

# New "Wicked" trilogy begins

## "The Brides of Maracoor"

Gregory Maguire,  
William Morrow, 2021.

**T**he Brides of Maracoor," the first volume in Maguire's new trilogy "Another Day," opens "Sing me, O Muse, the unheroic morning."

Woven into the half-page invocation that follows is a description of a week's storm, now clearing, and a hint of something in the sky—"But who could see above the clouds? Build the world, O Muse, one apprehension at a time. It's all we can take." Pulled gently into the quasi-classical world that feeds Maguire's imagination, readers find themselves on the tiny island of Maracoor Spot, watching the seven brides of Maracoor flay their feet with sharp seagrass, then walk down to the sea that stings and cleans their cuts. One by one, they begin twisting kelp into netting that shapes time: "The world today, as they found it, as they preserved it."

The brides always number seven; when one dies, she is replaced by a baby girl from the mainland, Maracoor Abiding. Currently, the person performing the replacement is Minor Adjutant Lucikles, who visits the island once a year to be sure everything is in order. His visit, and far more rarely, the six brides' adoption of an infant seventh, are the only changes that affect the island's inhabitants.

Almost immediately, it becomes clear that the "preserved world" of the brides is about to be challenged. Helia, the senior bride, is clearly aging, and Mirka, who will become senior bride at Helia's death, is all too eager to replace her. But it is the youngest bride, the ignorant but curious 10-year-old Cossy, who brings about the island's major change; she rescues a half-drowned adolescent girl who is clinging to an enormous talking goose.

The girl, we soon learn, is green and has a broom. Readers of Maguire's quartet

"The Wicked Years" will recognize her as Rain, the granddaughter of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, who was last seen in "Out of Oz" as she flew away from her homeland on her broom. The brides, of course, know nothing of this; in fact, they know nothing except that Rain's appearance is unprecedented, and that her arrival fatally swells their number to eight.

Rain's appearance coincides with the visit of Minor Adjutant Lucikles. When he sees her, he faints, thinking she's a goddess. But when he realizes that the brides were hiding Rain from him, thus threatening the accuracy of his report, he sails off in a huff. As his anger wears off, he begins to doubt the wisdom of his action, for his ship encounters odd episodes far beyond the imagination of the bureaucratic world of Maracoor Abiding, where he lives with his family. A flock of land birds invades the rigging of the ship, followed by a flock of owls driven away only by an appalling act of cruelty. Upon arriving at port, Lucikles and the crew find the city half-ruined and

empty of its people—an army of an unknown country has invaded, and all those not killed have fled. Whose fault can all these events be? The country's leaders have no difficulty deciding, as soon as Lucikles tells them about Rain. They

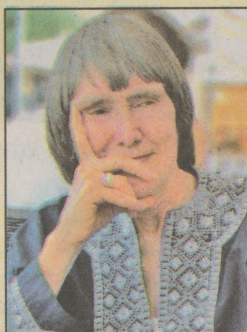
send him back to the island to fetch her, only to find that the brides' pristine society has been corrupted by murder—and that Rain defends the murderer. To Lucikles' horror, his much-loved son, who has gone with him, supports Rain's defense in the trial that follows.

Maguire's book reads beautifully, offering readers various points of view, set in a landscape vaguely reminiscent of the Greek islands, and touched by episodes that mingle clas-

sical myth with winged monkeys.

It is less a sequel to the Oz books than a variation upon themes in the earlier series.

What will happen next, and how that will transpire, is unclear at the book's conclusion. But it will undoubtedly be very interesting to find out.



## One-Minute Book Reviews

Laura Stevenson

