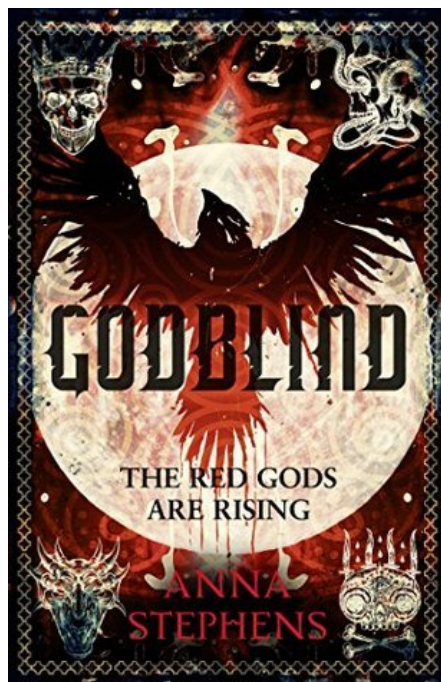




Godblind

Anna Stephens

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The Mireces worship the bloodthirsty Red Gods. Exiled from Rilpor a thousand years ago, and left to suffer a harsh life in the cold mountains, a new Mireces king now plots an invasion of Rilpor's thriving cities and fertile earth.

Dom Templeson is a Watcher, a civilian warrior guarding Rilpor's border. He is also the most powerful seer in generations, plagued with visions and prophecies. His people are devoted followers of the god of light and life, but Dom harbours deep secrets, which threaten to be exposed when Rillirin, an escaped Mireces slave, stumbles broken and bleeding into his village.

Meanwhile, more and more of Rilpor's most powerful figures are turning to the dark rituals and bloody sacrifices of the Red Gods, including the prince, who plots to wrest the throne from his dying father in the heart of the kingdom. Can Rillirin, with her inside knowledge of the Red Gods and her shocking ties to the Mireces King, help Rilpor win the coming war?

Godblind Details

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Author : Anna Stephens

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From Reader Review Godblind for online ebook

James Lafayette Tivendale says

"The Red Gods Are Rising"

Contains minor spoilers I received a free advanced copy of G0dblind in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to Anna Stephens and Harper Voyager. Please note, I have had to spell the book's title as G0dblind with a 0 otherwise GR's removes the word from my review for some reason.

To begin with, I must admit that after reading the excellent G0dblind I think I will be eternally afraid of betrayal and hammers.

The world of Gilgoras had an uneasy truce between King Rastoth of Rilporian and King Liris of the Mireces. The former were followers of the Gods of Light and the later under the direct command of the banished Red Gods. After recent events which caused the seemingly perpetual madness of one King and the murder of another, it seems like the Red Gods are now playing their hand, after years of plotting and they are hoping to send the world into bloodthirsty chaos. If so much blood and gore are delivered then the veil that has kept the Gods exiled from the physical world for so long will break and they can be made flesh once again.

G0dblind is labelled as Grimdark for a reason. If Abercrombie presented lectures on how to write gritty, brutal and tortuous fantasy then I imagine Anna would have been his star pupil. To truly enjoy this book I think readers need to know what sort of journey they are getting themselves into beforehand. The themes and language presented and used are very adult. Towards the beginning of the narrative, there is an attempted rape, some good old fashioned cheating at cards, a savagely violent sacrifice and a regicide. This certainly sets the tone for the action which is to follow. A couple of early reviews have stated that they couldn't handle the violence subjected to ladies in G0dblind which I see could be upsetting to some people. At the same time, there are some very strong female characters here and the violence given is not restricted to just the ladies. There is one particular scene where it will be the men reading who are the ones cringing and perhaps even feeling sick. (I had to put the book down for ten minutes!) Returning to the statement regarding violence to women, the transformation of one character from being a recipient of the aforementioned to her position at the book's finale made for an excellent character development arc. I believe that this book would not work if it was utterly and unconditionally horrific throughout and if the players involved were nothing but bloodthirsty cavemen-like individuals. The good news is that is not the case at all. There are some really nice moments here such as love found in unexpected places and there is a great amount of loyalty and honour amongst certain factions and troops. Stephens' debut is typically a good vs. evil tale yet it is only about halfway through that the sides seem fully aligned and that leads to some amazing plot twists up until that point. Out of the main characters, my personal favourites were Captain Crys who is a brave and influential soldier and the warrior Dom who is a seer who receives often unwanted messages from the Gods.

