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October 1st, 2023
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ENGL 110C
Overview: “The Sun and The Star”

The Sun and The Star is an adult fantasy novel written by Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro. Nico, the son of Hades with help from Will, the son of Apollo, must venture to Tartarus and rescue Bob from the clutches of Nyx, the primordial goddess of night. Nico must endure his demons as his relationship with Will is put to trial.

Camp Half-Blood

The plot begins with prophetic visions plaguing Nico. The nightmares continue growing worse in succession to his visions. Riordan emphasizes the repetition of the word “listen” in these nightmares to indicate the importance of Nico’s nightmares. The titan later known as Bob pleads Nico for help through voices and visions, while Nyx tortures the demigod with nightmares.

Sally Jackson’s Apartment

Next, the duo embark on their journey via taxi to Sally Jackson’s apartment in New York City. Nico wants to contact Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon, and Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena, to rationalize with Will how dangerous the journey to Tartarus is. Unfortunately for them, they could not convince them to reconsider their decision. They give some departing advice to Nico and Will and remind them they have each other, hinting that their relationship was essential to surviving in Tartarus.

The Door of Orpheus

Then, Nico brings Will to “a normal wall of rocks” that Nico reveals to be the door of Orpheus! The door of Orpheus only opens once you sing a melody, which Will graciously volunteers to. Once opened, they attempt to descend the steps to the Underworld, but not without

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battling Epiales, demon of nightmares. Thanks to Will's abilities as the son of Apollo, he escapes the nightmare and defeats Epiales by projecting a ray of light.

Trog's Home

Afterward, the two follow the River Styx to the relocated home of the Troglodytes. The Trogs offer them "human food," which was mostly tomato soup with shoelaces and lizard. Nico reveals to the Troglodytes the trauma he has been reliving from his capture in Tartarus. Nico has another nightmare where Nyx inflicts pain onto him, which he didn't think to be possible. After a horrible sleep, Will comforts Nico before they depart to the secret passageway to Tartarus.

Menoetes's Farm

In reality, the tunnel the Trogs guide them down leads to 'The Farm,' which was a tree nectar plant run by Menoetes, a demon who works for Hades. Once he discovers who is trespassing, the Trogs accidentally reveal the intention behind traveling down the secret passage. Menoetes threatens to report them to Hades unless they can retrieve fruit from Persephone's garden. Persephone immediately detects the trespassers in her garden, and privately talks to Will about his relationship with Nico. Ultimately, she allows the couple to escape with the fruit.

Drakon Fight

After gaining passage to Tartarus, the group soon finds themselves on steep ground. Will loses balance and gets badly injured, leaving Nico and Hiss-Majesty to fight off two Drakon. Screech-Bling tends to Will's wounds whilst the two slay one of the Drakon, leaving the other running in terror. Will is unable to heal himself after crossing the threshold into Tartarus, resulting in the reopening of his wounds.

River Acheron

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Soon, the adventurers reach River Acheron, where they encounter a nymph named Gorgyra. She offers them the use of her canoe in exchange for their story. They replay the memory of how they initially met, followed by how Nico first involuntarily came out. The anecdotes ended with the recalling of the couple's first kiss. Unanimously, Gorgyra agrees that the stories have satisfied her and allow them the use of her canoe.

Plunge Into Tartarus

Finally, At the river's end, the protagonists begin their plunge into Tartarus. Together, they fall for what feels like days until they nearly crash. Luckily, Nico reacts instantaneously to summon bones that break their fall. Once conscious again, Nico wakes up to the breath of a Centaur named Amphithemis, who is revealed as a mania that tries to kill Nico. Nico reunites with Will once he escapes the regeneration blister field.

Mansion of Night

Lastly, the demigods arrive at their final destination, the wall of darkness. After nearly plunging into an abyss, they find the blister and free Bob. Timely, Nyx surprises and ambushes the trio. Nico's power sharpens as he is now able to command Nyx's army, turning her cacodemons against her. The three of them escape down the River Acheron with Nyx unable to trail them. Since Nyx is the embodiment of pain and agony, the river denies her. Nico and his companions escape hereafter.

Author's Tone

I found Riordan's novel to be very romantic. Will held great loyalty toward Nico that he followed him to the depths of the underworld to support his dutiful recklessness. Nico placed a

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considerable amount of care on Will. He valued his opinion and followed his judgment in every situation. Most importantly, they prioritized each other above all other dangers.

Emotional Appeal

In Persephone's garden, she says, "There cannot be light without darkness, nor darkness without light. You must have the contrast for both to exist." This reminds us that to truly understand someone, you can't be afraid to be vulnerable. Thinking variably may improve our ability to relate to one another. The vivid imagery that Riordan depicts throughout the text emphasizes the harshness of the underworld while stressing the importance of their mission.

Who Is The Audience?

This novel is aimed toward young adults, seen by its inclusive storytelling. Many older folk tend to be more bigoted toward stories that feature homosexual relationships, and children would be obscure to the idea of homosexuality. Greek mythology and fantasy has a greater appeal to young adults than most other adolescents.

Conclusion - Final Thoughts

Unlike most of Riordan's writings, I believe that this took a precarious turn in comparison to his later works. It illustrates the dedication and trust mustered into a relationship. It reminds the reader of the irrationality of love, and the strength a relationship holds. To conclude, it was a monumental stride in fantasy literature and an excellent representation of the queer community.

References

Riordan, Rick, and Mark Oshiro. *The Sun and the Star*. Puffin, 2023.