



The Light of Kerrindryr

H. Anthe Davis

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Redemption through Service.

Purification through Sacrifice.

These are the tenets of the Imperial Light, and Cob follows them devoutly despite being enslaved for his father's treason. Now, raised as a soldier and betrayed by a friend, he has been driven from the Imperial Army into the heretic-riddled lands he helped to conquer. In this strange realm, he finds that Light and Dark are not as simple as they seemed, and though he considers everyone around him an enemy, to them he is a prize--the unwitting carrier of a secret that every faction in the warring world wants.

The Army would do anything to get it back except kill him.

His treacherous friend has no such qualms.

The Light of Kerrindryr Details

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From Reader Review The Light of Kerrindryr for online ebook

Theresa says

I never thought I would say this, but there is a thing as to be too detailed and a too flowery writing... every freaking thing is detailed... seriously.... that makes for a really long boring story

Stuart Macmartin says

Not as enthused about this book as Pauline; I could easily put it down and there were some bizarre scenes and sometimes the language seemed to be trying too hard. But it is richly imagined. Easily 4 stars for all the reasons Pauline writes. Probably will read the next, if I can remember what went on.

Bill Tillman says

It is very sad that this was such a great tale, only to be followed by another with adult content. Great mixture of high celt mythalong with the author's own twist.

Masquerade Crew says

REVIEWER: JANN

4.0 ON THE MASQ SCALE

Have you ever felt really strongly about something only to find out it was not that way at all? This was an interesting book - somewhat unique in its plot lines leading you first one way and then another. The story moves from one person's perspective to another's and then another's and, while you must pay attention, it's not that difficult to follow. The characters are well written and go through thought processes to lead them to re-evaluate what they blindly believed before. Cob is a young man who thinks he knows what's what, but discovers he's been lied to numerous times, even as small child. There is much magic moving in and around Cob and the people he meets after being told to 'Run'. Who IS Darilan, really? And Lark? She starts out as a strong character, but at the conclusion of this book seems to just be there...unless that's the way she is perceived by the dying 'monster'. Will she break out in the next book? And Sarovy has to have a bigger part in a future book just because he's a curious character I'd like to know better. Very imaginative storyline and the writing is descriptive and portrays the world of the characters well. There is very little sexual content but there is some innuendo. I enjoyed the book, mulling it out over a week or so. I will most likely read the next one so I can see if Lark gets more of a part and if my presumption of her importance to Cob is as well-founded as I think it is. I give the book 3-1/2-rounded-up-to-4 stars for anticipation for future writings.

Nancy says

This is only the beginning, folks! Hillary is a new and aspiring author; and I love her work. She has introduced me to the SciFi genre and I am hooked on her book(s)! Her choice for words and her expression of detail to her unique characters are outstanding. Give it a try and see if you get hooked like I did! Yes, it is about good vs evil; but it will also take you to another galaxy/world and back in a blink of an eye! You truly want to read more!!

Steve Thomas says

The Light of Kerrindryr largely tells the story of Cob, an escaped slave on a quest to redeem himself by facing judgement in a religious ritual on the other side of the (highly oppressive and theocratic) Empire. But the Empire isn't having any of that and deploys a super-powered assassin to track and capture him. Most of the story is a chase.

Cob himself is an unlikely protagonist. He's a short-sighted, bigoted zealot who shuts down any scenes of exposition by sounding off about lies and blasphemy and Darkness. This immediately puts him at odds with me because I'm a fan of good world-building, and he prevents the author from talking about it. The world-building is there, but it often goes unspoken and impenetrable.

Darilan is more conflicted. His motives change so often that I never got a good handle on what he actually wanted.

The book had some high points. The action scenes were well done. The world-building was strong, even though it was largely obfuscated. I liked the idea of an Empire with many contending factions barely managing to work together. I complain about Cob's personality, but he was well-written and served the purpose intended.

At the same time, the book felt bloated and directionless. Pacing was a major issue. There's a section early on where Cob is first making his escape that is written in a dreamy, opaque style that made it a chore to get through. Around 3/4 of the way through, something similar happens yet again. The story changed directions sharply about halfway through, and the author didn't seem to know what to do with some of the characters involved. To cite another pacing issue, there's a particular event that basically divides the book in two and would have been a great cliffhanger. Instead, the story continues in the same volume, yet resets as if a new book had started. Character motives changed drastically as a result and all momentum was lost. In that sense, the book contains its own sequel, yet still didn't seem to resolve any plot lines.