The world of Gilgoras is not as grandiose as some recent epic fantasy creations but it works well presenting the tales the book is trying to tell. The ARC I received didn't contain a map and this was fine so I would comment the final version probably doesn't need one either because of how descriptive the book is. The world building is excellent from the short sharp chapters leading the narrative to be presented via approximately twelve points of view perspectives. As the world isn't that large and the action normally only takes place in three or four locations at any time there will sometimes be a continuation or slight overlapping going from one character's portrayal of an event to another character's views of what comes next. The narrative will then switch elsewhere on the map to pursue what is happening in other areas.

This is the first book of a proposed trilogy. It concludes in pretty awesome fashion but it isn't really self-

contained and is the first portion of the bigger picture the same way The Lord of The Rings was. The intense and climactic ending definitely makes me want to pick up the next, currently untitled book as soon as I can. I noticed a lot of intriguing statement snippets which I believe are seeds to more complex events and happenings and Stephens' is working hard on the groundwork here to ensure that the following books become more complex, deeper and ultimately fulfilling. There is a sort of cliffhanger during a certain siege and I am really intrigued to see how those events are concluded. Godblind is a thrilling, unrelenting and a brilliantly presented debut that lets readers walk on the darkest plains visited in the fantasy genre. Highly recommended. It is not for the faint-hearted but definitely for fans of Abercrombie's The First Law and for fans of ASOIAF's structure, characterisation and most brutal moments.

Kitvaria Sarene says

This was bloody brilliant! Bloody both as gritty and as amount of awesomeness...

This is grimdark at its best! It is the closest thing I ever found to ASOIAF in tone and scope - it does read easier though. With Godblind I didn't feel like I would miss important stuff, if my attention waned for even just one second, and still it managed to be epic, have a lot of POVs and characters and an expanding world.

I loved the characters, and enjoyed following them and their growth throughout the books. They felt very realistic and changed over the course of the story. I especially enjoyed the good mix of female and male characters, that were very diverse and not stereotype in any direction... (neither damsels in distress, nor ice cold assassins, neither heroes in glorious perfection, nor villains just for the sake of it.)

The world was set invitingly, and I'll be glad to return to it with the next installment - as I listened to the audiobook, I sadly didn't get to have the wonderful map in the Hardcover version, but I already ordered one for my shelf! I need this one to look pretty on there...

Some politics, but it never got boring, different factions and religions to follow and gods trying to get back to earth after being banished...

The plot was complex enough to keep me engaged and interested, yet easy enough to follow so I didn't feel like I needed a flowchart to be able to follow the story. It was varied and has different subplots, so it never gets boring.

The prose was perfectly fluent and I never once was thrown out of my reading "flow" due to a bumpy phrasing, or chapter breaks at the wrong moments.

It is proper grimdark, so not for the faint of heart. There are human sacrifices, torture, attempted rape, and all kinds of violence in Godblind. But they felt like a natural part of the story, and not at all like they were added just for the sake of it. And they are important for character development.

All in all I can't really recommend it highly enough - what an astounding debut!

Dyrk Ashton says

Holy FS is this book brutal. Anna Stephens out-brutals Abercrombie hands down. I've never read a book that made me squirm as much as this one, and I do love me some grimdark. And I mean all of that in the most loving manner, because this is another book that deserves the hype. Wonderfully written and extremely fast

paced. The chapters are super short, moving from one character POV to the next, making it very difficult to stop reading.

I might say maybe they were too short for my taste, because I had a hard time connecting with the characters, but there's so much action and insanity going on that it's definitely not a criticism. I did get frustrated a few times with some (what felt like to me, anyway) repetition of scenes and characters running around like chickens with their heads cut off, but again, that's just me, and it certainly doesn't make me want to give it any less than a full 5 stars. Do check this out!

Melanie says

ARC provided by Skyhorse Publishing in exchange for an honest review.

I do want to start this review by saying that this is a grimdark fantasy novel, which means that it has much darker and more brutal tones than regular fantasy. Many of the characters are morally grey, and do very ruthless, savage, and inhumane things. I personally do enjoy this type of fantasy, but I know this subgenre isn't for everyone. This all being said, there are a lot of **trigger warnings** for brutal violence, rape, attempted rape, graphic torture, genital mutilation, religious sacrifice and other things along/in those veins.

“The gods demanded victory.”

The basic premise of this book is that in the world of Gilgoras the people either worship Dancer, the Goddesses of Light, and her Fox God son or the Red Gods who are the Dark Lady and the God of Blood. The Mireces people choose to worship the Red Gods, but they pay the price by being exiled to the cold and miserable places of Gilgoras, while the people that follow Dancer and her Fox God son get to thrive in Rilpor.

“Rilpor will belong to Blood again and, after it has fallen, all the world will know my wrath.”

