



The Horns of Ruin

Tim Akers

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Eva Forge is the last paladin of the dead god, Morgan.

Eva, forsaken by her parents and forgotten by her family, was the last child dedicated to the Cult of Morgan. Morgan, god of battle and champion of the Fraterdom, was assassinated by his jealous brother, Amon. Over time, the Cult of Morgan has been surpassed by other gods, his blessings ignored in favor of brighter technologies and more mechanical miracles. Now, Eva watches as her new family, her Cult, crumbles around her.

When a series of kidnappings and murders makes it clear that someone is trying to hasten the death of the Cult of Morgan, Eva must seek out unexpected allies and unwelcome answers in the city of Ash. But will she be able to save the city from a growing conspiracy, one that reaches back to her childhood, even back to the murder of her god?

The Horns of Ruin Details

Date : Published November 30th 2010 by Pyr (first published January 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781616142469

Author : Tim Akers

Format : Paperback 268 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Fantasy, Fiction, Adventure

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From Reader Review The Horns of Ruin for online ebook

Tyrannosaurus regina says

I almost gave up on this book partway through, which I only mention because I am very glad that I didn't. The back half the book comes on strong and delivers on just about everything I hoped that I would find. However, the first half just felt like a slog for me, so much so that it took me months to read this when at my best I read at a pace of about a book a day. The protagonist was just not my cuppa, recklessly brutish, but the worldbuilding, oh the worldbuilding, that is the star. It was those bright spots that kept me from putting it down forever, and got me into the bits that I loved.

Cheryl Gatling says

Once upon a time, in a world that wasn't ours, because it also included a race of small gnome-like creatures called the Feyr, and reptilian creatures called the Rethari, there were three brothers, Amon the Scholar (who might better be called Amon the Engineer, because he built complex machines), Morgan the Warrior, and Alexander the Healer. They started out as men, but became gods. Each had his own cult of followers who practiced their leader's special arts. Then the god Amon killed his brother Morgan. He was then executed by Alexander, who became sole ruler of the city of Ash. The followers of Amon were imprisoned, but were still used to maintain the machines that Ash depended on. Ash floated on the surface of a lake, and was connected by monorails that ran on circular paths powered by impellers. The followers of Morgan are dwindling in number. Eva, our heroine is the last Paladin. She is trained in special skills with both sword and gun, but also in "noetic" powers. She, and others who have been trained, can call up power, and do apparent magic, by chanting spells that recite the past deeds of the god. During these chants, the runic characters of the words seem to roll around visibly in the air. But that's all background. Tim Akers manages a great deal of complicated exposition much more smoothly than I have done. The story begins when Eva is escorting the Fratriarch Barnabas through the city streets, and he is kidnapped. She makes it her business to find him if possible, avenge him if necessary, and find out what the heck is going on. Naturally, everyone has secrets, and almost everyone is trying to kill someone else. Eva is a hot-blooded, trigger-happy, fiercely-loyal, trash-talking, independent woman, unable to sit still. Wherever she goes, you can bet it's going to be interesting. As I neared the end I read faster and faster to find out what was going to happen, but at the same time the plot became more and more complex. I couldn't read too fast or I would miss something important. I did say, "Huh?" a few times. But I had picked up this book because I had wanted an escape from depressing current events and history, and that it is. That it is. There is enough shattering glass, buildings falling apart, sword-swinging, fire fights and near-drownings to distract from any number of real troubles. And it just might have something significant to say about the uses and abuses of power in our own world.

Ben says

The star of this book is the setting, more specifically the world. I can't even begin to tell you the volumes upon volumes of text that I would read if they were set in the world where the city of Ash resides. I don't want to go into too much detail, because part of the fun is discovering all of it yourself, but if you like weird, slightly pulpy but generally awesome world-building, you'll probably like this.

