



Tarnish

J.D. Brink

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Being a hero isn't as easy as the tavern tales would have you believe.

Billy Cole has always been a quick study, be it at telling tales, brewing ale, or swordplay. And yet it surprises Wil Thunderstrike, his alter ego, at just how hard and fast the lessons come on his first venture into the real world of back-alley thieves, traveling talespinners, and warriors of renown.

Wil's quest is to find epic heroes to save his home town, but it'll take more than a sword and the inspiring tales of his legendary idols to survive the harsh world beyond Redfield. From the inns of Hobb's Turn to the port city of Fellwater, he'll chase brigands and join pickpockets, fight with constables and street thugs, find romance and fall from grace, all while trying to discover his own true nature and forge his destiny. *Tarnish* is a grittier coming-of-age story than you're used to, blending elements of traditional high fantasy with a darker, less forgiving perspective on right and wrong.

What kind of hero would you be?

Tarnish Details

Date : Published 2013 by Fugitive Fiction

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Author : J.D. Brink

Format : Paperback 402 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Adventure

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From Reader Review Tarnish for online ebook

Daphne says

I absolutely loved the innovative take on the classical epic fantasy Tarnish brought to the genre. I didn't start getting into the story until about 40 minutes in, but I'm so glad I stuck with it. By the end of the first hour I was absolutely hooked, and was really sad when I had to pause to do real life things. I just wanted to get back to the book and finish it.

I'm definitely adding another work from Brink to my TBR pile to see if his other work is as enjoyable as Tarnish. I also REALLY hope he plans on a sequel. This would be a wonderful start to a series.

The addition of the storytellers telling actual stories within the bars and inns was a stroke of genius. It was my absolute favorite part about the book. There is so much trope that goes into this genre anymore that the way this book was structured was a breath of fresh air.

I really can't get over how perfectly suited to this story Menesses's narration was. His enunciation was great, and I loved all his character voices. It was a first class performance. I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

AudioBookReviewer says

My original Tarnish: Complete Trilogy Edition audiobook review and many others can be found at Audiobook Reviewer.

Tarnish by J.D. Brink is the first in a fantasy series called The Thunderstrike Saga. This start to a coming of age saga follows Billy Cole as he leaves his small town of Redfield to become an epic hero like those he heard about in tavern stories. The son of and mentored by legendary heroes, he has a lot to live up to. When Redfield is threatened from unknown and magical threats, Bill Cole volunteers for a quest to find help, having been inspired by the heroes of his town. As he faces the dangerous life on the road, he must figure out a way to get help for his home town while maintaining his sense of self and honor. Through this quest, Billy Cole hopes to turn into William Thunderstrike, his alter hero ego.

This was a surprisingly excellent fantasy coming of age story. There are two simultaneous storylines. One follows Billy Cole as he embarks on his quest. The other follows the characters in his home town as they deal with increasingly dangerous magical attacks. Both storylines are exciting in different ways. While the action in Redfield is driven by the attacks on the residents, much of the storyline is about the politics of the town. Billy Cole's adventures are more exciting. He interacts with a diverse cast of characters some of whom are easy to hate, easy to love, and easy to not be sure about. One interesting aspect of this novel was the frequent telling of tavern stories. Throughout the novel, especially the first half, different characters tell epic stories about legends to crowds in taverns. This is so frequent that the plot seems to travel from one tavern tale to the next. But somehow, it works. And these tales tie into the rest of the plot well and help add background to many of the characters. Billy Cole's coming of age is gradual and he is flawed, which allows his growth to be visible as the story continues. The magical aspects of the novel are for the most part tied to land around Redfield. This part of the novel was unexpected for me and I thought that it was interesting and

mystical. Overall, I thought the storyline and the characters were engaging and exciting with good pacing.

The narration by Todd Menesses was excellent. He voiced the characters well and consistently. At times, I felt that he spoke a little too fast because I would miss some of the words, but mostly it was great. The production quality was good as well. I would recommend this story to readers who like fantasy coming of age stories.

Audiobook was provided for review by the narrator.

Bob Craton says

Recently I posted an offer on Goodreads to review a select few fantasies if the authors could convince me their work was something original and not just a re-hash of standard themes and characters. (I specifically excluded elves, vampires, magic swords and other things.) J.D. Brink promised that his books fit my criteria and he told the truth.

I started with “The Prince of Luster and Decay” which is a short book that is something of a prologue to this series. I was impressed, as you can tell if you read my review of it.

