



## Havenstar

*Glenda Larke , Glenda Noramly*

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Keris Kaylen is a mapmaker's daughter. When her father is murdered and a mountain disappears, Keris is betrayed by her brother. Forced to flee into the Unstable, she finds her safety is in the hands of a man bonded to the Lord Carasma, the Unmaker...and her ordered life is turned upside-down. Her survival will depend on a map and a place called Havenstar—but she can't reproduce the map, and Havenstar may not even exist...

## **Havenstar Details**

Date : Published March 18th 1999 by Virgin Worlds (first published January 1st 1999)

ISBN : 9780753503904

Author : Glenda Larke , Glenda Noramly

Format : Paperback 490 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Adventure, Romance

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## From Reader Review Havenstar for online ebook

### Hannah says

This is the book that started it all! My mum picked up for 99p at some sea-side tourist store thinking it was some love in the dust romance. Upon realizing it wasn't she handed it to me when I was just a kid not even a teenager yet. I shared it with my friends and my original copy disappeared for years because I lent to to someone who lent it to someone else.

I went to ebay to find another copy and thats where I found out that it wasn't actually in print anymore due to publishing problems. It was ranging from anywhere between 75 - 150 pounds at the time. I managed to swipe a copy for 12 quid through much patience.

It was THE book that started my love for Fantasy books, and I can still pick this book up today and fall in love with the pages and characters all over again. Whenever people ask what my favorite book is it is the first thing I think of.

The word is deep, engrossing and frightening and the story goes through some unexpected turns. The characters are colorful and flawed and I adore each one whether they be the bad guy or the good guy or the guy who can't make up their mind. I just love this book to death and don't want to say anything that could spoil the story for anyone curious about reading it.

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### Sandra says

Basic plot: The realm is divided up into "safe" areas and unstable areas where ley (kind of magic?) and chaos rule. People live in the "safe" areas and have to live by fairly strict rules in order to maintain the safety of those zones. Along comes Keris who has run away from home and falls in with a group who are out to change the world- a group that doesn't believe people need to follow strict rules and that thinks that the unstable chaos areas can be conquered. There is a basic romance which has no real development, it's just \*poof\* there. It's very much a traveling adventure book with a band of characters getting into dilemmas along the way.

This book has an amazing world with fully fleshed out details of how things operate. It was honestly very interesting. You also learn as you go, there is no info-dumping or any dumb moments in a classroom where a kid explains the entire universe, so some things are a bit unclear in the beginning but you figure it out eventually.

The romance wasn't fleshed out, it went from "ew you're mean," to "omg why do I want you so bad," to "tweeeee we're in love!!!!" It was disappointing.

For such a well thought out world and characters the OMG-climax-discovery-of-how-to-fix-the-shrinking-world was a MASSIVE let down and way too simplistic. It felt like a dumb cop out. The ending kind of fizzled out for me with all sorts of deus ex machina simplistic answers and a handful of loose threads.

Overall worth the read, but not worth a re-read.

## Pauline Ross says

This was the author's first published work, but shortly after its appearance in 1999 the publisher sank, and the book with it. Now the author has self-published it (hurray for the digital age). Not only is it available once more, it has been picked up by a traditional publisher too. A result whichever way you look at it.

The story has one of the most original settings I've encountered. A cataclysmic event tore the world apart, spreading chaos everywhere apart from a few islands of stability which are kept that way by rigorous adherence to a religion-based system of rules. Travel between these islands is made possible by accurate mapping of the chaotic patches between them. Main character Keris is the daughter of a mapmaker who dies under mysterious circumstances in the unstable lands between islands, and she is forced away from her home as a result. And that doesn't begin to describe the complexities of this world.

There's no easy entry here. The reader is dropped into this complicated background without a parachute, so the early chapters are riddled with jargon and references to unexplained events, places, people. It isn't long, however, before explanations begin to appear, and although it took me a long time to work out the differences between tainted, unbound, excluded, unstablers, ley-lit and the like, things do become clearer. The ley lines are the most significant element; these are the ever shifting rivers of chaotic energy which criss-cross the landscape, the source of power for Carasma, the lord of chaos and his minions.

