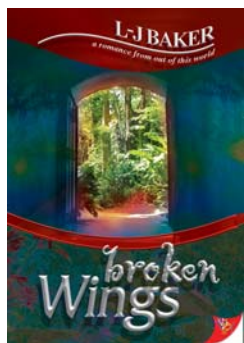


Book Review: November 2006

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at L-Word.com literature & JAW)



Broken Wings

L-J Baker

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L-J Baker's debut novel, *Broken Wings*, is pure fantasy and a whole lot more. I did not expect to like this story as much as I did, but it captured me from the beginning, taking me on a delightful and magical ride and teaching me a lesson or two along the way.

Simply stated, *Broken Wings* is about a fairy, named Rye Woods, who has illegally escaped Fairyland with her younger sister. To give Holly a better life, Rye works hard, holding down 2-3 jobs and attending night school. She does all this while trying to avoid the authorities, fearing they may find out who she really is and deport Holly and her. But Rye doesn't count on falling in love with the beautiful Dryad, Flora Withe. Baker melds this sweet and tender love story with the hard-hitting issues of class, money, and prejudices.

Baker has given us a complex character in Rye Woods. She is fiercely loyal and protective of her sister, Holly, even lying to her about her family history and their past in Fairyland. Yet she is an honest, hard-working fairy who struggles to pay for an elite private school for Holly so she can have a better life. Rye focuses all of her energies on Holly so she has little time for anything else. But when Holly enters a school art contest, Rye attends, and this is where she meets Flora, a wealthy and successful artist who is immediately intrigued by Rye. Flora sees beyond the trappings of appearances and finds the beauty within Rye. Rye at first does not understand or accept this love because she is so afraid of Flora discovering her true identity. This conflict is the heart and soul of *Broken Wings*.

Baker's make-believe world uses language and imagery that fits flawlessly with the tone of the novel. The metaphors of conformity and having to hide one's true identity are stinging and bold. Baker does not pull any punches as to the real themes of the book, but she carefully and skillfully incorporates these into the plot. This is quite a feat for a first-time novelist.

Sometimes the prisons we live in have nothing to do with concrete and bars. *Broken Wings* is a moving tribute to those who have broken free of the chains that restrain them. Kudos to Baker for taking on such a brave task.

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