“Tarnish” tells a marvelously inventive story. Many writers use flashbacks to provide details about the past history of characters. This author’s flashbacks are in the form of tall tales recited by ‘talespinners,’ as story tellers are called. You know that the talespinners exaggerate and aggrandize their yarns but you also are aware that each has a kernel of truth. Sorting through the legends to guess the facts is part of the fun, especially in the case of Trevor the Red, a character who spins stories about his own past.

The plot is interesting and the characters are well done, especially young Billy Cole who re-names himself Wil Thunderstrike. His part of the story is a gem. “Tarnish” is a very entertaining and readable book. I did feel that the tall tales went on a bit too long in one scene, a contest between talespinners, but nothing changed my opinion about this book – which is five stars.

I did receive a free copy in exchange for an honest review but that did not affect my opinion in any way.

Rob Rowntree says

Tarnish
Author: J D Brink

Goodreads blurb...

What kind of hero would you be?

Silver, they call it, the light of the full moon: celestial magic that changes men into beasts and calls the dead

from their graves—and young men to their destiny...

When his village is attacked by creatures from Blood Marsh, Billy Cole volunteers to find help. But it'll take more than a sword and the inspiring tales of his legendary idols to survive the harsh world beyond Redfield. Taking the name Wil Thunderstrike, he sets off to save his home and begin his own heroic legacy.

On Fate's fickle course, however, sixteen-springs-old Wil Thunderstrike will become a storyteller, adventurer, and thief; discover romance, danger, and betrayal; and return home both a hero and a villain.

Four stars (3.5, I'm notoriously tough with my reviews)

I'll get right to it. I enjoyed this novel quite a lot, possibly more than I expected to. (I was given the ebook free via GR's group, The Source, for an honest review.)

It's the tale of Billy Cole and his quest to save his village, to grow into manhood, and wear the mantle of a true hero of old, to become Wil Thunderstrike.

A quest then. Nothing new you might say, but that's where you'd be wrong. The author manages to breathe new life into the old trope and it's a refreshing read.

We have magic, curses and darkness, tales of daring-do, and mixed in there's a dose of war is hell. Once onboard, I was drawn onward and couldn't wait to pick the novel up again. I wanted to get the end of these character's stories and to see what happened. And that's the sign of a good writer, to hook the reader and not let go, and here the author knows his stuff.

The world he creates is well crafted and different in as much as he blends tropes, there's a dash of steampunk about his cities, traditional fantasy about the tales and battles, and something icky in the marsh and swamp. His characters are well rounded and more importantly, his main character goes through change.

So why four stars(3.5)?

For me there were a couple of technical issues that drew me out of the story. There were modernisms in the dialogue, which weren't necessarily wrong, but I felt they jarred a little. I wondered whether the author used them deliberately, or if they were just his normal writing style.

The other was a device the author used to fill in back-story. His main character (and others) told tales in pubs/bars to earn a crust. It's a neat idea, but in the first part of the book it was used too much and became intrusive. That said, once past it the book does grab you.

I would recommend this book and wouldn't mind reading this author again.

Bob Milne says

This is a very odd book to talk about - on the surface, it just shouldn't work. We have multiple narrators, between whom we switch more for narrative effect than the needs of the story. We have a distinct coming-of-age story (which I've long since grown tired of), where the hero hides behind the persona of who he'd like to be. We have storytelling within the story, a kind of intrusive info-dumping that interferes with the forward progression of the plot. Finally, we have a plot that seems to wander without a clear direction for much of the book, before suddenly finding its direction and racing to a climax.

Despite all that, it worked. The narrative was strong – from the language, to the dialogue, to the imagery.

Brink isn't afraid to write lengthy paragraphs and scenes, to take his time setting things up, and to show us his world. That, to me, is engaging. It draws me in, makes me read a bit more closely, and gives the appearance of depth (which, it must be said, is not merely appearance). As for the characters, the hardest aspect of writing a novel is to encourage that immediate emotional connection, to draw readers in, and make them care - and Brink does that very well. I liked Billy from the first time we met. He interested me, intrigued me, and made me want to know more about him. There was this welcome duality to him that allowed him to play the hero very well, even as he grew into the role. It's less a coming-of-age tale and more a story of self-discovery.

There's a lot of imagination and fantasy flourishes here as well that really caught my attention. Even small, throw-away scenes like the dream of monsters inside the tavern are full of fantastic detail, allowing you to not just 'see' the danger but 'feel' it as well. That element of storytelling within the story really won me over. It allows for things to get a bit wild, a bit over-the-top, without dragging down the credibility of the entire story. We expect people to embellish their tales of heroism because we want to be entertained as much as we want to be informed, and Brink clearly understands that.