Keris is accompanied on her journey into the unstable world between the eight stabilities by a motley collection of people - a priest following orders, a high-ranking man making a pilgrimage alone, a brothel-keeper repenting of her sins, a timid man trying to impress his father and so on. The guide, Davron, and his tainted assistant, Scow, seem almost normal by comparison. And then there's the mysterious Meldor, who is blind but surprisingly adept for all that. All of them feel like real, fully rounded people, and if they aren't exactly people you would meet down the pub (Scow is described thus: 'His head was built on a grand scale, perhaps twice normal size, and his outsized face was circled by an animal's mane. The hair—fur?—of it cascaded down on to his shoulders, hiding his neck.'), they all have their own secrets and tragedies. The tainted, in particular (those caught out while crossing a ley-line and transformed in some way) are very tragic figures, unable to return to the stabilities, unable even to touch other people. Davron is particularly tragic, and the way he and Keris gradually come to understand one another, and the development of their slowly unfurling love story, undeniable and yet impossible, is masterfully done.

The story is intriguing right from the first page, and quickly builds to a fast paced and dramatic adventure. The consequence of a world infused with chaos is that anything can happen at any moment, creating a tale which crackles with tension and (I'll be honest) fear; some of those tainted and wild creatures were pretty horrifying. And yet there was always humour, too, especially from Corrian, the pipe-smoking former brothel-keeper with her down-to-earth attitude and appetite for life, and the timid Quirk, who takes to life in the unstable world with surprising nonchalance.

The religion of this world is not, at first sight, much different from any other hierarchical, rigid, dogmatic religion, but beneath the surface it's unusual. For one thing, it's an integral part of the division between stable and unstable areas. The stable zones are maintained by the continuous application of kinesis (a kind of gesture) around the borders and rigorous adherence to exhaustively detailed rules within the boundaries, which prescribe what may be grown where, what colours and styles of clothing may be worn, how many children may be born and what jobs they can do. All of this is intended to minimise the number of changes occurring and thus maintain order, a kind of stultifying stasis. Inevitably, this leads to some painfully inhumane results. Babies surplus to the permitted two are removed at birth and brought up in the religious

order. Those who are deformed or who defy authority are thrown out of the stabilities altogether, left to survive as best they can. Inevitably, such a system has its share of the secretly defiant, the petty tale-tellers and the corrupt, who will bend the rules or turn a blind eye for a consideration. I wasn't sure whether the author was making a general point about organised religion, but I found it very thought-provoking.

This book is awesome. It has all the characteristics I look for in fantasy: an original, well thought out world, a simple but powerful magic system, compelling characters who behave realistically, and a plot which never lets up for a moment. It's emotionally engaging, too; I always cared about the characters and there were moments that reduced me to tears. Keris the map-maker's daughter is a fantastic heroine, and the ending - well, the ending was perfect, I can't describe it any other way. A truly wonderful story. Five stars.

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### **Phrynne says**

Clever, clever stuff. Glenda Larke has created a fascinating world for her novel which we uncover slowly and steadily as the story progresses. No boring "info dumps" and only occasional passages describing the past events which led to the current situation. The characters are all nicely fleshed out, including the secondary ones. The story flows well and ends in a good way for nearly everyone. I am very glad I read it and will now look out for more of her books.

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### **Phillip Berrie says**

The first published book by one of my favourite authors (i.e. Glenda Larke). This book is out of print. I paid \$50 for a second-hand copy of this book and don't regret the expense one bit. It now goes for anything up to \$400 (as of December 2012).

Why am I reviewing this book now? First, I wasn't on Goodreads when I read it, duh. Second, it is now available as an eBook.

This book, and now the eBook version, is a must read book for all Glenda Larke fans. I also highly recommend it to all lovers of fantasy stories with fabulous settings, because the world, in my opinion, is one of the highlights of this story.

Why am I reviewing this version and not the eBook? Well, that's because I have a cherished (and signed) copy of this version. See above.

Gloats.