The writing itself is serviceable, and does manage to avoid a number of the idiotic turns of phrase and crutches that crop up so often in sci-fi/fantasy writing. It's nothing fancy, though, and a lot of the author's

descriptions of locales or advanced machinery failed to provide me with a clear image of what was being looked at. The characters are like the writing: Serviceable, reasonably fun, don't fall into old, tried tropes too much, but not something to write home about.

I realize that might not send you rushing out to buy this book immediately, but it bears mentioning that pretty much from the time I bought this book, to the time I finished it, I couldn't stand to put it down. It moves along at a ripping pace, and even though you can probably guess what the major "twist" will be about a chapter in, it's still a damn good time. Besides, it's not too long, and it goes fast, so even if you end up not liking it that much, at least you didn't waste too much of your time.

Cécile C. says

Well, this is a completely non-literary four, because we're all allowed our guilty pleasures from time to time. No, this book is unlikely to blow your mind with it's wonderful style and deep explorations of human nature and societies. No, you probably won't find much to say about the character once you scratch the surface. But it still was tons of fun.

One thing I often regret about steampunk is that, while I love the idea of it, and I usually enjoy steampunk worlds, there are few books so far that held my attention all along. There's usually a place where I feel like skipping, or where I carry on because I don't like to leave books unfinished. This wasn't the case at all here. Even though I mostly understood this novel as having no great literary ambition, it made sense from start to finish. Yes, the characters were a bit flat, but they were consistent, likeable and above all, not lazy (meaning that I never felt that the author had yielded to the temptation of substituting easy stereotypes for characterisation). The world is uniformly cool, and while I got very little sense of the social order, ecology or even technological level of the setting, the parts it focused on (mainly, the gods and their followers) were extremely satisfying and consistent. The core story is quite conventional, with a bit of apocalyptic stuff thrown in for good measure, but it holds water.

Also, part of the fun for me was that it's so relaxing to read a story set in a world where gender is not a factor, for once. The protagonists are ladies, plural, not just one token female in a men's world. They have very different personalities and a complicated relationship, none of which hinges on anything related to masculinity and femininity. Men and women interact without bothering with sexual tension (which is only logical when taking into account the fact that they have an apocalypse to prevent and all). There is no bullshit sexism, like "A lady with a sword??? Wow, what a freak!", or comments on the female characters' looks (it was really cool to realise that I didn't actually know if the heroin was supposed to be pretty or not, and that it took me until the end of the book to realise that, because it simply wasn't relevant to the story). It was a nice change.

A strongly recommended read.

David Pappas says

Steampunk may not be my forte. Nonetheless this book was all action from beginning to end which made it an easy yet interesting read for me. In the throes of a waning human world a new god or rather warrior goddess emerges? The context is a bit sketchy in spots. At the risk of misogynistic accusations, the female character is not well suited to the lead role. She does not exhibit the characteristics of a normal woman at all. Although this an all too common theme in books of this nature nowadays it seems. She is stronger, faster,

smarter, more knowledgeable, and more callous than everyone around her. Her persistence in the face of all odds and her uncommon good luck may be her strongest most enduring traits. She is able to cut the chains of slavery like butter, she has unlimited endurance, she hasn't a clue which direction to turn, and yet she always turns in the right direction. Fast read. Can be interesting, but not for everyone.

Lisa says

This was a decent, if predictable book. I did enjoy the world that was built, but wish the story wasn't so formulaic. I knew the big reveal by the end of the first chapter. It would have been better if it was longer, with more story built into it. It was more like a novella to me. Worth all 50 pennies I paid at the local book exchange. Now it'll go back and someone else may surprise themselves and read it and enjoy it!

Angie says

I struggled to get into this book, and once I finally did, I was disappointed. There was so much that could have been built around the mythology of the cults that wasn't done, and rather than try to make this a series, it felt like there were ~3 chapters at the end dedicated to wrapping up the loose ends poorly. Not sure why an author would go to the trouble of creation only to not share it with the reader.

George Shirer says

And my reading quest continues!

The first thing you should know about 'The Horns of Ruin' is that the cover art is fucking awesome.