It's not just mindless heroism and adventure, however. There's also a heart to the novel, a very self-aware sort of appreciation for humanity and the horrors of war. Towards the end of the story, Billy stands before an advancing army of swamp monsters and asks himself, "How monstrous can they be if they mourn?" It's a good question, and it leads into the final evolution of Wil (the hero) coming to terms with being Billy (the boy). Sure, I would have liked a little more world building, and I would have liked more of a sense of the wider world, but those are minor quibbles to be resolved in a second book. All-in-all, *Tarnish* is a solid tale, a classic sort of heroic adventure that's really pulls all the elements together in a satisfying resolution.

Originally reviewed at [Beauty in Ruins](#) as part of the Great Self-Published Fantasy Blog-off

Patrick Leclerc says

Tarnish is a new take on the classic Hero's Journey tale. A young man leaves on a quest to get help for his village which has come under attack from strange creatures. The theme is classic but Brink does a remarkable job capturing the mentality of a boy on the cusp of manhood. Anyone who has made that painful, awkward transition can feel the authenticity of young Wil's emotions, ranging from the unshakable confidence and feeling of immortality, to troubled self examination. I can't remember ever reading a book which captured that transition better than Brink has with Billy Cole's transformation to Wil Thunderstrike.

The world Brink has created is rich and detailed, well drawn with enough backstory to give the setting depth, but not so much as to be overwhelming. I was impressed with the world, and I'd like to see more of it.

My only criticism is the plot and pacing. It tends to meander, and there's a lot that could be tightened up. Places where I wasn't really sure where it was headed. Not a suspenseful "what's going to happen next?" but a perplexing "where are we going with this?"

I think the voice and the setting carries the story through. I will confess that my patience can be bought with voice, but I found this book well worth the time spent reading it.

Saritha says

i was given a free copy by the author in exchange for an honest review. i have done my best to do so.

It is a book about heroes, magic and adventure. There are tales within the tales which make it even more interesting. The story tells us about the journey of Billy Cole as he sets off to get help to save his village. He dons the personality of Wil Thunderstrike, a storyteller & a hero so as to get help. The story begins on a very interesting note & develops at a good pace.

Billy is a 16 year old boy who is the son of a famous retired hero & was trained by another famous retired hero. He wishes to prove himself & become a hero like the character he takes on when he leaves. He is not an infallible hero; he makes mistakes, gets into scrapes & gets out of them. He grows up on this journey from boy to man. I couldn't help liking Billy.

The story had a good pace & kept me on my toes with all the twists & turns. It made me laugh, bite my lips & cheer for Billy. I liked the stories his mentor told him & all the different stories gave the story an additional flavor & made it even more interesting. I loved the ending, the scenes were well written.

Billy was someone I could relate to - his uncertainty, his need to prove himself, the blind faith that youth have on their abilities, seeing the real world & being tested by it; all of it made him even more likable to me. I could relate to a lot of it. The female characters are portrayed as strong women & I liked nearly all of them. His relationship with his father & with his mentor is well written.

The book is like a roller-coaster – full of twists & turns & you keep asking “what’s going to happen next?!” The way the story built up was good, my anticipation kept on building along with it. The ending did not disappoint. It was an exciting story. I liked it. I felt my heart race with Billy’s and I felt it break with him. I felt as though I was with them in the story & I enjoyed the ride!

here the link to my amazon review. its a copy/paste of this review

<http://www.amazon.com/review/R2YWPO5V...>

Melissa ownsbey says

i enjoyed this book
it was awesome would make
an great movie
it had everything i like
blood swords dragons beast
fighting i give it 5 stars plus
thank you for sending me this book
to review

Richard Mactough says

Tarnish is a coming of age tale about Billy Cole or his alter-ego Wil Thunderstrike. After his village is attacked, Billy goes on a quest for help to fight the creatures also known as gromlins. Thunderstrike lives the true tale about a young teenage boy becoming a man. All of the characters are vibrant and well driven. They all stood out from one another, eliminating generic characteristics.

The story was well written, however, the storytelling told within the story was a bit too much. I felt it took too much from pushing the story forward. There was only one important key that answered a curious question near the end. The story was still very well written, easy to keep up with, and kept me hooked until the end.

The last four chapters leave you astonished with unexpected twists and turns. You well question Wil's transformation from start to finish. It's an instant classic heroic epic. J.D does a great job in exciting his readers, and sets up well for the next story (sequel). I highly recommend this book to lovers of Lord of the Rings and any other medieval tale.

Sydney says

Different than my normal read purely because it has a male pro-tag but VERY good. I would say this is more of a crossover YA-Adult book based on the storyline, characters, and tempo. I enjoyed it immensely. Well done.