This book also helped me realize something about my own tastes. I don't really care for stories where the characters are just being jerked around by circumstance and constantly reacting. Cob in particular had almost zero agency for the entire book. In small doses, removing a character's agency is good for conflict and tension. In large doses, it feels like the author is railroading the characters, as another review pointed out.

Overall, not a bad book, but it would have benefited from tightening the focus of the plot and letting the world-building show. It might have even benefited from being split into two.

Lindsey says

Readers beware: If you enjoy the predictable, then this is not the book for you!

Fantasy usually isn't my thing (I'm addicted to kinky, HEA romances), but I like to break out of the box every once in a while and try something different and this book really hit the spot! Adventure, magic, humor, mythology, dashes of horror (don't read while eating!), astonishing creatures, and characters that take the reader's emotions on a 360 degree roller coaster ride... Seriously? What's not to love? It's piking awesome!

And if that hasn't sold you, one word: Rian!!! An adorable little goblin that looks "a bit like someone had shaved, painted, and dressed a cat"(I picture him as mixture of Dobby, Nibbler, and my cat Lucy) who has stolen my heart.

Anyway... I dare you not to get sucked in! Let the countdown for book #2 begin!

Tiffany Mathews says

This book was hard to rate but I did it on a personal level of what is important to me as a reader.

In terms of description and action, I would have given this book a five. The pictures the author paints are incredible.

She uses her voice to create something truly unique and wonderful. As a piece of writing, again I would give it a five.

And the last way it scores a five is for creativity of idea. I have never read anything else remotely similar. When people tried to ask me what I was reading, I had nothing to compare it too.

However, the reason it ultimately scored a three with me is because I never felt like I was able to latch onto the characters. For me, being able to see the world through their eyes and hearts is even more important than seeing it through a third party narrator. There were moments when I would begin to attach to a character (I was a particular fan of Lark) just to have the scene switch. More often than not, I was reading a scene without any attachment to any of the characters because I had little understanding of their underlying motives, purpose, or background.

I am still curious to see if those elements present themselves in an unveiling sort of fashion in the books to come and plan on trekking through trying to get closer to the characters - in spite of still feeling like I don't know them, I know I want to.

Thomas Cardin says

All right. I have a lot of progress reports on this one--good and bad. When *The Light of Kerrindryr* was good, it was very good. The descriptions and the action were well thought out and vivid. Many of the places came alive in my head.

To talk of my favorite bits in detail would be spoiler to the story. There is depth and action here that rocked my socks, but detractors as well. Not an easy book to review, but the complexities are a good thing as much as bad.

I cheated at one point and went to the author's website which is a very detailed affair. The story grabbed my interest enough to get off my butt and see what other information I could dig up, and there is quite the mountain of detail there to hunker down into. I would like to have seen more of the worldbuilding that the author did behind the scenes make it into the story. The sense is undoubtedly that there is a lot more involved than just what the reader learns. The story has depth that way, but it was also an issue for me--quite often I felt intentionally left in the dark, the characters knew much more than they were saying, feeling, seeing, etc.

Thankfully, the story never stops to drag through pages and pages of exposition, it very well could have for as complex as the world is.

I loved the action, H. Anthe Davis writes a hell of a fight scene...I found myself craving ACTION, and got it in big tasty lumps. This is where the story really sold itself and redeemed itself for me. There is a bar scene where things go completely crazy and the story goes "KA-BOOM" as exciting and phenomenal things are revealed (or at least shown). There are plenty of other action scenes, and the author definitely likes to use them as big reveals of underlying secret stuff. This is where the dust at the tip of the iceberg of worldbuilding is delicately brushed aside with a tiny brush. You can SEE that there is a LOT going on, and there are hints of vast undiscovered bits.

Here are my issues:

I found many names unpronounceable or so similar to others that I was lost, this was especially true with the spirit and deity names. Again, the author's website came in handy, but I should not have needed that crutch to follow along. This is minor issue and its completely subjective. The other issues hit me harder.

