



At One's Beast

Rachel Barnard

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Every girl and boy in the village of Frey fears the beast who lives in the forest. Ten years ago, the beast was formed from the town's rage -- and the evil that lurks inside all people in moments of weakness. Every year since, the townspeople have sacrificed one of their own to appease his anger. This year the sacrifice does not go as planned. A young man saves the chosen girl from fate. She is torn between doing her duty and untangling the identity of her savior and captor. The young man grew up with thoughts of revenge on the town that turned their backs on him, but when he is close to the girl, he is reminded of who he used to be. From once upon a time to happily ever after, the people of Frey will have to rally together to rid the town of evil once and for all, but in the process will they destroy everything that is good in their world?

At One's Beast Details

Date : Published July 24th 2014 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

ISBN : 9781494744762

Author : Rachel Barnard

Format : Paperback 174 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Romance

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From Reader Review At One's Beast for online ebook

pearl. says

[

* There is a Beast living in the woods.

* There are jackals living in the wood

David Rose says

Substantial immersive short fantasy

This is an immersive fantasy for young adults, but with broader appeal and deeper purpose. It is a relatively quick read, what I would call a long novella or a short novel. The setting is the isolated pastoral village of Frey, which is surrounded by a wild and largely unknown forest.

The key physical feature in the story is a mysterious well in the forest, which the villagers use in an annual cleansing ceremony, as a receptacle of all their ill-will from the past year. The well no longer contains water, but exudes an accumulated dark menace; however, "No one has ever fallen into the well."

The three main human characters are Zosimos ('Zos'), Alcina and Aethon, who are very well depicted. Barnard's writing style is good, easy to read, and a comfortable fit with the content.

The village is strangely isolated (perhaps intentionally), and the Jackal is oddly enormous, at least in my impression. But this is a fantasy.

It's a great story. There is drama, there is a mysterious beast of the forest which the villagers perceive as a destructive enemy and which they try to appease by offering an annual sacrifice. There is romance and tension. There is love, there is quick judgement and rejection, there is the eternal struggle of conflicting human emotions. The characters are endearing, particularly Zos and Alcina. There is the sway of influence between the chaotic forest and civilized village life. The story grips, the characters struggle with themselves and with one another, and with the revelation of buried truths.

Plaguedoctor says

I received At Ones Beast from the goodreads giveaway.

Possible Spoilers!

At Ones Beast isn't a bad book or a 'piece of trash' by any means, it just needs some improvement. I over all

enjoyed the series and it's concept. However, the book seemed to hastily tell the story and try to get it all finished within the short page length. With that being said, it created a few problems. It left out a lot of character development and skipped around quite a bit. The characters didn't have time to grow and come to terms with each other. One chapter they're suspicious and hateful of each other and then suddenly in the next they're cuddling up with each other. The story also seems to drop off on parts and not talk about them again. After the main character realizes Zos is the beast then she completely stops thinking about the other sacrifices and doesn't even questions him about it. I questioned it for a few chapters. If Zos didn't do anything with the sacrifices then what happened to them? Did they just get lost and stranded, did the Jackal eat them, etc? You can't leave gaps. I also thought the ending was a bit odd. They feared Zos his whole life and drove him to the forest and yet they excepted him back to graciously without any suspicions. Anyway, those were just a few things that I thought could have used some improvement on. The story over all was a great read, it just needs to be worked on more :)

Cee (The Mistress Case) says

I received this book for a Read for Review.

At One's Beast is a fantasy read about sacrifice, betrayal, the thin line between losing yourself to good or evil, family, friendship, and love.

Zosimos was tormented by his inner and outer self. Consumed by revenge and bitterness for the village who betrayed him out of fear for the unknown and out of guilt for what they did to him, Zos was only tamed when Alcina, a brave and compassionate girl, reappeared in his life ten years later.

I'll try to keep this short and simple.

Despite this story being nicely written with beautiful phrases, everything felt rushed.

At the beginning, I didn't know how to feel about this story, but as it progressed, I began liking it— but then I kept losing interest and I simply didn't know how to feel anymore. "Do I like it? Or do I dislike it?" I didn't know.

Therefore, I kept reading (while procrastinating at the same time) and this was what went through my mind: What is happening? What is going on? Why do I feel like the author is being lazy and trying to rush everything into place just in order "to get it over with"?