--Update--

So I was lucky enough to actually a signed copy of this from the author. CHEA! So thank you thank you Mr. Brink for the fantastical read.

The longer I am away from this book, the more I like it. What's amazing about this book is that it is its own story. It's well written, although it got a little choppy (more on that in a minute) and the characters are their own beings. It's not some spin off, take off, bullshit twisting of the same young adult themes. And honestly, I think that's mostly because for ONCE we get a very real male pro-tag.

Billy/Will, our main homeboy, is adorable. This is my Will:

Smexy, and buff and clean faced. He's exactly what I would think a medieval teen-aged adventure junkie would be. And I think it's completely cute how smitten he is with the illusion of Will vs Billy. And love how he has to wrestle with the age old "who am I?" question and how Brink makes it very entertaining. He has all these ups and down and highs and lows and by the end, he's really gotten booted off this pedestal he put himself on. But I couldn't help but giggle at the last name he comes up for himself, Thunderstrike. Call me

dirty minded but heyyyy...

Personally, I am A HUGE fan of switching narrators. I love being able to feel and see the story through different eyes and voices. It adds depth and dynamics to a book. And while I did enjoy all our narrators, I only wish we got to spend a little more time with each of them. I felt like sometimes we would meet someone and he'd be gone before we got a chance to know him.

And OMG, I love love love that you get all these stories within stories because there's all these storytellers in the story. It's like, bookception.

Read all my reviews at www.rattlethestars.com

Marie says

It took me a few chapters to get going on this book.... but once it caught me, it CAUGHT me. I found myself looking forward to reading it as soon as I woke up, and making extra time (outside of my normal reading time) to read it.

This is good vs. evil, but complex and interesting. I really enjoyed the characters. I liked the tales that were being told to fill in the character stories.

The surprise ending was a total surprise. It was not only a surprise but it was one of the most interesting plot twists I've ever come across. I'm still explaining it to friends because it was just fascinating and really well written. I plan to read the entire book again!

Loved it! I believe it is open for a sequel and if so I'm looking forward to it.

Andie says

I first need to thank the author, J.D Brink, for allowing me access to this book in exchange for a review- sorry for putting it off for a little bit and thank you for being understanding about it!

I was contacted by the author back in April via e-mail, and he asked if I would be interested in reviewing his novel "Tarnish". I looked at the Goodreads page and pretty much replied with a "Hells yeah!". Fantasy? Sword fights? Monsters? Destiny? Gimme, Gimme!

The novel itself is enjoyable. Unfortunately, at the time I was reading this, I found myself in a bit of a

reading slump and was very stressed with real life, so much like with "Shadow of the Wind", I don't want to be too overly critical about it.

The world building in this novel was great, there was so much depth to the different towns Billy (or Will, as he names himself throughout the book) found himself in throughout the story, and certainly a loving amount of depth and effort had gone into the stories Will told along the way. I found Will mostly amusing as a character (I do say "mostly" for a reason, which I will come back to in a bit), I loved seeing him big himself up for a fight and then basically just get pummeled. Just goes to show that real life is never like the tall tales we spin. It was like the ultimate "You tried..." story. I did feel quite a bit of sympathy for him whenever he got showed up.

If I have one negative to say about this book is that I found it tricky to follow the narration. The story would jump from Will's perspective, to a story Will was telling, to the perspective of someone in the village back home- this is where the new popular fad of character names for chapter titles does come in handy! I'd find myself a bit confused for the first paragraph or two of a chapter and then feel stupid as I realised "oh wait, it's a different character" or "oh right, it's one of the tales". I found it meant that the flow of the novel got interrupted by it a lot. But even then that isn't really too much of a negative comment, in my opinion anyway.

Following this, while the tales within the story certainly had a loving amount of depth, I found it took me away from the actual plot of the book too much, and I found it difficult to let the stories keep my attention because I just wanted to follow what was going on with Will and the situation with the monsters back home- which I also felt was not addressed as much as it should have been. I know I've missed something vital from this book, I can't shake that feeling- it has to do with "Trevor", but I know it's because my mind was in two places at once while reading this book, just trying to sort out the tales from reality.

I did find myself getting frustrated with Will's attitude and treatment towards the female characters in the book but I guess this can and probably will be excused by the fact it's how traditional heroes behave in their adventures, I guess. I know Will is basically a teenager but I still found it pretty off-putting.

On the whole, yes it does have a few flaws, but I certainly recommend this to fans of the fantasy genre.

