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The Eternal Conflict between the Light and Dark once again blackens the skies and blights the land. On one side stand the Tuatha de Danaan, golden-skinned and beautiful, filled with all the might of angels. On the other are the Fomorii, monstrous devils hell-bent on destroying all human existence. And in the middle are the Brothers and Sisters of Dragons, determined to use the strange power that binds them to the land in a last, desperate attempt to save the human race.

Church, Ruth, Ryan, Laura, and Shavi have joined forces with Tom, a hero from the mists of time, to wage a guerrilla war against the iron rule of the gods. But they didn't count on things going from bad to worse ...

Darkest Hour Details

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From Reader Review Darkest Hour for online ebook

David says

Re read this book. Still fantastic. One of the greatest series on myth and faerie ever.

Cindy says

I know I loved the first book and I thought it was one of the best books of 09 I'd read (US release). This book is even better than the first. It's got a lot less traveling so the plot is more focused. Also Chadbourn seems to explain things a little easier in this book than the first. At times I'd get lost in the first book but this was just wonderful.

There are still landmarks in the book but they aren't as predominant instead it's more about the characters and seeing them grow in their magic.

Sierra says

Let me begin with the good things. The series takes place in the UK, so your entire world view is England, Wales, and Scotland. Which is interesting in its isolation. The handling of the Celtic deities and mythological creatures is fascinating. The "higher" powers, the beings from Otherworld, humans cannot focus on them well. It's a unique angle on the unknowable. On the other hand, I still didn't care about the six main heroes, Church, Shavi, Ruth, Laura, Veich, and Tom (True Thomas, or Thomas the Rhymer, from Scottish mythology). Their emotions and feelings are 'told' and repeated in the same words, which gets annoying, not 'shown' in actions or dialogue. Nor do I care about their predicaments or their inner flaws. No one seems interested in doing any research on Celtic deities or mythology to try and figure out what to do or what exactly they are up against. Tom's cryptic answers and questions just seem annoying, instead of urging them on to discover their own inner answers.

****SPOILER ALERT****

With Ruth "carrying" Balor, she accepts it way too easily, as if she's carrying Church's kid instead of the leader of the Formorii. She is supposedly chosen because she is the "strongest," but that is never shown, either. Laura's sacrifice seems pointless (I won't further explain!), but I'm glad she won't be around to be the character to only add glib and sarcastic comments, as she puts it to Church near the end.

****END ALERT****

Yes, I will still read #3 because I want to know how it will end. My prediction is that if the "dark side" does win, the book will feel unfinished, like nothing was really accomplished. And if the "good guys" win, it will feel like a happily ever after fairy tale.

Laura Jackson says

I'll admit, it took me a while to get into this one but I think it's because of the long gap between books. I referred to the ending of World's End before starting so I could familiarise myself with the plotline. That

aside, the one thing that I liked about the book was the characterisation. Now that we are able to get a look into the psyche of the characters, I'm able to determine which of the characters I like/dislike. For example, I'm not the biggest fan of Ruth. I don't want to give anything away, but she really irritated me in this book. Laura was starting to become a bit of a drag as well. Meanwhile, I'm loving the characters of Veitch and Shavi; they are both so contrasting but brilliant in their own way.

The thing that really got to me was the constant jumping between characters within the chapters. I don't mind third person shifting point-of-view, but I prefer to have it change in separate chapters, like Robert Jordan does in the Wheel of Time series. It's very easy to get quite lost. I start to get really into a characters point-of-view, only to have it dramatically change on me.

The plot itself has been really well thought out. Something that Chadbourn does really well is that all of his characters has a purpose to the story. All of the "mechanical" characters shed some shining light on either the story or the characters.

All in all, a good sequel and I'll be reading the final book soon :)

amanda says

As much as I enjoyed the sequel, there's still some aspects to the story that keep me from rating it higher. I really love the plot, first of all, & Veitch grew into a character that I really like, whereas I feel Shavi sort of faded into the background in this one. Laura is still unlikable, no matter what she does, & I expected more change from her, honestly. At least a cutback on the "witty" & sarcastic remarks because they're just unbearable. The other characters were fine, but still, aside from Veitch & Ruth, I felt like I got nothing new from them. They seem to be talking about the same things they were talking about in the first book. Still very excited to read the last book, as it has been a very intriguing & fun read as a whole, nonetheless.

