



# Darkborn

*Alison Sinclair*

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**A new romantic fantasy of magic, manners, and espionage that is also a "fast-paced thriller" (Carol Berg).**

For the Darkborn, sunlight kills. For the Lightborn, darkness is fatal. Living under a centuries-old curse, the Darkborn and the Lightborn share the city of Minhorne, coexisting in an uneasy equilibrium but never interacting. When Darkborn physician Balthasar Hearne finds a pregnant fugitive on his doorstep just before sunrise, he has no choice but to take her in. Tercelle Amberley's betrothed is a powerful Darkborn nobleman, but her illicit lover came to her through the daytime. When she gives birth to twin boys, they can see, something unheard of among the Darkborn. When men come for the boys, Balthasar is saved by the intervention of his Lightborn neighbor-and healed by the hands of his wife, Telmaine. Soon he finds himself drawn deeper into political intrigue and magical attacks, while Telmaine must confront a power she can no longer keep sheathed in gloves, a power she neither wants nor can control.

## **Darkborn Details**

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Author : Alison Sinclair

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## From Reader Review Darkborn for online ebook

### Sharon ☠ is an emotional book junkie ☠ says

This is a story of two different type of people living side by side in supposed harmony. Throw in another type and there can only be trouble ... at least so far.

A powerful mage and her followers cursed the people a thousand or so years ago. The Darkborn can only live in the dark and the Lightborn only the light and who knows about the Shadowborn except they are trouble. And that begins with Tercelle showing up on Balthasar's doorstop right before sunrise ... and pregnant, ready to give birth at any time.

The author doesn't really give much background/history to what's going on. You basically have to learn as you go. It took me awhile to figure out that the Darkborn are essentially blind ... using only their "sonn" to see. I did figure that's probably what it was but it's not till later in the book that it is spelled out. Add into it that this is a historical setting and I was definitely thrown for a loop since I don't have much experience with this genre. The funny part was after about 30%, I kept going back and forth about how much I liked it. I even planned to continue with the next book if it didn't leave off at a good spot but thankfully it does. I think I need some time to let it settle.

As for romance, there's not much. The main two characters are married, Balthasar and Telmaine, and we get some really sweet moments from them. But there's also Ishmael and Floria who spice things up.

Essentially, this whole book is about the acceptance or unacceptance of magic and it's place in all the worlds. You have the Lightborn who embrace magic and the Darkborn who don't and we're really not too sure about the Shadowborn. It leads to a whole mystery over the father of Tercelle's babies, that leads to beatings, murders, kidnappings, arrests and a bunch of political finessing.

It's also told in several different POV's which I really enjoyed. I like how you get to know characters better that way ... especially Telmaine. Seeing her grow and accept herself was very intriguing.

I really enjoyed learning about the Darkborn ... how they live and just how they navigate was very interesting. I can't wait to see how life is for the Lightborn in the next book.

Favorite line:

"Bal," she whispered, her forehead resting against his chest as the seconds counted away. "The only power I'd wish for is the power to turn back time."

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### Kelley Ceccato says

Like Gail Carriger's Soulless, this is a book that earned its fourth star in the last hundred pages. The books actually have a crucial similarity: both have heroines who take their own sweet time becoming awesome, and then at last they come into their own and our patience with them is rewarded.

I'll get the negative out of the way first. It took me a while to start to like Telmaine, although I'm willing to admit the problem may be more with me than with the book. I'm naturally impatient with the whole "I don't wanna have magic! I just wanna be normal!" shtick we see plenty often in the fantasy genre. However, I have to acknowledge that Allison Sinclair did a realistic job of depicting in Telmaine what a woman, even an intelligent woman, born and bred in Darkborn society would be like. She would naturally shun her potential for awesomeness because all her life she's been led to associate magic with danger and evil. She's been trained to be an ornament, and, being intelligent, she has tried to excel in that role. For her suddenly to think, "I have magic! Cool!" would strain credibility. (Yes, fantasy novels too need to have a measure of credibility.) So I suppose the negative is really a positive after all. At the end she's still apprehensive about her power and frightened of what the future might hold for her -- but that's what the sequels are for.

Outright positives:

- 1) I appreciate that Telmaine is a wife and mother -- not "as opposed to a career woman," but "as opposed to the maiden who usually gets to be the heroine of a fantasy novel." In so many stories, a woman's story, her potential for adventures, stops when she gets married; even if it goes on after that, it certainly stops when she has children. But Telmaine's adventure is just getting started.
- 2) Normally I hate love triangles, but this story raises the interesting possibility that a woman might be genuinely in love with two different men.
- 3) Telmaine is not the only interesting female character in the story. I'm looking forward to Lightborn and the chance to get to know Floria White Hand better. (Telmaine will rise more in my estimation if she can lay off the jealousy, particularly when she herself is emotionally torn between two men.) I also admire Olivede Hearne, the dedicated mage-healer, and would like to see her win some love and appreciation from someone other than just her brother Baltasar; in the world she comes from, she's undervalued both because she's a mage and because she isn't beautiful like Telmaine, and I would love to see her triumph.
- 4) While I generally look at "Characters First, World Second," I have to praise the interesting concept of the contrast between the two worlds living side by side, one where light is a destroyer, and the other where darkness is deadly. Sinclair does a fine job of creating the darkness-reliant culture, and I don't doubt she will succeed as well with her portrait of the Light half.

