



Before the Mask

Michael Williams , Teri Williams

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Spare the Rod

In the bleak Khalkist Mountains, on a stormy winter night, a child is born amid hard words, ill will, and the ominous prophecy of a druidess. Young Verminaard grows up unlovely and unloved, trading friends and family for a dark romance with an evil, mysterious voice and the sinister weapon it comes to inhabit.

Michael and Teri Williams, long known for their poems, novels, and stories in the continuing DRAGONLANCE saga, reveal the origins of the evil cleric Verminaard.

The Villians Series explores the corrupted origins of the malevolent minions of Takhisis, Queen of Darkness.

Before the Mask Details

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Author : Michael Williams , Teri Williams

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From Reader Review Before the Mask for online ebook

melydia says

This is the story of Verminaard, unloved bastard son of Solamnic Knights, and his road to evil. My husband adores the Dragonlance series and insisted I read this. He'd finished it in a weekend, so surely I, the voracious reader, would speed through as well. He was wrong. Though far from being a bad book, it just didn't draw me in. Verminaard's evilness seems to be inborn rather than reactionary, to the point that the supposed contributing factors - the unloving father, the loss of the beloved brother - seem more like asides and much less sympathetic. Likewise with his half-brother Aglaca, who is unfailingly upbeat and loyal for no apparent reason. I understand the story the Williamses were trying to tell, and it took a while to put my finger on what was wrong. Then I realized it was missing a vital element of all great drama: levity. The human experience is not serious all the time. Even in the grimmest tales there is laughter. The unrelenting depression of this book left me frankly unmoved.

Brett says

Fun & easy read. I really enjoyed reading such an easy story after some of the heavy narrative I've been going through.

Canis Minor says

A captivating story of one of the most malevolent villains of War of the Lance, Verminaard - his misery, loneliness, passion and finally, fall into hands of Darkness.

Ros?a says

I would say, do not read the back cover of the book. It makes for much more interesting read.

Most of the story is a dramatic struggle for the souls of two brothers, Verminaard and Aglaca, who are the main heroes of the book. Because of ancient prophecy, evil powers want to sway one of the brothers to their cause, while the other brother would die. A lot of the book is spent in the struggle, which one of them is it going to be? Or is it even possible that one might redeem the other?

I didn't read the back cover of the book before reading it, and had no idea about the characters present in the book, so it made a quite interesting psychological drama. If you want to enjoy the reading more and don't know anything about the subject, I suggest you don't read the back cover or anything related to the book and just read the story itself.

For Dragonlance fans, it probably is interesting if they want to know some background for some characters. However, generally I think the book is not very well written and you can probably read an article on some Wikipedia which would tell you as much without having to spend unnecessary time with it.

There are a couple of awful clichés (female druidesses serving only as love interests being rescued from

distress and whatnot, even though of course they are "strong" females who could save themselves as well, but somehow the "strong" part isn't shown in the story at all), but I must say it's better than it could be. Still, it is no jewel of literature. Of course you are expecting only so much from this kind of book, but even for such a thing it is, well, mediocre at best. A bit more originality here or there wouldn't go amiss.

So once again, the thing I enjoyed about the most was actually the drama. It would have been the best part of the book, had not too much of it been foreshadowed on the back cover. (view spoiler) There are a couple of nice minor characters, but otherwise not really too interesting read altogether.

Frankie Roxx says

I absolutely love this book. Ever since first reading *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* I'd been a fan of Lord Verminaard--so much so that as a child I really wanted a mace like *Nightbringer*...So for me this tale was a blessing. It gave us a chance to take a deeper look into a fascinating character that originally didn't get much chance to shine. I found myself drawn into the tale as we bore witness to Verminaard's seduction by evil and the futile attempts by others to draw him from his dark destiny. Of all the villains novels put out for the *Dragonlance* franchise I rank this and *Lord Toede* as my two personal favorites and I recommend them both though for completely different reasons. *Lord Toede* for it's pure humor (and hidden message) and *Before the mask* for the dark and compelling tale of a man born to embrace evil.

Rob C. says

the life and times of the dragon highlord Verminaard

Jeremy Brown says

Before the Mask is the first book in the Villains series set in the *Dragonlance* setting. The series focuses on the villains highlighted in the *Chronicles* trilogy by Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis. This book focuses on the Dragon Highlord Verminaard and his ascent from an innocent child to one of the Dark Queen's most famous dragon highlords. The book starts off with the birth of Verminaard and picks up several years later when he is a child. After this the author skips up a few years to when he 20 years old. At this point the author starts to bring in elements that eventually cause the rescue of a woman from captivity and Verminaard's discovery of the mace "Nightbringer". After the retrieval of *Nightbringer*, Verminaard begins his descent into evil by committing a host of nefarious acts. The book ends with meeting his dragon mount Ember and pledging his loyalty to the Queen of Darkness, Takhisis.

Check out the full review below.

[<http://www.thefantasyreview.com/2007/...>]

Ronald Wilcox says

First in a series of tales about the origins of the villains from the Dragonlance Chronicles. Pretty good storyline with fair writing but not real absorbing. Would not be a good first novel for someone not familiar with the Dragonlance setting.

Bradley says

Villian tales for so much fun. This book is nice and dark. A pure delight. =-)

Steve says

My favorite book in the villains series. Dark story with an evil character.

{Wild Night In} Cat says

This afternoon I desperately needed a Fantasy novel. This one filled the gap, although it didn't drive me wild. Oh well.

Jim C says

A book that is part of the Dragonlance world. This one tells the story of Verminaard who was a minor character in the original trilogy. You do not need to read the original trilogy for this novel. This is your basic enticement of evil path book and the character's slow descent down this path.

I was surprised how much I enjoyed this book. I have read this author's other contributions to this universe and I am not a fan. But this one was different. The time setting had a feeling of King Arthur and was enjoyable. I liked the slow pace of the character's downfall and how he becomes the man we see in the original trilogy. The author gives the reader different reasons for this downfall and it's up to the reader to decide if it was because of his own volition or other factors. The author did a wonderful job of making me care about a character that I have not thought about since I read the original trilogy many years ago.

This book is a nice addition to this world. If you are looking for a fantasy novel that reminds the reader of earlier times, this book accomplishes that aspect. There are a couple of battles to move the pace but ultimately this novel is about one's choice in life.