It all happened so fast when Alcina accepted her place in Zos's home. I found it hard to believe she wasn't bursting with questions: What happened to her best friend Iris? What happened to the other sacrifices? Did Zos know about them? Did these sacrifices fall prey to vicious jackals? Did they fall victims to the forest?

Honestly, I'm not the sort of person to be rude and call writers "lazy" (this is my first time saying something so insulting), but this is too much frustration for one reader. I want details, explanations, back stories, more depth. I wanted so badly to sink into this book and get lost.

Unfortunately, it didn't happen for me.

And to top it off, even though I had nothing against the characters, I couldn't find myself caring a whole lot about them or rooting for them.

Too many parts of this story left me feeling "That's it? That's all?" Towards the end, I practically had to force myself to keep on reading and I didn't even rejoice the happy ending, which is strange because I always do.

The one positive thing about the ending is that it sends a powerful message: Let go. Let go of all your anger. Let go of the evil. Let go of your haunting nightmares. Be free from it.

Nonetheless, I enjoyed the story just enough not to hate it, and no, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. I really wouldn't. However, don't let me stop you from reading it for yourself and forming your own opinions.

Best of luck to Rachael!

Update: It would have been nice to know how Zos reacted to his mother's death too. Too many things in this story are left ignored.

-Mistress

Andrea Prepo says

I received this book in a Read for Review.

First of all, I have to say that this is a very well written book. Since the first chapter you get into a story of fantasy and mystery, with the addition of a fairytale like beauty and the beast. Zosimos and Alcina represent two different things, almost like yin and yang; one is darkness, is embracing all the horrible things of the world, being The Beast. The other is light, is taking all that darkness around you and cleansed it. Both of them, specially Zos, have to fight the temptation of giving into those dark desires.

The book keeps you hanging until you finished so, why not five stars?

Yes, the story is amazing but I think it needed a little more of background. Did the well really cleanse you of all your dark thoughts? What happened if you didn't go through the ceremony? Why did the darkness took Zos and marked his skin? Was the dark presence a conscious being or just a force who tempted you, voicing your greedy and selfish desires? If Zos wasn't the beast everyone thought he was, why did they start giving him sacrifices?

I don't know if it was the intention of the writer leaving these questions unanswered. Well, now that I think about it the mystery gives the story the quality of a fairytale, the magic is not explain it just is.

Anyway, Rachek Barnard create a great story and I thank her for lettin us enjoyed it.

Sofia Trindade says

I received this book for a Read for Review.

At One's Beast is an amazing well written book, Rachel Barnard has a lovely away of writing!

Good points about this book:

-I think that Miss Barnard got the part about the duplicity of the human nature quite well, especially in the village people's actions and Alcina when her friend is chosen. Most of us say we will be there for everything and anything but then when the time comes we get cold feet and don't do anything to help those we call friends.

-The story is original and interesting.

- It's so well written!!!!

-The ending is very well thought and it's message is striking!

My only problem with this book is that it needed more backstory, the story is incredible and so are the character but because we don't have much information about the Well, the village and its people (specially the main characters), it's hard to enjoy this book to its fullest.

But once you begin reading this book and pass the first chapter you get used to the story and it gets easier to keep going, but you must finish it!! The ending is wonderful!!

Elizabeth Krall says

I was drawn to this story by an excerpt, which I thought had a sense of darkness and ritual. I was intrigued by the concept of a well that absorbed the bad thoughts and intentions of the town's people, and then the idea of what would happen to a good person who fell into that well and absorbed the badness.

Unfortunately, the concept and the idea were the highlights of "At One's Beast". I do think there's a story in here, but the plot and the characters need more work to bring it out.

Once Zos has fallen into the well and it collapses, nothing seems to change in the town. The people have no outlet for all those bad thoughts, yet things go on as before. Shouldn't there have been an outpouring of evil? The townspeople seem far more narrow-minded, selfish and weak than evil.

