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Chronicles Of Ancient Darkness #4: Outcast



Synopsis

A thrilling story of friendship, survival, and the need to belong. For two moons Torak has hidden a terrible secret—and now it is revealed. He bears the mark of the Soul-Eater, and must pay the price. Cast out from the clans, he is alone and on the run: cut off from his best friend, Renn, and his beloved pack-brother, Wolf. He flees to the haunted reed-beds of Lake Axehead, where he is hunted by the Otter Clan, taunted by the Hidden People, and, as soul-sickness claims him, he falls prey to an even greater menace. Tormented by secrets and broken trust, he uncovers a deception that will turn his world upside down.

Book Information

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Series: Chronicles of Ancient Darkness (Book 4)

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (30 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #40,320 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Prehistory #50 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Foxes & Wolves #1681 in Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy & Magic

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

I am the oldest of the clans of the Open Forest...I speak for them all...The boy bears the mark of the Soul-Eater. The law is clear. He must be cast out. What does it mean to be an outcast? For Torak it means he is no longer accepted among the clans. He leaves his tribe in disgrace because he has the mark of the Soul-Eaters on his chest. He cannot communicate with anyone, and if he is found, he will be killed. Fin-Kedinn, the Raven Leader who has been like a father to him, has been forced to cast him out. Even Renn, his best friend, is not allowed to help him and must turn her back on

him or risk her own death. He is clanless. Torak travels alone, always in danger and with the curse of the Viper Mage, Seshru of the Soul-Eaters, haunting his every step. The young warrior, however, does not give up. As he walks away from his beloved peoples he declares: "I may be outcast and clanless, but I'm no Soul-Eater. And I will find a way to prove it..." With his long-time companion Wolf at his side and his confidence in the forest, he is determined to tear the mark from his chest and prove his worthiness. Though Renn is supposed to stay away, she finds him and reveals the magic rite he must use to remove the evil scar. Yet, as he moves deeper into the forests and is faced with more obstacles, his confidence is challenged from all directions. Hunted and haunted by the Viper Mage, Torak is unable to escape her powerful magic. Worst of all, he discovers that he cannot control the sickness creeping through his body and that he might, without intent, harm those he loves. Renn now travels with a skilled Skinboater from the Seal Clan known as Bale. Risking their own lives, they try to protect Torak and help him as he fights against the Soul-Eaters.

Although I read a lot of series, I usually lose interest after just 2 or 3 books. Often the plot becomes predictable and the writing more haphazard. Not so with Michelle Paver's Chronicles of Ancient Darkness series. Outcast is the fourth in the series and my favorite so far. The story picks up right where book 3, Soul Eater, left off without any annoying recap. Torak is quickly outcast from the clans because he bears the mark of the Soul Eaters. Being an outcast is worse than it sounds, by law anyone who sees Torak is now obligated to kill him. On the run, Torak is pursued by the clans, but also by a Soul Eater who is desperate to use his spirit walker power. I found this installment to be intriguing and well-paced, with lots of Paver's incredible world building and character development. Each book reveals more and more about the clans and their belief systems. This time we meet a new clan, The Otters, who have a unique culture dictated by the lake upon which they live. The Stone-Age religion of the clans also plays a major role in the story and is beautifully developed by Paver. The concept of soul-sickness is especially interesting in this book since it causes Torak to forget everything he has ever known about survival in the forest, a major part of his identity. Character development has always been one of the strengths of this series. Although the characters are complete, their development is subtle and doesn't get in the way of the plot. The protagonists Torak, Renn, and Wolf have never become static, even after 4 books. This book does an especially wonderful job of exploring the developments of Renn and Wolf. I enjoyed the shocking revelations about Renn's past and seeing Wolf enter adulthood - caring for wolf pups and enjoying the company of a potential mate.

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