The main character, Cob, has a run at the beginning that was very difficult to read. Sentences were over-complicated and the structure stymied me enough to re-read things line by line. This hits near the beginning of the novel, but after I was already hooked. Some of this has to do with the names of places and the character being weary and in a daze himself. For the life of me, I could not grasp the description of a certain landmark that was all over those pages until I went to the author's website and saw a map. This section, up until Cob finds the farmstead, threw me out of the story repeatedly. I almost put the book down and walked away, but I am very glad I kept going, as I said, it sunk its hooks into me already.

Cob is a pigheaded fool, there, I said it. I mentioned this in my progress reports as well. To clarify: Not only does he not believe anything that is said to him (with good reason), but every time he asks another character about something important to his survival he gets so mad at their response that the effort is lost on both parties (Cob and the reader). Sometimes this put Cob in the "too stupid to live" category of characters. Cob had his reasons for being pigheaded, they were all carefully laid out to us, too carefully. It came out to me as contrived. The author gets heavy-handed with the mysterious elements. A reasonable person would stop these characters with information and peel the onion apart, especially when it meant life and death.

Toward the end, Cob does start exploring the depths of his complex nature, but by then it was way past due for me. Truthfully though, he is never given an opportunity to catch his breath without someone putting some kind of a whammy on him. Unfortunately, that read too much like author interference and more heavy-handedness. In the world of table top role playing games, we called that "power playing" on the game master's part--forcing the players onto rails so they had no choice in where they were going how they were getting there. At that point the player can just put their hands in their lap and tell the game master, "OK, here's my character sheet, tell me when we get there."

This is my take on it, other readers may see things quite differently--there is a LOT going on.

Now about all the unexplained, double-secret stuff. If you swung a dead cat, you would knock down at least three bushes with intriguing, secretive, aloof, characters hiding behind them. I like one or two of these guys around, they make things fun. Too many, however, and it starts to scream interference and "power play" to me again. So I am left with some trust issues. I know there are more books coming, that this is only the first of a series. Some stuff has to stay hidden until later, I get that, but I think there was plenty of room to sit down and actually reveal something. Give the reader a bit more rope and they will hold on tighter, too much and someone's getting hung. For me, too little was revealed.

Faults aside, I want to read more. For a first book there is enormous promise here.

I think a fantasy reader is going to find some very enjoyable scenes in here. A sword and sorcery reader is going really dig the action. A lover of worldbuilding is going to see enormous depth but feel intentionally kept in the dark. There are hints of visionary and metaphysical things galore in here that I wish had been dusted clear of the obscuring layer of secrets, just a bit more. Overall I wanted to rate this higher, the combat and certain other details were top notch, but the heavy-handedness and the disjointed area at the beginning were detractors.

Scottsdale Public Library says

The Light of Kerrindryr brings readers on an unpredictable journey with an enslaved man by the name of Cob. He was forced into the slave army for the crimes of his father and with only a few short months left of his service he is shoved out by his only confidant. Cob, unlike many slaves, was content with his role in the army and must now find his way to be purified in the Light again. This book was a wild ride of action and adventure set in a world filled with magic, sacred souls, and the truth hiding among it all. Davis switches the point of view between a few characters and each time you will find yourself believing, whole-heartedly, the character's views and actions. The Light of Kerrindryr is a great novel for anyone looking for a unique read; even if you are not a fantasy reader Davis paints such a detailed world it is easy to lose yourself into the War of Memory Cycle. A fantastic read from a local Scottsdale AZ author! -- Ashley W.

Kelly says

If you like high fantasy and awesome villains, this is the book for you. The author creates a world that is both interesting and unusual, with shocking events and revelations about the characters' identities and motives. Things are rarely what they seem. One of my favorite things was the complex mythology - not the usual

copy/paste of European mythology that many fantasy writers use, which was very refreshing.

Taylor Davis says

Unfortunately, I give up. I completely agree with Steve's review. At 40%, the book just felt too meandering. I couldn't connect with the plot or the characters at all.

Debra says

Before I get on with the review:

An urge to smack some sense into the main character is natural. He's a very stubborn teenage boy.

Fantasy series, adventure, monsters, evil and good dukeing it out - except, wait, which one is evil again? Sometimes the guys you took for granted as the good guys turn out not to be what you thought they were. Sometimes a character you were sure was the villain does something that shocks you with how wrong you were about them. Then they go back to being villains again, but with your view of them utterly changed. Occasionally, this book steers away from 'traditional' fantasy adventure and becomes just one hair shy of Clive Barker/Lovecraft. Skin crawly. The evil characters are pretty evil. Some of the 'good' characters are pretty evil, too. Almost no one in the book is how they seem on the surface.

