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Stanley Goes Fishing

Gillian Streeter
gstreeter@fortbend.lib.tx.us

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Reviewer: Gillian Streeter  
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult  
Rating: Significant shortcomings  
Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Voyages and travels--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Princetta Malva of the Kingdom of Galnicia is mortified--her father reads her personal diaries and notebooks aloud in front of the councilors and forces her to burn them. She is also about to be married off to a foreign prince whom she's never met. Raised by her tutor on stories of adventure and magic, Malva is not about to accept her situation--along with her handmaiden Philomena, she plans an escape. But as she begins experiencing real adventures and life-or-death choices, Malva discovers the world is not mythological at all, but full of beauty, pain, betrayal, and friendship.

This adventure was clearly intended to be an epic--the story sweeps across large amounts of time and great distances and the characters encounter frequent and varied dangers. But Bondoux tends to tell rather than show readers how the characters are changing. The book has a Sinbad-like style: it is plot-driven; adventures come fast and furious with minimal character development. That might have made it a good bedtime text, if not for the complete let-down in the ending. Readers should bear in mind that the story may have lost some cultural and language aspects when it was translated from French to English, but the overall effect feels stilted and contrived.