Then comes the beast. Initially, it seems that "the beast" is the dark, evil force responsible for what happened to Zos. ("that poor boy who'd fallen into the well so many years ago and was killed by the beast.") But then "the beast" takes a tangible form: "The calamity that befalls us when we don't adhere to the yearly sacrifice is devastating to the town. He plunders and destroys." However, if Zos is "the beast", as we are led to believe, he did no more than steal housing materials: "It had taken Zos quite a few raids to gather enough materials to help build his little house in the middle of the woods and quite a few more raids to find its meager furnishings." Yet, the townspeople send a child into the forest each year to appease the beast. They

sacrifice their children to prevent the theft of timber and bedsheets? (Yes, Zos has sheets on the bed in his not-so-humble house in the forest.)

The jackals puzzled me, too. Apparently, their horns (jackals with horns?) have strange, magical powers, which are never explained. “As he opened his mouth for breath a tiny particle of orange was pulled in and tickled his throat. He coughed and some of the tension in his tendons was re-directed. He spat out the orange sliver.” And...? What was so great about the orange sliver? What effect did it have? Where was the tension redirected?

I still have no idea why the jackals followed Zos and Aethon into the town, other than to act as a plot device by which Zos saves a young girl and is forgiven and welcomed back. From beast to hero in one simple step. They forgive him, he forgives them, Alcina conjures up some hitherto-non-existent power to dispel the evil and anger, and they all live happily ever after.

The three main characters (Zos, Alcina, Aethon) seem to drift through their interactions with each other. They think a lot. They veer from yes to no, from liking to hating, they wallow in angst, and then instead of dealing with a situation they storm off in a huff or bound into the forest.

The erratic plot and flat characters could be forgiven if the writing itself was a joy to read. Alas, it is not. There are occasional evocative sentences, but the telling of this fairy tale is sprinkled with jarringly modern Americanisms: bop, freak out, guy, critter, product of his environment. I had to reread a number of phrases because they made no sense, were awkward, or invented new meanings for words. Here is a small sample, verbatim:

- she immediately thought to abandon her imprisonment as soon as she could
- it advanced with superior steps
- agony playing with his face
- the baby jackal trounced up
- a circus of flustering
- as soon as the deplorable sight of iron was in sight
- shagging off the dirt from himself
- watched her breath bow the particles down to her mighty wind
- an even layer of molars that craved jaggedness
- let his terrorizing out on the man-made prison
- yelped a short reverse hiccup

This short YA fantasy novel may well appeal to young readers or to adults who don't tend to analyse what they read.

(note: I was given this novel in exchange for an honest and non-reciprocal review.)

✕Tabby✕ says

THE REVIEW

Why this book?

It seemed interesting

What I thought

I'm confused by this book... I don't know if I liked it or not. I have to think about it more. One thing for sure I really hated the towns people, and I don't understand why they considered Zos a beast. What did he do to them? One thing I really like though is the relationship between Zos and Alcina. Like others say there are some similarities to Beauty and the Beast which is my favorite fairytale, so you would think I would love this. Unfortunately though The strengths of this book are outweighed by its weaknesses. Overall an ok read.

Bee says

Ugh.

That really sums up this book. Brace yourselves for the most negative review in the history of pandas.

Every girl and boy in the village of Frey fears the beast who lives in the forest. Ten years ago, the beast was formed from the town's rage -- and the evil that lurks inside all people in moments of weakness. Every year since, the townspeople have sacrificed one of their own to appease his anger. This year the sacrifice does not go as planned. A young man saves the chosen girl from fate. She is torn between doing her duty and untangling the identity of her savior and captor. The young man grew up with thoughts of revenge on the town that turned their backs on him, but when he is close to the girl, he is reminded of who he used to be. From once upon a time to happily ever after, the people of Frey will have to rally together to rid the town of evil once and for all, but in the process will they destroy everything that is good in their world?

I wish i could say that At One's Beast at least started off good... but that would be a big lie. So, basically this novel evolves around the city of Frey. But there's some kind of "evil" lingering in the town? That's the first point of how bad this book was. The author gave no explanation whatsoever about this evil or how it got into Frey in the first place. She didn't explain why this Well was so important! Like... why? Why was this evil there, you can't just say EVERYBODY IS EVIL MWUAHHHAHAHA and then just go along with that. NO, you can't. it ruined the book, darling. One of the main characters is Zosimos or "Zos" if you will, he fell into the "evil well" that i mentioned above. But that whole scene was so vague that i didn't understand what was going on at all. He heard "voices" in his head that compelled him closer to the well? WHY. Rachel, you need to give explanations, not leave open ends everywhere! It just made the whole reading a pain in the behind because nothing made sense.

