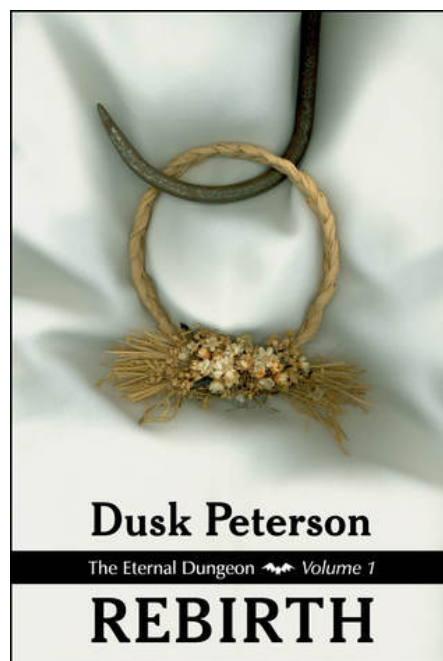




Rebirth

Dusk Peterson

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"This prisoner deserves special treatment.' The hooded man looked over at the young man again."

Elsdon Taylor, a prisoner accused of committing a terrible murder. Layle Smith, a torturer with a terrible past. Their meeting in the Eternal Dungeon appears certain to bring out the worst in both men.

Yet neither man is quite what he appears. As the prisoner and his torturer begin to be drawn toward each other, the ripple effects of their meeting will have a powerful impact on other inhabitants of the Eternal Dungeon: Layle's faithful guard, struggling to contain his doubts. A younger guard determined to take any shortcuts necessary to ensure that his life follows the path he has already chosen. An old love from Layle's past, still sorrowing. And most of all, a prisoner who has not yet arrived at the Eternal Dungeon, but whose fate will depend on how Layle handles Elsdon Taylor . . . and on how Elsdon handles Layle Smith.

A winner of the 2011 Rainbow Awards (within the "Eternal Dungeon" omnibus), this tale of love and adventure can be read on its own or as the first volume in The Eternal Dungeon, a speculative fiction series set in a nineteenth-century prison where the psychologists wield whips.

The Eternal Dungeon series is part of Turn-of-the-Century Toughs, a cycle of alternate history series (Waterman, Life Prison, Commando, Michael's House, The Eternal Dungeon, and Dark Light) about adults and youths on the margins of society, and the people who love them. Set in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the novels and stories take place in an alternative version of America that was settled by inhabitants of the Old World in ancient times. As a result, the New World retains certain classical and medieval customs.

Rebirth Details

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From Reader Review Rebirth for online ebook

Danny Tyran says

I love this series even though I hate when authors shows sadists or masochists as truly crazy and needing the care of a psychologist (mind healer as they are called in this book).

Laile is losing his mind. He isn't sure if he won't harm prisoners; so he takes a leave. Chr*st! Why authors always describe sadists as people unable to control themselves and their sexual urges? Not that this part of the story is not good. It gives the authors the opportunity to explain her vision of good/bad, right/wrong, moral/immoral and how the margin between one and the other could be thin.

It's clear that Mrs. Peterson is a believer (Christian since she gave quotes from the bible). And her vision of good and bad is in accordance with her values. I'm not a believer and even if I am a sadist (more a masochist but a sadist too), I don't agree at all with her vision of sadists being what they are because of their painful backgrounds. I was born like that. Nobody made me that way. I'm not telling that there is not crazy sadists, there are crazy sadistic men and women, but there are not more mad men/women in this segment of population than in the rest of it. So why do they always only speak of the crazy ones?

The premises and the settings are dark. It's not about BDSM at all, it's about real torture of prisoners. But the torturers do their "job" for the prisoner's good, to get them confess their crimes, to accept responsibility for their actions and to show some regret, so they can get a spiritual "rebirth".

When Elsdon is in the Hidden Dungeon, Aeden (great character, by the way), his torturer explains that when you force a prisoner to feel bad about their evil deeds you are crueler than when you torture their bodies, because then you deprive them of their own conscience, that's their souls that you are torturing. I love that part, because the author made us walk on the border between moral and immoral.

It's very well written. She took care not to use a too modern vocabulary and wording, so we feel we're reading an old book. She is a good story teller. If I gave only 4 stars is because of the "mad sadistic" part, even though that part is interesting too.

Yingtai says

Will anyone ever manage to write the story of a sweet and courageous submissive helping his tormented but formidable dominant get it together? Yes, and here it is! It's hot like [cough], and soul-searing beyond romance. Yes, it is a BDSM relationship, rooted in love and compassion and consent - and somehow the realness of the dungeon setting makes it hotter without squicking me, wimpy as I am about actual torture. I know it doesn't sound possible, but it is. And this is only the beginning of an epic - you can follow this couple all the way through the Eternal Dungeon series.

