



The Crystal Desert

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THE CRYSTAL DESERT is the third book in the Guardian Cycle, a sweeping fantasy epic from one of the best new storytellers in the genre.

Terrel's destiny is far from clear. In exile from his home, he journeys through a hostile world, with only the spirits from an earlier life and his instincts to guide him.

Having crossed two oceans, Terrel finds himself in Misrah. A harsh and barren desert land, survival there is a daily struggle for its nomadic tribes. But Misrah is also a place of many wonders, where superstition is as important as the constant search for water. For Terrel, his magical talents may be all that can save him. And lead him one step closer to discovering the truth of the mysterious prophecies in the Tindaya Code.

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The Crystal Desert Details

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Author : Julia Gray

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From Reader Review The Crystal Desert for online ebook

Eric Leblanc says

I'm not sure why I like this serie so much so far. The main characters are one-sided, not much progression to them even after 3 books, and the plot is thin.....

But I must admit that the countries/landscapes she describes in these books are fun. And the people living in these landscapes fit very well within their environment.

So once again we get Terrel walking around a new continent, trying to fulfill his bargain with the Ancient from the first book. He is travelling across a desert with a tribe of nomads, and trying to reach the third Ancient. There are some hints, clearly the water from the desert, as few as it was before, is even thinner now. And a huge river apparently got swallowed up by the desert... hum hum.... Smell like an elemental's work.

To reach that elemental Terrel will enter traditional contest amongs tribes, the Race of Truth. Each tribe assign a Champion that will cross the desert by himself during the day, without water, only to be helped every night by his team of followers. The goal is to be the first to reach a mythical mountain.... Guess who we are going to meet there? :)

The race is probably the best part of the book, along with some glimpses of the past centuries on this continent. In fact, I would like Gray to give more insights about what happened a long time ago in this world. It is clear with the ruins Terrel finds along the way, and from symbols all over the world that there was once a civilization that was larger across all continents.

Anyway, I bought the last two books, so maybe it will get even better.... or not :)

Arminion says

I didn't like this book too much. It was too similar to the second one. In both these books, the first part deals with Terrel getting himself familiar with certain group of people and their customs, eventually becoming a full member of their community. The second part of the book is where he meets the elemental and has to "fix" certain things to continue his quest.

The story was predictable. As soon there was a mention of the lost city in the desert and the Great race, I knew that Terrel will find the city and that he will be part of this race.

The last part of the book was a mess. Once again, elemental is scared and in distress, destroying everything around him. The ending is confusing where all hell breaks loose in Qumish, with Mlicki summoning the storm, the shaman dying in a pillar of flame, Terrel floating around as a spirit and the mother of Mlicki and Kalkara showing in the last minute.

And that is one of the problems. For most part of the book, nothing really important happens, but suddenly in the last few chapters, the story is all over the place.

Once again, there is a lot of unexplained phenomenon going on, Alyssa's powers and Kalkara's secrets. At first, I found this magic interesting, but now it's just annoying.

Regardless of these criticism, I still enjoyed the book and I will continue to read them just to see how this all ends. I would probably give it 4 stars if I haven't read the first two.

Christopher says

Superb middle book in this series. It establishes a new layer of confidence in the main hero Terrels confidence and that of his companions especially that of Alyssa. The books sees our heroes journeying (in one form or another) to the land of Misrah, which is a country ravaged by desert with all the comforts that comes with. The character yet again strike you as as real with all the strengths and frailties that you would expect. The way they overcome the challenges they face is handled very well and with many a heartwarming twist. In the same way there are some surprises (some brutal) along the way! Extremely great, recommended as ever! Brilliant! :D

Omiai says

I was really disappointed by this book, given that I loved the first two in the series!

It's main downfall was that it was pretty much the same as the 2nd book (the jasper forest). The way it was set out was pretty much the same, except instead of moving to be with a new group of people in the 2nd half, Terrel is with the same people. Although the setting was different, the basic plot was the same as the 2nd book.

I really had to force myself to finish this book, which is tragic because, as I said, I loved the first two! So I really hope that things improve in the 4th (the red glacier). I think my main problem is that it doesn't seem to be going anywhere! Three books in and I'm still waiting for it to seem like Terrel is heading towards a goal, because at the moment it feels more like a random set of adventures, even though the 'bigger goal' is mentioned every now and then. I'm starting to feel that perhaps, 5 books was too many, but I will continue to read the series and hope things improve.

Aaron Carson says

Normally a writer needs a balance between description and plot to carry a novel. I usually go for novels with more description and less plot, because it creates more of a sense of immediacy for me. A good use of description can create an almost tactile experience for the reader.

Gray, (I'm referring to the author as Gray for convenience here, in spite of the fact that it's two people), breaks with the mold by plunging the reader into the deep end of the story, without going into a lot of background. In spite of this I found myself literally transported to the desert where the story takes place. While Gray is very sparing with adjectives in describing the setting, one can palpably, (if not viscerally) feel the vastness of the desert, and the mysteries it contains.

I'm not exactly sure how Gray achieves this, but it's the first time I've encountered this quality in fiction. It's almost a use of innuendo, and suggestion, which casts the atmosphere, and I found it to be much more successful than a more laborious approach, although I have a lot of respect for that method also.

The story is very plot driven, and almost desperate in it's tone, but the reader is not subjected to the level of

stress which some fantasy writers employ in lieu of excitement.

Let me be clear. This is not Goodkind. The entire plot is not consumed by the main challenges introduced in the first book, and some readers may get frustrated with the feeling of the hero having been led far astray from his original quest, but I actually found this refreshing. I'm not a fan of the all consuming, bone crushing task, that so many heroes seem to have to face in fantasy novels. That said, Terrel certainly seems to have his hands full.

The ending is a bit more predictable, and follows suit somewhat the other two novels. In this respect, I didn't find it particularly scintillating, but I'm more about the meat of the story, than the ending in any case.

I do appreciate that the cover artist, Mick Van Houten, seems to be intimately familiar with, (if not to have actually read), the story, and each cover is an actual recognizable scene from the adventure. It's a small thing, but I feel it shows a level of respect for the writer which I appreciate.

I was going to start a book from another series after this one, but this epic has me so intrigued, I may have to keep going and crack open The Red Glacier.

Jenn Cotton says

Terrel's journey leads him farther and farther from home. Foretold by prophecy, he joins the Toma tribe as a healer, seeking the cause for a great plague that has descended on the world, and the mysterious disappearances of water.

The nomadic culture of the desserts proves a delightful change of pace from the standard fantasy. I really enjoy that each novel carries it's own unique story and setting while maintaining an overarching theme with the rest of the series.
