



## The Compass Rose

*Gail Dayton*

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The legends of the Godstruck were just that -- legends. Until, in an attempt to defend her people, Captain Kallista Varyl called on the One for aid and was granted abilities such as no one had seen in centuries. Now Kallista has been charged with a new destiny as one of the most powerful women in the land -- but her power is useless if it cannot be controlled. Mastering her "Godstruck" abilities is the first step. The next, learning that she cannot unlock the secrets of the Compass Rose and defeat her nation's enemy alone. And finally she must stop a demon-possessed king . . .

## **The Compass Rose Details**

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Author : Gail Dayton

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## **From Reader Review The Compass Rose for online ebook**

### **Holly says**

I was enthralled with this book from the first chapter, and read through it in barely two days. The characters, the world-building, and the relationships they build were riveting.

Kallista is a practitioner of magic which she uses to defend her mainly matriarchal kingdom as part of the army.

When defending against an invading army she calls upon a divine power to aid her and becomes Godstruck, chosen for a greater purpose. From there we have wandering ghosts, a matriarchal society, a power most think is evil, her conflicting relationships with her illian, a family unit made up of many people, and a group called the barbed rose who seem to want her dead.

The story does contain relationships that involve more than one person, but done in such a way that it's believable and adds to the story. The matriarchal society that rules is fascinating, but I did feel for the men who were kept in lower power. This society is such a contrast to the Tibran caste system that puts women right at the bottom as good only for children and relief for men, it was a point that her Tibran comrades found difficult to grasp, but they seemed to prefer.

I will be reading the two remaining books in the trilogy, and couldn't recommend it more for someone who wants a strong female protagonist, and is fond of unusual love stories.

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### **Amy Qualls says**

Liked the book overall, but the writing just wasn't very tight in places. She had a really good opportunity to explore the concept of illian, and just didn't - she opted for titillation over world-building. I'm not sure she really know where she wanted to take the book. I read the two follow-ups and was a bit disappointed; she had a fantastic idea but the story just got away from her. It would have benefited by being twice as long and twice as detailed. Oh well.

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### **Anna Suave says**

Ahh! At last I found the kind of smut I've been looking for in a book. Very much in the fantasy/alternate universe genre. Romantic without being unduly insulting to the reader's intelligence. Plenty of sex (the language is more romantic than graphic) and an adventure at it's core.

AND as an added bonus - it contains NO vampires!! (Hooray!)

The book features polyamory, multiple-marriage, group sex, and some very very mild elements of same-gender sex and bondage. I should say that if you're looking for gay erotica or bdsm, you probably won't like this book. We're talking hints here people - not full on pony-boys on parade.

I really enjoyed this book - it was pure fantasy, easy on the brain, titillating, good story, good

characterizations, tawdry, but not smutty enough to make a person feel guilty for reading it. If you like fantasy and are looking for a good sexy beach read - I highly recommend giving it a try.

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### **Rachel says**

Nice try, but de-evolves into magic orgies.

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### **Maria D'Isidoro says**

I'd almost forgotten about this book until I saw it again while scanning a romance shelf. I kind of wish it were forgotten still.

While it's been a few years, I still remember a lot of what I felt about this book. It started well; the drama of the war, the conflict of Kalista's emerging powers, and the friction between her and her companions were all interesting and compelling...

...and then it all just fell apart.

The plot was lost in the wake of Kalista's numerous romantic interests. The world became a stereotypical high fantasy landscape. After nearly five hundred pages, the climax took less than ten.

The only reason I read it through was because I was 16 and there were copious orgy scenes. And even with the hormonal compulsion, I was still thoroughly disappointed.

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### **Bridgette Redman says**

If you like your fantasies hot with eroticism and tingling with mysterious magic, then you'll want to delve into Gail Dayton's fantasy debut.

The author of two previous romance titles, Dayton has penned the start of a fantasy trilogy replete with clashing societies, powerful magic, frightful enemies, and spooky dreams. And did I mention sex? Yes, lots and lots of sex. And talking about sex. And thinking about sex. But we've already established this is a romantic fantasy, right? So none of us can be too abashed or surprised at the naked bodies or the formations they take.

The Compass Rose takes us into the heart of Captain Kallista, a military mage—known in her land as a naitan. It is a land where one in five women are born with magical powers as are one in ten men. This imbalance has made the society a matriarchal one where men have had to fight for the same recognition and respect afforded their female citizens. They are fighting against warriors from a caste-driven land where women are mere property—property owned by whatever man makes demands of them.

Amidst a battle where the medieval matriarchy is faced with the sudden onslaught of gunpowder technology, Kallista calls upon the One God and is struck with a magic that hasn't been seen for centuries. The magic

obliterates the enemy and leaves her charged with forces she does not understand.