This world's background deals heavily with gods, mysticism and religion and the results when faiths collide. Magic is sometimes treated as a science. I know a few people in my personal life this might offend, so if you're one of those types, you won't like this book.

This is the first of a series. Do not start reading it thinking it will wrap up everything at the end, because it will not. That's gonna take awhile, and only a few things are tied up in the first book.

If you want some style comparisons, I'd go Fritz Leiber, Roger Zelazny, and maybe a little George R. R. Martin. I was especially reminded of Lanhkmar for the world building, system of magic and of Game of Thrones more than once with all the intrigue and factions running around trying to get over on one another. Also for the level of emotion you build up for some characters that you have to deal with when you find out more about them. Another series I thought of while reading was King's Gunslinger - the Dark Tower series. If you liked any of those, you might want to try this book.

Happy endings are not guaranteed for anyone.

Pauline Ross says

This could be the world's shortest review. I could just say: this book is piking awesome. Read it. The end.

Or I could tell you exactly why it's so awesome (a much, much longer review). So let's do that. Settle down, I'm going to ramble a bit so this may take some time.

I read a lot of debut fantasy, and there's no way to predict exactly what you might get. Even the sample isn't a good guide, because a promising opening can sometimes tail off disappointingly. Mostly, I find them to be varying shades of mediocre; imaginative but ploddingly written, or nicely executed but trite. Very occasionally, something truly exceptional turns up. I've been lucky enough to find a few such gems in the last year or two, and this one is right up there with the best of them. It has great characters, awesome world-building, an incisive writing style and a rapid-fire plot with a surprising twist on almost every page. There's a slightly slow start with a deluge of hard-to-grasp detail, but once I got past that, the story sucked me in and never let go.

I have to mention the world-building first. There are two kinds of fantasy authors: one kind draws a squiggly-edged continent, adds several kingdoms, three rivers and a mountain range, decides how many gods are in the prevailing religion and - we're done! On with the story! And then there are those who actually invent worlds. Some are so complex and layered and nuanced that they make our own world look simple. Tolkien invented entire languages for his. Others create architectural styles, clothing, flora and fauna, cultural variations, weaponry, even cutlery. I haven't found invented cutlery in this book, but pretty much every other detail you could wish for has been thought about. You want to know where the highest rainfall is? [1] Which are the best grain-producing regions? Where the stables are in the army camp? How the ogres count? (Seriously; in base six, if you want to know, which gives the mathematical module in my brain a frisson of pure delight.) And yes, there are languages and fantasy's second-best invented swearword. [2] The author has it all worked out, starting right at the beginning, with the creation. And the best part of it is that all this world-building isn't slapped on like theatrical make-up. Instead, there are little snippets here and there, where the story needs it (or lightly brushed on, to continue the make-up analogy). The result feels extraordinarily real. I love it.

Cob, the main character, a slave in the Empire's army, is frustrating in a lot of ways. He's seventeen, possibly not the sharpest knife in the drawer, has been messed about with mentally for years (as all potentially rebellious slaves are), and his stubbornness level is set to eleven, at least. He believes absolutely everything he's been told by his parents and, more recently, by his Empire masters, has a touching faith in their dogmatic religion, and did I mention how stubborn he is? So every time someone tries to help him or rescue him or intervene in any way, he reacts with a certain amount of negativity, shall we say. For much of the book he's merely a pawn in other people's machinations, reacting to events (mostly by saying no) and constantly trying to be normal, even when it's obvious that he really isn't. Even his escape from slavery is very much against his will (and isn't that a wonderful break from tradition, a slave who doesn't want to escape?). He absolutely wants to conform, to be a good Imperial citizen. You'd have to have a heart of stone not to ache for poor Cob, caught up in events way out of his league and finding out some truly heart-breaking things about his past. And the present, come to that. Or finding himself temporarily in the midst of a real family and being astonished that the children play around.