Seriously. If I was perusing the shelves of my local book dealership, I would pick this book up just for the art. So, props to the artist.

Secondly, as I sat down and started to read this book, it felt super-familiar. It took me about a chapter or two to realize that I HAVE READ THIS BOOK BEFORE.

Read it and completely forgot about it.

sigh

I hate when that happens.

So, I read it again. And it was okay. In all honesty, I don't know if my reaction is because I've read it before and subconsciously knew what was going to happen or because it's just an okay read. The fact I didn't really remember reading this book previously tends to make me think my reaction this time is consistent with my previous, forgotten, reaction.

It's an okay book. It's well written with an interesting premise and a protagonist, Eva Forge, that I didn't want to see die horribly. And I really enjoyed how Akers had her channel her Paladin abilities. Go read the book to see how she does it.

Would I read a sequel to it? Probably not. The book's okay but it didn't knock my socks off. Maybe it will for you.

Quiet says

This book is unreadable. It is, indeed, that bad.

How to explain this? Think of any action, and tell it exactly as it happened and presume that matters (He jumped from the street. In the air he turned 45 degrees. He kicked. Hard.). Now the next action. And the next. And the next and the next.

Then cut up this nonsense of flatlining activity with pathetic dialogue that makes even Young Adult dialogue look skilled, and throw in some D-grade political fantasy story that makes you want to kill yourself with embarrassment as you remember all the ways you misinterpreted and tried to write political stories yourself back when you first read Ayn Rand's "Anthem" and George Orwell's "1984." Wouldn't want to show any of them to anyone on the planet these days, right? Well Tim Akers here seemed to be full of himself enough to think that his qualified for publication, and somehow whatever bogus publisher is behind him thought so too.

It's rare for me to truly not be able to finish a book. I read a ton of shit all the time, but generally even a lousy book at least has something going for it, even if it is just a wildly stupid, mildly thrilling momentum. I can stomach weak tropes, cardboard characters, flaccid action--- but not when it's all at once and so wholly composing of the entire book.

It's too funny that this book has been given acclaim for its "world building." Dumbest thing I've read, and utterly transparent in why this mistaken positive has been offered. Why? because this book has a centerfold comic-book illustration which does 1000x more in presenting the story, world and characters than the actual book itself. The only possible reason anyone could be tricked into thinking this book does anything other than gouge your brain with stupidity is because of that action-heavy cover illustration, and that's truly it. Shame on the reviewers, and I do mean that.

This book should absolutely have never been published. It is truly unreadable, worse than being simply a waste of time and money. Skip this book, and skip Tim Akers too; at the very least the author should have had even that pinch of self-awareness somewhere in the process which would immediately have clued him to his having written complete and utter shit, but of course did not. And really, only a delusional, self-obsessed twat could have pursued publishing so weak a story as this.

Nikki says

The Horns of Ruin is a fun, rather frenetic steampunk adventure with a very kickass heroine. There's a lot of fascinating ideas in the world-building — the gods and the way divinity works, the invocations which are based on stories about the divinities, the interplay between the three gods... It feels like a piece of a larger world, maybe a tie-in for a game. Eva refers to her spells as buffs at one point, even!

This doesn't always lead to the best storytelling, and it is a very linear plot which just features Eva bashing heads in, then briefly recuperating before going off to do it again. But it has its charms, and I enjoyed the ride.

Reviewed for The Bibliophibian.

Michelle says

The Horns of Ruin could have been a fantastic tale of revenge and theological theory in a steampunk world-- instead it's a paltry, careless foray into a partial steampunk, magic tinged world that mostly leaves the reader with the question, "Who decided Eva Forge was qualified to be a savior at all?"