This is the Volume 1 of the series, containing six different parts. I would strongly recommend getting them all together here, because they work together as an amazing story, and you won't want to skip around. After you read this volume, you can pick up any part of Volume 2: Transformation, or Volume 3: The Balance. Those work fine as independent stories, and I specially recommend The Consultation, Barbarians, and Death Watch. But when Volume 4: On Guard comes out, that's another one you will probably want to read as a unified story.

Tara Stone says

This was a strange book. I'm not sure I could explain how without giving spoilers, because a lot of what made it so compelling was learning about the world and the characters gradually. But it's strange in a good way, not a bad way; I'd recommend it. The setting isn't like anything I've seen before, and the relationship between the two main characters is complex and fascinating.

A.B. Gayle says

There are a few stories around that were born as online sagas and for various reasons never went the traditional route of publishing. "Special Forces" is one, "The Administration" is another. "Eternal Dungeon" ranks right up there with them.

The book (along with the rest of The Eternal Dungeon - 400,000+ words) is obtainable from <http://duskpetererson.com/#eternaldungeon>

The stories that make up "Rebirth", the first volume about "The Eternal Dungeon" are dark, but that's because they explore serious themes. Themes of good and evil, guilt and repentance, redemption and renewal. Love is at the core of the stories and while there is some sex, it's a very small component and vital to the plot.

Each of the chapters except the last are primarily told through the eyes of the two main characters, Elsdon Taylor and Layle Smith. Rebirth 6 is told completely by a totally new character, giving a whole new twist on the scene.

The following quote from the POV of Layle's former master isn't the story by any means, but illustrates some of the concepts covered.

The master's first acquaintance with his prisoner had come through the arrest records, and what he read there confirmed his long-held belief that the torturers of the Eternal Dungeon were fools. Their hope in prisoners' rebirth seemed to be based on the belief that prisoners' evil nature was shaped by the people around them: that if the prisoners met the right people, their natures could be shaped back to their original goodness.

The master considered this theory to be muck. In his experience, most people who did evil had been evil from the day they were born. This boy was a clear example. His early childhood had been no harder than that of many other children, and his time in the band had been, by the witness of the children and of those who had seen the boy during those years, a relatively pleasant period. There was no reason the boy should have turned to criminal torture – unless he was a boy born to do evil until someone stopped him by strangling him.....

It seems to me," he said slowly, "that your friends are looking at the matter from the wrong side round. The question isn't whether the evil men of this world should receive punishment. The question is what happens to the hearts of men who decide to inflict such punishment on their own, in time of anger. It's quite possible, you know, to become as evil as the wickedness you're punishing."

On the surface, a reader might expect tales of torture and abuse, pain and suffering, whereas in fact the specifics covering these are rarely entered into. If you fear reading them because the physical manifestation of torture doesn't appeal, you'll miss a truly great read.

The Eternal Dungeon is in essence the story of psychology. It's a story about the mind, not the body. It's a story about madness and sanity. It's the story about love given unreservedly to one who feels undeserving of that love. It's a story about sacrifice on every level.

And if you're still worried, there is a HFN at the end.

Just an update that "Eternal Dungeon" came second in Elisa's Rainbow Awards 2011 in the Best Setting Development and won (in a tie) Best Gay Fantasy!

Elaine White says

Book – Rebirth (Eternal Dungeon Vol. 1)

Author – Dusk Peterson

Star rating - ★★★★★

No. of Pages – 386

Cover – Really nice. Symbolic, once you know what it means.

POV – 3rd person, multi-POV

Would I read it again – Yes!

Genre – LGBT, Historical, Fantasy, Dark Romance

**** I WAS GIVEN THIS BOOK FOR MY READING PLEASURE ****

Reviewed for Divine Magazine

**** WARNINGS: prison, torture, rape, child abuse ****

Wow! Stunning. Beautiful. Brutal.

What can I say? This book ripped my heart out and then ground it to dust, taking great delight in the brutal act. The only thing Layle would lament was that the pain didn't last longer.

I'll admit, I was scared to start. I've enjoyed very few dark reads, because they're either not taken far enough into the darkness or we're taken too far into the mind of a sadist who brutalises the MC we're come to love. The balance is so hard to reach, but this one did it. It was brilliantly written, complex and the author didn't apologise for being brutal and blunt. But once I started, I was thrilled by what I read. From the first story Rebirth #1: The Breaking, I was captivated. The inserts from Psychologists with Whips: A History of the Eternal Dungeon were so intriguing and weird, in a good way, that I couldn't wait to read more.

When it comes to characters, I completely fell in love with Elsdon. He was innocent, charming and yet dark in a way that was almost contrary to his nature, yet made perfect sense because of the way his story was told. The glimpses we got into his soul within the first 20-30% of the story were incredibly detailed and real.

Mr Smith and Mr Sobel intrigued me right from the start, because they were so mysterious and didn't get to

show their POV for a long time. I actually think that worked in their favour. Though we never saw Sobel's POV, I know it's coming in later books, so I'm excited by that. Mr Smith, however – Layle Smith – is such an enigma. I honestly have never known a more confusing, more passionate, darker or self-conflicted characters. His relationship with Elsdon is beautiful, right from the start.

