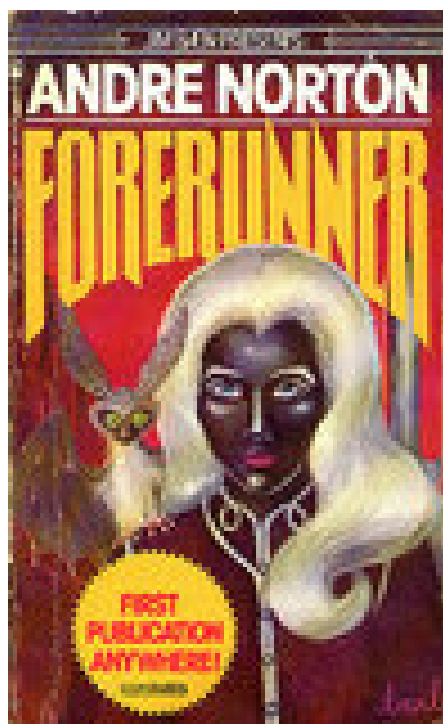




Forerunner

Andre Norton , Barbi Johnson (Illustrator)

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A quest for our beginnings and beyond. In a future so distant that Earth has become only a legend and its very name corrupted Xarth, a beautiful young woman, blue-black of skin, silver of hair is left alone in the dark age civilization that is all that remains of a once mighty culture. She is forced by circumstances to accompany a star traveler in a quest on whose outcome rests not only knowledge of the origins of mankind but also the last, best hopes of its future.

Forerunner Details

Date : Published 1991 by Pinnacle Books (first published January 1st 1981)

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Author : Andre Norton , Barbi Johnson (Illustrator)

Format : Mass Market Paperback 282 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fantasy, Fiction

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From Reader Review Forerunner for online ebook

Kaylee says

The entire book is written in run-on sentences, probably to show how alien the character is. I think this is completely unnecessary, and makes it hard to read. The only reason to use an accent or a different way of speaking is to contrast between human and alien, but this book takes place entirely on an alien planet, where *everyone* is an alien. The plot was interesting enough that I kept reading and finished the book, but I really hated the execution.

Before you commit to taking this book home, I highly recommend reading a few pages to see if you can stand it. Not a few paragraphs, mind you, but a few pages; it makes a difference.

Leila says

Instantly readable, exciting tale which falls somewhere between sci-fi and fantasy. "Forerunner" is one of those tales that you can't put down until you've read all of it. An engaging, likable orphaned heroine with mysterious origins labors for a vile old hag who has little warmth to give her ward. The girl must take care to cover her hair when she goes out on errands, lest the curious recognize that there is something special here: an ancient prototype of humanity with ebony skin and splendid silver hair. Our heroine parts company from her unloving guardian very early in the story, and events blossom into a fine alien adventure novel. As with many semi-mythological tales, the heroine's strength and confidence must withstand many tests. Freedom and self-possession are the prizes for which she must fight.

The sequel, however--whole different story. Probably one of those rush-rush jobs according to publisher demands. Virtually the entire story in that one is a battle for survival with plant-like alien creatures. Pass on it. Wish I had. Buying the paperback was pouring money down a drain. Read "Forerunner" twice, instead.

Jacqueline says

I'm giving this 3 stars because other books by this author are so much better but I will say that the boys loved it and want me to immediately start the next in the series. They just love to listen to Andre Norton books. I love AN too but honestly this one was not her best. I believe it is a pretty early book. The writing style is very convoluted and it is difficult to read out loud. I always get the feeling that the boys might have forgotten the beginning of the sentence by the time I get to the end. Something about it seemed to move slow and it seemed as if not a whole lot happened plot wise. The style that AN has in which the magic elements are rather vague and not extremely concrete seems to be worse here. I'm not really saying this is a bad thing. If you read AN you know how "wispy" feeling her magic stuff is. But that it seems that she hasn't quite got a handle on it here.

All that being said, we liked the book. I am always appreciative when the boys beg me to read to them at night. All our read out loud choices do not elicit this reaction. Also I am glad that a) they like sci fi/fantasy and b)they can appreciate a more difficult read with denser more interesting sentence structure.

Andrea says

This is not one of Norton's stronger stories - although Simsa is very relatable and the story starts off well, it loses a ton of pace and interest around the time they hit the desert - and then later an event occurs which considerably alters Simsa in a way which makes her a much less enjoyable character.

Not a terrible story, but not great either.

Mary Catelli says

One of her SF works. I noticed in this one there was rather more coherence about the problems they faced than the somewhat random jumble some of her characters face.

It opens with Simsa, a Burrower -- someone who lives in the poor quarters -- having grown up under the protection of an older woman, who died. She still has her tame zorsals, which can help defend her, but not enough to protect her from those who want to move in on her. So she rummages through her treasures for sale, first to buy herself better clothes, and second to bring when the starmen arrive in their spaceships.

The first ship has on it a passenger who's interested in her pieces. He's also interested in what other ruins and artifacts this planet may have, and above all, what happened to his older brother, who came in search of them. Securing the money that he promised her involves in his affairs.

The rest of the tale involves a trader who decided to skip auction and sell his wares himself, a long voyage over the sea, a desert, a fierce draconic creature, pictures taken by his brother, a pool that doesn't have water in it, and a statue that looks like Simsa. Among much else.

Elizabeth R. says

Forerunners are so often mentioned in Norton's work. It seems to me, though, that when we get a story about them it's impossible for such to live up to the hype. That said, I think this may also be among her earlier works. In any event, worth reading, although not as good as we expect.