The priests send her to the capital so that the ruler can try to discover what her powers mean. She is not the only one touched by the God, though, and others are drawn to her to supply her with the magic she needs to defeat the demons that threaten the land.

Dayton draws upon many traditional elements of fantasy to create her tale. She establishes a world in which magic replaces much of technology and then threatens its citizens with those who shun magic. There are visions and prophecies, mysterious helpers, strict social codes, and strong religious themes. Relationships are polyamorous, with a wedded family containing multiple men and women all of whom are bound to each other and arrange sexual relationships in whatever way they prefer.

Like all Luna books, *The Compass Rose* also has a strong woman as the central character. Kallista is extremely well-drawn and grows in both wisdom and understanding throughout the book. She's all the more interesting because she has her flaws and must face those flaws before they are able to block her from her goal.

Dayton's biggest strength is her characterizations. All of the book's characters are interesting and come with their unique set of motivations and needs. Torchay the bodyguard has hid his love for years. Stone is experiencing culture shock while his humor carries him through an abruptly changing life. Others are recovering from a history of abuse and submission while another allows his religious inspiration to submit where he might have ruled. Each character has distinct personalities and speech, something many writers struggle with when their cast is so large.

Dayton's strengths in characterization is somewhat offset by her pacing. While the dialogue and internal conflicts are well-written and interesting to read, nearly all of the book is spent on preparing for an ultimately anti-climactic task that merits only a few pages. She eliminates any suspense about whether the protagonists will be able to accomplish their goal as there are too few pages left for the reader to doubt. Then again, the enemy was nothing but a force of evil—and forces don't necessarily make for scintillating dialog.

Ultimately, the clash between good and evil wasn't what this book was all about. The book was about Kallista, the family she forms, and the bonds that grow between them. It was a book that explores interdependence and our need for one another.

The book would be disappointing if it were meant to be a stand-alone book. Dayton introduces many intricate plotlines that then get left behind with barely a visit. The reader is assuaged only by the knowledge that there are two more books in which they can be revisited and further explored.

Luna calls itself “the new face of fantasy” and continues to produce highly readable and entertaining books that make fantasy novels appealing to adult women. *The Compass Rose*, a book which shares a title with a 1995 Ursula K LeGuin offering, can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with its Luna peers. It may not be their best book, but it is a worthy one and is sure to delight the fan base it is building after only a year of existence.

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### **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Have you ever read a book that immediately wrapped you up in its magic and refused to let you go? That's what happened to me with Gail Dayton's *THE COMPASS ROSE*, the first in the One Rose Trilogy. From

amazing characterizations to a world unlike any you've read about before, this book takes you straight into the heart of the story and makes you a part of the action, the mystery, the romance, and the unimaginable magic that is the nation of Adara.

Kallista Varyl is a Captain in the Adaran army, a woman intent on saving her city from the invading warriors of their neighboring kingdom, Tibre. The army of Tibre, unlike that of Adara, relies on man-made instruments such as guns and cannons to win its battles, instead of the magic that Kallista and her people use. Now, though, outnumbered over ten to one, magic doesn't seem to be enough-until Kallista, in desperation, calls upon a power that was thought to be only legend, and changes the course of history.

Kallista, beyond being a warrior, is also a naitan, a magic wielder. Some have even called her a witch. But her normal magic powers aren't enough to out-battle and out-smart the hordes of the Tibre army, and so she calls upon the One Goddess, something that her kingdom's myths and legends are made of. Only it wasn't a legend, as after calling upon the powers that be, the entire Tibre army is struck dead where they stand-all, that is, except for Stone, a warrior who stirs within Kallista feelings she's never before experienced.

Now she's conquered the rival Tibre warriors, but she's left with even more questions than answers. With a mysterious mark on her neck and the brooding Stone, Kallista faces her elders-only to find out that she's been Godstruck, an occurrence that hasn't happened in her nation for over a thousand years. With power beyond belief, Kallista must learn to control the magic that has made her the fulfillment of a prophecy, for she is now the one destined to save her people from the Tibre, and their demon-possessed king.

As if defeating the evil king and harnessing her powers weren't enough, the ruler of Adara decrees that all six Godstruck players, not limited to Kallista and Stone, marry and form an instant magical family. They're then ordered to infiltrate the kingdom of Tibre to overthrow its king, and everything that such a coup entails.

Gail Dayton has created a magical world unlike anything I've ever experienced. The strange sense of family that abounds in Adara becomes understandable as the story unfolds. The bond that Kallista and Stone share goes beyond mere passion and intertwines with their combined magic. The secondary characters in this book are so real that without them, the book wouldn't be the same. I can honestly say that I'm eagerly anticipating the continuation of this story with the release of *THE BARBED ROSE*.