Also, after Zos got pulled out of the well, he was covered in black stripes or something. Like tattoos ,i assume, that ran across his body.

Okay Bee, take a deep breath.

Also, i didn't connect to the characters at all. Whenever something happened that brought danger upon any character i just... got bored. I didn't care at all about Alcina, the female main character. The love triangle didn't affect me, because i couldn't be bothered to care about both boys. Alcina just claimed that Aethon was her childhood best friend... but we never saw any real interaction between them.

Hmm, oh. So another infuriating thing about this book is that Zos was supposed to be "the beast" of whom the villagers were all afraid of. But... i don't get WHY they were afraid of him. Because yes, when living in the woods he did raid some shops. But that's it. He didn't kill anyone. as far as I know he hadn't seen any

human for years... so why were the villagers still making a big deal out of him? He was living peacefully in his little house in the woods, nobody had even seen him. So there you have that question again. WHY. Nothing made sense.

I could rant on forever, but i think this is enough negativity for today.

Okay, maybe just one last thing ;)

the ending... god. Spoiler alert right here.

So it's a happy ending. The people of Frey suddenly accept Zos because he saved some random girl. ... i don't.... WHAT?! For YEARS they were afraid of him. for YEARS they repelled him. And he saves one girl. i repeat, ONE GIRL. And he is welcome back with open arms? No. Fuck that. Also, for some magical reason the stripes on his skin vanish, except for one black tear streak on his cheek.

what

the

fuck

people.

No, just no. I dreaded reading this book. I kept procrastinating and just didn't want to read it --

I don't recommend this book to you. And Rachel, if you read this, please consider rewriting your book.

This awful novel deserves no stars at all. But am i allowed to do that? Whatever. 0 stars for At one's Beast.

Lots of Luck,

Bee

Victoria Bastedo says

Rachel Barnard's *At One's Beast* is a compelling take on the original tale. The beast begins an innocent boy, infected with the scouring of other people's hate. It's a book that asks, what makes a person good or bad?

The boy falls in a pit of black thoughts and comes out so covered with the streaks of mental filth that he appears a monster. Inside his thoughts rage feelings of despair, hopelessness and suffocating oppression. He runs deep into the forest to escape the village that now fears him.

Years later the girl is truehearted enough to sacrifice herself for the town that betrayed her and is sent alone to the forest to appease the beast. Although she is the beautiful one on the surface of things and the most free, in the end it's the boy that surprises us.

I love that he will not become evil, no matter what seeks to force change upon him. Read a book that says truth will not stay hidden, and proves that misguided and suspicious people are never too old to learn that appearances can't judge what's in the human heart.

At times the book was dark to read, and yet I expect young people will sympathize with the difficulties that

are perpetrated upon our main characters. By the end I had a difficult time putting the book down!

A.E. Albert says

Set in a fairy tale forest, *At One's Beast* tells the story of Alcina and a ferocious beast threatening the small village of Frey. Through a cruel twist of fate, she is chosen as the yearly sacrifice. But the town of Frey's gift to this monster alters Alcina's life forever.

At One's Beast is about seeing people as they truly are. Or perhaps, more importantly, choosing to see past the physical and judging people by condition of their heart.

This book is beautifully written. I was very impressed with Barnard's style and prose. The author is at times almost poetic, giving the story an otherworldly atmosphere. However, this doesn't effect the easy flow of words, making it an wonderful read.

The book contains the obvious conflict between the village of Frey and the Beast. Yet, there is also the personal conflict brewing between the main characters. The author takes you into their minds so the reader can partake in their journey through self realization.

Daphne Walker says

I found this book to be very involved and fast paced. It keeps the reader interested! I definitely read nearly half the book the first night I received it. Exciting, and I liked the metaphors and messages within the story line. Good character background and plot detail.

Lana Axe says

This is an intriguing dark fantasy tale about a young girl named Alcina who is willing to risk her life to save her home, despite the fact that her friends and neighbors were ready to offer her up as a human sacrifice. She proved herself a character of worth right from the beginning, and I couldn't help admiring her courage throughout the story.

