

One for the Morning Glory

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The Tale began when young Prince Amatus secretly sipped the forbidden Wine of the Gods, leaving him half the lad he'd once been--literally--for his left side suddenly vanished without a trace!

But, as is often the case in Tales of this sort, the young Prince's misfortune was also a sort of blessing in disguise. For a year and a day later, four Mysterious Strangers appeared, and, as Amatus grew to manhood, they guided him on a perilous quest to discover his true identity--not to mention adventure, danger, tragedy, triumph, and true love.

John Barnes has been heralded as "one of the most able and impressive of SF's rising stars" (*Publishers Weekly*) for his widely praised novels including *Orbital Resonance* and *A Million Open Doors*.

Now, in *One for the Morning Glory*, John Barnes has crafted an artful and immensely entertaining fable that takes its place as a modern fantasy classic beside such enduring works as William Goldman's *The Princess Bride* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*.

One for the Morning Glory Details


Date : Published February 15th 1997 by Tor Fantasy (first published 1996)

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Author : John Barnes

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From Reader Review One for the Morning Glory for online ebook

David says

This is clever literature that makes for a good entry point into fantasy stories without really being a fantasy story. It's really a self-aware fairy tale (like *The Princess Bride*) using two literary quirks to make it so enjoyable.

The first is that it is indeed self-aware, both from the storyteller's perspective and the characters' perspectives.

The second is the author misuses relatively common words to describe things specific to the story's universe ('gazebo' for a game animal, 'pismire' for a pistol, and 'omnibus' for a rifle are but three of many examples).

Both quirks add charm to a pretty formulaic story. That said, there are enough character development, plot twists, and surprises to make this a quite enjoyable read.

Mary Catelli says

A fantasy novel set in a land where they know they are living in a fairy tale. Unlike those lands that are merely actual. . . . Where everything that is very old is bound to be true. Where every tale that is told is bound to have happened.

Prince Amatus drinks the Wine of the Gods while only a little child, and "A child who tastes the Wine of the Gods too early is only half a person afterwards." The right half as it turns out. And King Boniface hands out prompt justice to the Prince's Personal Maid, the Alchemist, the Witch, and the Captain of the Guard who were to blame. (He was, after all, high, low, and middle justice to the land, which has a fairy tale court except where having a more realistic element works better. 0:)

A year and a day later, four mysterious people arrive to take these positions. And Prince Amatus grows up, and through adventures: underground where the goblins and the Riddling Beast live; in the face of a terrible plague in his own city; in an invasion from the usurped kingdom of Overhill.

Even though they know they are in a fairy tale, well

"This is not how these tales end," Calliope said firmly.

"This is not the way that things end when they get to be tales," Amatus said, "but since ours is not told yet, we cannot count on it. There were a hundred dead princes on the thorns outside *Sleeping Beauty's* castle, and I'm sure many of them were splendid fellows."

Tragic things happen in this novel

And the word play. I've never seen anything like it. For one thing, it would work only a work like this one, which isn't common. But he malaprops through the entire world. They fire pismires and fight with escrees. And it really has to be read to see how it works.

Jennifer Linsky says

This may be the perfect modern fairy-tale book. It has wonderful characters both noble and villainous, a quest, a prophecy, and a Doom. If any of that appeals to you, stop reading this review and read the book!

Leons1701 says

A very atypical work for Barnes, who is best known for relatively hard SF coming of age and disaster stories. So a fairy tale fantasy is not his usual ballpark at all. Which isn't to say he does this poorly, Barnes always writes good stuff and this is no exception. He is clearly having fun playing with language here, introducing completely new and unexplained words is one of his trademarks, and he plays with it to extremes here. Everything is quite obvious from context and most of them are just mangled somewhat from a familiar term or sometimes an archaic one and most are actual words used out of familiar context (omnibus more or less used as arquebus, for example). Some of them may even be archaic terms themselves, who can possibly keep track of every single name that has ever be applied to a handgun?