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### **Audra (Unabridged Chick) says**

Though published by Luna Books, the sci-fi/fantasy arm of Harlequin, this book seems to have little in common with her romance novel sisters. There is romantic tension but very little in the way of actual sex. While I did come to this book hoping for a tawdry fantasy novel, I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed it, lack of sex notwithstanding. Dayton's world-building was wonderful -- even though a map and glossary was included, her narrative was thorough enough I did not need to refer to either.

While the plot is interesting enough -- a quest ultimately to destroy a demon -- I found the cultural world building more fascinating. The primary culture, Adaran, has a polyamorous family unit called ilian. It can be sexual, business-like, multi-generational, all of the above, none of the above. The main character, Kallista, enters into ilian with her male bodyguard, two male prisoners of war, a female defector, and a male merchant of foreign origin. Though Kallista feels intense sexual attraction with all of the males, the ilian is initially entered into contractually. The secondary plotline weaving through the story explores Kallista's feelings toward all the men and the evolution of the ilian.

Ultimately I was disappointed in Dayton's exploration of the ilian. Though the ilian is the only form of marriage in Adara, and requires four or more adults of any gender combination, there seems to be little change in sexual attitudes: all four men displayed no bisexual or homosexual interests and each man had intense jealousy at the idea of Kallista having sex with the other men. I know that romance novels have constraints, limits placed on the author by the publisher, but I found it slightly unbelievable that a culture used to polyamory would display rather traditional, Western, monogamous sexual mores.

That quibble aside, the story read quickly and I am eager to read the sequel. (I am assuming there will be a sequel; the ending seemed to beg for one!)

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### **Bookish Ames says**

First read: October 2011

So I only had vague memories of reading this book and I'm so glad I went back and re-read it. I'm seven years wiser (lol) and am reading the story with different eyes. I paid more attention to the relationship dynamics and I have to say I enjoyed this story more the second time around. I plan on reading the rest of the trilogy soon - I want to see how things progress and what further threat is out there. Action wise - I loved the magic and the bonding and how chosen ones are 'marked.'

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### **Lisa (Harmonybites) says**

This novel was first published by Luna, a Harlequin imprint marketed toward fantasy readers that drew from both romance and fantasy writers. I generally felt most of their books were too romance aisle and not strong fantasies. *The Compass Rose* is actually one of the exceptions in that respect among the Luna books that I liked with some creative world-building.

I thought the world Dayton created was intriguing: Adara, a matriarchal society, practices group marriage requiring at least four members. This society is magic-based--there's North, South, West and East magic. The protagonist, Kallista, is a naitan, a magical practitioner of North magic and captain in their army who can call down lightening. When it looks like she might lose a battle she calls on the Goddess--and finds herself able to destroy the invading army--but there's a catch. She's now "god marked" and tied to others so marked she must marry and with whom she can tap magic to defeat the forces arrayed against her nation: her bodyguard, with whom she's been partnered a long time, two prisoners of war, a female refugee and a foreign merchant.

I'm generally not a fan actually of fiction involving polyamory--or forced marriage, and in a sense the "god mark" acts as such a device. I prefer stories that develop intimacy between just two, not only because multiples aren't appealing to me and to my mind just two in real life terms hard enough, but in fictional terms more than two major characters can become unwieldy and there's little chance to develop six.

I think I liked this work involving polyamory more than most for several reasons. Unlike say LK Hamilton's Anita Blake series, I didn't feel this was some piled-on harem--each character had their own conflicts and brought something into the mix--the inclusion of foreign characters, even ones from an enemy nation, meant Kallista and the others really had to work to form themselves into a family. Together with the matriarchal culture and the magical system I thought this brought an interesting dimension to the plot. In that regard this

brought to mind Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Forbidden Tower* with its clash of personalities and cultures within a group of people who must find a way to mesh together magically and sexually in order to survive and flourish.

I also thought this novel was on the whole well-written. It's a complex plot and world and Dayton builds it well--gradually letting you in on its ins and outs through the story itself instead of wads of infodump. I think the novel's biggest fault is that I think its conflicts both internal to the group and in terms of the menace they face was resolved far too easily.

The novel was a good, entertaining read--a solid work of fantasy even if not a favorite or one that has me rushing to read the next book in the trilogy.