The Mireces people not only worship the Red Gods, but they make incredible sacrifices to them, too. I'm talking excruciating pain until death type torture sacrifices. Yet, they are finally strong enough, and have enough people following their Gods' path, to try to take over Rilpor once and for all so they no longer have to live in the shadows.

Meanwhile, there is a man who is part of the civilian watch of Rilpor who is directly connected to the world of the Gods. They speak to him, among other agonizing things, but he is normally able to let his people know before something catastrophic happens. Then he rescues an escaping Mireces who he believes is the key to something much bigger. And he's right.

Add in a sick king, mourning the loss of his wife, a commander trying desperately to protect that king, while also trying to uncover what is true, a general, who doesn't know what to believe but wants to do what's right, another newly appointed king who has a very questionable adviser, a very lucky or cursed man, depending on how you look at it, with two different colored eyes, and a couple of Gods that want to live and rule among humans. Yeah, this is a pretty epic story with a lot going on.

This story is told in many different points of view, but it is blended seamlessly and never feels like it's too much or over the top. It's just an amazingly well crafted dark tale, filled with twists and turns that made me unable to put this book down. There are betrayals and backstabbing, dark rituals and salvations, friendships and loves, this book has everything I want in my fantasy.

This book has some amazingly strong female characters. A girl coping with her abuse and PTSD to become the fighter she's always wanted to be. The best officer Rilpor has ever seen, while constantly having to put up with misogynistic and sexist things. The most badass old woman, who never loses sight of her God or her faith, ever. Hell, even a villain that doesn't want to be a sidekick to a male and his agenda anymore. This story has the representation I want to see as a woman who reads and loves fantasy. Anna Stephens is Queen, end of story.

“Then fuck you all, she thought, I'll save myself.”

And speaking of representation, Crys like instantly became one of my all time favorite characters. He honestly might be my favorite character in all of 2017. I do not believe sexuality is ever a spoiler, but if you feel differently, do not read the rest of this paragraph. I love how we get to see Crys explore, deal, and accept his feelings for men. It was such an unexpected joy in this very dark world. The scenes where Crys accepted his self, and who he truly was, warmed my heart to no end and were some of my favorite moments in this entire book. Plus, you guys know I'm always here for the bi/gay representation, always, and Crys' was expertly done.

And the friendship in this book is truly spectacular, too. I loved seeing the growth of some of these friendships, but I loved seeing the forgiveness and acceptance even more. Friendships are never perfect, and sometimes they start out really rocky, but that doesn't mean that they aren't worth it.

I also loved the lesson of starting over, and how you are never the mistakes you have made in your past. And you certainly are never the terrible things that were forced upon you. Seeing the escaped Mireces, Rillirin, healing from her abuse (sexually, physically, and mentally) and the PTSD caused by them, was beautifully done and I was so happy it was added into this book. And then seeing her be able to love and accept love again was nothing short of magic to read. Discussions like this, especially in fantasy, are so needed and I completely applaud Anna Stephens for thoughtfully and respectfully adding them in her already phenomenal story.

“You weren't a whore; you were a victim”

My biggest, and maybe only, complaint is that I went into this believing it would be a standalone, which it is totally not. In fact, I think this beautiful book spent most of its time setting up for the events that are going to take place in the next installment. Most the time, when you receive a physical ARC, you will get a sell sheet that will say something along the lines of "epic new first book in a series" or something along those lines, but my sell sheet totally didn't say anything like that, and neither does the description, so I went in ignorantly believing this would be a stand alone. Obviously this is not the fault of the author or this book's what so ever, in fact after reading, I saw on Anna Stephen's author bio it says it's a trilogy releasing a book a year. So, this is totally and probably my fault for just not doing my research and realizing that it was the first book in a new series, but regardless I was a little disappointed, especially because of the massive cliffhanger(s) of an ending. Yet, now I realize that I get more books in this world and with these characters, so maybe it's not as much of a disappointment as I originally thought. But I do think it is important to note, especially since Goodreads also doesn't have this listed as the first book in a series yet. But I do need to get my hands on the

next book, like, yesterday. Seriously, who do I need to sacrifice?

Please give this a try upon release on June 20th 2017. I really believe it is something special and something so worth reading if you're a fantasy lover. I loved this book wholeheartedly. I instantly loved the premise, I quickly fell in love with the world, and eventually fell in love with most of the characters. The discussions are important, the representation was amazing, and the story is addicting as well! I am so impressed with this debut novel and author, and I cannot wait to get my hands on book two.