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### **Aelfwina says**

A bit too blatant in its Christianity/religious fervor (even if it is somewhat veiled in fantasy terms). Also in need of some editing (dragged on in places and the final resolution seemed a bit too simple - in the "really, no one had thought of that in a thousand years?" way).

Bit of insta-love as well - that did not help.

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## **Carol (StarAngel's Reviews) Allen says**

Very difficult and slow starting out...but keep at it because it all comes together and makes sense!

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## **Becky says**

Pretty decent read, and I guess I'd round this up to 3.5 overall stars.

The world building was complex and intricate and I struggled to follow all the "rules", but the author did a fab job of not info dumping and letting the story naturally progress so that you learned as things happened.

The plot was fast paced and there was a lot of goings on in this cross country journey. The secondary characters were all well rounded and added a bit of comic relief to what could have been a bit of dark fantasy read.

Of course to really enjoy a story I have to like my MC, and Keris was pretty awesome. The love story had real potential to be fantastic but fell a bit short somewhere. I'm not sure if they fell for each other too fast (it still took them like 300 pages in before they admitted it) but still, sometimes I like a little more angst before we go straight to "I love you's" and "We're going to get married".

However I still really enjoyed the story and would read a sequel if there was one.

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## **Madelaine Marko says**

Love this book re read it regularly!

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## **S.B. Wright says**

Havenstar has a history, a bit of a sad one. It was Glenda Larke's (writing as Glenda Noramly) first novel, released in 1999 under the then Virgin books SF imprint.

It raced up the Amazon charts(getting to 81 on the general list) only to be orphaned and out of print as the publisher imploded.

Thankfully Glenda was made of stern stuff and has gone on to release another 9 novels with more on the way.

She decided to re-release Havenstar as a self published eBook. No longer do fans have to contemplate inflated prices of paperback copies on Amazon (of which none of the money is seen by Glenda), it's now available from a number of digital outlets.

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a mapmaker who can make a chart of secure pilgrimage routes...

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Havenstar is a debut novel and to be expected there were some sections where I felt characters voice and register were a bit inconsistent. That's really nit picking though, what is a rather original piece of fantasy writing. A strong female character and mapmaker as lead, an interesting mix of religion and magic.

I think Havenstar still stacks up against anything current in fantasy and exceeds quite a few in execution and concept.

It feels familiar in places – a society controlled by the church and its Rule and exotic in others with the concept of the unstable and the unmaking of the world. There's enough of a touchstone for a reader of the heirs of Tolkien that you won't feel lost and enough fresh concept to reinvigorate you reading.

It's a stand alone book for those with an irrational fear of trilogies (or a lack of time) and a great introduction to Larke, who seems to me to be somewhat of a hidden gem in Australian Fantasy writing circles.

If you are looking for some quality fantasy writing to fill your ereader after Christmas then try it out, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

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### **Dynamic Pickle says**

Sigh... Another book with delusions of grandeur. A romance story that fancied itself as an epic fantasy. Had great concept, but poor delivery. World had so much potential, but it was glossed over. Where more detail was appropriate, there was none, and where it wasn't, there was too much. The romance didn't make sense. The heroine was meh. The hero was meh. The old blind man was also meh (and had a personality pretty uncoordinated with what it was supposedly written as). All the characters felt weird. Like the author forgot halfway through what those people's personalities were, and just went along. The ending was meh. I took nothing from it, learned nothing from it. This barely entertained me.

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### **Siavahda says**

Oh, wow.

Oh, *wow*.

Where do I even begin with this book? Seriously. When I read and adored Larke's *Watergivers* trilogy, *Havenstar* was out of print, but numerous people told me that it was the best of all Larke's work. I found it hard to believe that anything could be better than the *Watergivers* books, but when it showed up as an ebook I snatched it up instantly.

And you know what? Every one of those people was right. I'm still amazed that it's possible, but this is *even*

*better.*

*Havenstar* starts out with what seems like a typical premise; a young woman, Keris, is unsatisfied with her life, and makes her escape. We've all read variations of that before, right? Except that Keris' problems are not easily solved by her leaving home. Far from it. Because the source of her problems, the Rule, is enforced everywhere - forbidding women from dozens of careers, stifling creativity and banning change or original thought. Wherever she goes, she will have the Rule to deal with.