Inside the dark and spooky forest, a place I always love in fantasy, Alcina comes across the beast. Though he isn't the beast she expected. He's actually just a human, scarred and twisted by the ravages of an ancient evil. He had a Quasimodo feel to him for me. He's the bad guy because of how he looks, but he isn't a murderer. He does what he must to survive. I think his character was the most endearing. It's true that people in our history treated those with physical deformities with disdain and declared them evil just because of their looks. That seems to be what's going on here, and it was interesting to be immersed in that mindset. Ok, so he was cursed after falling in the well instead of being born that way, but it's a similar enough situation. The evil curse adds the fantasy to what could otherwise be a scene from our own history.

Overall this book is well written. It has some fantastic descriptions, and I felt myself immersed in the world and culture.

I received a free copy for an honest and unbiased review.

D.r. Howey says

A relaxing fantasy getaway - I found, "At One's Beast", right after I posted a review of the same author's previous novel, "Ataxia and the Ravine of Lost Dreams". Having enjoyed what I describe as "a refreshing, modern writing style and technique", I was happy to find more work by the same author, Rachel Barnard. "At One's Beast" is not similar to previous novels that I generally migrate to, but I was intrigued by the summary of the story printed on the rear Jacket Cover. On the surface, it appeared that the story would be a modern rendition of a classic tale. However, the plot vaguely shares some similarities and is probably not intentional by the author, but might be due to my own assumptions by judging the cover. The author's imagination and writing skills successfully takes the audience away from this expectation - while keeping the reader anxious to get to the next page (and finish the book). I found it to stimulate my inner senses, yes some tears (I'm human) and I could really get into the main characters. In an effort to not spoil the plot or ending, I'll classify this as a modern type of fairy tale that is hard to "not finish in one sitting" (Warning: Don't start the book too late at night). It contains subtle hints within the story that assists the reader in subsequent chapters, challenging your own comprehension skills, making it fun to follow and reflect upon as the story unfolds. I'd recommend it for those that enjoy an easy reading, young adult fiction novel, one that needs to be read from front to back, without speed-reading techniques or skipping portions.

Sheri J. says

I put off reviewing because I love this book and I want to do it justice.

AT ONE'S BEAST is billed as a fairy tale twist and a low fantasy. I think it elevates both sub-genres by taking the basics of a moral tale and adding rich psychological complexity and atmosphere.

First, let me say, I was 'in' immediately and was driven to keep reading to the end - always key to a great read!

It starts with fairly traditional basics of Zos absorbing all the hate and evil of the town, and Alcina moving from fear and wanting to take him down, to seeing that he is something more. But the way the journey unfolds is uniquely modern from my perspective. For one, there's a tricky twining of three characters that create, from my perspective, a love triangle with Aethon. He is supposedly a friend, but has a fierce or even controlling streak that is a definite character flaw. Zos, while supposedly dangerous, shows gentleness and encourages Alcina's strength. He is fearsome but magnetic in his caring and vulnerability.

Alcina, while having fears and showing her impetuous youthfulness, comes from a general stance of strength and independence that makes the reader believe she will conquer the beast. But as she spends time with Zos and on her own away from her family and community, she shows a vulnerability to love of nature, adventure, and love in general. Instead of making her seem weaker, her genuine emotion and new experiences develop her into her own woman - not Zos'. That's not trite or typically fairy tale black and white. When she then comes to appreciate Zos, it makes her even stronger in my eyes and she lives and breathes instead of being a one dimensional fairy tale 'princess-type' heroine.

The only weakness to the tale I thought was the townsfolk, especially families, seem a little too hostile toward Alcina. This is chalked up to the evil influence, like a spell on them, so I can let it go. It's just that all the other emotion in the story is so realistically supported that this actual fairy tale simplification of that point seems out of place in comparison. (Kind of a back-handed compliment!)

There is a lovely mix of grey tones throughout this story. There is a well-crafted atmospheric quality to the

world - kind of an abstraction that allows complex contemplation while the clear action proceeds without dropping the reader for a single moment.

After reading Barnard's debut novel, ATAXIA AND THE RAVINE OF LOST DREAMS, I was interested to see where this promising young author would go next. AT ONE'S BEAST exceeded my expectations and is very well developed. It's a solid work that I would highly recommend.