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### **Katie(babs) says**

Many years ago there was Imogene, a mage who cursed the entire land. Half of its inhabitants live in sunlight; the other half can't stand darkness. The Darkborn are born blind but have a sonar sense called sonn, which is described as unheard sound. The Lightborn and Darkborn live in the same city and the same land but in different societies. While the Lightborn accept magic, the Darkborn consider it a taboo and embrace technology.

Balthasar Hearne is a man worth his weight in gold. He is a doctor who helps the less fortunate. He likes the simple things in life and is happily married to his wife, Telmaine and their two young daughters, six-year-old Florilinde and five-year-old Amerdale. Balthasar is left alone at his home in Minhorne while his wife and two daughters are away. Telmaine comes from a family of prestige. Balthasar was only a physician-in-training when he asked for Telmaine's hand. But since Telmaine loved Balthasar and I would say she was a bit spoiled and Daddy's little girl, she got what she wanted. Now years later this couple has settled into a

comfortable life even though Telmaine carries a dark secret. Telmaine is a mage who can heal through touch. She literally has so much power at her fingertips but keeps it hidden. She wears gloves because if she touches a person with her naked hands, they may find out about her magic. Both Darkborn and Lightborn people despise mages. Bigotry against the mages is a strong thing and Telmaine has done everything she can to hide her affliction.

But Telmaine won't be able to keep her abilities under wraps for much longer. Because Balthasar has helped his brother's ex-lover and has hidden her two new born children, he is attacked and left for dead. When Telmaine arrives home, Florilinde is kidnapped before her eyes. Her daughter will be returned to her if she will give up the newborns. At the time of the kidnapping Telmaine has no idea what is going on until she finds Balthasar on the floor of their home dying. She then must turn to another powerful mage who is both scandalous as he is fascinating.

Ishmael de Studier, Baron Strumheller is a border mage and a hunter of Shadowborn monsters who reports to Telmaine's cousin Vladimer. The Shadowborn are an abomination that must be contained or destroyed. Ishmael was disowned by his father when he was a teenager because he is a mage. Now as an adult he has made his own way into the world. At Vladimer's ball, he meets Telmaine and they strike up a conversation. Telmaine is wary of Ishmael because of his reputation and she is also somewhat attracted to him. Ishmael finds Telmaine to be lovely, but he also knows she is a bit different from the other Darkborn ladies. And when he escorts her and her two daughters to their home, he will find out how different she really is.

Telmaine and Ishmael join forces to save Balthasar, find out who took Florilinde, why Tercelle's newborn twins are so important and who her lover was that impregnated her. Telmaine also must come to terms with her mage powers and her growing feelings for Ishmael. Ishmael will try his best to find the villain who has hurt Telmaine and her family. He hopes that he will not lose his heart to a woman that can never be his.

Darkborn is an excellent book with great world building, characters and most importantly magic. Allison is so very creative to come up with two different sets of people, those who can't live in the light and those who can't live in the darkness. They live side by side but are not willing to work with one another because of their own set of beliefs and what they feel is right and wrong.

At first I thought this would be Balthasar's story, but the one character who shines in Darkborn is his wife Telmaine. When we first meet Telmaine she is shown as a spoiled woman of leisure. She talks about Balthasar with love, much like someone would talk about a puppy. When she comes to the realization that she may lose her husband and child, that is when Telmaine grows up, takes responsibility and is on a mission to kick some ass. No one messes with what belongs to her and those she loves. You do see the deep love she has for Balthasar, but then there is Ishmael who is a temptation. Ishmael seems to know all her desires and if Telmaine was a weaker woman or much like Tercelle who callously throws away her babies and leaves Balthasar to pick up the pieces, she would allow Ishmael to show her those seductive types of things a married woman should only share with her husband.

Ishmael walks a fine line. Whereas Balthasar is everything good, Ishmael is one who could turn to the darkness due to his experience and skill as a hunter of the Shadowborn. Once the Shadowborn reach into your soul, you are unable to deny them. They call to you and Ishmael hears the call. But he is strong and won't walk with the Shadowborn. He will destroy them instead.

Darkborn is a great fantasy mystery. Magic is considered an abomination to some and I loved how Allison was able to show this issue, mainly through Telmaine's eyes. Balthasar is a character you will root for, and as for Ishmael, you want him to find peace within himself. Darkborn does tie up some loose ends but leaves

Ishmael's journey very much open ended with Lightborn that will be published in May 2010.

Steampunk or Fantasy, Mystery or Fiction, Darkborn is a wonderfully written book.

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### **ambry says**

Darkborn crept up on me. The beginning was slow, and overladen with awkward exposition. I think it was around page 60, halfway through an aristocratic party, when all the little details about dress and art and social norms started to build in my head and I realized just how carefully the author had thought through her society of the blind.