Ryan Mishap says

The premise from the first book remains the same, as does the plot, basically. Oh no, they will raise the most evil Balor! The five infused with the spirit of the land must stop them! Internal conflicts threaten the group's ability, and Ruth has been kidnapped! Laura hides her insecurity behind snarky commentary while Jack doesn't know if he is strong enough to be leader, and....

I'm being a little dismissive, but this was all right, nevertheless. I Like the old myths having basis in an ancient history involving beings we can't understand and I enjoy the references to the foundation of those myth within Chadbourn's own myth-making.

It is just too long and re-hashes many of the same conflicts from the first book.

Briton says

Like my last review, i will say Mark is a brilliant writer, creating excellent characters and uses mythology that i just absolutely love.

However, unlike the last one, i felt a bit disappointed. He wrapped it up nicely, but i expecting something better. The final battle in this book seemed detailed, but on the brink of too detailed.

Still, a great book, only for mature readers like the last one. Ends in a way that you can't go on a single day without reading the next one to know what happens next.

Lindsey says

I definitely liked this book better than the first in the series, but I'll be hornswaggled if I can tell you why. For some reason, I had the hardest time getting into the first book. I still had a hard time getting into this one, but I made it about half-way through. The action is usually pretty fast-paced and the story line is very interesting. I guess a good deal of my issues may arise from the characters. It's just been very difficult for me to connect to them. Again, I couldn't tell you why. It took me some time, but I'm still interested to see where the rest of this series leads.

Siobhan says

In short, neither the writing or the plot was good enough to be worth the cliff-hanger ending. It did flow better than the first, but the characters still don't have any depth or grow much, and frankly just aren't that likeable. I gave this a shot hoping it would improve from the first book, and it did... slightly, but not enough to make me reach for the third.

I *really* wanted to like this series (the premise being that the old Celtic gods have returned to rule the land) but it's just not that good.

Joel Flank says

Things get even darker for humanity as gods and faeries of ancient myth are now free in the world, governments can't cope with the new reality, and technology continues to fail intermittently. The 5 chosen by the Pendragon Spirit continue seeking ways to stop the darkest of the foes from resurrecting their god and ending all human life, but they need to go to great lengths just to find out what they might be able to do to stop the catastrophe. When their allies often have a big enough price they must question if the trade off is worth it, they have to call up deep reserves of strength they didn't know they had, and learn to use their newfound abilities to try to stave off disaster. A lot more dark fantasy, and harrowing emotional journeys make this a complicated read, compared to more traditional epic fantasy stories.

Donna says

How did we end up here

After I sent my review of the first in the series to the publisher they offered up the next two in the series and I greedily accepted. It took me a little bit to get to book two but here I am.

Okay, book. You've got 50 pages. Go!

Well, half of those fifty pages was recap so at least I didn't have to re-read the last book. I got the not-so-

Cliff Notes version right at the beginning of number 2. And then it led into an offshoot POV that ultimately had no bearing on the story and it just depicted random events going on throughout the country as a result of the fantasy becoming reality. It kept the action on its toes but it was disingenuous to the greater story and the advancement of the plot. Once it finally gets to the plot where the first book left off it picks up immediately from the end scene and we're back at it.

Fifty pages wasn't a good sample beginning on this one since the story didn't really start picking up until around page 100 and quite frankly by then I was willing it to move a little faster. The story's basically about nomads wandering around the British countryside trying to avoid the Big Bad that's after them. Like the bulk of DEATHLY HALLOWS, there's a whole hell of a lot of camping bookended by some minor action. Still, I kept reading because I wanted to see where it was going.

What worked . . .

The world building. I love how much detail Chadbourn put into bringing back the darkness and how horrifying he made it. There were some parts where I was uncomfortable reading for how disturbing and painful the plot was to the characters and it's ultimately this that kept me reading. I just love this world so much, how it's unraveling the known world and remaking it in its own image. I like how even the nicer, more allied beings have undertones of sadism and darkness, making them all untrustworthy.

