



The Storm Lord

Tanith Lee

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A recognized master fantasist, Tanith Lee has won multiple awards for her craft, including the British Fantasy Award, the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement, and the Bram Stoker Award for Lifetime Achievement in Horror.

In the land of Dorthar, the Storm Lord reigns as king.

According to law, the Storm Lord's youngest son will be the rightful heir. His queen, the cunning and ambitious Val Mara, intends her young son, Amrek, to be that heir.

But fate has other ideas. When the Storm Lord abducts a Lowlander priestess, conceives a child with her, and then dies in mysterious circumstances, the unborn baby of that union suddenly becomes the heir to a vast kingdom—a situation that Val Mara is eager to rectify.

When his mother also dies, the infant, Raldnor, must be taken far from the Storm Lord's stronghold to escape the queen's murderous wrath, forsaking all knowledge of his royal heritage.

Raldnor grows up among the people of the Plains, but he is set apart from his friends and neighbors by the mystery of his past. Meanwhile, Amrek has taken the throne as his mother intended. If Raldnor is to reclaim his destiny and defeat the usurper who has taken his place, he will have to survive trials of strength, political sabotage, and threats against his life, regaining his birthright as the true Storm Lord of Dorthar.

The Storm Lord Details

Date : Published July 4th 2017 by DAW (first published 1976)

ISBN :

Author : Tanith Lee

Format : Kindle Edition 413 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Science Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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It's only as Raldnor achieves a sudden spiritual awakening that abrupt motion occurs. It becomes both more and less interesting: the machinations become irrelevant, the battles are predestined, and Raldnor becomes inhuman, his personal connections severed. At the same time, the serpent goddess Anckire is moving in this world--either as an actual divinity manipulating events, or as a collective psychic virus or meme within a people bearing ultimately unknown powers. An alien and irresistible purpose pushes aside Raldnor's humanity with imagery reminiscent of Christian sainthood. The world is ultimately transformed, an entire culture blasted by divine action, whether that divinity is actual or the product of collective psyche.

Paul says

New edition of a book written in 1976. It just didn't grab me and hold my attention.

C. A. Powell says

I bought and read this in 1977 when I first started work in London after leaving school. I was going through a phase of reading fantasy and science fiction. I enjoyed the story and did read again a couple of years later. It was an enjoyable pulp sword and sorcery story but lacked the little extra to stand out.

Lucas says

This is one of Lees earliest pieces I can Definitely hear her in, It has definitely made me decide to read a lot more of her stuff. The emotional wringers she throws her characters through are something else even when the physical action is very muted. Got to find the other two pieces in this cycle.

Cécile C. says

Tanith Lee writes well, I'll give her that. There are some striking descriptions and some beautiful turns of phrase. Re-written, this book might be great.

Unfortunately, in its present state, it's not much more than an unbelievable collection of all the worse sword& sorcery clichés. Also, it's offensive; but not as in "it hurts my political sensibilities" (though it does), but rather as in "how can someone expect world-building this crude to be believable"?

There's a rape every twenty pages or so. It's tiring in the long run, and I'd be very thankful if she had bothered to give some thought to her female characters and made them, I don't know, three-dimensional or something; but she didn't. Instead, we get treated to a collection of paper dolls whose entire personality can be summed up as "whores". Nothing more. They enjoy being raped, they enjoy being trafficked into brothels, they enjoy the hero because he's soooooo manly and good in bed (seriously, I've met 13-year-olds with a more mature view of human sexuality), and they're completely interchangeable. As for the men... well, at least they have personalities. They're still portrayed as a pack of dogs bowing to the alpha, but hey, they're characters. So it's not even possible to state that characters are not the focus of this novel. They are; only women are portrayed as subhuman. I feel insulted, and also, I felt that an author who can't be bothered to pay attention to half of humanity in her world-building is doing a poor job of it.

Also, the race relationships are represented in an incredibly crude way. Beastly black people rutting every other month and chaste, just, humane and honest white people persecuted by their black oppressor?... I mean... seriously? I was also sorely disappointed that the hero didn't escape the "tragic mulatto" cliché, making him a bit of a good guy (his white side) and a bit of a sexy brute (his black side) (no, that's not a caricature. I wish.), forever torn between the two sides of his ancestry, as if that was the way mixed-race people lived in the real world.

To sum up: a book with beautiful writing and potentially wonderful world-building, spoiled by all the crudest sword&magic stereotypes you can dream of. I suppose that, at this point, I should just shrug and call it a "product of its time". The trouble is, last time I looked, the "time" for this kind of writing was 1930, not 1977. Fritz Leiber was already making fun of those clichés in 1940, for Pete's sake. We'd had freaking Tolkien and Frank Herbert and Roger Zelazny in 1977. There's no excuse, I say.

