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Ash Mistry and the Savage Fortress

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This was a book waiting to happen. In the welter of fantasy, from Potter to vampires, it's surprising in retrospect that no-one had tapped into Indian mythology. Here are gods, heroes and demons a-plenty, whose presence seems much more immediate in India than their counterparts in the western world. Ashok Mistry begins this tale as a thirteen year old British Asian holidaying with his younger sister in India. He is caught up in a plot by a decaying English imperial adventurer and sorcerer (significantly named Savage), to find the tomb of the demon king Ravana, and unleash mayhem on an unsuspecting world. By the end of the book, Ashok has become a very different being; and ready, I suppose, for more and different encounters with evil. This is a book that belongs in the genre of horror adventure, in which you have to accept certain things as given: for instance that everyone in India speaks perfect idiomatic English and that the laying waste of an entire region by demons could pass relatively unnoticed. That accepted, Sarwat Chadda makes good use of some more than promising material. His Rakshasas ? demons, part animal, part human - are properly terrifying; and what more dreadful god could there be than Kali? Here, as in Indian mythology itself, Rakshasas can be both good and evil and Kali's power can be both beneficent and destructive. While there are plenty of action packed moments, including an apocalyptic climax, the story has quieter intervals and characters that have an emotional life and recognisable relationships, even if Ash's mantra that really he is only a thirteen year old British boy who wants to go home wears thin by the end. For all its gore, it's a cut above the usual monster fare.

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