



His Dark Empire

M.R. Forbes

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They said he was a cruel and unfair man, that he could never die, and that he had ruled over us for as long as anyone could remember. They said that he made slaves of innocents, that he hunted the magically gifted, and that he named them Cursed for the tears of blood they shed. They said he claimed the ones who lingered, and killed the ones who ran.

Eryn didn't know why she ran, except that she had promised she would survive. She didn't know the dangers of his roads, or of the monsters that lurked beyond her imagination. She would never have guessed how much she would lose... or how much she could gain.

Silas didn't know who he was, except that he was a murderer. Destitute, alone, and imprisoned, he couldn't grasp the depths of the memories he had forgotten, or understand exactly how much he had lost... or how much he could gain.

It could not have been foretold how his actions would change their lives, or how their lives would change the fate of his.

For nothing was as it would seem in his dark Empire.

His Dark Empire Details

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From Reader Review His Dark Empire for online ebook

ParaUrban Review says

This new series by MR Forbes was released just before his third book, Broken, from the Divine trilogy. Having enjoyed the first two books of that series so much, I didn't hesitate buying the start of this new one immediately.

The story line revolves around a young girl (Eryn) who is Cursed, and Silas, an alcoholic with an unknown and potentially dark past. For the tears of blood she sheds, Eryn is forbidden to live - she is a danger to society and will be killed if discovered. Silas is a murderer - at least, somewhere in the fogged, alcoholic reaches of his mind, he knows he's done some terrible things.

A chance encounter with a cursed child results in Silas leaving the haze of alcoholic memory loss behind and kicks off a riveting, painful journey of discovery, loss and re-learning. Eryn and Silas's lives are thrown together when Eryn is discovered by his soldiers and escapes into a world of turmoil, hiding who and what she is and desperately trying to survive in a world of monsters and men who wouldn't hesitate to hurt or kill her.

Mr Forbes has once again written an outstanding tale. I'd have liked to see a little more world-building and perhaps some fleshing out of the characters as they developed but, overall, it's a fantastic first book in a new series we can definitely look forward to. Well done Mr Forbes!

Kingsley says

3.5 / 5

Contrary to my normal process I'm going to put my narrator review first and book review second.

I rarely give 5 stars to a narrator. I just don't. So a 5 star review here is a big deal.

I've listened to many books by Jeff Hays and have always enjoyed them. He performs rather than just reads, something I always enjoy. Differentiates characters. Puts emotion in. Really makes the story come alive. There have always been a few things that I'm not a huge fan of that he occasionally adds – sound effect/digital effects (laughs, spits, or distortions for monster voices). Usually used sparingly and fairly appropriately. They are still here in this book but used very sparingly and in places that are appropriate. They didn't annoy me, or take me out of the story as full on sound effects do. Your mileage may vary – dislike of these is a personal thing of mine. So it's still not perfect, but it is great.

The main difference that elevates this book above others Hays has done, and gives it 5 stars, is that the entire thing is outside his native accent. He's American and this book is done with an Irish narrator and filled with Irish, Scottish and English accents. And yet they all hold true (to my Australian ear). The way the accents are distributed makes sense for the story too – with Irish and Scottish for the poor and working class and stiff

English for the Lords or soldiers etc. Those in power are English sounding. While not set in Britain (it's in a unnamed magical realm) the class stereotypes built into the accents really builds the books.

So the 5 stars is a) for Hay's always great work, b) the additional work of maintaining a non-native accent and c) the thought put into how accents affect character.

Now... onto the book.

It's a 3.5 / 5

The story follows two main characters: Eryn, a young girl with the Curse, and Silas, an old drunk with no memory but native fighting skills. In the realm they live He (the unnamed ruler) actively kills off anyone with the Curse. Silas is brought out of his drunkenness during a stint in prison. He then takes action to try stop soldiers killing a Cursed boy, before he goes on the run slowly remembering that he once was a hunter of the Cursed. At the same time Eryn is discovered to be cursed and she and her brother go on the run to escape the soldiers. They are eventually thrown together, both wanting to escape His grasp and also to fight back against Him.