Again, this sounds vaguely familiar. The Rule is even interpreted and enforced by the Chantry, recognisable as a stand-in for the Judeo-Christian church. It all sounds like something I've read a hundred times.

But for once, the religious order is not blandly corrupt, imposing ridiculous rules for no apparent reason. Here, the Rule is of the utmost importance - because keeping Order helps prevent Chaos from eating away at the world, in a very un-metaphorical manner. In fact, Keris' world is divided into eight small pieces, separated by vast tracks of wilderness ruled over by Lord Carasma - the traditional Adversary god as you've never seen him before. And Carasma, bit by bit, is winning his war with the Maker - the safe havens, no matter how strictly they are Ordered, are growing smaller and smaller.

It might not be such a problem if the wild spaces in between were not so - well, wild. Order does not exist there. Mountains can disappear without warning. Rivers alter their course. Gravity abruptly stops working, holes open up in the ground, monsters abound, and things other than water can rain down on the land. Worst of all, it's criss-crossed with ley-lines - rivers of evil power that can kill, taint or twist the people who are forced to cross them.

In a world where the landscape changes daily, and no settlement is self-sufficient, maps are of the highest importance. And that is what Keris wants to do - make maps. The daughter of a famous map maker, forbidden to follow in his footsteps by the Rule, Keris escapes her horrible brother to try and find some freedom. Unfortunately, said brother follows her, and she has to join a pilgrimage to a far-away settlement to get away from him.

Her fellow pilgrims, and their guides, turn out to be somewhat more than expected.

Larke has created another amazing world here, one with believable attitudes, politics, religion and mythology. Her characters, as usual, leap off the page and breathe; I especially loved the frustration felt by many of the characters towards the stifling Rule. But the story is much more than that. Larke could have taken the easy route, condemning the Chantry and making *Havenstar* a battle between a strict organised religion and a more creative pagan one, but in fact it's nothing so simple. Both sides have their flaws, and both their good sides. The Chantry may be overbearing and hypocritical, but Larke makes it very clear that they genuinely believe what they preach. It's also clear that the Chantry are not wholly wrong, or even mostly wrong; one conversation between Keris and Meldor, towards the end of the book when Keris finally reaches the eponymous Havenstar, sticks out especially - there is a discussion of mining and such that won't make sense out of context, but beautifully encapsulates the way in which the Chantry are right as well as wrong. That said, it is very difficult to side with them over Keris and her friends.

But it is definitely the characters who stand out the most. Keris is a wonderful heroine, an interesting mix of intelligent, naive and stubborn; she knows what she wants but struggles to accept that she is allowed to have it, and despite her dislike of the Rule finds it hard to let go of the Chantry's teachings. The rest of the cast is beautifully human as well; no one is perfect, people lose their temper and make mistakes, and named characters get hurt and die. Meldor in particular is a wonderful change from the usual idealistic resistance leaders - but I can't say more than that without spoiling the plot.

And *even more* than that are the themes Larke weaves so deftly into her book. Good and evil often crop up in

fantasy, but I've never seen them dealt with quite this way before; despite the existence of an Adversary-type god and his evil minions, the actual meaning of evil is questioned over and over. Chaos and order are re-examined again and again throughout the story, as are issues of religion, loyalty to government, immortality, sexuality... Larke even, unusually for this type of epic High Fantasy, includes a handful of LGBT characters, which gets her mega points from me. (Don't be put off by the fact that the first one we meet is a bad guy. That, too, is something Larke examines and plays with, and there are a pair of awesome lesbians who are very much on the Light side).

All in all, this has gone straight onto my favourites shelf, and is going to get recced to *everyone I know*.