Anyhow, it's a reasonably decent story about the Prince of a fairy tale kingdom who manages to lose his entire left side due to a very early mishap. There's adventure, mystery, valor and true love, all the stuff you'd expect, even if it isn't always done quite the way you'd expect.

I much wanted to rate this higher, 3 stars just doesn't feel quite right, but I can't really say I loved it. it's there, it's a good book and a fun read, but it seems to just be missing some extra little spark.

Sean Randall says

I enjoyed the first part of this but it confused me the further on it got. Interestingly written, but I'm still baffled.

Katie says

Self-aware sword+sorcery fairy tale replete with witches, goblins, necromancy, lost heirs, riddlemonsters, secret passages, potions, and the like.

Infuriating & awesome repurposing of existing english words, e.g. "For supper she had prepared piecemeal panbread, a platter of protons, and an ample haunch of gazebo" which is hilarious but sometimes to the detriment of understanding. Likewise, there are a lot of similarly-named characters who are not sufficiently developed to distinguish themselves from each other, and at times it becomes important to recall who is who by flipping back to the beginning and re-reading introductions. Awkward.

Glen Engel-Cox says

The jacket compares this to William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*, and it is easy to see some resemblance. Both are fantasy stories in which the author speaks directly to the reader for humorous intent. The device of the book within a book in *The Princess Bride* allows Goldman to comment on the story itself; Barnes has his characters comment on it, as they realize that they are part of a tale. Post-modern fantasy.

Whowouldathunkit.

And it works for the most part. Barnes deconstructs the typical fairy tale through his self-aware characters, yet also makes these same characters empathetic and keeps the tension of the story itself tight. Although you know that you are reading a story, you wonder just how much this new tale will fit the traditional, or if the author will suddenly veer off into unexplored territory. At its heart, the story is still your basic fantasy plot, and, unfortunately, no amount of tricks can avoid the fact that you've read this all before.

The Princess Bride succeeded because it exaggerated the standard cliches, making everything stand out as in bas-relief to the flat irreality of the normal story. Goldman's fondness for the genre kept it light, rather than ponderous and heavy-handed. Barnes starts off well, and there are brief flashes of brilliance, but most of the time his post-modern experimentation takes a backseat to the plot. It thus feels schizophrenic. I like what he was trying to accomplish, though.

Risa says

For some reason when I started this I was skeptical, but it was damn good.

It's a story that the characters almost know they're in, which changes perhaps how they think about things, but not what they can do. It's self-referential - it reads a bit like a historical account, since characters write their accounts of it afterwards, and the novel refers back to those accounts but also gives you the thought processes of those characters at the time.

Possibly my favorite jokes: firing omnibuses and eating dried gazebo.

Corey says

A winsome fairy tale for grown-ups. Not since T.H. White's *'The Once and Future King'* have I read a book that melded humor and pathos so splendidly.

Sean says

"One for the Morning Glory" by John Barnes is an deeply enjoyable fantasy that holds a special place in my heart. After being given a copy to read in high school, I read it in one sitting cover to cover. Ever since then, I have worn out one copy reading it two to three times a year. It is my favorite book of all time and I wanted to re-read it in order to write a review explaining why everyone should read it.

The plot is simple: in a mythical kingdom, Prince Amatus, the only heir to the Kingdom, drinks a full cup of

the Wine of the Gods and loses his entire left side. A year and a day later (an auspicious time in fairy tales), four mysterious companions come to the City and become the Prince's loyal companions whose destinies are intimately tied to his.

The story plays on common folklore motifs like those in the work of Joseph Campbell, which make the story at once familiar and new. The tone is playful and self-aware, much like "The Princess Bride," though I believe the writing is much more inventive, the story more epic and enjoyable, and the plot more intricate, deep and full of mystery. Even after many readings, I still find myself contemplating the ideas in the book and trying to figure out its complexities.