I've also listened to several books by M.R. Forbes (some narrated by Hays, some not). Despite being a new release to audio this is not in his most recent works. I've read several books put out by him since this one, and he has grown as a writer since then. That said, this is still an enjoyable read.

The book is (intentionally) claustrophobic in its view of the world. Very little is known or told of the world beyond the character's immediate purview. There is a mention of 30 provinces but towns or cities outside the immediate are not mentioned. This makes sense both for the characters and the world. The characters (a young girl and a man with no memory) aren't going to know much of the world, while the oppression of the dark ruler gives strength to the idea that the sharing of knowledge of "better places out there" is forbidden.

Because of this the world isn't too fleshed out. The removal of the history before His rule also removes a lot of the depth to the world. It is hinted that it is there, it is just hidden.

The story provides a small climax, but it doesn't feel like much of one compared to the grand scheme of what is ahead of these characters. Some greater cause for Him being like He is is hinted at. It reminds me very much of another fairly well known fantasy story that I won't name because it might be considered a spoiler. But having read other said book it makes the ending for this one a little more predictable, which probably played into my disappointment with the ending.

When the rest of the series comes to audiobook I will be picking them up I'm sure.

Laurie Hopkins says

Wow

It's a good book when the ending leaves you stunned. I disregarding this possibility at one point so was not expecting this. I love Eryn and Silas, they are strong characters, and you just want them to triumph over evil.

Got to go read the next book now.

Daniel Bice says

I loved this book more than the divine series, and I do like the divine series. this book starts out like a typical fantasy novel that is written very well, the characters are likeable and world is likeable. What I really like was the ending. I have a lot of questions like is this set in the future where an Apocalypse happened and the world reset itself to the middle ages and the time of this story? Is the cure a virus of mini robots made by man? did the curse cause an apocalypse in the past? and why is the HE keeping it all a secret and what does he know? well one thing is for sure I am hooked and can't wait for the next book.

Diana says

These books started out like every other YA book and I was prepared to be bored and to stop reading, however it surprised me with its depth, really unexpected (and at times weird) twists and turns, and great character development. I am really invested in finding out what happens and I really enjoy the characters (even the villains) with their flaws and all.

Betule Sairafi says

Not too shabby, and free on Kobo!

Pros:

- It's not a cookie-cutter fantasy. Some of it reminded me of Mistborn: The Final Empire, but it was largely its own story.
- No romance! No! Romance!

Cons:

- Why is MR Forbes forcing his dumbass gender roles on me? Ugh.
- Only two viewpoint characters. Maybe I've been ruined by the likes of GRRM, maybe two is just a weird number.
- Only hovered near the most interesting parts.

But Who Cares; It's Free:

- Not the best grasp on the possessive 'its,' and related self-publishing issues.

David Caldwell says

I won a copy on Goodreads Firstreads.

I have to admit that I screwed up with this book. It sounded interesting enough for me to enter the giveaway. I get lucky enough to win a copy and then my brain did a bad thing. It forgot the book's description and made me think this was a vampire novel. I have burned out on vampires for the most part (and zombies are hanging onto a scrap of skin... I mean hanging by a scrap of skin). So I finally have started it and wish I had started a good while ago. Bad brain, bad. I should give you to the zombies.

An immortal tyrant has been ruling an empire for the last 400 years. He makes the laws and has an army to enforce those rules. Anyone who breaks the law can find themselves being sent to the mines or killed. If you are one of those unlucky enough to develop strange powers called the Curse, his soldiers will make you disappear. Anyone who tries to hide or help the Cursed can expect to die as well.

Eryn Albion is a young girl who is one of the Cursed. Now the soldiers are looking for her.

Silas Morningstar is the town drunk. He has been drunk for the last 10 years so he can forget. Because if he remembers, he might be so much more but he also might be able to live with those memories.

Together Eryn and Silas set out on an impossible mission. They will end the rule of the tyrant who rules the empire.