The adventure story is fun, but it's that aspect of the book--its worldbuilding--that bumped it toward the top of my currently reading list. This is a book that really seems to grasp the social model of disability. True, the characters aren't human in the sense we mean it--they have sonar, for one thing--but the author never lets their blindness be merely cosmetic. It's part of them, and it's fascinating to see a culture built around the assumption that it's the norm.

But even great worldbuilding can't sustain an entire book (see: Pegasus). What kept my interest were the three main characters, all genuinely likable, confident in their own spheres, and yet with flaws, sometimes deeply problematic ones, outside of them. I -love- that two of the leads are married to each other, very happily married, and yet both have crushes outside their marriage. They're not unfaithful, nor do I get the sense they're trending that way in future books--they're just human. Neither is thrilled that the other has feelings for someone else, but they're not beating each other (or themselves) up over it. These things happen; their marriage will survive. How often do characters get to be that mature over something like this? Not often enough.

As a side note, I see a lot of reviewers don't think much of the female lead, Telmaine. I, umm, disagree. Rather a lot. No, she's not perfect--she's a Regency romance character stuck in a heroic quest story, and she's fighting with all she's got to get back into the kind of novel she belongs in. But she -is- fighting, not just passively sitting around. And she does eventually come around to trying to save the world. On a number of levels, I appreciated her resistance more than her husband's "ooh, a quest!" idealism. It felt more real. (But I liked him, too.)

The one thing making me reluctant to tip this book to the four side of the three-four divide is the origin myth. Which is a perfectly fine origin myth--once upon a time everyone was a sighted human, and then a mage's curse divided the land into two peoples, one who could not bear the light (and was blind, and gained sonar to compensate), and one who could not bear the darkness--except that it undermines one of the book's best aspects: the presentation of blindness as the norm. Why not start with a race of sonar-using people, half of whom were cursed to lose their sonar and gain sight? Or even a race with both sonar and sight, where each half lost something? As it is, I am mildly worried that the series will end with the curse being broken and all the blind characters suddenly regaining sight. That. . .would be kind of problematic. But so far the author is doing really well, so I suppose I should just have faith. And get a copy of book two.

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### **Ginn says**

It is so refreshing to read a fantasy novel in which the main characters, Balthasar and Telmaine, are married and stick together through the difficult places in the plot, even through temptation. The story is family-oriented, which is nice.

I love the world the author has created. Contrast is one of my favourite things, and what's a better contrast than light to dark? The way she explains the Darkborn, and how their society works in conjunction with that of the Lightborn, and the existence and different levels of sonning, is well thought out. I do feel that the author went a little crazy with the thesaurus though, even if I did enjoy the language style. It was educated-sounding but somewhat challenging to read.

I wish this book was complete in itself, though. I don't appreciate this trend of leaving off books with a cliff-hanger ending, or an unresolved plot. The overarching plot should be more subtle, at least, and not something that detracts from overall satisfaction in the book's ending. That said, I will be reading the next in the series, since I've grown fond of Balthasar and Telmaine.

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### **new\_user says**

I'm torn on this one. Wavering between three stars and four. On the one hand, *Darkborn* was elegantly written. My inner editor hardly made a peep. In fact, I have a little bit of a soft spot for fiction written with older, literate language.

Dialogue exactly suited the period, albeit in an alternate universe with magic, and the characters-- and I was so thankful for these characters, who, to the last, are all intelligent individuals moving in shades of gray. No one argues when they're told to stay behind (thanks). They could have been explored more compared against other fantasy novels, as this novel's firmly established in fantasy territory, despite the strong undertones of romance and "manners."

The blurb gets that right. The interactions between characters are subtle. There isn't any eroticism, although there is tension and cues and all the hints exchanged in a BBC romance, only without the weight those moments have in a BBC classic because the rules are bent regularly (one simply cannot maintain one's modesty dashing through flames).

At the same time, the fantasy arises in the main conflict of a rising evil, the magic, heroism, etc. Without giving away too much away, the dark horse yet shining hero is my favorite and his BBC dilemma is compelling. LOL.

My problem with the novel, despite all that, is that, by the last page, not much has changed. It seems like everyone ends where they began, only there's an excuse for another novel. Our major concerns about the characters come to nothing, and that's simply not satisfactory with a love triangle. Frankly. LOL. This felt suspiciously like an adventure to set up the characters in the positions they need to have the real or next adventure.

It was also missing some fighting. Major action scenes ended almost before they began. They were resolved immediately, with no problems, and while this doubtless saved my poor frantic heart, it was a little anticlimactic.

I'll give Sinclair props for potentially starting a new genre in fantasy, with elements of traditional fantasy and

a comedy of manners. I'll give her credit for the writing and characters, but in order to really appreciate this, you have to truly enjoy suspense and milling about and a minimum of physical movement. Four stars for the prison chapters. I might read the next book if it seems like some progress is actually made with the characters, some *resolution*, rather than just another adventure. Or if I'm in a particularly good mood.

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### **Sarah Mac says**

This book had a lot going for it: a gorgeous cover, an awesome world-building concept, a 'society fantasy' with historical feel but magical twists. Alas, it fell somewhat short of the mark.