There are a number of other characters who also have point of view episodes, sometimes quite briefly as the plot requires, and this could have been a mess, hopping from one character to another. It works very well on the whole, although there were a few times when the rapid jumps from place to place felt a bit choppy. Fortunately, all the characters have depth, even the walk-on parts. Darilan and Sarovy, who both end up chasing after Cob, are wonderfully deep and nuanced characters, and just as tragic, in their different ways. Only Lark fell a bit flat for me; although she had her moments in the early parts of the story, she became not much more than baggage for a while, and I didn't feel I got to know her well enough to get under her skin, so to speak. But I loved her pet goblin, Rian, who stole every scene he was in (even while fast asleep), while never saying much more than 'Meep' and 'Ys' (yes). And there are some peripheral characters that I would love to see more of, like the Archmagus and the Crimson General (although from a safe distance, perhaps).

The magic is fairly straightforward. There are mages who use sigils and runes and words and hand-waviness to create their spells, so there's a fair amount of hurling of thunderbolts and the like going on. So far, so conventional. There are portals (yay for portals!), some permanent, some created on the fly. Some mages are also mentalists, able to probe into the minds of subjects, see their memories and moderate them.

Mindwashing, it's called, and the process and its after effects are truly unsettling. Almost everyone in the army, freesoldier or slave, is subjected to it at regular intervals, to keep them content by removing distressing experiences from their minds, with odd effects, but like any such capability it also becomes a means of keeping control.

The author's world comes fully stocked with a range of interesting lifeforms, not just humans. There are ogres and skinchangers, goblins and some really creepy beings called eiyet. Creepy oozes out all over the place, actually, and there are moments of pure horror, in the Hitchcock sense of chills up the spine, rather than the more usual sense these days of grossness and spilled entrails. There are also magically enhanced - well, things, for want of a better word, about which I will say no more. There is a certain blurring of the distinction between alive and not-alive which gave me the heeby-jeebies, frankly.

The plot... look, if I say that the book's about a slave who escapes and is chased across several countries by a bunch of people who mean him harm because of something powerful inside him, something he's not even aware of, well, it sounds like a million other fantasy books, doesn't it? So let's not worry about the plot. In reality, it's not at all trite, and everything fits together beautifully, the characters all behave perfectly believably and it's anything but predictable. It's absolutely the opposite of predictable, in fact. I just never knew what was coming next, not once.

Where the book excels for me is the way it deals with the spirit world, the shadow world, dreams and not-dreams, things which are beyond human understanding (to express it in a very pedestrian way). It's very difficult to convey these sort of airy-fairy concepts effectively, but the author does it brilliantly here. I generally have real trouble visualising these non-world (and non-rational) experiences, but here I always knew what was happening, even if I didn't always know why. The author's writing style is a big help, with a precision of word-use that is a joy to read.

I've found it difficult to write this review. I enjoyed this book so much, and at a much deeper level than the usual run-of-the-mill fantasy, that it's hard to express. It's not easy to write intelligibly about an experience which wound its tendrils around me and burrowed inside my mind. It's still in my head, buzzing round and making me think about memory, and belief, and friendship, and good and evil and (worst of all) good intentions, and people who aren't what you think they are, and who knows what else. There are parts that are unforgettable: Cob doing his thing in the tavern; Lark getting left behind by the shadowbloods; the wolf; Darilan's dagger and bracer; some of Cob's dreams (or not-dreams, maybe); Lerien; the crows; the thing that Weshker encountered; the teardrop pendants (and who would imagine that a modest piece of jewelry would be so scary?). The characters are unforgettable too, and I cared about all of them (well, OK, maybe not Annia!). The story is complex, subtle and many-layered, and yet I never felt out of my depth, never wondered what the hell people were doing, never had to go back and look up who a character was or what a reference meant. That's an outstanding achievement in a genre that too often mistakes cryptic for clever. And - a bonus - there are outbreaks of humour at the most unexpected times.

You're probably getting the picture by now. I liked it, quite a lot actually. Compelling characters, a fully-realised world, an action-packed plot that zooms along at a rate of knots and never feels in the least contrived, and a wonderful ending with plenty of emotional resonance. A beautifully conceived and written book with real depth. Highly recommended. Five stars.

[1] If you really want to know this sort of thing, I recommend the author's website, which is amazing.

[2] The best is in Glenda Larke's 'Stormlords' trilogy: 'pedeshit'. But 'pike/piking' is close, very close. And then there's 'Morgwi's balls'. Gotta love an author who can invent great swearwords. ETA: well, who'd a thunk it, apparently 'piking' isn't an invented swearword after all. It's been around since the 18th century, and is an integral part of the Planescape D&D setting. So now we know. Still think it's a cracking word, though.
