



Salt

Maurice Gee

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The Whips, as silent as hunting cats, surrounded Blood Burrow in the hour before sun-up and began their sweep as the morning dogs began to howl. Their gray tunics turned black in the downpour, their helmets shone like beetle wings and the sparks that jumped from their fingers as they herded their recruits fizzed and spat like sewer gas.

Salt is an utterly compelling fantasy adventure, the work of a master storyteller at the peak of his powers.

When his father Tarl is captured and enslaved to work in Deep Salt, Hari vows to rescue him. This is a forbidding task: no one returns from Deep Salt. But Hari was born and raised in Blood Burrow. He's tough and smart--and he has a secret gift: he can communicate with animals.

The beautiful Pearl, born into the privileged world of the ruling class known as Company, has learned forbidden things from her mysteriously gifted maid Tealeaf. Now her father has promised her in marriage to the powerful and ambitious Ottmar. But Pearl will never submit to a subordinate life, so she and Tealeaf must flee.

When their paths cross, Hari and Pearl realize that together they must discover the secrets of Deep Salt. Their long journey through the badlands becomes far more than a quest to save Tarl--their world is on the brink of unspeakable terror.

Maurice Gee is one of New Zealand's finest writers, with more than forty books for adults and young adults and a number of prestigious awards to his credit. Salt is the first volume of The Salt Trilogy. Orca will publish Gool in Fall 2010 and Blood Burrow in Spring 2011.

Salt Details

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Author : Maurice Gee

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Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Fiction, Adventure

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From Reader Review Salt for online ebook

Elizabeth says

I read a lot of young adult fiction for work as a youth services librarian and am able to enjoy most of it. While the majority is not fiction I would read for my own personal entertainment, I can see its merit and appeal. However, there are a handful of books that I have picked up for work and have really connected with. Salt and its sequels are those kind of books. I doubt I can do the book justice in a review, but I would like you to at least come away with your interest piqued.

Dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction is really popular right now, I think in part because of The Hunger Games. I was less than impressed by The Hunger Games, both with the writing and with characters. Neither of these issues plague Salt. Maurice Gee loosely based the world of Salt on New Zealand and the colonization of the islands. In doing this he creates a haunting and ethereal setting.

The city of Belong is populated by a wealthy and genteel set of people who came from Company, over the sea. They rule the Burrows with an iron fist, keeping them in extreme poverty and in conflict with one another. Hari has grown up in Blood Burrow. His mother is dead and his father, Tarl, has taught Hari how to survive in their savage world. One day the police force, the Whips, arrive in Blood Burrow to round up men to send off for slave labor. Tarl ends up in an altercation with one of the captains and injures him pretty seriously. As punishment he is assigned to Deep Salt, a mysterious mine for which no one ever returns. Hari is distraught and decides to set out and rescue Tarl from Deep Salt.

Here Gee weaves in the story of Pearl, one of the Company daughters. She is promised in marriage to an odious man. In an attempt to dodge the marriage, Pearl runs away with the help of her ladies maid Tealeaf. Tealeaf is a Dweller, a race of people with cat-like eyes and the ability to speak through the mind. As they escape the city and the Burrows, they come across Hari in the wilderness. While the two children are leery of each other, they form a tentative alliance. Tealeaf discovers Hari has the ability to "speak" with animals and the potential to learn to speak silently with people too.

Pearl and Tealeaf agree to help Hari.

As their adventure continues Pearl is pursued and Hari discovers something terrible about Deep Salt. It becomes their mission not only to rescue Tarl, but to save the world from the plans of Company.

The book is just so beautifully written. It has such atmosphere and is so dark and bleak, but in a way that keeps you turning the pages. I feel compelled to note that there isn't quite the violence of The Hunger Games, but there is off page sex (very little and at the end). I think it would make a much better 8th grade plus novel, but certainly a younger audience could handle it (they just may not enjoy it as much). The violence of The Hunger Games baffled me. I am surprised that something like that became so popular especially with the younger crowd. Not that I personally mind it or would prevent my daughter from reading it. I was just surprised.

Update: I read this book probably five years ago, maybe more, and absolutely loved it then. But I think I loved it even more re-reading it. Salt has it all. Incredible story telling, good writing, amazing characters, fantastic world building, and it subtly tackles some interesting issues like colonialism, racism, poverty, privilege, environmentalism, and coming of age.

Spoilers ahead.