Blog | Twitter | Tumblr | Instagram | Youtube | Twitch

The quotes above were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

Tracey the Lizard Queen says

Originally reviewed here: <http://thequeenofblades.blogspot.co.uk>...

4.5 Stars

Move over Abercrombie and Lawrence! You too, Fletcher.

In the past it has been noted that there are almost no mainstream female GrimDark authors. Sure, there are those that write dark fantasy, and horror, and even stray into the morally grey area we love so much. But they tend to be slightly tamer than their male counterparts. I'm not sure why, maybe because they think 'females write only for females' rule applies? Well not any more! Here at last we have a true GrimDark book, written by a female author that can not only stand up to the male competition, but also kick it in the balls! Halleluyah! Or should that be 'Praise the Red Gods!'?

Human sacrifice, attempted rape, murder, and mass-murder. That is only the first chapter! Seriously, you can read it here: <http://www.starburstmagazine.com/home...> After I read that I knew I had to get my hands on a copy. Thankfully the lovely folks at NetGalley were happy to oblige my indulgence.

Set in the world of Gilgoras, this follows the struggles of the followers of the Red Gods. They have been exiled to the freezing mountains for the past 995 years. All they want is to claim back the land they feel they are entitled to. Land presently occupied by the followers of the Fox Goddess. Led by their king and priestess, they launch a rather audacious attack on the citizens Rilpor. Naturally this is not an ill advised last attempt to claim back their land, but a carefully laid plan. All to allow their gods to pierce the veil into the physical world and win their war.

This story is being marketed as 'for fans of ASoIaF', now that may be true in a sense, there are big differences between the two. Godblind is less than half the length of the average GRRM door stopper, there are not nearly as many PoV's. The pace is relentless. I flew through this in no time at all, and that was with limited reading time.

I thoroughly enjoyed the brutality, the betrayal, the absolute genius of Lanta. She is written just perfectly. And *that* torture scene. Even made me flinch. Brilliant. Make no mistake, this is not for the fainthearted. But GD fans will be pleased.

I received an e-copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/07/09/...>

Godblind is a book that would seem tailor made for my tastes in grimdark. It's epic in scope, characters, and setting. There are multiple points of view. Plenty of action. Lots of gut-churning violence. I enjoyed this novel, I won't lie. But it is also a debut, and it kind of shows. The writing is solid, but the plotting is predictable and scripted, as if the author placed certain elements into her story that she felt should be in there, and not necessarily because they really had to be.

First on the checklist is the multiple perspectives—we have an enormous cast here, lots and lots of POV characters. One of the first ones we're introduced to is Rillirin, an escaped slave who has spent years suffering at the hands of the Mireces after she refused to worship their cruel Red Gods. She eventually finds her way to the Rilporian people, enemies of the Mireces, bearing them a warning: the old Mireces king is dead, and with him dies the truce between their two peoples. Ambitious new leaders have seized power, one of them being Rillirin's own brother Corvus, a fanatical convert to the Red Gods. Accompanied by his dark priestess, Corvus plans to march on Rilpor and subjugate everyone to the religion of blood and sacrifice.

While all of this is happening, Rillirin also meets and develops a close relationship with Dom, a seer who receives visions of the future. Dom's power allows him to commune with the benevolent gods of Rilpor, but when the Dark Lady takes notice of him, his dreams become filled with pain and death. Meanwhile, not all is well with the Rilporian throne. The king is slowly losing his mind, still grieving for his late wife, who was murdered. With the killer still at large, Durdil the guard commander is at his wit's end trying to solve the murder but keeps running into dead ends, and amidst the heightened tensions, a captain named Crys has been assigned to accompany Rilpor's two royal princes on a diplomatic mission and protect them from threats.

And that's as far as I'll go describing the summary because I don't want to risk revealing too much. Though if I'm to be completely honest, I think anyone following the story closely would be able to guess many of the story's plot twists. In case you're curious why I gave Godblind only three stars despite enjoying the book, well, that's the main reason why the rating took a hit. Rather than grow out organically, the story felt forced and contrived, unfolding in a very ordered and controlled way. The novel's format made me feel like the author was following an epic/grimdark fantasy "how-to" template, and even the manner in which important events unfolded made me think they were included simply because they were expected. As a result, many of the shocking revelations lacked their intended impact. Fight scenes had plenty of blood and action but no spirit. Character relationships were complex and yet failed to feel genuine. And the most unfortunate part? Some of the brutal scenes of torture, killing, rape...they felt gratuitous. Don't get me wrong, as an avid reader of grimdark I am used to books filled with cold-blooded violence and every act of unspeakable sadism, but most of the time these elements are consequential and don't have the feeling of being blatantly tacked on. There were several scenes like this in Godblind that just leaped out at me, not so much because of the disturbing situations and actions they portrayed, but more because of the way they were written. It's difficult to explain, but they just felt randomly excessive and out of place.