Even so, I give props for brainstorming. Imagine a vaguely-Victorian city that's shared between two populations -- a race that can't live in light & a race that can't live in darkness. Some of these people manage to share house complexes. For a Lightborn & Darkborn to split their building -- with access through double-door compartments -- is considered the ultimate form of trust between neighbors. (With good reason, right?) There's an intricate system of bells that chime warning for light & dark. The cab drivers refuse to take customers too close to sunrise/sunset, & those who can't get transport end up seeking shelter with whoever is at hand -- it's considered poor manners to turn away someone close to sunrise, no matter if you dislike them.

Another intriguing detail: Darkborn are essentially blind. They use sonar ('sonn') to visualize their surroundings, which creates another layer of social complexity, depending on the strength & familiarity (or lack thereof) of the sonn'ing. (Picture a ballroom of jealous women imaging each other into a haze of echoing impressions, or randy young bucks imaging beneath women's clothing, or a mob of angry Darkborn getting tangled in too many sonar impressions. These are legit problems that are all touched upon.) Lightborn & Darkborn attitudes toward magic further complicate their interaction. The Darkborn reject magic in favor of tangible medicine, psychology, & pre-industrial mechanics, & anyone Darkborn with mage abilities is considered unworthy of high society. Lightborn, however, have embraced magic & use it whenever possible -- including government, police, & medical issues.

All this makes a solid world-building foundation -- I just wish the pacing & clarity of the story had lived up to the promises presented by these details. We have some likable characters & we have some less-sympathetic ones -- but either way, they're given very little to do. I'm not usually one to complain about slow-moving fantasy, but there's got to be SOMETHING tethering your interest to the characters, otherwise a book moves in fits & starts...which is exactly what happened here. Important things happened in a rush, then settled to snail's pace for lengthy chunks of narrative. (view spoiler) At several points I was certain the book had hit its stride...but then things slowed yet again. I was suckered into further false hope by the rescue of a kidnapped child -- great use of magic in that scene -- and an intriguing reveal between husband & wife, effectively drawing the narrative to a close...except it didn't end. Oops. Imagine my surprise to find another 40+ pages of random Things Are Doing Things action, rounded out by an excruciating recap of events in a bizarre anti-climactic interview with the spymaster. *Why?* As if events weren't recapped frequently enough throughout, there has to be another reveal of the same. damn. information?! Snooze button, please.

Solid 3 stars. Not terrible, but not good enough that I'm particularly interested in continuing the series.

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### **Karissa says**

I have had the Darkborn trilogy on my bookshelf to read for quite awhile. I've actually started it a couple times and just couldn't get past the first couple chapters. I was determined to read at least the first 100 pages this time to give it a fair shot....I still didn't like it much.

Let's start with the things I thought were interesting. I think the main draw for this story is the unique world. Sinclair has created a world with two different species of human: one that will burn in the light and lives in the dark and one that will unravel in darkness but thrives in the light. What is interesting is they live side by side (literally) in the same cities. There is a council of representatives that meet occasionally to make sure both species are coexisting okay. Despite that each species has their own forms of government and generally lead completely separate lives from each other. This whole concept is a bit unbelievable but still kind of neat.

Okay, so then why did I stop reading it? Well there are a lot of readings. First of all the characters names were tough to keep track of; two of the main heroines have names that are very close and I was constantly getting confused about who was doing what. Secondly the book jumps around between POVs a lot and it just wasn't working; it was jarring when we switched POV and not at all well done. Thirdly our main heroine, Telmaine, is married to sweet and scientific minded man who adores her and whom she adores. She has two lovely children and is generally happy. Then when another mage enters the story (an older man) she is suddenly drawn to him. Now I didn't get to the point where she actually cheats on her wonderful husband but that's kind of where the story seemed to be going and it was just...yucky.

Less specifically I didn't like that the story didn't flow well and was very hard to engage with. The characters were likewise hard to engage with and I pretty much struggled to read every page of this book. I read it until 100 pages and then stopped. This is one of those cases where I just didn't have the patience or time to read something I just was not enjoying.

Overall I didn't like this book. The world-building is well done and unique but the characters were hard to engage with and the story didn't flow well. I wouldn't recommend this and, obviously, won't be reading the last two books in the series.

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### **Carolyn says**

I really enjoyed this one - more than I thought I would. What looks like another standard fantasy/paranormal romance is actually a political intrigue/adventure novel. An engrossing 'world' with an interesting magic system, and the underlying 'curse' which sundered the people into the Darkborn and the Lightborn, two societies which operate independently, but share the same space in the capital city. I thought the Darkborn were going to be some kind of vampiric race, this assumption not helped by the dark beauty on the cover, but instead the Darkborn, who would be burned to ash by the light, any strong light, use 'sonn', a cleverly realized sense of sonar to make up for the sense of sight, which they lack. Living in total darkness, sight as we know it would be of no use to them.