Amy VanGundy says

Anne McCaffrey was my life when I was a reading, growing young person. Andre Norton was frequently mentioned as an inspiration and an influence so I was curious to read one of her works. I have no idea if this was a good entry point into her writings but sometimes you just have to dive in.

I was not enthralled with Forerunner but thought it was a concise and solid story. Modern fantasy authors need like 700 pages to even start to. Hold a world but this novel had that done in maybe a third of that. The writing style is different quite sparse but it is sort of a nice change from more modern styles. I'll hope to read some more Norton in the future!

Kristen says

Though I found myself rereading parts because the writing didn't always flow well* and the ending was rather abrupt, I enjoyed this tale of adventure and discovery. I love intelligent animal companions so I really liked reading about the bond between the main character Simsa and Zass, the injured zorsal she rescued and trained. Simsa is a determined character, and I'd like to read the sequel about her.

Rating: 7/10

Full Review: <http://www.fantasybookcafe.com/2016/0...>

* This may be at least partially due to Moving Brain. Since I've been preparing to move for the third time in just under two years, I've had a lot of difficulty concentrating on reading and writing reviews!

James says

This one of Norton's buddy novels, there are two protagonists working together, the woman Simsa and the man Thom. If this were a modern YA, there would be some romance, but that's not old school, their relationship is one of mutual respect. In the beginning, Simsa is the lowest status imaginable but she does have animal buddies, typical for many of the author's heroes. Thom is the starfarer with all the tech know-how that Simsa's culture lacks.

The story is told from Simsa's perspective and she initially distrusts Thom. Gradually as the adventure unfolds they grow to rely on each other and Simsa matures rapidly in the process. Then comes the magic pill, (view spoiler) The ending feels a bit forced.

While this book is part of the Forerunner series, it has nothing to do with the previous novels in the series and can be read as a standalone. Also this edition is illustrated, but they aren't needed to understand the story, so any edition will be a decent read.

Omar Mizdaq says

My first Norton. she writes in a way that's unique in my experience... intuitive sentences, that don't really make sense sometimes if you analyse them, but more on a feeling level. characters aren't fully fleshed out, and I didn't feel much of a sense of connection to them, but the main story of Simsa's self actualization is inspiring. I liked the slow pace. Fantastic adventure abounds here. I feel her words communicating with some deeper part of me and i like this sensation, although it's only dimly felt right now... will definitely read more by her, and look forward to future journeys

Valerie says

Norton had a gift for astrobiology which has rarely been matched. The zorsals in this book and its sequel (called, not surprisingly, Forerunner: The Second Venture) are batlike carnivores, larger than most Earth fruit bats, but otherwise similar, except that they're

six-limbed (wings count as limbs).

This is hard to place in the sequence of Norton's somewhat vaguely imagined future history. Earth has been so nearly forgotten that few still know where it is, or even how to spell the name. The hero of this book, an orphaned girl named Simsa, is definitely not of Earth--but there's some tie that's not quite clear, even to her. She is, btw, described as 'beautiful'. If so, it's (literally) a negative beauty. In pictures and descriptions, she resembles what you see when you look at a negative of a photograph.

Susan says

Simsa lives in the Burrow, but is unlike anyone else there. The woman who raised her has taught her to hide her differences as much as possible - she has black skin and white hair. She hopes to sell some of her gleanings to the spacers when a ship lands, and meets Thom. He recognizes some of her things as X-Arth and is very interested. When he is followed by dangerous men, she helps him escape. He tells her he is hunting for his brother who came to her planet and never returned. She ends up going with him, she discovers a little about her possible origins and perhaps also her destiny.

Rob says

...Despite all the negatives I did enjoy *Forerunner*. It is not a memorable novel but certainly a lot better than my first encounter with Norton's writing. Simsa is a character you can really root for, even if she is too stubborn for her own good sometimes. If you are willing to overlook Norton's prose and the occasionally illogical plot in favour of a good adventure, this book might be a good read. Norton published a sequel named *Forerunner: The Second Venture* in 1985. I won't rush to the nearest book store to get it but I won't rule out reading it at some point either.

Full Random Comments review

Frank says

I have read all of Nortons work for third until 1990 or so. I have not read any of Her co-authored works because it feels like trading on Nortons name. I don't recall a single novel that wasn't enjoyable read Some of the older works feel a bit dated now. But it's not like reading Ee Doc Smirh. Norton is usually a fun light read

Janice Seagraves says

I just finished Forerunner last night and feel a little disappointed. I've read Andre Norton since I was in HS and I'm found of her work. I've always loved her strong female lead characters.

Forerunner is written from the POV of the main Character Simsa, who is raised among the Burrowers (simple people who live underground and dig for treasure in old part of the city).

Simsa's black skin and white hair marks her as different. With little to no education, and raised by an old woman who never told her anything about her history, Simsa has to make it on her own after the old woman dies.

When the Starmen come, Simsa sees an opportunity she's been waiting for.

After she sells some old broken trinkets to the Starman Thom, Simsa finds herself in trouble with a local crime boss. She then sets out on an adventure with Thom as he goes in search of a long lost city and his lost brother.

In the end, Simsa finds out who she is and discovers more power than she's ever dreamed of (which reads like God in the machine).

I found the dialogue stilted and the ending abrupt. After a long rambling speech by Simsa, it's as if Norton said that's it, and the book just ends with no real conclusion to the story.