I liked how Chadbourn was wholly unforgiving with his characters and none of them escaped the brutality of what was going on around them. And he was unapologetic about it as well. It wasn't just physical or mental testing he was putting them through but Chadbourn dug down to the very souls of his characters and tore them off piece by piece, losing some in the process and gluing the rest back together in this Picasso-looking painting of pain. As bleak and unforgiving as it all was it made the story real to me. I believed it because, in reality, if this were to ever happen it would be just as disastrous as this.

What didn't work . . .

The pacing. It was such a slog to get through. So much so that I whine to myself about reading the third book in the series because I don't know if I can take it. The book's as much a character-driven narrative as it is plot-driven at this point and a lot of their time is spent wandering around the countryside, trying to find someplace safe to sleep coupled with an intense amount of soul-searching and coming to grips with what was going on around them along with what was going on with themselves. The book is bordering on something that really isn't for me and if it wasn't for the world-building I mentioned above I would have stopped reading.

I got tired of the drugs Shavi had to keep taking in order to tap into his powers. I was tired of Jack's incessant whining about being the unwitting leader. I was tired of Laura being an irredeemable bitch. Ruth was still my favorite and it pained me to see her go through what she did. Veitch grew on me as well, for all his shoot first, ask questions later attitude. He ended up being a knight in shining armor and really rose above the rest by the end. Tom was kind of meh. He inserts information when it's absolutely necessary and then is just a pain the rest of the time. If I weren't so bored with the book I would have laughed at the similar comments the characters made about him. But I was bored. I was trying to will the book to end and for the love of everything that was holy IT JUST WOULDN'T END. It just kept meandering on and on and I wanted to put it down but the world kept dragging me back in and it was just enough to keep me reading. Barely.

Did I mention Laura's an irredeemable bitch? She just didn't let up and I really don't understand why Chadbourn wrote her the way she did. There really seems to be a Madonna/Whore situation going on between her and Ruth and it bothers me. Instead of having two rather level-headed women we get polar

opposite archetypes. Sure they're both strong but at what cost? I didn't find them this polarizing in the last book and they really branched out from each other in DARKEST HOUR. I don't know if it's supposed to be explained away with the situation or they're both just so damaged and this is how they're dealing with it or what but it just didn't sit right. And where Laura's story went, for all I didn't like her I didn't like where Chadbourn took it. I have a feeling it's not where it was obviously made to go but it was just so sudden and by the time it happened everyone around her was so fed up with her that their reactions were barely registering at all. A whole of of, "huh, oh wells" going on and it sucks all around. I feel bad that this fictional character has basically been crapped on her entire fictional life and then she doesn't even get a decent send-off.

And in the end . . .

I have the third one in the series and I will give it my all when I try to read it but unless something spectacular happens and the plot focuses more on plot-like things instead of internal naval-gazing I'm giving up on it. It's just too heavy-handed for me. There are aspects of it that I really do like but it's not enough to hold my interest and I can't force myself through another book. I'm trying. I really am. But it's taking a turn down the more character-driven path and that's really not my bag. I need more and if I don't get it I'll have to tap out.

Stefan says

Darkest Hour is the second book in Mark Chadbourn's AGE OF MISRULE trilogy. As often is the case, the middle book in the trilogy is the darkest one, and if the title didn't give it away, Darkest Hour is no exception. Thankfully, the novel contains enough excitement to make it a thrilling read that should please fans of the first book.

At the conclusion of World's End, the return of the Tuatha dé Danann turns out to be a bittersweet victory. Even though they have been typically been cast as the "forces of good" in the legends, they turn out to be so powerful and alien that they treat normal humans as pets at best and have no problem using and manipulating them. It quickly becomes clear that Church, Ruth, Laura, Shavi and Veith — the five Brothers and Sisters of Dragons — cannot count on their help in ridding England of the Fomorii, the hellish monsters that are wreaking havoc across the land. The Fomorii are trying to revive Balor, the Heart of Shadows, who is the ultimate evil god and will bring the End of Everything. The five heroes are forced into a guerrilla war against the overwhelming forces opposing them, while all around them life as they know it is falling apart...

