

But even this isn't the full reason why I enjoy *Elfquest*. Part of its charm is in Wendy's art. In comics, a visual medium, art is as important as story. And Wendy's art, though maybe not as polished as many mainstream artists, has a vibrant life and style that allows her to reach into the souls of her creations. Her drawing may not be as clean and precise as other artists, but she has managed to create a world, a believable reality, that many so-called "better" artists could not even begin to do. There is some undefined spark in her work that suggests that there is no reason to question whether this world exists or not—but just that you believe in it while you read the stories.

This is why I envy Richard and Wendy's comic. They have created an idea from scratch, an idea they totally own; they consistently produce a high-grade effort that gives me great pleasure in reading. *Elfquest* is not *Crime and Punishment*, it doesn't have the emotional depth of *Heart of Darkness*, it doesn't possess the lyric beauty of Shakespeare's plays, but it is a damn well-created comic book that you can enjoy. And therefore it totally succeeds in doing exactly what a good comic book should do—entertain, thrill, and put a smile on the reader's face.

And frankly, there's nothing wrong with that!

Marv Wolfman

The very name "elf" holds power of enchantment—even in our prosaic world of the here and now. For it is a key to unlock the imagination, link us with a rich past of folklore and legend. Elves have come out of that misty otherworld known to tale tellers wearing many different horns, tied to different types of action, both beneficial and malific as far as our own species are concerned.

We have met, first in the traditional oral tale, then on the printed page (and not without a heritage of awe), these alien beings of super powers and minds whose depths can not be understood by humans. The elven hosts, shadowy in their gold and silver forests, whom Tolkien made known to us are basically unknowable. Even his own kings of ancient blood were not wholly at ease with the elf lords. We are led to believe that, though man and elf might love and unite in unbreakable bonds, their children were torn between the demands of this double heritage—they were a somber people, with more unfulfilled longings than contentment within them. Tolkien's elven hosts were truly more than man, and needs must accept any home in the human lands as a place of exile from which they would eventually depart.

Kipling's "People of the Hills" were also figures of awe—and of danger—uncertain of temper, tricky, vacillating in their relationships with the human race. In that tradition are those of whom the Scottish and Irish storytellers and ballad makers speak—the fair ones who lingered at times for human contact—perhaps because they seem to believe that there was a kind of warmth they could not understand which was a part of the very imperfect mankind. Maids and Men—children, too—were stolen away, to revel with those who wore the

"fairy green" by right. Such might dance and feast for a night, only, upon returning, to discover that in human time many years had passed.

We have the old ballads of True Thomas and of Tamerlane—Thomas whose human voice enchanted an elf queen to his near undoing—Tamerlane whose valiant sweetheart had to fight for him against the strongest spells her elven opponent might summon. The ancient struggle between one world and another are made very stark in such stories as these.

Then somehow, in comfortable Victorian times, elves dwindled, to lose in stature both physically and in power. There was no awe to be raised by these small folk, testy, tricky, rather inept for the most part in their now spiteful pranks. All which was left was a reinforcement of the uneasy thought that elves and men were, at the best not good company, and, at the worst, mankind could suffer a great deal from their attention.

In this *Elfquest* saga of the hot-tempered, brave Cutter and his exiled band, we are presented with a new supposition of the reason which might lie behind this antagonism. Imagine, as you must and joyfully will, a race possessing what seem to be supernatural powers, but also a people who had reached the level of understanding whereby the settlement of problems is never to be achieved by violence. These gentle and gifted travelers are brought to a savage world of raw new life where the human kind have not yet emerged from a state lower than the beasts—for beasts do not kill nor torture wantonly.

As man so often does even today, the savages fear and then destroy what they can not understand. The survivors, deep in shock, unable to believe that in this world there are only violent answers, flee into an unwelcoming wilderness.

What will arise from such tempering? Not a copy of the first gentle space farers. Their children are far different, having adapted and adapted, fought and learned to meet fear with strong action. Here rides Cutter, their youthful chief, and the rest of his clan, mounted on wolves, with whom they have made a pact so that wolf and elf are brothers. These are people of action—still they are not so lost to their heritage that they can kill easily, like man, in the name of some dark power.

In *Elfquest* Wendy and Richard Pini gave those lucky enough to have discovered the magazines from which this book is assembled a new type of elf—neither all powerful alien, nor tricky sprite. The development of these adventurers who have been forced to believe that all the world is against them is a logical one, and the reader is speedily caught up in following thrilling action.

This is well the way it might have all happened on another world, at another time, perhaps half the galaxy away. I, for one, would like to believe that it did! Also I trust that this is only the beginning of the return of the elves who shall rise in the end to equal their ancestors—those glorious walkers among the far stars.

Andre Norton