The characters were interesting, but because the narrative was spread over so many POVs, only a couple of them really stood out. The beginning of the book really set a precedent for this; one after another, characters were fired off at us in rapid succession, without developing those who have already been introduced and letting them sink in. I had trouble remembering who everyone was every time I returned to the book from a break. The author also has this habit of splitting up a single event or scene, e.g. a big battle, into multiple short POV chapters—even when all the characters are together for the duration—whereas everything told via

a single POV in a longer chapter might have been more effective and less distracting. When chaos erupts and a fight is in full swing, all I want is to be lost in a scene, and not have to reorient myself every time we switch to another character's perspective.

As this is a debut though, I was not surprised to run into some of these issues. Godblind has its flaws but I definitely want to highlight some of the things Stephens did really well, including keeping the story interesting and fast-paced. I also mentioned a couple characters that stood out for me, and they were Durdil and Gilda. Damn, but latter is an old lady with grit! And Durdil's chapters were often full of suspense and cutthroat palace intrigue.

Overall, despite its predictability Godblind is actually pretty decent for a debut, with a few stumbling blocks that I can see being overcome once Stephens writes more books and gains more confidence in the art with time. As it stands right now, I think this book is an above average entry into the genre, with potential to develop and grow into something greater over the next couple books. I hear the series will be a trilogy, and I shall wait for news of the sequel with interest.

Book Roast says

*DNF'ed at 50%, will speak more about it in the livestream :)

❄️Nani❄️ says

3.5 ??

4/12/17

Sighs

This is one of those books that I really wanted to love and went into with high hopes - unfortunately, it fell a little short. So, here goes...

--For the most part, I really enjoyed it and it was what I could've asked for in a Grimdark Fantasy. I would point out, however, that this is not for everyone. The themes and language presented and used are very adult. The narrative starts out with an attempted rape then dives into other dark and gritty scenes including a savagely violent sacrifice (a cringe-worthy torture scene I was not prepared for) and more bloody scenes. It didn't hold back on anything and though it had so much potential, it lagged on many things I appreciate in fantasy books.

--One of the biggest drawbacks was in the world-building. Being that, **THERE WAS NONE**. The entire time I was reading, I felt like I missed out on the foundational part of the book and dove straight into this one. Not a lot (if any) was explained about the world, the characters and the deep conflict between the Red Gods and the others (which, if I'm not mistaken was the whole point of the entire plot?).

--Another drawback was that this book took what I absolutely love and look for in every fantasy book (multi-POVs and short chapters) and basically wrecked it. Very annoyed!
For starters, the chapters were so short that I was never given the chance to really get to know the world or the characters as much as I would've liked to because, after two or so pages, it'd change straight to another

character.

--And the POVs! I absolutely love books told from many different perspectives but Godblind had some character POVs that were plain unnecessary. We move across ten characters, some of whom have more chapters than others but then switch to another character who was right next to the one we just read about. It was utterly pointless and felt like a page filler.

Out of the main characters, however, my personal favourites were Captain Crys, a soldier of Rilpor who always finds himself in trouble in more ways than one, and Dom - the seer who receives often unwanted messages from the Gods.

--Yet another thing that lowered my rating was the lack of feeling of connectivity. I did not feel any emotional connection to any of the characters whatsoever. None. I couldn't care about them or care about who lived or died. And feeling no connection to your characters is practically one of the worst things that could happen when you're reading a book.

Contrary to my review, I did enjoy some parts. I just wasn't blown away by it (despite my wishes). For a debut novel, it was an unrelenting and brutal dark fantasy that might not have been executed ever so perfectly but was thrilling nonetheless. It's not for the faint-hearted but definitely for fans of Abercrombie and Lawrence.

1/12/17

Right, so! I was told that this is one hell of a dark book which contains the bloodiest most gruesome scene in fantasy.

Here goes...

+

It's SO AWESOME to read a Grimdark fantasy written by a female author!?

We don't get many and we should!!

Petros Triantafyllou says

There's this term we are using in the Grimdark Fiction Readers & Writers fb group, called "Grimdark AF". A term to identify the grimdarkest of grimdark. As grimdark as it gets. GRIMDARK AS FUCK. I believe it deserves to be a sub-genre of Grimdark Fantasy, and Godblind may as well be the very first novel classified as such.