Darkest Hour is a fine continuation of the AGE OF MISRULE trilogy. The five main characters continue to grow throughout the novel, slowly taking on more individual roles as they become familiar with their own specific abilities. Mark Chadbourn does a great job portraying these everyday people who are thrust into very un-everyday situations. While World's End was an exciting read because it showed the heroes gradually discovering the nature of the new age, Darkest Hour is different: it's less of "what the hell is happening?" and more of "how can we do something about it?"

My favorite part of Darkest Hour was the portrayal of the Tuatha Dé Danann. While the Fomorii are portrayed as a more stereotypical and mostly homogeneous force of evil, the Golden Ones are much more nuanced and varied. While some of them seem almost human-like, others are closer to gods or forces of nature, and Mark Chadbourn makes the reader appreciate how truly unknowable these beings are. The basic disdain they feel for us "Fragile Creatures" is one of the most chilling aspects of this novel.

Darkest Hour works on many levels, ranging from pure action to mysticism to horror to romance. Once

again, the route of the five protagonists is described in detail, including which highways they take, and some of these more mundane travelogue details really highlight the surreal nature of the challenges they face. This contrast is again beautifully interpreted in a gorgeous cover by John Picacio, showing the tiny heroes dwarfed by a huge, terrifying nightmare creature.

Some parts of Darkest Hour are so action-packed that they read like an Indiana Jones movie on acid, with surreal and hallucinatory battles and journeys, both in this realm and the Other Lands, alternating with utter and unbridled mayhem as the normal world is torn apart by legendary creatures. This leads to some stunning and spectacular descriptions of the clash of the supernatural with the mundane, but on the flip side, the novel contains so much action that it becomes a bit tedious towards the end, alternating battles with moments of quiet in a steady pattern.

Aside from that minor complaint, Darkest Hour is another solid contemporary fantasy novel with realistic characters facing some very surreal challenges. The novel is often dark, at times genuinely scary, and almost always entertaining. The end effectively sets up what should be a spectacular finish of the AGE OF MISRULE trilogy in Always Forever.

(This review was also published on the Fantasy Literature website - www.fantasyliterature.com. Come check us out!)

David says

Wow. I am not a huge fan of the fantasy genre (But let's take a moment to remember Anne McCaffrey and her dragons, she was a saint!). However, I thought this book was fantastic (is that redundant?). Particularly as the second book in a trilogy--a bridge. Every story has a beginning, middle, and an end, and I thought as a mid-point tale this was well executed, at least in the last third of the book. The first two-thirds of the novel were much the same as World's End. But here Church is becoming more of an antihero and Ryan more a hero; and--thankfully-- Laura is slightly less obnoxious. Mark Chadbourn does a great favor to the reader by weaving Celtic fable and myth into a coherent and progressive storyline that doesn't involve unicorns (so far, though there be dragons here) but does require thought. Two-and-a-half thumbs up!

Stef says

This book was a huge slog! More violent than the first book, more depressing. I did like the random little bits of history and folklore that pepper the book still but I wish there had been more about Maponus, Dian Cecht, Ceridwen, and the Caoineag. I really like how Cernunnos is used in this story, he is the most approachable of the Golden Ones, the most relate-able since he is a nature spirit, but he is also the most upfront with what is expected when he appears, i.e. that a sacrifice must be made for his help.

There was also this weird dichotomy between describing the group as close-knit, beyond friendship, and how they had all transformed since the first book, but still bringing up the hatred between Laura and Veitch, the jealousy between Laura and Ruth. It seemed odd, are they friends or aren't they? I'm pretty sure even frenemies don't go around threatening each other with death if they don't agree.

I'm hoping that the third book in this series is not as heavy as this one was.

Annji says

Disappointing second book of the Age of Misrule trilogy. Characterisation so flat it almost became concave. I still love the idea of myth taking over our age of reason but this second book really dips into lazy execution. Some neat details and a few truly frightening moments but mediocre enough to make me not need to rush headlong into the third book.