Highly recommend, I will definitely be reading the rest of this trilogy, which happily for me are all already published. = )

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### **Bücherfresserin says**

Inhalt:

“Nachtgeboren” handelt von einem Land, indem Nacht- und Lichtgeborene gemeinsam in Frieden leben. Während die Lichtgeborenen tagsüber ihre Leben bestreiten und Dank des Lichts sehen können, leben die Nachtgeborenen, wenn die Dunkelheit die Sonne vertreibt und orientieren sich lediglich mit Hilfe ihres Ultraschalls und ihren anderen Sinnen. So unterschiedlich wie beide Rassen sind verbindet sie dieser immer gegenwärtige Fluch, wie ebenfalls die Magie. Doch wo die Lichtgeborenen forschen und ihre Fähigkeiten weiterentwickeln, gilt Magie in der Welt der Nachtgeborenen als gefährlich, wenn nicht sogar verboten. Genau in dieser Welt lebt Balthasar und seine Frau Telmaine mit ihren zwei Töchtern. Telmaine, von adeliger Abstammung und eigentlich nur dazu bestimmt ihrem Mann als Dekoration zu dienen, eilt seit ihrer Hochzeit mit einem normalstämmigen Arzt ein Ruf voraus, denn sie ist keine bloße Dekoration, sondern eine kluge Frau, weshalb Balthasar sie auch zu seiner Frau machen wollte. Allerdings taucht eines Tages wie aus dem Nichts die frühere Mätresse seines verhassten und verschollenen Bruders auf und hinterlässt ihm zwei Zwillinge, die ein merkwürdiges Rätsel aufbieten, denn Balthasar ist sich sicher, dass beide Kinder die Gabe zu sehen haben. Kurz darauf überschlagen sich die Ereignisse, als seine Tochter entführt und Balthasar fast bis zu Tode geprügelt wird, wodurch es an Telmaine liegt ihre Tochter wieder zufinden und den Frieden zwischen Nachtgeborenen und Lichtgeborenen zu bewahren, denn nicht nur hütet sie seit ihrer Kindheit ein belastendes Geheimnis, sondern ist das Land plötzlich von Intrigen aufgewühlt, die über das Grenzgebiet reichen ...

Meinung:

Bei “Nachtgeboren” handelt es sich um die Darkborn Trilogie von Alison Sinclair. Die Reihe handelt von der Stadt Minhorne die seit langem von einem Fluch gespalten ist. Es gibt Lichtgeborene und Nachtgeborene, die seit Jahrhunderten Nachbarn sind, aber sich nie wirklich sehen können, da beiden Rassen ansonsten der Tod widerfahren würde. Lichtgeborene ertragen keine Dunkelheit, wohingegen die Nachtgeborenen in der Sonne verbrennen, was mich leicht an Vampire erinnert. Dieser Fluch ist auch nicht das einzige außergewöhnliche an dieser Reihe, denn nicht nur die Kultur zwischen beiden Rassen ist vollkommen anders, sondern auch deren Umgang mit der Magie, da es immer wieder Licht- sowie Nachtgeborene gibt, die mit magischen Fähigkeiten auf die Welt kommen, was eine wichtige Verteidigung darstellt, im Kampf gegen die, die aus dem Grenzgebiet kommen, dem Schattenland. An sich klingt dieser Idee ziemlich spannend und bietet ein enormes Potenzial, denn der Konflikt zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen, Überlebenstechniken und magischen Fähigkeiten scheint sehr interessant. Der erste Band aus dieser Trilogie spielt aus der Sicht von Nachtgeborenen, was das Cover schnell vermuten lässt, sowie der Titel. Erzählt wird die Geschichte überwiegend aus Balthasars, Telmaines und Ishmaels Sicht, die allesamt eine bedeutende Rolle in dem Roman spielen. Teilweise erinnert es auch schon an eine Dreier-Beziehung, wobei Balthasar und Telmaine eigentlich verheiratet sind, aber das ist anscheinend auch eher Notwendigkeit bei den meisten Nachtgeborenen. Balthasar als Charakter erschien mir schon von Anfang an sehr positiv und ich glaube, dass es bei solch einem freundlichen Mann auch kaum anders sein könnte. Dagegen finde ich seine Frau relativ oberflächig. Mit Telmaine wurde ich bis zum Ende nicht warm, wieso ich auch öfter einmal ins Stocken kam beim Lesen, denn mir erscheint Balthasars Ehefrau eher unreif, als eine standhafte Mutter, die zu sehr auf eine Scheinwelt achtet. Aber wahrscheinlich liegt mir dieses Frauenbild auch überhaupt nicht, da bei den Nachtgeborenen Frauen eher als Dekoration dienen, was wiederum das völlige Gegenteil bei den Lichtgeborenen ist, wo die Frauen kämpfen und mutig sind, wie Balthasars Jugendfreundin Floria Weiße Hand — meine heimliche Lieblingsprotagonistin.