The Mireces were exiled from Rilpor almost a thousand years ago, and their Gods were imprisoned beyond reach. Being savages, outnumbered and outclassed, they didn't dare fight except from the odd ambush here and there. But when a new Warlord takes command, and while the Rilporin King is unwell both in body and mind, the Mireces plot invasion with two targets in mind: destroy everything, and bring back the Red Gods.

A powerful Seer, an ex-slave, a General and a Captain are called to stop them. But are they enough, or is Rilporin doomed to be erased from human history?

The Blessed One hissed and drew all eyes back to her.

'Our gods are trapped on the borders of Gilgoras like us, but They weave Their holy work inside its bounds nonetheless. With the help of my high priest, Gull, who lies hidden in the very heart of Rilpor, They draw one to Them who can finally see Their desires fulfilled.'

She bared her teeth.

'Know this now, and rejoice in the knowing. The gods' plans are revealed to me, and soon enough to you. Begin your preparations and make them good. Come the spring, we do not raid. Come spring, we conquer. And by midsummer, we will have victory not only over Rilpor but over their so-called Gods of Light as well.'

Godblind is told by many points of view with short, sharp and to the point chapters. A lot of debuts (and especially first books in a series) suffer from a low tempo and a slow pace in an attempt to establish characters, world-building and make you feel familiar with them, before moving into the main story-line. The result of this is uninteresting and/or boring chapters that may force the reader to DNF. Fortunately, this wasn't the case with Godblind. Stephens is excellent at establishing and developing her characters, exploring and expanding her world, and telling a bad-ass story in the process.

If you can say one thing about Anna Stephens, it's that she's talented beyond doubt. But talent isn't always enough - it must be combined with hard work and a long-term vision; and that's exactly what she's done. From the smooth-as-silk prose to the exciting and steadily-rising tempo, from the exceptional main story-line to the intriguing smallest plot-arcs, from the masterfully-crafted characters to the fascinating world-building, Godblind might as well be the grimdark debut of the year.

In all of my reviews, I highlight both positives and negatives. Anna's debut is a great book, but it isn't perfect. Godblind has a problem in its first half, and here's where things are getting weird.... for the life of me, I can't pinpoint it. A lot of things crossed my mind: Perhaps the characters are one-dimensional. Perhaps the story-telling is slightly apathetic. Perhaps the pacing was uneven. But when I focused my attention on these elements, I didn't find them lacking. I can only presume that the said problem is insignificant and beyond notice so you won't be able to identify it while searching for it, but you can feel that there's something "wrong" while reading. In conclusion, I guess I'll have to settle with "slightly unrealistic due to multiple but minor factors", although I'm not entirely satisfied with the term. But, this is just a minor problem and didn't affect my rating or the pleasure of reading the book in the slightest.

All in all, Godblind is an excellent debut and the starting point of a promising author that won't take long to be a household name.

4,5* rounded up to 5* because it's a debut

You can find more of my reviews over at <http://BookNest.eu/>

Kaitlin says

I was sent this for free from the publisher in exchange for a review

This book is a new release set to come out on the 15th of June in the UK and I wanted to read it just before so I could review it for then (which, yay, I managed!). I requested this when I heard it was a new Grimdark book written by a lady - something I've not really read before - and I haven't read any Grimdark in a fair while so it seemed like a perfect collision of circumstances.

This is the story of a world trying to forge on after the banishment of the Red Gods. These Gods are brutal and cunning, manipulative and bloody. They've been banished from the main area of the world and are now just worshipped by the few Mireces who live away from their previous lands. The Gods require constant sacrifice so people are often brutally ripped to shreds and destroyed in the name of the Gods - it's not a place you'd want to live! They also keep slaves who they have captured so that they can be served by them and

then destroy them at leisure.

The other kingdom we follow, Rilpor, is a thriving and bustling kind of medieval setting. This place is governed by a King who is sadly going mad after the loss of his beloved Queen to an unknown assassin. Unfortunately for Rilpor, the loss of control the King is showing starts to open the door for malevolence to creep in and eventually we see a drastic turn of events in the form of the most graphic and nasty torture scene I've read in a long while - so fair warning!!

Overall I enjoyed a lot of this story but the second half did feel a lot stronger to me. It seems like this story is a pretty solid and exciting start to the series, and I anticipate the next book being even better as this one is a debut. I found the magic interesting and the gore sickening, but overall it was a quick grimdark read with some quality moments and interesting characters and character choices.