This is the first part of an epic fantasy tale. There is plenty of action, great characters, tons of twists and turns, and plenty of secrets to discover. Don't expect everything to go as you expect or for everything to be wrapped up by the end of the book. But you also won't finish the book and feel dissatisfied. (Think of something like the Star Wars movies. You know more is to come, but each movie gives you a full story.) There are so many great characters and scenes in the book but I don't want to spoil any of it. The characters are the best part of the story. They have flaws and make mistakes which just makes them seem more human. The Curse is a fascinating mechanism for the story and I look forward to finding out more about them.

This is a great read for any fan of fantasy fiction.

Jim Kratzok says

Wow! This was a great story.

I don't usually go for sword and sorcery type stories, but in this case I am making a happy exception. I gave the book 5 stars but had been planning on only awarding it 4 stars because of a few editing issues that I noticed. Using "sew" when you mean "sow" is just a bit sloppy and should have been caught. But since my goal was not to proofread this book but to enjoy the story as it unfolded, that's exactly what I did. The ending of the story was so strong that it clinched the decision for 5 stars.

Mysterious Silas Morningstar, town drunk, ends up being so much more than that and he cleans up pretty well too. Eryn, the blacksmith's daughter, finds out that she is one of the "cursed" and this leads her into a heartbreak adventure. Naturally, the two meet up and become boon companions. They unite in their

common goal to take down the ruler of their land.

I'm looking forward to reading book two of the series.

Melissa Hayden says

The descriptions Forbes uses as he tells the story are like I'm listening to the sounds and seeing the world through the eyes of the characters. The writing didn't feel boring to me as we come to trouble after trouble with Silas and Eryn. There is something new at each turn, growing the world as we go.

Forbes has created an enticing story that we learn about the characters along side them through their battles, internal and external.

******FULL REVIEW******

*I requested to review a copy of this audiobook for an honest review from the author.

The Cursed are hunted by "His" soldiers. People turn in Cursed to "His" soldiers for a hefty reward. The Cursed are removed from their loved ones. If they run, they are killed.

Silas has flashes of a past he doesn't remember. He physically reacts in ways he doesn't understand how his body knows to do it. When he finally sobers and remembers pieces of what he's forgotten, a wife that left him and that he's a murderer, Silas becomes determined to avenge the lives he took as that man acting on orders of another. Silas will learn what he can of "Him" and put an end to the cruel reign, even if it's killing the ruler of their land.

Eryn is fourteen and is Cursed. She doesn't see it as a curse but something that could help people. But now she's hunted for what she can do. She's promised her mother she would survive, and that's what she's determined to do. She's determined, more than ever after losing her family to "His" soldiers, to stop "Him", to take everything from "Him".

I had the great pleasure of listening to this book. First, Jeff is such an amazing talent in voices. I could listen to this story to hear his work even if I didn't like the story, which I did enjoy it. At the beginning, I loved the lead in with reading of the title page in the lilt of the character. There was music that set the stage for the story, making me all the more excited to get going with the story. Jeff is talented with his voice variation and putting it all together seamless as to create a piece of work that's fun to listen to. He adds the echo of calls, voices around the character, or laughter of many. I do love these small extras added to the story. The best part, we get the story in the Irish lilt of the setting and characters accents. It's clear to understand the words and gives a feel to the world they are in.

The descriptions Forbes uses as he tells the story are like I'm listening to the sounds and seeing the world through the eyes of the characters. The writing didn't feel boring to me as we come to trouble after trouble with Silas and Eryn. There is something new at each turn, growing the world as we go.

Forbes has created an enticing story that we learn about the characters along side them through their battles, internal and external. Silas is a drunk who can't remember his past, and is good with that. Until he sobers up by accident. His body reacts to a threat in a way he never thought he knew how to. There are accusations made of him. And he starts to remember as his body fights through withdrawal. As he travels and remembers

more, we learn the pieces with him. Eryn is cursed and has no idea what that means for her. Eryn learns about the cursed as she travels with a growing determination to end the deaths of the Cursed and their loved ones, for her lost loved ones. These two pair up in a team that feels like a father/daughter relationship, and accept each other for their faults.