Ansonsten bietet der Roman “Nachtgeboren” vor allem für High Fantasy Fans viel Spannung, die vor allem Thriller mögen, denn viel mehr als ein Thriller in einer Fantasywelt ist “Nachtgeboren” eigentlich nicht. Das hatte ich in dem Maße jetzt nicht erwartet, sondern eher, dass es auch ein wenig romantisch, wenn nicht sogar erotisch werden würde, was ja für die meisten Bücher bei Lyx spricht. Dem war aber nicht so, denn Telmaine ist verheiratet, aber eine wirklich innige Beziehung zu ihrem Ehemann konnte ich dann auch nicht ausfindig machen und ihre plötzliche Zuneigung zu Ishmael sind auch eher Teenagergedanken, als das

daraus wirklich eine Romanze entstehen würde. Genau dies finde ich ziemlich schade, denn nur als Thriller konnte mich der erste Teil dieser Reihe kaum überzeugen. Es passiert einfach unheimlich viel und ständig wird irgendjemand so schwer verletzt, dass nur Magie ihn heilen kann. Es gibt keine netten romantischen Stellen, die diese trockene Suche nach der wirklichen Gefahr irgendwie ausschmücken.

Dazu kommt, dass ich die gesamte Geschichte an sich sehr spannend finde und mich auch der Fluch von Lichtgeboren und Nachtgeboren überzeugen konnte, aber es einfach an Vorwissen fehlt. Mir hätte da ein kurzer Prolog genüge getan, aber so wurde ich unheimlich flott in diese merkwürdige Welt hineingeworfen. Irgendwie konnte ich mir bis zum Ende kaum vorstellen, wie das Leben wirklich ablaufen kann, wenn man sich per Ultraschall bewegt, denn Nachtgeborene haben grundsätzlich nicht die Fähigkeit zu sehen, was wiederum teilweise sehr verwirrend ist beim Lesen.

Deshalb kann ich das Buch grundsätzlich auch als bloß durchschnittlich bewerten, vielleicht ändert sich dies bei den folgenden Bänden, aber dafür, dass der erste Roman "Nachgeboren" rund 400 Seiten enthält, hätte ich mir mehr Abwechslung erwartet, zwischen Gefühlen, Kampf und Spannung. Der ganze Roman schien mir durchweg leider eher als eine Hetzjagd, als eine Auflösung von Intrigen, Morden und der Entführung einer der Töchter Telmaines, die Balthasars Ehefrau übrigens ziemlich flott, binnen weniger Seiten rettet, wodurch die ganze Geschichte zu Beginn, mit den Zwillingen relativ schnell in den Hintergrund gerät — schade.

Alison Sinclair hat jedoch eine sehr schöne Sprache und über ihren Schreibstil kann man nun wirklich nicht meckern. Alles passt, die Dialoge sind nicht zu trocken. Die Autorin hält sich nicht mit zu vielen Details oder Gefühlen auf, sondern bringt durch ihre Wahl der Worte die Geschichte weiter. Allerdings waren mir die Passagen mit Telmaine manchmal etwas zu schweermüdig, da die Autorin sich vor allem auf diesen Charakter begrenzt und mir die inneren Konflikte von Telmaine schnell auf den Nerv gingen.

Fazit:

Es handelt sich um einen Fantasy-Thriller im High Fantasy Bereich. "Nachtgeboren" ist der Einstieg zu einer Trilogie, der nächste Band erscheint noch 2011 bei Lyx unter dem Titel "Lichtgeboren". Für Leser, die auch gerne einmal auf Romantik verzichten können und lieber einer spannende Handlung, in mitten einer vollkommen anderen Welt, folgen wollen, könnte der erste Band durchaus lesenswert sein.

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## **Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says**

This is a cross between urban fantasy and mannerpunk, likely to move into epic fantasy in the sequels. By which I mean it mixes action scenes and captures/escapes/rescues with formal social encounters and an adherence to societal norms, all of it with a potential Ultimate Evil brewing in the background. My thoughts on all aspects of the book are mixed, so I'll take them one at a time.

**The Worldbuilding:** This book's novelty is primarily in its world, divided into two societies, Darkborn and Lightborn. The Darkborn are blind, use sonar ("sonn"), and burn to death in sunlight, while the Lightborn are sighted and dissolve in darkness. Though they share cities, the two groups can never come face-to-face, and each has its own rulers and social norms. This book focuses exclusively on the Darkborn, rather than introducing us to two societies at once, and that works well, especially since they are the stranger and more interesting race.

The world's limitations make for great narrative potential: the Darkborn can't step outdoors in daytime on pain of death, no matter the extremity, whether medical emergency, house fire, crime, natural disaster, the list goes on. It's quite an obstacle to normal life as well. Now if you are already thinking, "why don't these

people just live underground, or at least build sealed walkways in urban areas?" you are thinking more critically about this premise than I did - until the author waved the holes like a matador before a bull, that is. As one character offhandedly informs us, the Darkborn in the city where our story takes place once had tunnels, but bricked them up after the Lightborn made the streets safe for their use at night (presumably by sealing their windows). So, somehow we are supposed to believe that these people are capable of discovering electricity, inventing the steam engine, and various other mechanical and engineering feats, but are so stupid as to destroy their 24/7 safe passageways in favor of roads whose use entails instant immolation approximately 12 hours out of the day? I want to give the entire race a Darwin Award.