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## Kerry says

ORIGINAL READ: 10/10 (8 October 2005 - 10 October 2005)

[Copied across from Library Thing; 16 October 2012]

REREAD #1: 8/10 (finished 15 January 2010)

Originally published in 2005, *The Compass Rose* was one of the early books in Harlequin's Luna range. The idea was to publish fantasy novels with a light touch of romance and I rather enjoyed the early days of the line, including this one. Its sequel, *The Barbed Rose*, came out a year later and I enjoyed that one too. Unfortunately, at that point Luna dropped the trilogy. The final book, *The Eternal Rose*, wasn't published until late 2007 when Juno picked it up.

That means that I bought and devoured the first two, but had a longer than expected wait for the third. And for some reason I can not now remember (probably just that I didn't get around to it) I never read that third book. I always wanted to, but as more time went by and my memories of the first ones grew vaguer and vaguer (and reading paper books got harder and harder for me) it just became too big a job and I didn't finish the trilogy.

Recently, all three books were rereleased as ebooks. Hooray! I bought them on the spot (yet more books I have in paper and electronic versions) and decided to reread the first two before finally tackling the third.

So how was the reread?

I enjoyed discovering the world again. I remember the basics, but there was so much detail I had forgotten that it was almost like a new read.

Dayton's matriarchal society surprised me a few times as I'd forgotten how dominant it was. I found myself feeling outraged on behalf of the male characters, which interested me as they are treated no worse (and often better) than any woman in a standard patriarchal-focused fantasy. And I accept that because I'm so used to it. But this switch kept surprising me. And yet, I don't think Dayton did it at all for shock value, but because that was part of the tale she had to tell.

The main things I had remembered was the enemy Kallista was fighting and the Adaran social custom of binding several people (up to twelve) into a form of group marriage. That is a major part of the story, again not for shock value, but because a group of people find themselves bound together not really by choice but at the will of the Goddess. They then have to learn how to live together, how to care for each other and how to love each other.

There is a lot of focus on choice in this book. On how much choice individuals really have and what exactly it might mean. I found this a little ironic (in a good way) as all the main characters made a huge choice at the beginning to open themselves up to the will of the Goddess and then fought desperately to avoid that little choices that were demanded by that freely given big one.

The heroine, Kallista, is especially guilty of this. She basically says "Your will be done" early in the book and then stubbornly fights the consequences of that until right at the end of the book, when she realises what she's doing and opens herself up again. Kallista is an appealing character, which made this stubbornness frustrating rather than annoying, but I did occasionally find myself wishing she'd just get over it and get on with things. All the same, her reasons are logical (at least to her) and it is something she needs to work through.

The other members of her bound family, or ilian, are four males and another woman, making for a total of six. They are all well drawn, although having so many main characters does require careful sharing of on-page time for each of the secondary five on Dayton's part. On the whole she does it well. I feel like I know all of Kallista's ilian and I certainly want things to work out for all of them.

The villain in this novel is, in many ways, rather small and easily defeated. The book is about the main six characters and how they learn to cope with their destiny and each other. The "baddies" will be showing up in more detail in the second book as I recall, and I have no idea about the last book as I know very little about it. This is clearly a "setup" book, with the main plot threads coming in its sequels. This is not a complaint, as it is instead a lovely character novel which also clearly establishes the plot conflict to come.

I am looking forward to reread *The Barbed Rose* and finally getting to *The Eternal Rose*.

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### **E. says**

An interesting introduction to the complex society that governs the country of Adara which has a military system that includes women in positions of power and wielders of magic called naitans along with their respective bodyguards challenged by other countries such as Tibre which disdains magic use in favor of mechanical and scientific methods and consider women to be incapable of holding positions of authority. Various denizens of each country discover that they have to shed their preconceived notions and accept the fate that a mysterious omniscient power has conferred upon them while they try to rid the world of the demons that incite violence and chaos. An intriguing tale that keeps adding new players to the mix while only revealing parts of the quest that begins with the naitan Kallista Varyl developing fantastical powers and follows her while she becomes a pied piper to various different inhabitants of her world.

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### **Teea says**

Read the first few chapters and loved the world she was building, until it took an unexpected twist into orgies and just plain ridiculousness. Uhm, no thank you.

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### **Mmaries says**

Fantasy with silly romance aspects and some hilarious moments. But it's nice to see the harem be populated by men for once.

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### **Heather says**

This book started out wonderfully. the first two characters to be introduced were interesting and complex, the world was well-put together, The author threw in an interesting supernatural twist....and then it flopped. It was as though she simply couldn't get from point a to point b and keep things interesting. It became WAY too much about sex and WAY too much about Kalista. She was already egotistical and the story in the book just encouraged her. Everything revolved around Kalista. Blich.

This author has promising world-building skills but needs to work on her motivations, make her plots more complicated and keep her sex drive out of her books. Glad I read this one at the library.

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