I think what I'm most disappointed with in this book is the careless feeling of it--Eva Forge feels like a concoction of a all-powerful female brute and teenage attempts at bad-assery. She doesn't feel realistic or sympathetic or even worth empathy--its as if she's been distilled from a teenagers desperate need for a female warrior without bothering to discover what could lie beneath her shiny, overblown armor. Her hatred, initially justifiable, becomes a hallmark of her character (what little there is). One of the most often used and most often bungled character histories is to have them hate something to the extent of it blindly dictating their actions. While this *can* be a perfectly relevant character trait, it should never be the only one and it should never be the pervading motive for a character for over half a book. Eva hates the disciples of the God who killed her God, that's fine, but blindly hating them when there is so clearly something else afoot is just poor quality.

Even her back story is uninteresting and unworthy of direct sympathy; what friends she has are never mentioned by name and never appear to show us something more than what Eva appears. She is haughty, arrogant and unwilling to accept help without complaining or lamenting or acting as if she doesn't need it at all while she has it. There's nothing about her to make her more than a teenager in action. As a consequence she lacks the necessary depth to make the reader care for her predicament, her trials and even her eventual triumph. Her fellow characters are similarly challenged and ill-fitted to bring out any further characterization. I, as a reader, simply do not care what happens to her.

What this book does have is pretty writing and an interesting world built about it. Tim Akers is nothing if not good at writing scenic portraits and describing battle sequences with relative dexterity. What he lacks, however, is the necessary depth in his dialog and character interaction to make this novel truly enjoyable. Conversation, when it occurs, feels very much like it was placed only to hurry the story to its next dramatic battle sequence, rather than interwoven with each other. It is as if it is some sort of grand tale wherein only the battle aspects are important and the rest shoved in for page numbers. But dialog is incredibly important in establishing characters and the tone of the story and this is where the book truly suffers. Eva is a battle-maiden and only a battle-maiden; what you see is what you get, and what you get isn't worth the time.

I highly suggest looking elsewhere for your steampunk fix. In The Horns of Ruin, Tim Akers disappoints.

Ahimsa says

This had all I want in a fantasy book. Good characters, some intrigue, a plot that isn't entirely predictable, a unique setting, and a set up for future happening all add up to a superb story. The best part is the narrative voice. It's told in third person, and the protagonist's voice is consistent and distinctive. Reading this as an adult is like reading David Eddings as a child--it's the same sense of immersion and fun in a new world. I think this book would appeal to those who like Martin, Rothfuss, or Lynch.

Adam says

Pretty fun, a very fast read. It almost has the feel of a videogame from the 80's; the story is there, the fun is there, but I have no idea what is going on when I come in because no one reads manuals. There's even mention of 'buffing' and such, so the language makes that connection pretty easily. Descriptions are a bit minimal, and sometimes I had trouble getting the right picture in my head of what was going on. Lots of action, with a blurring over of most location descriptions. The magic system is flat awesome, I wish religions were actually like that. Soup kitchens could invoke 'Jesus when the bread and fish lasted' to make soupkitchens more efficient.

That said, the story is complete and interesting. The author isn't out to write an epic tale spanning decades, this is one adventure being slogged through by a neat character. And I really appreciate when a story can just be a story. Every story doesn't need a huge cast of characters, love interests, betrayal, long descriptions of history, or that sort of thing. There's not much padding here, nor is there any wide-eyed PoV character so everything can be explained as though the author was staring right through the fourth wall. But the author does not fail to explain things, so eventually things make sense.

The character is great, and the setting is neat; but this is just a single tale pulled out of the world and told. It moves quickly and ends a bit abruptly, but honestly, it should be that way.

Krazykiwi says

Now this book is the something different I've been looking for lately. It's a difficult read though, and I'm not entirely sure how I feel about it. I might even have to revisit this review at some point. It's a little like someone took religion (small r, generic), steampunk, aliens, the age of chivalry, urban fantasy and a modern world, and stuck it all in a blender. The only thing missing here is gobs of sex, to which I say thank goodness, it's actually nice to read a book now and then where there's virtually no romance (or boinking) at all.

And this is a little hard to write about without explaining the world in some detail, so there might be spoilers, but I hope not.