Mr Bergsen, the healer, was interesting; a small character who had a huge impact on the main characters. Garrett was that unknown anomaly and by 21% I knew he was important, but I couldn't figure out why or how for a while. When the big reveal came, I was thrilled to get answers that made sense. On top of that, I admit that Rebirth #6: Tops and Sops really confused me; the character was a total mystery, difficult and intriguing. For the first page or two, I really thought it was going to be a separate story maybe leading into the next book and that my time with Elsdon and Layle was over. Then, the shock of all shocks came, and not only was I relieved, I was crying and being a big blubbering sop and...there's nothing to say but THANK YOU, AUTHOR! You know why. ;)

As ridiculous as it sounds, I cried a lot. I was crying by 11%, right after Elsdon's confession. It was not only gut-wrenching, captivating and completely devastating, but it was kind of beautiful, too. By the time we learned about Layle at 19% my head was in a total mess of F'd up proportions. The flashbacks! God, the flashbacks killed me over and over and over again. By the big, huge revelation of epic proportions came right at the end of Rebirth #2: Love and Betrayal, I was in total shock. I don't think I spent more than 10% of the story after that point not crying over something.

In Rebirth #3: First Time, we finally got Layle's POV and it was a kicker. I can't even describe what it did to me except to say that seeing Elsdon through Layle's eyes was hard on my heart. I'm still not sure how I survived. Then the whole “Sun” thing cut me to shreds. Literally, that one word, alone.

I loved the way that each of the “episodes” had a different focus on POV. Each story, bar #6 (which deviated with a 1st person POV), had the 3rd person, main focus of Elsdon's POV with generally one other character giving him a break, as well as a continuing storyline running throughout. Elsdon and Layle's relationship and the challenges they faced were a constant source of plot, even into that final story. The extra POV's – Garrett, Chapman and Layle – were vital to the understanding of events that Elsdon wasn't present for and it was great to have that added information.

~

Overall

I can't put into words just how much I loved it. It's the kind of story that hooks you from page 1 and with each page just digs its claws in a little further, until – before you know it – you're flesh and blood with the story, the characters and you have such an investment that putting it down for a drink, food or the loo is just impossible and unthinkable.

Not only will I be buying and devouring the next three volumes in this series, but Dusk Peterson has just landed themselves on my Must Buy NOW! list.

Thank you. Thank you for this story, for these characters, the stealing me away from a cold Winter day and giving me a hot prison to feel like home, a little cell of my own to feel safe and Layle and Elsdon to restore my faith in humanity.

~

Favourite Quote

“Searching other people is easy. Allowing oneself to be searched is an act of courage.”

M'rella says

The book is incredible, even if it proved itself to be an uneasy read: I had to put it aside a few times and think about some aspects of the story before I could continue.
4.5 stars.

Jewel says

???

To say that this book messed with my head a bit, might be a touch of an understatement. Indeed, many parts of the story are disturbing. So, if descriptions of abuse, torture or rape trigger issues, for you, then you might want to keep on walking. *Rebirth* doesn't pull its punches. It is quite intense and at times, it is pretty hard to read. The main themes explored are good and evil, guilt and redemption, life and death. It's a very psychological and philosophical journey.

Rebirth has 2 distinct story elements. One is the story involving Elsdon Taylor and the High Seeker, Layle Smith, told from their POV. And the other, intermixed with Elsdon and Layle's story, is written in a more scholarly style and is from what would be the future, from their perspective. And that part is mostly about Layle and how there isn't much known, with any certainty, about his life. Very little about him has survived the test of time, save his revisions to the *Code of Seekers* and a few other fragments of his writing.

Without giving too much away, *Rebirth* is about two men, both very damaged by their pasts, and both of whom want nothing more than to be reborn into men that are each worthy of the other. Layle, particularly. He's a master torturer; a sadist. He is greatly shamed by his nature and has made the personal decision to spend his life alone because he can't see a way that he could find another Seeker who was also a masochist. And, yeah, he's pretty right, there. You see, *The Code* prohibits Seekers from having physical contact with prisoners, with very good reason. Seekers are also forbidden to have relationships with guards. Their only option is another Seeker. So, you see his dilemma, yeah?

But he falls for Elsdon. His innocence, his compassion... And Elsdon feels the same. Elsdon sees a good man in Layle. One who has spent nearly 20 years doing everything he could to protect the integrity of *The Eternal Dungeon* while also protecting the rights of the prisoners within. When Elsdon looks at Layle, he sees a compassionate, intelligent, emphatic man. He does not see a monster. He does not see the darkness that Layle keeps so tightly in check.

So the story revolves around Layle and Elsdon learning how to be together, given their individual frameworks. And Elsdon has such insight and understanding. He amazed me. Layle, did, too, because he tried so hard.

The writing is impeccable, though the style really didn't mesh with me. Still, it was very well written and one of the most unique stories I've read. And as I mentioned earlier - it is intense.
