mythology. You might not think these elements can work together – but they do!

Such dense world-building, under the direction of a lesser author, would slow the story down or make it confusing. True, at one point I began to feel overwhelmed by the volume of characters; so many names, so many relationships to keep in my head! But this doesn't become an issue because the story's momentum carries you along until those characters become clear, real and necessary. You also have to remember that, as the first book in a series, there are a lot of seeds to be sewn here.

Characterisation isn't lost to the epic proportions of the story either. They are big, bold and highly imaginative. Tyson Gallows as the main character looking for a cause to die for, is someone who sparks your sympathy but who you can't help cheering on. Likewise, Damien, my favourite character. This guy mirrors the main character in my The Knights' Protocol trilogy, someone who despises his psychotic nature because he's been turned into a highly effective killing machine. Both damaged men have enough humanity in them to want to do the right thing but are frequently thwarted from doing so. Serena is the star of the show in many ways, the feisty young woman around whom the entire story revolves. Again, in less skilled hands, her "ability" would have led to a very different climax in the story I feel, she'd have been the saviour, rather than the potential threat.

Symphony of the Wind is a finalist in the 2018/19 SPFBO competition. Rightly so. For me, it has every factor needed to make it the winner. It is an astonishingly adept debut for a writer who will become a major name in the fantasy world in years to come.