So, we have a world where the god(s) were once mortal, and became divine. And their scions, the monks and paladins who serve them, can invoke real physical powers. Depending on which of the gods you are dedicated to, that could be armour, fighting ability, or a weapon, or it could be the ability to read minds, or to heal wounds, or control others, or perhaps the ability to create complicated machines.

Add to this the knowledge that before humans and their gods were divine, came the Feyr, and before them, the Titans, neither of which were human. And that at the walls of your city mass the Rethari, another non-human race, perhaps with it's own yet to become divine gods among them.

And set this all in a city where paladins and monks wield their power alongside clockwork and magic monorails and modern skyscrapers, as likely to be wearing jeans as a cloak and a sword.

So to our plot: There once were three human brothers made divine, turned into living gods, but now there is only one. One of the brothers, Amon, betrayed another, Morgan, and Amon was in turn executed by the third brother Alexander, leaving him the only living god, and the sole ruler of the city of Ash for the last century or so.

Eva is the last paladin of Morgan, because few dedicate their children to dead gods anymore, and fewer still pass the trials. The Cult of Morgan is dying out, but she still has her duty, to protect the elders - and she fails spectacularly at it when unknown forces attack her and the leader of the Cult of Morgan in the street. It doesn't get better when the remaining elders are attacked in the assumed to be impregnable safety of their own monastery. Very soon Eva is left alone with only a young acolyte of Amon she doesn't trust, a mysterious artefact she doesn't understand, and the occasional help of one of Alexander's healer/policemen. And that's when she discovers she's stumbled into something that shakes the foundation of the entirety of human myth, religion and society, and she's the one who has to figure out what to do next.

So, yeah. Lots of religion, and it's provocative in many ways. What if divinity was bestowed on mortals? Would they be any good at it? Or would it be like the pantheons of old, all infighting and trickstering - I think the latter, clearly so does Akers. More interestingly he explores different ways it might happen, by showing us how the races before humanity handled it, for good or ill. There's really a lot to think about in this book, it's very cleverly done.

But, and it's a huge but, please don't think this is a big mass of religion masquerading as a fantasy book, it's not at all. It's a rollicking, action packed (and fairly violent), blend of high and urban fantasy (sword and sorcery IN a steampunk AND modern urban setting all at once!). People die, big and small decisions are made, friendships forged and torn asunder, mentors defrocked, again for good or ill, and it's a lot of fun to read.

Bonus points for: As mentioned, no sex, but moreover, a rocking kick-ass (literally) heroine, as well as a kick-ass but in a very different way sidekick who is also a woman. And neither of them are mary-sue's and neither, when put in positions of danger, use their sexuality as a weapon nor have it used against them by any of the male cast. Eva is tough as nails, but makes mistakes, and owns them too when she realises. She's confident when it matters, but smart enough to be scared of the consequences of her actions, she doesn't blindly trust anyone - but she's not so stubborn she can't back off and trust her allies when she must.

And the writing is... special. I like it, it pushes my buttons, treading a fine line between exposition and show-don't-tell, but managing to do so without the hated "As you know, Bob..." dialog. It's got it's own language going on, but it's cute and not too hard to figure out: Bullistic for guns, (bullet + ballistic, obvs). There's a lot of quite neatly phrased invocations going on - actually those remind me of that one star trek episode where the aliens could only speak in metaphors invoking memory of ancient battles, in the style of "David, with a stone, in front of Goliath" to mean "small and weak taking on something big and scary". I wouldn't mind this one as an audiobook, but only if it had a really talented narrator who could really pull off those speeches.

Recommended for: Anyone looking for some urban fantasy with a real twist - this is a really unique mix. People who liked Dune (for no particular specific reason, it just had a vibe for me somehow, even if it's a completely utterly different setting.)

Not recommended for: fans of linear plots, anyone too rabidly anti-religion to bear in mind this is entirely

fictional. People who like to keep all their genres separate.

Sonja P. says

I liked the idea, but a Hundred Thousand Kingdoms did it better.