3.75*s which I've rounded to a 4*s overall. :)

Sh3lly (grumpybookgrrrl.com) says

I am conflicted about this book. On one hand, I enjoyed it, so this a solid three star rating. On the other hand, I felt like it went on too long if you weigh the content of the actual plot. There are multiple POVs, at least a dozen. The book ends without resolution (apparently it's going to be a trilogy). The entire book ended up being set up for the next book. I didn't feel there was enough "meat" to justify a higher rating. *shrug*

Many things happen, including build up to a religious war, romance, political treachery. There are *dark* gods in this who influence man and like suffering, sacrifice, and torture. It has dark parts. This is not a very nice world.

I liked the various characters well enough, but to be honest, if there were fewer POVs and the book was shorter, I would have given this four stars. By about 70% in, I just wanted the book to end, and that is about when the real fighting begins and events start unfolding.

However, the book is easy to read and I found myself easily engaged... to a point. This is a debut novel and there is a good story here with good writing, etc. I just can't say I loved it, although I will probably read the next one.

Original post:

\$1.99 on US Amazon: October 19, 2017

Emma says

I went in to this thinking it was YA (only the gods know why) but was aggressively disabused of the notion in the opening scene. Thankfully I like my fantasy as dark as it comes, but for anyone looking for a lighter read, this is not for you. At this point and all the way up to a scene about 1/4 of the way through that will make you wince (at the very least), I thought this would be an easy 5* read. Not only did it play with genre tropes, it fooled with narrative ones. So many moments went like this:

reads scene

Hang on

Wtf

Did the author just do that??

reads scene again

She did just do that. Damn.

Repeat.

Then for me it lost itself. The multiple POV that had worked well to keep the tension high in the initial stages now seemed shorter (not sure if actually true but it felt that way), each person over too quickly and no depth in sight. Things kept happening off stage and I wasn't sure whether that was a stylistic choice or whether it just didn't fit, its quite a big book already. The sections jumped all over the place and i found it difficult to care what people were going through because I just didn't feel it. Added to that the shoehorning in of two romances that were entirely unnecessary and unlikely, and I was struggling.

I'm still giving it 4 because it's trying to do something different and because I was genuinely surprised and thrilled by the first part.

ARC via Netgalley

Petrik says

3.5/5 Stars

An enjoyable grimdark debut with one Mortal Kombat level of brutality scene.

This is one of those occasions where I truly hate Goodreads rating system, a 0.5 is a must have here. 3 stars are too low while 4 stars are too high so take the rounding down or up here with a grain of salt, I'm rating this book 3.5 stars, a great book with some cons but still very enjoyable.

Honestly, I'm in sorrow. This is not an easy book for me to review. I really wanted to love this book more especially after seeing the raving reviews it received from several reviewers I know, but I can't give this a higher rating because of some cons I had with it.

Before I start my review, I'll give a warning to those of you who are sensitive on the topic of violence and rape, there are several scenes that might trigger you. The book itself started with an attempted rape and then continued with two more rapes scene happening off screen, later on, *(to a mother and a teenager)* near the end of the book. Plus, as I mentioned in the beginning of my review, the existence of one very brutal scene that I usually only find in other media, will definitely make you wince.

Picture: Goldsboro's Books June Book of the Month, taken from the author's blog

If you think for one second that hammer and nail in the picture are there for decoration, you couldn't be more wrong. I can never look at hammer the same way again after this book, that's all I'll say on this matter.

Consider yourself warned.

The plot of the book revolves around the Mireces people, who worship the bloodthirsty Red Gods, that's plotting an invasion of Rilpor, which is filled with thriving cities and fertile Earth and the people worship the Dancer and the Fox God. If you've been following my reviews, I always avoid 'bullet point's' review but I must make an exception for this one because a number of things I enjoy and dislike are more or less equal. I've been staring at this review for hours and I honestly don't have any idea how to tackle this one other than using this format.

I'll start with the cons first so this review can end on a positive note because, despite the problems I had with it, there's no doubt that I enjoyed reading this book.

-The overkill short chapters. If I may be brutally honest, the first 30% of the book was boring due to the huge amount of POV's and short chapters. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind short chapters, in fact, one of my favorite series of all time, The Faithful and the Fallen series by John Gwynne is done in the same manner. However, in this case, it's just too much. The book is less than 400 pages, there are 106 chapters in it. Yes, that means most chapter consist of only 3 pages, this kills the sense of immersion and made the characters really hard to get attached to, especially in the beginning. Not to mention there seem to be no distinctive voices between the male characters until around halfway of the book.

-Characters are severely lacking in physical description. Up until the end of the book, I have no slightest idea on what every character facial features should look like. Despite the huge amount of casts, the only concrete information I got was that Rillirin has red hair and she's 20 years old, Dom is less than 30 years old, Gilda is old but that's it. Call me nitpicky but I prefer to know how the characters supposed to look like.