I'm not sure how Gee manages to do this, but Salt is both character and plot driven. The story is incredibly

exciting and full of action and suspense. However you are also let in on the history of Hari and Pearl and then see them grow immensely as their stories intertwine. I especially liked that not only does it take time for them to shed their old, terrible lives, they don't do it completely by the end of the story. They retain vestiges of those lives that may never completely leave. Hari often hears the call of violence and hatred while Pearl often feels the pull of privilege that came with wealth. By the end though the two have heard a higher call and they strive to follow that instinct instead of their old ones.

The world is, I believe, based on the colonialism of Australia and the marginalization and impoverishment of the Yolnu. There might also be shades of New Zealand and the marginalization and impoverishment of the Maori. I don't think you need much if any understanding of what happened in those places, but it's a place and situation you don't hear much about in traditional American education which I think makes it all the more interesting. Thankfully there is a map at the beginning of the book to help those of us who have a hard time picturing the lay of the land. Descriptions are spare, but detailed enough to create a clear picture in your mind what the world looks like. And the descriptions of the Burrows, the slums, and the life in them are very vivid. Be forewarned, this is not for the faint of heart. There is a lot of violence in those places.

In my second reading the relationship between Tarl and Hari really stuck out to me. When Tarl is taken to work in the Deep Salt mine Hari vows to save him and this puts Hari's storyline into motion. Hari spends some time, both before leaving the city on his journey and while on his way to Deep Salt, reflecting back on his early memories of growing up as Tarl's son. The two were close and Tarl was surprisingly tender with Hari. However as the two have very different experiences through the book, Tarl in the mine and Hari on his travels, they diverge. Once reunited Hari discovers the bond between them is no longer founded on shared experiences but on the relationship they shared in the past. The bond is still strong and certainly important, but the two have changed and they meet on different footing. Interestingly, Tarl appears to lament the new distance between them as much as Hari does, but he also understands that Hari is getting a chance at a much better life than Tarl has had or expects to ever get and this is something he very much wants for Hari. Their relationship and its changes, I think, will really resonate with teens who are separating from their parents and becoming more independent, but also feel that longing for the simpler time of childhood.

I won't get into all the themes I listed above here, but know there is a lot to this story. There are also two more books in the series. They could in theory all be read as stand alone novels and they are all good. I liked this one best of all, but I think that was because I read it first and loved it so much. The next book, Gool, follows the children of Hari and Pearl in their quest to rid their world of the evil that still lingers. That one is interesting to see how Pearl and Hari have grown and how they have passed their legacy on to the next generation and tried to build a new world for their children. The third book, The Limping Man, follows another character entirely in the next generation after Gool. I would say give this to kids who like dystopian fantasies, and that is probably a good recommendation, however I read the Hunger Games after this series and Hunger Games pales in comparison. This is so much better and I'm not sure kids who loved Hunger Games style dystopia will connect in the same way with this one.

Alejandro Mora says

I really liked the book Salt by Maurice Gee. The reason on why I liked this book was because it related a lot to a previous group of books that I just finished reading. It related to it because in the group of books that I read a boy that had gotten captured for a crime that he did not commit was being sent off to prison where he works non stop and can never leave or have contact with the outside world. It reminds me of this book salt because when Tarl was captured and sent off to work at salt it reminded me when the boy Alex from the

other book had gotten captured. Other reasons that I liked it was because of how they used the mineral salt as a weapon and the things that one was able to do to other people with salt. Salt was so bright it blinded those who looked. It made people very ill to the point of no return. They had captured his father and he set off on a mission to help and rescue him with his new partner. I hope that the other two books are as good as this one.

Jarvis Crabb says

Hari lives in the burrows, where you do anything to survive. Company often comes to the burrow to take people to work to help build Company (everything is for the good of Company). Hari's father is taken and assigned to Deep Salt, a death sentence. No one ever survives or escapes Deep Salt and there are rumors of mutant rats and other beasts. Hari vows to save his father. Meanwhile, Pearl, who lives in Company's luxury, and her maid, Tealeaf are plotting to runaway so Pearl doesn't have to marry the leader of another House. Pearl is different from the rest of her family and class, being mindful to some extent of those beneath her, and she can speak to others without words. Hari, Pearl, and Tealeaf meet up on their journeys and their goals become linked.

My main dislike of this book is that the ending was so blunt, otherwise the writing was well done and the characters well developed. I liked the healing that Hari has with the help of the Dwellers. This is the first book in a trilogy and I imagine we will find out the fate of the island.