Barnes is an inventive author, playing on common folklore motifs, especially the construction of fairy tales and stories about heroes. He creates interesting, well drawn characters who are as complex as they are enjoyable. The text is playful with words, using common English words in new and inventive ways.

The most important aspect of this book is that it doesn't try to be anything other than what it is: a story. And it calls for the reader to remember that in stories, everything has meaning and everything has a place. This is a book you will read again and again will pass on to your children. The only sad thing is that it is currently out of print but one can buy a copy on Amazon. Enjoy!

John Loyd says

One for the Morning Glory (1996) 319 pages by John Barnes.

I have to call this story a fairy tale. Even the characters in the story refer to it as such. The style reminds me of the old Saturday morning cartoons like Rocky & Bullwinkle or Fractured Fairy Tales. Don't let that make you think less of this book. Barnes crafts an excellent story to go along with the tongue in cheek humor.

It is said that a child who tastes the wine of the gods too early is only half the person afterward. In this tale Prince Amatus at the age of two drinks a cup and is literally half, having no left side. This doesn't seem to affect his mobility, eating or other functions, just his appearance. King Boniface then executes the ones responsible, and after a year and a day and many rejections of possible replacements a group of four come in and get the jobs.

Prince Amatus grows up, adventures begin, Amatus struggles with a personal problem, then a threat to the people, and finally a threat to the kingdom.

It's a fine story with the interaction of Amatus and his four companions, Duke Wassant, Sir John Slitgizzard, and Calliope. Characters from the early adventure are woven into the later story. It works, it was fun to read, and it felt meaningful.

When I mention tongue in cheek, a game animal in called gazebo and hunted with omnibuses. What one has with tea is a plate of protons and simile. Other weapons include escree, pismire, pongee, and trebleclef. The usage was so clear, that it took me a while to figure out that he was making up words or new meanings. I'm cool with how he did it.

Nicolas says

Ce livre raconte l'histoire d'Amatus, un prince puni pour avoir goûté trop tôt au vin des dieux, et qui va vivre presque tout le livre avec juste sa moitié droite.

Dans tout lecteur de fantasy, il y a un enfant avide de conte qui sommeille. Et ce livre a été écrit pour cet enfant. Sous couvert d'un roman de fantasy classique, on tombe dans une espèce de conte bizarre, muni d'une forme d'auto-dérision, où tous les personnages savent qu'ils sont dans un conte(1), et où l'histoire suit également les règles du conte. Ainsi, après une mise en situation très claire, où on voit notamment le capitaine de la garde capable de se trancher lui-même la tête avant de remettre son arme au fourreau, on suivra avec étonnement Amatus, et ses quatre compagnons magiques, recouvrer peu à peu son intégrité, ainsi que celle du royaume dont il est le prince(2).

J'avais découvert Barnes avec la mère des tempêtes, et ce récit change complètement la vision que je pouvais en avoir, car on trouve ici une vision distanciée tout à fait sympathique, et une approche du conte riche de nombreux aspects, de la nécessité des sacrifices (nombreux et souvent bien décrits) à l'humour un peu absurde qui peut transparaître dans certaines situations (notamment lorsque Dick Tonnerre explique la nécessité d'avoir des brigands mariés pour qu'ils soient efficaces), il y a de très nombreuses choses à découvrir dans ce roman, qui laisse lorsqu'on le ferme un goût de rêve, certes un peu enfantin, mais diablement agréable.

(1) d'ailleurs, ils utilisent à plusieurs reprises les règles du conte à leur avantage

(2) évidemment, un héros ne peut être que noble, et quelle meilleure noblesse qu'un prince de sang ?

Tobey says

Don't you love that feeling when you're reading a book that you found on your own, that you'd never heard of anywhere, and as you read you realize that you've discovered something special that you'll carry with you all your life?