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### Angeliki says

DNF

Started ok...then became promising and I really like the whole map idea, until the bad guy, Carasma, made his appearance...And I thought, really?I mean I get it that the author wanted to emphasize the seductive nature of evil but it felt like she was stressing a bit too much that the Lord of Chaos had a huge...well, that he was too-well endowed!And later, a bad guy makes his appearance and again he is naked and the stress is put on his sexuality a bit too much...I have nothing against sexuality at all, but it felt that the author was overstressing that aspect of some charactes a bit too much, and it felt a bit out of place, or even funny, picturing the Lord of Chaos and his minions like that...couldn't connect...and the fact that one of the charactes sells his immortal soul so that he can be sexually together with other men didn't feel like a true motive to me. He could do that in secret without having to sell his soul to the devil!It wasn't like he was in love with someone so much that he couldn't bear it being apart...Apart from that, the story felt a bit weak at points, and it was kind of an insta-love between the main characters. The author describes Keris as being plain a lot of times, and yet, for unknown reasons, Davron falls in love with her a bit too quickly, without getting to know her at all...The only character I really liked was Meldor, who seemed to have a lot of layers. In general not my cup of tea.

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### Terri says

A couple of housekeeping items: again the Goodreads description is short and lacking. And also, this is currently only available on Smashwords, but I understand it will be released soon on Amazon in physical format. This was Larke's first novel, before the Isles of Glory series, and was written as Glenda Noramly.

Havenstar had all the excellent detailed worldbuilding I've come to expect from a Larke novel. The characters had complex back stories and fleshed out personalities, where they could've easily been flat and ordinary, used only to move the plot forward. Complex secondary characters really round out a novel and help the reader connect to the story, and this is something that Larke does very well.

Keris loves map-making and has considerable talent, but the archaic Rule prohibits her from inheriting her father's shop. She runs away in order to avoid marriage to an awful man who only wants her money, and meets Davron, Scow and Meldor. Davron has all the tragic back story and tortured circumstances that make for a angst-filled love interest, but the age difference and said circumstances prevent a relationship between him and Keris. Scow has been "tainted" by the ley, and lives with the mind and desires of a man, in a body that can never be normal again. Quirk, one of the travelers, starts out timid and afraid, the kind of mousy character I'm always sure I'll hate, but he grew on me. Meldor's characterization was particularly layered. Davron trusts him, and Keris can't quite figure him out. Even as far as 3/4 of the way through the book,

Larke utilizes language in such a way that the reader still isn't sure whether or not to trust Meldor. He blatantly uses people to serve his purpose, and he doesn't seem at all interested in their feelings or their personal well-being, as long as he achieves his ultimate goal, but his status as the blind wiseman sort of causes you to pass over that. I just assumed that his judgment was not to be questioned, even as I thought, "He could turn out to be totally evil."

The plot was interesting and the use of ley lines as a destructive, unbalanced force was particularly cool. When the traveling party goes out into the Unstable, the laws of physics are literally unbound. Things crumble into dust, or there's a field one minute and a crater the next, and it's all constantly changing because they are walking in Chaos. The setting provided a very effective feel to the whole book, where Chaos is alive and actively assaulting the land, beating away at Stability, eating it away a little at a time until the people are trapped in tiny islands of safety amidst a world of swirling, dangerous ley energy.

As with Larke's other novels, the themes are decidedly more "adult," and I only mention this because I review so much YA on this blog, and YA is usually less descriptive with sexual themes.

A solid 3.5 stars for the book! I really liked it, and it's definitely one I'd recommend if you like high fantasy and a strong heroine.

The review "Havenstar" first appeared on [StarlightBookReviews.com](http://StarlightBookReviews.com).

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### **Michael Vondung says**

I discovered this fantasy novel when exploring self-published e-books. There's much to like about Havenstar: likable main characters, world building that strays a little from the norm, moral dilemmas, religious criticism (for some readers that may be a turn-off), imaginative monstrosities that actually make the novel proper fantasy and not just "a medieval themed story set in a parallel universe", and decent action scenes. Naturally, it also comes with a dose of slightly-teenage-flavored romance.

My favorite aspect is probably the world, and if this had not been a standalone novel, I'd definitely have snatched up the "next in the series" title, too. Then again, it's nice to find worthwhile fantasy books that don't require the reader to make a large time investment by having to commit to an entire series. Still, I'd like to read more books set in Glenda Larke's torn fantasy universe.

All in all, a solid fantasy novel that is suitable for both young adults and not-so-young adults. It's a beautiful book.

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