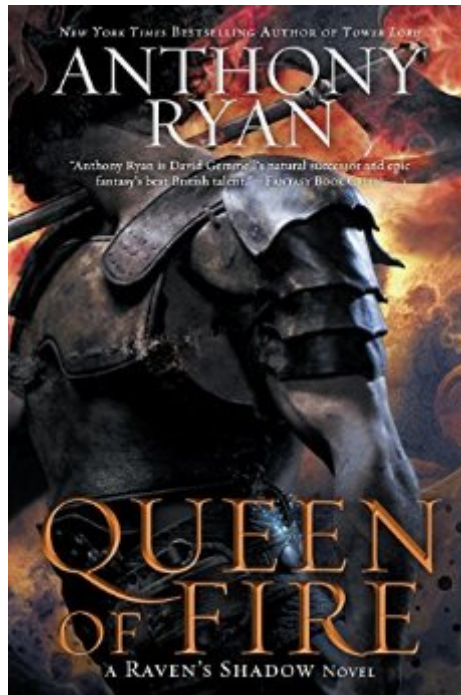


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Queen Of Fire (A Raven's Shadow Novel)



Synopsis

In the thrilling conclusion to the *Ædeftly and originally executed* • (Booklist) New York Times bestselling trilogy, Vaelin Al Sorna must help his Queen reclaim her Realm. Only his enemy has a dangerous new collaborator, one with powers darker than Vaelin has ever encountered. The Ally is there, but only ever as a shadow, unexplained catastrophe or murder committed at the behest of a dark vengeful spirit. Sorting truth from myth is often a fruitless task. After fighting back from the brink of death, Queen Lyrna is determined to repel the invading Volarian army and regain the independence of the Unified Realm. Except, to accomplish her goals, she must do more than rally her loyal supporters. She must align herself with forces she once found repugnant—those who possess the strange and varied gifts of the Dark—and take the war to her enemy's doorstep. Victory rests on the shoulders of Vaelin Al Sorna, now named Battle Lord of the Realm. However, his path is riddled with difficulties. For the Volarian enemy has a new weapon on their side, one that Vaelin must destroy if the Realm is to prevail—a mysterious Ally with the ability to grant unnaturally long life to her servants. And defeating one who cannot be killed is a nearly impossible feat, especially when Vaelin's blood-song, the mystical power which has made him the epic fighter he is, has gone ominously silent. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

File Size: 4106 KB

Print Length: 643 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 042526565X

Publisher: Ace; Reprint edition (July 7, 2015)

Publication Date: July 7, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00OQS4DJQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #8,900 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #90 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Horror > Dark Fantasy #97 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Horror > Dark Fantasy #244 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

Customer Reviews

If I had to describe Queen of Fire in one sentence it would be: "It wasâok?" I would rate QOF 2.5 stars if possible, but on the strength of my man-crush for Vaelin, I'm bumping it up to three. If I had to guess, most of the "real" reviews will be giving it two stars. And by "real", I mean the reviews with detailed criticisms, and not the upcoming massive flood of one-liners that will be rating it five stars. Let's be clear: This is not a five star novel, but it isn't a one star novel either. I would say mostly twos and threes. Which of course is a PROFOUND disappointment! Like many of you, I fell in love with Blood Song. It still remains the best novel I've ever read. It is the standard to which I compare other fantasy novels and almost all of them fall short. Anyway, I loathe spoilers so I'll try to stay away from anything major. In fact, I'm not going to go into many plot specifics at all. This is simply an honest opinion from someone who knows nothing about what it takes to write a novel or write a thorough review. One of the major problems from Tower Lord resurfaces here in Queen of Fire, and that's the complete and utter lack of character development. It's essentially non-existent, which is a great shame because that's one of the things AR did so well in Blood Song. After 100 pages in Blood Song, who would have thought that pompous jerk Nortah would have turned into the man he eventually became? But we watched it unfold through Vaelin's eyes and it was 100% believable (I picked Nortah because he's an easy example, but anyone will do). There's none of that in Tower Lord, and it's even worse in Queen of Fire.

There is no other way to say this other than this book broke my heart. I have been disappointed before, but when I read the final page of Queen of Fire, I wanted to literally cry and I don't mean that in a good way. I understand that endings are hard, especially in fantasy, but with Blood Song, the first book in this trilogy, Anthony Ryan created something special and although the second book in the series Tower Lord was a slight misstep, I still enjoyed it, but to say that Queen of Fire disappointed me would be the understatement of the year. For the uninitiated, Queen of Fire picks up right after the ending of The Tower Lord. The United Realm has been invaded by the Empire of Volar, a sadistically evil nation who outwardly practices slavery and appeals to the worse base of human nature and cruelty. You think something is barbaric and cruel and dehumanizing, well the Volarians feel that is just the way of doing business. Not only are they evil, but they are ruled in the background by a dark and mysteriously powerful being termed the Ally who pulls the strings of the ruling council while also granting said members near immortality, mysterious abilities and wealth

beyond their wildest dreams. At the start of our novel, the people of the United Realm have just crushed a large Volarian army at Alltor, the capital city for one of the provinces of the realm and are now making plans to remove the Volarians from their capital city Varinshold and the remainder of the realm while taking the fight to Volaria itself in order to ensure that the Volarians stay gone forever. The strength of the first book of this series, Blood Song, lies in the characterization of the characters. Every character in that book felt unique, believable, and tangible and they spoke with their own voice.

I ended up being disappointed by this book. I didn't hate it, and overall, the book was more tolerable than parts of book 2 (Tower Lord, and I'm thinking specifically of the first half of that book). But it was kind of repetitive and it was lacking a lot of what made me really like book 1 (Blood Song). Note: some spoilers for Blood Song and Tower Lord may appear later in this review. It is hard to talk about what I didn't care for in this book without making reference to certain previous events. I'll try to be as vague as possible. Also, I'll take this opportunity to suggest not reading this book without having read the other two first. There is just too much that won't make sense. (On the other hand, if you do read books 1 and 2 first, you shouldn't have much trouble following along here.) Once again, we have 4 (maybe 5) viewpoint characters: Queen Lyrna, Reva of Cumbrael (a noble who has inherited the governance of this land), Frenis (who still considers himself a brother of the Sixth Order, which is a military arm of a religious group), and Vaelin, who hands over command of Lyrna's army so that he can go on a separate mission. (I say maybe 5 because we also have some scenes from historian Vernier.) This is the story of Lyrna's invasion of the Volarian Empire. In previous books, the Volarians had invaded Lyrna's Unified Realm, killed and enslaved many people, and committed many other atrocities. She wants to take the fight to them so they cannot threaten her people again. I was never quite comfortable with this goal of hers. I think maybe that was the point, though. At one point, she has to stop herself from going after even more territory. She has to remind herself of her goal in the military campaign.

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