For more of my reviews, please visit The Book Heap @
<http://thebookheap.wordpress.com>

Mike (the Paladin) says

Well crap...look there is an old country remedy usually called the spring tonic or simply sulfur and molasses. It's just that sulfur and molasses. In the case of the tonic you mix it together, one teaspoon of sulfur to two teaspoons of molasses. Here I can't mix it, you get the two separately. So, what do you want first the sulfur or the molasses?

Okay, guess we'll go with the sulfur first. I think you will if you read much see a lot of this book coming including the "BIG CLIMAX" or "BIG SECRET". That may not be a terrible thing as there are only so many plot twists out there, but they need to be done well. Whenever I got interested in this novel it would seem to take a break or something. When I laid it aside I just wasn't in a hurry to get back to it.

Also it's "sort of" a message book and it's a message we've all seen before. That got a little old.

Now I got that out of the way, let us have the molasses. The book so far as how it's written is good. You will get to know the characters. Billy/Will is fully drawn and you come away feeling that he was there in full color (so to speak). Some of the other characters are going to stay a little paler and not be so "three dimensional" but that's not too much of a problem.

I didn't really think the transitions did much for the book and the "stories" that we experience during the story telling are a very mixed bag. They do set up much of the story and add to the plot but they aren't all related that well.

In short I didn't hate it, like part of it might "consider" more by the author but am far from sold on more by him. If I could I'd put this close to a 2.5. that said I can't really give it a full recommendation I can only say some of you will love it...others, not so much. Maybe try for yourself...let me know what you think.

Karri says

This book was exactly what I've been missing! An epic tale with swords, magic, and heroes!

Since finishing series' such as The Wheel of Time by Robert Jordan (James Oliver Rigney, Jr.), and The Sword of Truth by Terry Goodkind, I have been trying to fill a void I didn't know I had, that is until reading Tarnish. While the writing style is different, it's just enough to show the reader how unique J.D. Brink's telling of this type of story is. This is a wonderful fantasy novel with everything a fantasy lover could want. Do not miss out, and lose yourself in J.D. Brink's world. You will be so glad you did!

Audiobook Narrated by Todd Menesses: I enjoyed Mr. Menesses' voices and reading very much. He was the perfect choice for this novel, and would be excellent in the next in this series.

Kyra says

For more reviews, please visit my site.

Actual rating: 3.5

When danger comes to the small town of Redfield, one boy goes out in search for help. He follows a path that may lead to fame, riches and glory, and his name is Wil Thunderstrike. What Wil doesn't realise is that his path is about to take a wrong turn.

This book is first and foremost a coming of age story for a young man. It deals with lessons that he needs to learn about how the world works outside of Redfield, relationships, friendships and discovering who he really is. Wil is an excellent protagonist, an awkward teenage boy perfectly rendered, with enough flaws and things to learn that we also journey along with him as he becomes his own man. I can't profess to knowing exactly what goes on in a teenage boys head, but this seems closer to the truth of it. Though there isn't too much to set him apart from the crowd apart from his height, Wil is still an interesting character. Perhaps he is more interesting because he is not special, but wants more for himself. A lot of people can relate to this. A

few other characters, such as Ian, Trevor and Silverskin were also very well drawn and had very distinct characteristics.

The pacing for me was slow to start. This was mainly due to all the storytelling that took place as the background of the characters were developed. Generally, this is not something I like as there are other ways to a back-story in motion without the main story stopping entirely. I tend to enjoy it if a book gets on with the main plot, saving the back-story for subplot rather than distracting the reader from it. The pace was also lacking due to the fact that the story flitted between Redfield and Wil. I was more interested in Wil's story than those that he had left behind, and with the stories being told there as well, I admit I was slightly impatient to get back to Wil. However, as the story developed, I found that this became a great device for building up the story and the tension as the danger lurked mainly with Redfield.

The ending was certainly the best part. The pace had steadily picked up during the book and speed up again in the last third. The final chapters are therefore a flurry of battle scenes, revelations and a rush of magic. It is true that some parts of this you can see coming, but in others you really can't. Mostly I did not think about any sort of mystery until I was nearing the end, and perhaps the book could have benefited more from making me question the events in Redfield.

The fantasy element was always there, but for the most part the book was grounded in reality, only really letting any magic slip in nearing the end. Yes, there is a silver man and a swamp man and they are both strange, but really I just accepted them for what they were, not really thinking about if there was any meaning to it. I think my reading of this book would have been better had I known there was something mysterious going on.

Tarnish is a good read and was interesting, but wasn't quite my thing. It is more suitable for those who enjoy steadily paced, classic heroes tales and male coming-of-age stories that are very character-driven. Personally, I would have preferred much more magic.