I bought *One for the Morning Glory* from my local used books store because it had a Charles Vess cover and a cool title. That's all. It set on my shelf for a few months and I picked it to read at random. The opening scene was strange and funny and a bit violent, and I knew I was in for a fun read. But it ended up being more than that.

In brief: As a child, Prince Amatus accidentally drinks the Wine of the Gods, which causes his entire left side to disappear. The four people held accountable, his Personal Maid, the Royal Alchemist, the Royal Witch, and the Captain of the Guard, are immediately put to death. A year and a day later, four applicants to the vacated positions arrive in the Kingdom, a Nursemaid, an Alchemist, a Witch, and a Warrior. These four companions raise Amatus, and define the course of his life in unexpected ways.

There is so much to enjoy about this book that I hardly know where to begin. It has the rhythms of an old fairy tale, and it reminded me a lot of Hope Mirlees' *Lud-in-the-Mist*. Only the author's wordplay gives away the fact that it was written more recently. There are twists and turns, and even when I thought I could see what was coming clearly, Barnes always ended up throwing in an unexpected surprise. The narrative is usually light and playful, but you never forget that there are some prices that must be paid, and every friend lost along the way really hurts. The cast of characters is broad, and all are fully developed treasures. I wish my time with the Prince and his four Companions, King Boniface and Prime Minister Cedric, the adventurous Calliope, the rascally Deacon Dick Thunder, and my two favorites, brothers-in-arms Duke

Wassant and Sir John Slitgizzard, never had to end.

That being said, the feature that elevates this book to a higher level is the fact that these characters *know* they're in a fairy tale, and they are able to use this knowledge to help them out along the way. Prime Minister Cedric says that because they have a certain piece of information, it *must* be important, otherwise they wouldn't have it. Their goal is to reach "a happy enough ending". This could just come across as being clever, but it also clarifies the difference between reality and fiction. King Boniface says that, if events ever happened without a purpose then "the Kingdom would merely be real, and vanish to where your lap goes when you stand up." In real life, things just happen. In a story, everything happens for a reason.

Adobe says

Four strange guardians come to young Prince Amatus after the prince loses half of himself -- the left half -- in a magical accident. Contending with monstrous disturbances and a looming war, Amatus and his Companions are conscious of being inside a story, but they all disagree on what kind of tale they comprise.

One for the Morning Glory is a gleeful exercise in epic quests and meta-narratives. It begins cleverly, and then it develops into something deep and genuinely moving, and then it...loses all momentum midway through and becomes a long, tedious slog. (But man! That first half!) Part of the problem is that One for the Morning Glory feels no need to wrap up plot points. Amatus' story is merely a lone thread in the middle of many other stories, but those other stories belong to other people and other books, and their beginnings-middles-ends only intrude incidentally on One for the Morning Glory. (Case in point: the Companions all have complicated secret motivations, and each of these complicated secret motivations receives one (1) dark allusion before dropping out of the story entirely.) Which would be fine and dandy were it not for the reader's nagging suspicion that Amatus' story is surely the most boring of all possible options.

Cera says

I read this a few weeks ago, while I was recovering from awful virus, but I'm only now getting around to writing about it!

And, hm, I'm not sure what to say. The novel is explicitly a fairy tale -- explicit in the sense that many of the characters recognise that they're inside a particular sort of story, and have expectations about what might happen in the future, or ways of understanding the past, based on their own understanding of fairy tales. But it's not a fairy tale of the reader's world, but of the world the book is set in, so while a character might sometimes say, "Since we're in a fairy tale we can expect X and Y," it's not always clear to the reader if X and Y can really be expected, or if this is wishful thinking. This may sound like an awfully pretentious post-modern conceit, but it really, really isn't; the story is touching and funny and wonderful. It's about a prince who has an accident early in childhood, and the things that happen to restore him, and also about the power of stories, and about love, friendship, honour and loyalty. It is a fantastic book, which is why I keep reading & reading it.