-Finally, world-building still needed a lot of improvements. There seems to be no other reason for the conflict between the Gods other than the almost thousand year exile of the Red Gods. The author might be saving this plot device for the sequels so I may change my statement on this one in the future if it ended up being true. The world also felt so small and quite lacking in vivid description.

Now, on to the pros:

+Short chapters. Yes, the short chapters are also the positive part of the book. The book is highly focused on plots, dialogues, and actions which made the book really hard to put down after the 30% mark. It's fast paced and there's always something going on in the story.

+The best part of the book for me lies within it political machinations. Despite being predictable, there's always this sense of "I can't wait for this part to arrive" and that's always a good thing in my dictionary.

+Well written female characters. Rillirin, Lanta, Gilda are all unique in personality and compelling to read. Rillirin's development throughout the book from the beginning is amazing.

+A huge plus on the beautifully detailed map. In my opinion, maps are a staple in high/epic fantasy books these days, it allows a better sense of location and how far each location in the world are from each other.

Don't let my short explanations on the pros put you off, I'm just highlighting the main point for you to enjoy it yourself so that you'll have a better experience when you read it. Overall, although I expected to love this book more, Godblind is still a very enjoyable book despite the problems I had with it and it's a good beginning to a trilogy. I will look forward to what Anna Stephens has in store for the trilogy in the future.

You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I very much enjoyed this book. Well, some parts I had to gloss over because this is a Grimdark and has very cringe-worthy scenes. So this book is not for the faint of heart! Blood guts and torture!

I was thrilled to get this freaking awesome stained, signed and numbered edition of the hardback. I also got a lovely postcard sent from the author. Some authors are just so awesome ♥

There were several characters that I liked but damned if I didn't write down all of their names! Story of my life. I did write down Rillirin and Dom's names, although Dom is easy to remember. Dom found Rillirin and took care of her. He felt like she knew something, like she was meant to be there with him and his people. Well she did have a story to tell but it wasn't the one Dom was thinking.

I enjoyed Dom and Rillirin a great deal and hope everything goes well for them in the next book. That ending though.... I don't know!

There were other people in that band of people that I loved. Strong women and men.

I didn't like the other people so much as they had the Dark Lady Woman, whatever she was called. I just know I hated her and she put out some serious torture on peeps. I guess for an evil character she beats everyone I know!

The two sides are fighting one another while others are fighting and killing each other over the throne. It's crazy train.

In the book you're basically thrown into the story. There is no real world, you're just along for the ride wherever you may be with the person you're reading about. Oh yes, there are multiple POV's but once I got used to them it wasn't that bad at all. I liked the shorter chapters too. It helps when you have a tiny brain!

I'm really hoping to get the next book in the special edition, signed and number book as well because it looks amaze balls! Freaking awesome cover. We shall see.

God, I wonder what kind of torture of peeps and stuff will be in the next one. Like I said, I just skim over stuff like that if it gets too bad because I still like to read great stories. And I watch a lot of history type with that stuff in it so I'm used to skimming or averting the eyes if it's too much. Just know all of that if you're going into this type of book.

I don't do animal torture and unless it was in some of the parts with human torture I skimmed over, there wasn't anything like that so kudos (I think)

Anyhoo!

Happy Reading!

Mel ♥

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

Aentee says

To be honest, 2 stars is being generous. I am so disappointed in this book after hearing all the hype surrounding it. Although I should have known when I saw two reviewers I trusted DNF this book.

- I enjoy multiple POVs, but only if they are distinctive characters with something to add to the story. In Godblind, the average chapter lasts about 3 pages, we never get to know any of the characters - and it all feels very messy and disjointed. Most of the male characters are barely distinguishable from one another.
- Grimdark is a genre I can appreciate, but the world building in this book lacked depth. Constant threat of death and rape being used as a background tool to create "dark" world building is lazy writing. The gore and torture were so over the top that I started laughing instead of cringing when we got to the most explicit scene. It seems so juvenile to think violence is the only thing that can make a novel dark.
- The world was barely non-existent, and as world building is the thing I love most when I read fantasy book - I felt very letdown by this one. There's four gods, two religions, and two nations -- barely described and lacking in any sort of nuance. I've never seen gods who were this ineffective and boring.
- The plot was incredibly predictable, also very confusing because I could hardly tell the characters apart.
- Very disappointing female characters, utterly lacking in any sort of real narrative arcs. Everyone is either a caricature villain or hero with a destiny or a soldier with a past -- they're all unmemorable tropes. Pass.

BLAH.