Moving on, the Darkborns' other notable attribute is their blindness. So social norms have built up around the use of sonn, and meanwhile I was surprised by how little I noticed that nothing is described in color. However, while sonn is limited in range and has to be "cast," otherwise it reads like vision; characters are capable of perceiving details like facial expressions, scars, and the material and cut of clothing, which seems a bit unlikely and unimaginative.

**The Characters:** Unusually for fantasy, two of our three protagonists, Balthasar and Telmaine, are a happily married couple with two young children. (By coincidence, this is not the first such fantasy book I've read in the last few months; the other is Dragonsbane, which I'd recommend over this one.) Balthasar is a gentle doctor and scholar, while Telmaine is a socialite from a noble family who married down, at least in the eyes of her family and friends. Unfortunately (at least to me), this setup does not prevent the book from containing a whirlwind romance subplot and a love triangle: enter Ishmael, our standard-issue grizzled warrior with a tragic past (yawn). Fortunately, Balthasar and Telmaine both handle their spouse having a crush outside the marriage like adults.

Of the three protagonists, Telmaine is the most prominent (and the only one to reappear in book two), and the most controversial among readers. My response is ambivalent. On the one hand, she is a dynamic character in the process of unlearning the prejudices of her society, and by taking an active role and succeeding dramatically at key moments, she makes a good heroine. On the other, she has quite the sense of entitlement, seen particularly in her secretly reading the minds of those closest to her and covertly learning their darkest secrets, without apparently considering the violation of their privacy and autonomy. Also, the author seems to want to prove that Telmaine is Not Like Other Women (at least in society) despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that she actually is traditionally feminine. Which just makes it look like she surrounds herself with vapid and small-minded people who obsess over trivial breaches of etiquette. Fortunately the book also includes some interesting women outside of high society; by far my favorite character is the mage doctor Olivede.

**The Plot:** Entertaining, despite a few clichés and the characters' constant repetition of their story to every new person they meet. The plot moves quickly without subsuming character development or worldbuilding, and the author allows us to figure out the world as we go. This book isn't quite standalone; while it ends at a logical point, it's a breather rather than a resolution. But it did keep my attention and provide enjoyable reading.

And despite all my reservations, and the fact that I am not a big fan of sequels in general, I've moved on to the second book, so in the end this one did its job. The writing is smooth if occasionally over-the-top, the characters are believable if not especially deep, and it's a good fast read. If nothing else, it makes for fun escapism.

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## **Ana Mardoll says**

Darkborn / 9780451463005

"Darkborn" is the first book in a new fantasy trilogy, and has absolutely won me over with its incredible premise and engaging writing.

The people of this fantasy world have been cursed and now fall into two distinct camps: the Darkborn who live their lives in darkness and who burst into flames at the touch of the sun, and Lightborn who live surrounded by lamps and who disintegrate if they are ever cut off from constant light. The Lightborn and Darkborn live amongst each other, sharing a city and with carefully designed houses that allow communication between the two groups, but never anything more.

Author Sinclair has put an astonishing amount of thought into her world-building and the effect will almost certainly please the reader. Since sight would be a fairly useless sense in a pitch dark world, the Darkborn have "sonn", a sonar-like sense that allows them to outline their surroundings with sound. The intricacies of life under this curse are explored in detail, and it's hard not to be completely immersed into the story within just a few short pages.

The characters of "Darkborn" are engaging and likable, and it's easy to feel frustrated whenever we're pulled away from one character to move to another, but it's the "good" kind of frustration that reminds you how committed you are to the reading. Almost all the main characters are delightful and will win over the reader; for instance, I was initially concerned that the character of Telmaine was heading directly into "Mary Sue" territory, but by the mid-way point of the novel I liked her so much that I didn't mind.

The one thing I feel ambivalent about is the author's treatment of QUILTBAG characters in her novel. I'm pleased to see gay, transsexual, and cross-dressing characters appear in the pages of a fantasy novel -- too often, they're avoided altogether. But on the other hand, the characters fit certain stereotypes of flamboyant behavior and it's unclear whether they do so because of the restrictive society in which they have been placed, or if we're just unfortunate enough to not have less stereotypical examples available to us. I'm inclined to give the author the benefit of the doubt since much of the novel is about unfair prejudice against various groups of innocent peoples, but I hope that the next novel may provide more three-dimensional representation of its marginalized groups.

~ Ana Mardoll

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## **Arlith says**

I couldn't finish this. I tried to read it, the idea sounded good, but I just couldn't do it. I made it about 50 pages in, but it was definitely slogging through, hoping it would get better. I couldn't identify with any of the characters, the names of the lead character's wife and the lady who had the baby were similar enough that I had a hard time telling them apart. I felt like I was thrown into a completely different world without any explanation about how it worked. I was having trouble even figuring out the basic rules of how their society worked.

I did enjoy the bits I read about his neighbor on the other side of the wall, but it wasn't enough to keep me

trying to read this.