Questions:

1. Why I decided to read this book: I decided to read this book it has a lot of action and suspense it has very unique characters

2. Which category on the bingo board this book completes: This is a book written by an female New Zealander.

in has survival parts to the book and has a female main character named pearl.

You should comment on the category too – why was it interesting (or not)?

I thought was really interesting because it has very unique culture and characters.

3. My favourite quote from this book (and why):

"I will do whatever it takes to get my dad back" it shows the extent you can go to, to save someone you love for example how much Hari had to risk his life to save his dad.

4. Something new I learned from this book is: I learned the extent you can go to, to save someone you love for example how much Hari had to risk his life to save his dad.

5. A character or setting in this book that was interesting to me (and why): I thought Tealeaf was a very interesting character she was a dweller which was a different race from the human race but are very similar they only have three figures and a short but they have powers to control and read minds.

Erin says

A strong fantasy that doesn't focus on the minute details of this fantasy world. Succinct writing and a well told story. It can stand on it's own and since I'm sort of sick of trilogies and series I'd be happy had it ended here.

La Coccinelle says

Where do I even start with this one? To put it bluntly, it was awful. I'm not even sure I want to waste any more energy by reviewing it, but perhaps it'll be cathartic.

Things didn't start off too badly, at least as far as the plot went. In the beginning, we see Tarl (Hari's father) taken away to work in Deep Salt as a slave. This is the most dreaded of work assignments because nobody ever comes back alive. The setting for the book is a dystopian fantasy world that (in some ways) reminded me of Panem in *The Hunger Games*. There is a city populated by the rich (akin to *HG*'s Capitol) surrounded by what are basically open-air prisons called the Burrows (similar to *HG*'s Districts). Unfortunately, the world of *Salt* didn't seem very plausible to me, since it tried to combine too much in the way of technology. They still use horses and carts for transportation, yet their weapons are electrified. I suppose this could be because of the meshing of the cultures, but I still found it inconsistent. All the talk of horses and railway cars that have to be hauled up the mountain by hand... and then a jarring mention of a flatbed truck and batteries. Have these people had their equivalent of an Industrial Revolution or haven't they?

The plot seemed to get worse as the book went on, but the characters were uniformly awful from the start. I couldn't identify with either of the main characters, and I just couldn't care about them either. Hari was particularly unlikeable (he kicks his dog until it yelps, for crying out loud!) and Pearl was just bland. All the characters seemed to have flunked out of Social Skills 101; the dialogue was often stilted and juvenile. And everybody wanted to kill each other! Honestly... It was like a broken record with the men. Kill, kill, kill... That seemed to be their only thought. (view spoiler)

Jongwan says

Hari, born in a society where the privilege rule, his dad is enslaved and sent to work at the deep salt, leading him to use his ability to converse with animals to rescue his dad and to discover the secrets of the deep salt. Personally, I liked how Maurice Gee portrayed the two main protagonists with polar backgrounds and personalities. Hari and Pearl, both with the same ability to interact with animals, come from two separate

worlds. Maurice Gee depicting the characters as counterparts allowed for a compelling story to unfold. For example, When Hari and Pearl needed to run, Pearl took off her shoes and noticed the social differences among each other: "Hari could not believe how small and white her feet were. They reminded him of the grubs they'd eaten" (Gee 88). Because of this, I would recommend the book *Salt* to young readers who enjoy dark and edgy themed storyline with engaging shapes.

Mandy Brouse says

How wasn't I aware of *Salt* by Maurice Gee? It's the first installment in one of the darkest books I've read in a while. Seriously, *Salt* is dark and desperate. It doesn't let up and I'm afraid of what I'll be getting into by reading the other books in the trilogy. Maurice Gee is a pretty prolific writer, but I haven't heard of him before. He's a New Zealand writer and he's won a ton of awards and accolades.

Salt has a strange setting; I can't describe it. It is dystopian--ruined and dying. Company rules with an iron fist. Although, when they came from over the sea their flags showed open hands, as if in greeting and peace. The rich live lavish lives and the poor die of starvation or illness. Many are hauled away every day to work in the various mines and other manual labour jobs where not much of you is left at the end of the day. The worst place to be is the salt mines, and to be assigned to Deep Salt is a death sentence. A slow and painful death sentence.

When the book opens, Hari is hiding in a cart, watching while his father is one of the many men being taken to a labour mine. Tarl fights back, insults Company and is marked to work in Deep Salt. Hari, using his ability to speak with animals, causes a diversion with the horses in an attempt to save his father. He fails, Tarl is taken away, and Hari escapes, vowing that he will save Tarl from Deep Salt whatever the cost.

