

Press Kit: Realmgolds

Realmgolds is a steampunkish secondary-world fantasy novel, the first of the Gryphon Clerks series.

Author Bio

Mike Reeves-McMillan lives in Auckland, New Zealand, surrounded by trees. He's almost certainly the world's only steampunk-fantasy author who holds a master's degree in English, a certificate in health science, an Advanced Diploma of Hypnotherapy *and* a certificate in celebrant studies (rituals for transition through crisis). He's worked as an editor for a major publishing house, which is just one of the reasons he has no interest in being published by a major publishing house.

Contact/Social Media:

Blog: <http://csidemedial.com/gryphonclerks>.

Email: mike@csidemedial.com

Google+: <http://gplus.to/mikerm>

Goodreads (book page): <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17453856-realmgolds>

Realmgolds Blurb

The Human Purity movement is growing in power and influence in Denning, attacking dwarf businesses and caravans and inciting popular rebellion, with the passive or active support of many of the ruling Golds.

Opposing them almost alone is the Realmgold, a young man named Determined. His problem is that, even though the Realmgold is meant to be in charge, nobody is paying much attention to him. Victory, who rules neighbouring Koskant, would love to support Determined, but an ancient magical treaty between their realms means she can't send in her troops, her skyboats or her pressure guns. What she can do, though, is share a new magical communications technology – and her elite corps of Gryphon Clerks...

Excerpt

A small dwarf caravan wound its dusty way towards the Thunder Gorge dwarfhold in the northwest of Denning. Its members, six mules, four gnomes, the dwarf in charge, and a centaur guard, had pushed hard to get to the hold before dark, but they weren't quite going to achieve it. The night was drawing in, and the mules would soon be stumbling on rough patches of the poorly-maintained road.

The small caravan's centaur guard was known, like all centaur caravan guards, as Muscles, though his given name was Tree. He looked away to preserve his vision as Pack of Sevenhills, the dwarf, lit the travel-globes on each beast's harness, assisted by his gnome leader, Pot.

Muscles was picturing being beside a warm fire with a drink in his hand and out of his leather barding when he heard a ruckus from up the road. He came alert despite his weariness, and quickly strung his bow, then held it low by his side.

"Just drunken locals, by the sound," said Pack.

"Maybe," said Muscles. "I'm taking no chances. Things are going to get ugly down here at some point."

Rounding a corner, they came upon a small mob of humans. They showed signs, as Pack had said, of drunkenness, but the light of burning torches mingled with the yellowish magical light of Pack's travel-globes, and there were a surprising number of farm implements for the time of evening.

“Well,” said a human near the front of the group, “what have we here?”

“Looks like de-gen-e-rates,” slurred one of his companions, who was eyeing the mules and their burdens.

“Three-fingered degenerates and a half-beast,” agreed the first. “What do you say, boys?”

“Purity!” shouted the mob raggedly, waving their farm implements.

“Let’s get them!” the second human cried out, and they fanned out and began a ragged charge, chanting “Pu-ri-ty, pu-ri-ty” and lowering their implements like spears or raising them like swords, depending on the length of the shaft.

Muscles’ bow came up, an arrow from the quiver on his back met it, and he drew and fired in less time than it takes to blink. The first speaker, apparently the leader, fell with a cry, Muscles’ shaft protruding from his left shoulder. Almost before he hit the ground, his yes-man got the same treatment.

A couple of nearby humans faltered, seeing their two spokesmen fall. One took to his heels, and the other stumbled back and fell on his buttocks with a grunt, then, after a moment, started crawling away. Most of them, though, were too fixated on their attack to notice (and too drunk).

A third human fell to an arrow — a big man with a reasonably sharp pickaxe — before the six who hadn’t yet fallen or fled reached the little caravan.

Muscles reared, and gave his war cry. He had trained the mules well, and they swapped end-for-end and began to kick out at their attackers. One, propelled by hooves, flew through the air like a sack full of straw, struck the ground heavily and lay still. Another, faced with Muscles’ own hooves windmilling in his face, covered his eyes with his forearms and stumbled backwards, where he tripped over the big man’s body and fell down. He continued to cower as Muscles hauled his broadsword from its straps on his back, next to his quiver, and decapitated a hayfork. The hayfork’s wielder dropped it hurriedly and began backing away.

The fight had lasted perhaps sixteen heartbeats so far, and eight of the eleven were out of action. The remaining three, though, had surrounded the little knot of unarmed gnomes gathered around Pack and were beating on them with their implements. Pot fell, bleeding from his head.

Muscles bellowed, sounding more like a bull than a stallion, but there was a mule bucking between him and the gnomes. He reached over it with his long, muscular arms and slashed at the shoulder of the nearest man, at the fullest extension of the broadsword. The man blocked clumsily, but effectively, with his mattock, and it clanged.

The startled mule bolted, and Muscles surged forward and swung the flat of his blade from right to left, knocking one man out with the blade itself and a second with the sword’s grip and his large hand.

The third, the mattock man, heaved his improvised weapon up above his head preparatory to bringing it down at Muscles’ enormous chest. While Muscles appreciated his courage, he didn’t appreciate his intent. He caught the mattock on his blade with a thud that shuddered through the human’s hands, and kicked him precisely in the solar plexus with a heavy hoof.

Muscles surveyed the area. A couple more humans had fled, several were groaning more or less quietly, and three lay terminally still. The gnomes and Pack were looking stunned, a couple of them literally. Pot was sprawled at Pack’s feet, and even before Muscles bent and checked, he knew he wasn’t ever getting up again. He sheathed his sword, lifted the gnome and tucked him into one of his empty saddlebags.

“Careful!” said Pack.

“Not much point in being careful with him now, I’m afraid,” said Muscles. “Who else is badly hurt?”

There were a couple of broken arms, some bruises and a nasty concussion. Muscles scooped up the concussed gnome, rallied the others and double-timed them, with the remaining mules, in the direction of the dwarf hold. Pack was inclined to protest at leaving one of the mules lost in the darkness, but Muscles was in command under conditions of threat, and the caravan owner was overruled. “We don’t have time to look for it,” said the centaur. “Either it turns up or not. Our concern now is to get behind stone before those humans come back with reinforcements.”

Availability

Realmgolds is available from Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00BVR3JFY>

Author Photograph

http://csidemedial.com/gryphonclerks/files/mikerm_beard-223x300.jpg



Cover Art by Chris Howard

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