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## Shelley says

Synopsis: For the Darkborn, sunlight kills. For the Lightborn, darkness is fatal. Living under a centuries-old curse, the Darkborn and the Lightborn share the city of Minhorne, coexisting in an uneasy equilibrium but never interacting. When Darkborn physician Balthasar Hearne finds a pregnant fugitive on his doorstep just before sunrise, he has no choice but to take her in.

Tercelle Amberley's betrothed is a powerful Darkborn nobleman named Ferdenzil, but her illicit lover came to her through the daytime. When she gives birth to twin boys, they can see, something unheard of among the Darkborn. When men come for the boys, Balthasar is saved by the intervention of his Lightborn neighbor-and healed by the hands of his wife, Telmaine as well as Ishmael de Studier Baron Strumheller.

Soon he finds himself drawn deeper into political intrigue and magical attacks, while Telmaine must confront a power she can no longer keep sheathed in gloves, a power she neither wants nor can control.

Review: The premise of this story is interesting. You have two races of beings who share the same city of Minorne. They have been "cursed" by what people are calling Imogene's curse to be either Darkborn, or Lightborn. In this book, the writer focuses exclusively on the Darkborn. What was different in this story was the fact that the Darkborn have no eyes. They use what's called sonn (thinking radar) to get through their lives. Ok, tell me nobody found that strange.

The story is focused on three (3) people: Balthasar Hearne - he's a Darkborn Physician who also has a friend named Floria White Head of the Lightborn. Floria is supposed to be some sort of spy mistress and assassin for the Lighborn. They seem to have some kind of connection, whether it be solely a friendship, or a kindred spirit. Balthasar assists in the low income portion of town, and has never really had money, unlike his wife Telmaine Hearne, who comes from royalty. Balt has two daughters 6 year old Florilinda, and 5 year old Amerdale. Balt's only crime in this book, is taking in a former lover of his long lost brother Lysander's and allowing her to give birth in his home, and then saving their lives when Tercelle tries to sunlight kill them. Later, it gets worse when his first born child is kidnapped in order to prod Balt into telling (who knows who; shape-shifters?) where the children went.

Telmaine Hearne - obviously the wife to Balt and the mother of two daughters, has known since the age of 5 that she has magic (touch-sense). She hides it well from her family by covering up her hands, and skin, including her husband until she finds him lying near death in his parents former home. Telmaine falls hard for Ishmael di Studier, when he helps her save her husband. This story mainly focus on her and Ishmael. Telmaine ends up being a decent character to cheer for when she goes after her daughter, and rescue's her. She also becomes a killer when anyone tries to hurt her, or Balt on the way to see Vladimir, and those who took her dauther. Has the ability to talk mind to mind with Ish, and nearly overloads his brain. Fifth, or Sixth Level Mage.

Ishmael di Studier - better known as the Shadow-Hunter and 1st level Mage. Ish works for Telmaine's cousin, Archduke Vladimer, in their war against the Shadow-born. Ish, is accused of murdering Tercelle, and using magic agains Vladimer. He finds Tel extremely attractive, and is the first one to actually understand what her powers are.

Other pertinent character: Olivede Hearne - Balt's older sister, and Mage herself. She practices medicine in an area called the demimonde, the Rivermarc, where fallen women, mages and criminals ply their trades. She secrets the babies away from Balt and finds them a home (WHICH, I'm sad to say, we have no clue where they went.) Olivede and Telmaine aren't exactly close. Call it trust issues, call it wealth vs no wealth issues. Olivede, however, ends up partially saving her brothers life, as well as Ish's.

Unanswered question(s): 1. Where did the newborns go? 2. Are they actually Shadow-born, or Light-born since they were both born with sight, something darkborn don't have. 3. Is Lysander really dead, or is he working with the Shadow-born? 4. Obviously, Ish and Tel have feelings for each other. They can't help it. They are in each others heads, as it were. Where does that leave the reluctant Balt?

The next two books in this series are Lightborn (06/01/2010), and Shadowborn (06/07/2011).

This series has a lot of premise if we can get passed the first 50 pages. In this one, I was looking for No Doz to keep me awake. Then, Ish came along, and things started to pick up. Unfortunately, there are a lot of readers who are not patient if the story doesn't start out with a bang. This story, it seems, takes place in an alternative Victorian area reality. The world building is quite charming, and the story overall has its moments. Some readers, and other protagonists have said that the Darkborn are actually vampires. I Don't think so.

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### **Tammie says**

Darkborn is a very inventive fantasy story. The characters were very nicely drawn and the world was original to anything I've ever read. The Darkborn are people who cannot live in the light, sharing a city with The Lightborn, people who cannot live in the dark. I especially loved the Victorian type setting. It was like reading a mystery set in a Victorian fantasy world.

Although I liked it well enough and felt the characters were well drawn, there is something about it that doesn't pull me in the way I wanted. I also did not care for what seems like the beginning of a love triangle between a woman who is married, her husband and this new man that she meets. She wants desperately to not be attracted to the new guy, and I commend her for that, but I'm still not crazy about it. I also don't really understand what she finds more attractive about this new guy than her husband. I'm afraid I won't care for the direction the author might take this aspect of the story in the next book so I think I'll pass on reading the rest of the trilogy.

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