

Entertaining fantasy is first in a long run of adventures

The Leopard Mask (The Guin Saga, Book 1)

By Kaoru Kurimoto
Translated by Alexander O. Smith
and Elye J. Alexander
Vertical, Inc., \$22.95, hardcover,
231 pages

Reviewed by KATY MILLER
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

If you like a fast-paced fantasy tale, try *The Leopard Mask*, which originally hit bookstores in Japan in 1979. At the time, author Kaoru Kurimoto announced it was the first in a projected series, *The Guin Saga*, of 100 books.

He's up to 87 now, but *The Leopard Mask* is the first volume to be translated into English and published in the United States.

The story begins with the first night in a long adventure of three characters. Guin, a man with a leopard mask, wakes up with no memory except a single word — his name. He crosses paths with Rinda and Remus, royal heirs to the recently conquered kingdom of Parros.

The three band together in

the forest of Rood, a hunting ground of humans by a menagerie of supernatural creatures. Despite the dangers of the forest, it is a haven compared with the nightmare that awaits them in the Stafolos Keep.

Guin is unswervingly loyal to the twins for no apparent reason. The twins themselves, a strong-willed sister and an overshadowed brother, are basically just trying to survive from one moment to the next.

The story moves from one impossible situation to the next as the trio attempt to live until daylight.

Kurimoto doesn't delve deeply into the motivations of the characters or describe his imaginary kingdom in detail. Still, the book is quick-paced, easy to follow and enormously entertaining.

Furthermore, Vertical Inc., a new publisher that translates Japanese works into English, promises the second and third entries in *The Guin Saga* this fall: *Warrior in the Wilderness* and *The Battle of Nospherus*.



Katy Miller can be reached at
kmiller@orlandosentinel.com or at 407-
420-5510.