Tim says

At least at this early stage in her career, Lee comes on like Anais Nin ghosting Robert E Howard - peccs and princesses pulp fiction with its latent surrealism unfettered. She takes us through stunning descriptive set-pieces - a ship caught by a chain of erupting volcanoes, a gigantic, grave-robbd statue of a snake mother-goddess in a secret cavern - which seem more like Freudian dream-work than Tolkien-style landscape porn.

The dead-eyed amorality of her noble savages and decadents, again, amplifies the strangeness. There's little glorification of her muscular protagonists here, each sows the seeds of their own ruin. And while the rapture of the physical remains - there's a lot of sex and some troubling despite-strong-feminist-overtone consent issues which again remind me a bit of Nin - it's free from the sniggering schoolboy behind the male authorial gaze.

This is wierd fiction which defies easy qualification. And there's something in that inability to reduce either The Storm Lord to their constituent parts which makes both of them worthy of note.

Catie Fitzgerald says

Slow start but the pace picked up mid-way through book three. Until that point, I didn't care about what happened to any of the characters and following the dialogue presented some challenges due to the author's style of prose.

Jason M Waltz says

my first Tanith Lee novel. not bad. liked it quite a bit till Book (section) 4, from which point through the end it became a shell of a story, just like the main character became a shell of a man. the tale lost all the humanity of its storytelling when he lost all of his humanity - it emptied of what appealed. he was a pretty strong character till that point, as was the story equally strong. so ended disappointedly.

Shazza Maddog says

I want to be Tanith Lee when I grow up. The way she can turn a phrase, her incredible descriptions, her dark fantasies, her comedies, her Y.A. stories. I wanna be Tanith Lee when I grow up.

The Storm Lord follows the path of a young man, Raldnor, son of Ashne'e, a priestess of Anackire the Snake Goddess, and Rehdon, King of Vis. The Lowland people are nearly albinos, pale skinned, blond to white haired, golden eyed; the Vis are dark. Raldnor is born too early, as Rehdon's Queen, Val Mala, sends poisons to Ashne'e to make her abort the child and keep her standing, as well as her son's. She insists her woman, Lomandra, provide her with the dead child's finger. Ashne'e, in turn, cuts off Raldnor's pinky finger to send back to Val Mala, and the poisons take her. Lomandra, in turn, carries Raldnor out of the city, only to die in the Lowlands herself, trying to keep him safe. He is adopted into a Lowlands family, but when his adopted mother dies, he leaves to seek his way in the world.

As this is a Tanith Lee novel, nothing is ever easy, and Raldnor must go through a great many trials and tribulations to reach his goal - which turns out to be raising up the Lowlanders to shake off the yokes Vis put on them. His half brother, Amreck, the Storm Lord, threatens at every turn, as well as pirates and other dangers, including war. And above everything, Anackire watches, the great Snake Goddess of the Lowlanders, and Her presence is felt throughout the story.

First of a duology, The Storm Lord is an excellent example of world-building with a story that might seem familiar.

David Elsensohn says

This was frustrating for me, because I like Tanith Lee.

There is the promise of a richly detailed worldscape, of vicious cultural attitudes, racism, and a rising heroic son of the downtrodden. But despite the “twist” of making the oppressed people pale and blonde, and Lee’s talent for brief, brilliant whirlwinds of descriptive writing, this feels like a concentrated brainstorming of ideas wrangled into a general timeline.

Lee likes to place the reader in anyone’s head as needed for narrative, and I am used to this, as she handles the different thought processes and pacing for each. However, the reader can quickly become lost with so many names, nationalities, races and references strewn through every paragraph. The difficulty of reducing estrangement for the reader is usually handled through the narrator, and the hero does encounter strange things, but it’s damned hard to determine who everyone is and where we are.

The hero is sullen and unsympathetic, until he becomes godlike and absent. The things that *happen* to him are interesting and would make for good conflict and development... but while he grows in power, he does not seem to grow enough as a character. As another reviewer has noted, the women are all chattel or eerie witches, and the men brutal followers.

Lee often has a breathless, dreamy pacing reminiscent of Moorcock, and vibrant metaphor similar to Leiber, and there are some pretty, pretty words in here... but very few characters we like, and a fairly well-trodden hero’s journey. I’m glad I read it, for it generates ideas, and reminds me that these ideas need to be handled carefully.

D32tr0y3r says

Amazing Read. On of the best fantasy books ever written.