Read the rest on my blog Edge of Seventeen: <http://eoseventeen.blogspot.com/2009/...>

Monica Chin says

There was so much going on in the novel, many themes like love, racism, discrimination, (I'm not sure if this is a theme but...) war, death and power. It is about a journey of a young boy retaliating against people of another race who have taken hostage of many men from his people including his father to a forbidden place called Deep Salt to excavate. The young boy's enemies were digging up powerful minerals embedded deep under the surface. These minerals were so strong they emitted blinding light, this light will poison upon impact and will crawl under your skin making you deathly ill. This mineral, salt, was viewed as a weapon that could be unleashed to the world by war and conquer which was exactly what the cruel men whom Hari wanted to kill were after. It was rumored that anyone who works in Deep Salt never returns to the surface... The young boy, Hari, set off on a rescue to save his father, seething with hatred and anguish for the men who took his people away to their deaths. On his way to Deep Salt Hari meets Pearl, who lived a life so different, she lived in a luxury mansion dining with knives, forks, spoons and comfort- unlike whatever Hari had experienced. Hari and Pearl were total opposites, who had hated each other because Hari was from the wild forests not in the posh world Pearl had lived in. Instead of seeking vengeance Pearl wanted freedom and wanted a life shared with her closest bond, not her family but her maid. As the truth of Deep Salt unraveled Pearl decided to help Hari save his father and fight against the people she was born into. A lot more happened in the book, and I skipped plenty of information about each of the characters so that I

did not spoil the story! It is hard remembering what had happened because I had read it in the beginning of July and I regret that I didn't write a review earlier! Overall I enjoyed the book because there was adventure and suspense as well as seeing Hari and Pearl evolve and change which to me, is key to an interesting story.

Corinne Edwards says

What is salt? No one really knows what they mine in Deep Salt, all people know is that once you're sent there, you never come back. When Hari's father is captured by Company cronies, Hari will do whatever it takes to get him back - even if it means going to Deep Salt himself. Pearl on the other hand, she IS Company, but wants out of that cushy life. She and her extraordinary maid are determined to get out of the city -but escape is as challenging as they'd feared.

What do these two young people have in common? How do their paths cross? What is the terrible thing that is about to be unleashed on their world? I sure enjoyed the answers to those questions, in fact, this was a very intriguing read. Part Lord of the Rings and part Romeo and Juliet - it's great fantasy. While it moves slower than The Hunger Games and has a less romantic plot, I'd say it reverberates with that same adventurous, political feel. It's a very moral and conscience-based book, a good basis for some ethical discussion.

For those who are interested, it's the first in a trilogy, but for me, it stands well enough on its own.

Kathleen Dixon says

I think I've read only one other by Maurice Gee, and when I'd finished it I went out immediately and purchased a copy. That's "lindsight," which is a novel written for adults. This one is written for children, I guess, but I've never let that put me off appreciating a book.

I read this in one day. The train trip to the city was about 40 minutes, then I caught maybe half an hour at lunch time, then grabbed a couple of 10 minute slots while waiting for lectures (Conference presentations). Then there was the train home, which didn't quite finish it, so I got back to it when I went to bed.

What a great story (I was going to say delightful, but have realised that has become my Word of the Moment and I'm using it almost indiscriminately!). There is adventure and telepathy and social comment and a little romance. Gee writes a skilful story that draws the reader in and makes the characters and storyline highly believable. I must pick up as many of his older titles as I can!

Matthew Sampson says

Gee writes in a weird style: subtle, wild, otherworldly, at once distant and very present. If we have to define it, it's omniscient, but with clearly designated POVs, moving from one to another in a seamless transition. Here is an author who knows how to stay out of his story, to let it be what it is, and to let us pay attention to whichever part we find most interesting without resorting to hamfisted attempts at influencing readers.

Usually I like immediacy, sophistication. Gee's style sits on the opposite extreme. But in no way is it *remote*; I said *distant* before, because time passes in irregular beats, sometimes many hours in a single phrase, other

times with paragraphs devoted to a matter of minutes; but never is it separated from the ineffable portrayal of the very human characters. Nor is it *simple*. Straightforward, yes, with lean, almost skeletal prose. And it works. The style is evocative, consistent, excellent. It's the right style for the story.

I cannot review a book by Maurice Gee without pointing out the character arcs. Hari and Pearl begin as enemies and end as lovers. Gee does not stress the character arcs during the story but leaves them for readers to discover upon reflection. They're not as strong as in his *The Severed Land*, but they work nonetheless, and writers could learn much by studying Gee's style.