We learn about the Cursed as Silas and Eryn do in the book. It's catching when you learn how it all fits together. In the end we get the full explanation of the Cursed and what it is. It's a sort of magic that the people can do. But there is so much more to it and what "He" is hiding.

This book has a conclusion for the journey of Silas and Eryn to learn of the Curse, it does not end on a major cliffhanger. There is still fighting to be done and I'm looking forward to the series as they fight "His" armies. I'm curious about "Him" and what will come of the Cursed.

Yes! I will be looking for the rest of the series!

Joey Woolfardis says

To be read on kindle. Not urgent but near the top.

Volpot says

4.5 stars. Surprisingly good

Hana says

Fast paced, well written book with lots of adventure, straight story and two very likable characters. A young girl Eryn who developed a Curse which gave her some magical powers on one hand but lost her family due to the fact that people like her are hunted down by His soldiers. An old man Silas who is introduced to us as a drunk but who is somebody else - a former general of His army who hunted down Cursed, ordered a capture (and ultimate death) of his own son, lost his all memories thanks to his beginning doubts and now swore to protect Cursed, Eryn and bring down His empire. The fact that Eryn is Silas's grand-daughter, revealed at the end of the book creates even a tighter bond between those two. I am curious where the story will lead us next and whether they can cure the illness and kill Him.

Terri says

The Drunk & the Cursed (Audiobook)

It is a world of strife, a world of fear, and a world under the foot of an immortal tyrant simply referred to as a pronoun. Add in a young girl with amazing powers who is called and considered cursed and an old drunk who is forced to sober up and you have a very interesting world and story plot.

M.R. Forbes draws you into bonding with the main characters quickly and draws out your emotions for

others, as well as showing you an intriguing world.

Jeff Hays as always does an amazing job with the narration, voices, and inflections of the characters and surroundings. He doesn't just read the story, he convinces you to live the story with him.

This audiobook was provided by the author/narrator/publisher at no cost in exchange for an unbiased review courtesy of Audiobook Blast.

Steve Caldwell says

"One of my favorite listens this year."

His Dark empire refers to the fact that the Ruler of the land is an unnamed immortal tyrant that has had all remnants of history erased. Magic is banned, and all magic users, called the Cursed, are hunted down by soldiers and Mediators. The Mediators then collect the ones they don't kill, and they are never seen again. Eryn, a village blacksmith's daughter, is one such Cursed. When she is betrayed by her brothers friend, she and her brother go on the run while her parents are killed trying to stop the soldiers. Her brother is killed on the journey, and she is almost captured, until she uncontrollably uses her powers to escape.

Meanwhile, Silas, the town drunk in another town, is turning in a Cursed for the bounty. He has a crisis of conscience as it happens, and tries to help the Cursed escape. He all of a sudden knows how to use weapons with amazing dexterity, and fights like a man possessed. He escapes torn, and Meets Eryn down the road as they both try and help some other Cursed to escape the Mediators. Silas discovers he's not who he thought he was, and Eryn finds she might have a connection to Silas. The past is dug up, and they both have to discover the part they will play in the drama unfolding, with consequences that can span the entire empire.

The story is action packed, as all M.R. Forbes books are, with complex, believable characters, and villains you can really loathe. With a fast moving plot, a really interesting and original magic system, this book is a must listen for any fans of epic fantasy.

As always, Jeff Hays does his usual superb job narrating This authors books, giving each character a life of their own.

I was given a copy of this book free of charge by the narrator in exchange for an honest review. through Audiobookblast

Megan says

Actual rating 3.5 stars

The tears of blood from those who are the "cursed" put a creepy and awesome image in my head! As another reviewer stated, this book definitely reminded me of a bit of Mistborn, but it still was it's own story. This book was ok, and had the potential to be really good. It felt almost like the action was sort of skimmed over. I would have liked to see more from these crucial moments. The narrator was fabulous, and absolutely perfect for this audiobook! I would love to hear him as the narrator in the future. Although I had an issue with the story, this was certainly not a bad book. I did enjoy the audiobook, and I can see why there are many good reviews. If you like fantasy go ahead and give it a try...especially the audiobook!

I was provided this audiobook in exchange for an honest review