So, three stars? My reasons, by and large, are either to do with the lack of many meaningful obstacles in the final push to victory (though it fits the style) or with choices made by the characters in-story. I was pleased to accompany Hari and Pearl on their journey, but I don't feel the need to keep reading.

Maybe one day. We'll see.

Rating: 3 stars (Interesting. Enjoyable. I might reread it.)

Natasha Wilson says

i decided to read this novel because my family owned it, and i had heard good reviews of this book. I also read it because i i had read other novels by Maurice Gee such as "Under the Mountain" and had enjoyed them.

My favourite character is Hari, the main protagonist. He is a teenage boy living in a dystopian world, where half the population is wealthy and happy, however the other half lives in extreme poverty. Hari is in the less fortunate half. His mother died when he was young, and so when his father is taken away by the government to work in the Deep Salt he becomes determined to save his father from the fate millions faced before him. With the help of Pearl, a privileged girl running from an arranged marriage and her maid Tealeaf, they set off on a dangerous journey.

Hari was my favourite character because he was determined and tough, though beneath his cool exterior he had an enormous heart. He also makes the otherwise quite dark novel humorous with his witty and sarcastic comments.

"I was chained to a crazy man.

We were thrown in prison together. We were both getting sent to Deep Salt. But during our time in prison, he hung himself.

I could've stopped him,

but if a man wishes to die, that is his choice, and I need to respect it"

This is my favourite quote because it made me understand that life can be worse than death, and that it is only somebody's own decision whether or not they take their life and should always be.. I agree with this quote immensely.

This book made me think more deeply about the future of our world, and how dark and twisted it could become. This is because "Salt" is set in a cruel future, and this may be similar to our future if we continue to mistreat our world and each other.

paula says

"Salt" is such a good word. Hard-edged and hissing, but with that L in the middle for nuance. Only one syllable, four letters, terse, definite, but not simple. "Salt" is a noun and a verb, and sometimes an adjective, and it has meanings both mundane and technical - alchemical, even.

In this book, "salt" refers to the salt mines that Burrows dwellers such as Hari and his father, Tarl, must labor in if they are caught by the Whips - minions of the all-powerful Company. But all of the word's connotations travel through the narrative like a mineral vein through ore.

Yes - by the way - we're living in the Land of Capitalized Nouns here, and that's just one of the features of this book that *ought* to make me cringe...

Full review on Pink Me: <http://pinkme.typepad.com/pink-me/200...>

Nick Gioia says

This book is about a 16-year-old dark-skinned boy named Hari whose father is captured by this group called the Company and taken to a place called the Deep Salt where you are forced to work hard long days and eat food which will eventually kill you. Hari will stop at nothing to get his father back and takes off on his journey across lands and places he has never been. Along with his journey, we learn a lot about Hari including that he has the ability to talk to animals we also meet two new characters Pearl and Tealeaf who is Pearl's maid who run away from their family who is one of the ruling families of the company because they don't agree with what they are doing. This group sets off to get Hari's dad back from Deep Salt. This book is filled with action and twist and turns throughout the whole book that will keep you on the edge of your seat and will send chills up your spine. It also teaches you many lessons about greed and the importance of family. If you like post-apocalyptic action-packed books then salt is a must read and you will not want to put it down to you read every last word from the book.

Simon says

I first read this book many many years ago now. Perhaps before I even started high school. I remembered it fondly as a good book, although, I couldn't remember exactly what happened. So I picked it up again to refresh my memory.

Admittedly, I had to drop a star. I almost dropped two stars because of the last chapter (which equaled five pages). But due to sentimentality, I still liked this book.

It's very simply written. And very typically New Zealand fantasy, I think. I've noticed that books by New Zealand authors are very...tonally different to other books. I can just tell I'm reading a book by a Kiwi, usually. It isn't a bad thing. I think our authors generally just have a more direct, simple style of writing. Hell, just take my reviews for example.

Despite being 'simple', as I put it. It's also quite dark for a young adult book, which I quite like. There is a lot of violence and death and heavy undertones of colonialism and class/race disparities. The cast is actually very racially diverse as well, which is nice. And the two protagonists are both very different and travel their own developmental arcs.

I think, besides the simplicity, it's biggest fault was the cheesiness too. Even though I just said it's quite dark. The ending particularly is very cheesy, I think, with its sudden romance and happily ever after.

But otherwise, it was a decent read. I wish more books by New Zealand authors were read and appreciated too.
