



The Iron Tree

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Jarred is a young boy who has grown up among his mother's peaceful desert people. While Jarred loves his mother, he longs to know the history of his father, a journeyman who left years earlier, promising to return for his wife and infant son. A broken promise but a token left behind--an amulet for Jarred that he has worn always. Some say it brings more than a bit of good luck his way, for no harm has ever befallen the boy.

When Jarred comes to manhood, he decides to journey into the world to seek his fortune and perhaps along the way find news of his father. In his travels he will come to a place so unlike his own as to boggle his mind--a place of immense tracts of waterways and marshes, where the very air seems to teem with magic and a people surrounded by creatures fey and not, with enough strange customs and superstitions to make his head swirl.

And to the beautiful Lilith, a woman who will haunt his dreams and ultimately steal his heart...who perhaps can provide a key to his heritage.

The Iron Tree Details

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From Reader Review The Iron Tree for online ebook

Katherine says

I gave this book 108 pages and I would like to have that time back so I can better spend it elsewhere. The first 2 pages should have been an indication to me not to bother and I wish I had read reviews of this book before I purchased it. I had previously read all three books from Dart-Thornton's previous series and found the first book good, the second two decreasingly enjoyable. Maybe I should have born that in mind, but the premise sounded good and I was genuinely excited to start this series. I am returning the book (to the store where it was purchased) to exchange it for something I will enjoy more.

Monica says

Dart-Thornton does an amazing job of painting a picture of the beautiful world she created. However, this is not for the impatient reader. She sometimes spends pages just describing the surroundings or a person and this book is basically setting the stage for the next when all of the real action happens.

Joss says

I can't really claim it as 'read' - I couldn't get past the first 50 pages. I'm usually fine with writing that's a bit flowery, but this author doesn't seem to be able to use a word of one syllable when she can find one of three or four. And not always suitably. I realise that 'profoundly' does mean 'deeply', but when you're talking about a hole dug in the ground, 'deeply' is just fine thanks.

Also... I'm aware this is a fantasy, fantasy is my preferred genre, but mixing druids with ziggurats and cuneiform? The archaeologist in me rebels. Surely you don't have to borrow language from wildly differing (real-world) cultures? Plenty of fantasy writers create their own terms.

Maybe if I'd given it more of a chance I'd have got in to it, but I'm feeling too impatient at the moment.

Kim says

2.5 stars Way too much detail and descriptions for me. Took to long to get anywhere.

Clare Cannon says

Fantasy lovers will find rich material in Cecilia Dart-Thornton's Crowthistle Chronicles. We are thrown into a dense fantasy setting from the start, and what follows is an abundance of imagery and detail rather than too much action.

The storyline itself is fairly simple: a young adventurer goes off to find his father, but is waylaid by a beautiful young woman in a village along the way. They want to marry, but a curse, which must first be

resolved, forestalls their happy union. The redeeming realism in their perfect romance is provided by the great sacrifice it ultimately requires.

Overall, fantasy lovers who delight in a rich and detailed story will be rewarded for persevering to the end.

Ashleigh Oldfield says

I am generally a huge Dart-Thornton fan, but I just could not get into this book. I hate to compare and author's works against one another, but I can't help but think this story pales in comparison with her Bitterbynde trilogy. It's a real shame as I think she is a very talented writer.

Talya says

Loved the first series by this author, the Bitterbynde trilogy, and thought I would adore this one, but no luck. I rarely do this, but I just couldn't contemplate reading it anymore, and it started giving me the evil eye when I would pass it by holding another book. Bleh. Who knows, maybe I'll pick it up again in a few years and love it. For now, eh.

Rachel says

I read a lot of crap, and even I couldn't get past the first five pages. She described a football as crudely-stitched goat skin stuffed with fibrous material... That was the line I stopped at. It was the most pointless description I've ever seen. I found that most of the description was unnecessary and wordy.

Min says

Slow, slow, slow! Another book by Dart-Thornton with a good story idea that is absolutely smothered by her horrible writing style. There were a few moments where I genuinely felt moved but these were few and far between. After reading the second book in this series I gave up, something I have only done with 1 other series of books.

Katie M. says

Not as good as the author's previous trilogy. Her writing is often lovely, and the places she imagines are fascinating. I love detailed world-building, but this book has too much even for my taste. The plot takes a long, long time to get started. It's engaging once it does, but not truly top-notch. Does it make me seem shallow to say that one thing I didn't like about the book is that the lead characters are too pretty? Maybe I should say instead that the author seems too enamored of her protagonists and spends too much time rhapsodizing about how wonderful they are and too little time making them seem like humans the rest of us can relate to. I'll probably read the second book in hopes that it will be more plot-intensive with the build-up out of the way.

Keith says

This is an unusual and (in my opinion, at least) beautifully written fantasy novel which I found to be a breath of fresh air in a genre overcrowded with overly fast-paced, action-packed, cliché-ridden travelogue adventures with little truly fantastical or magical about them. The elaborate, description-heavy writing style and sedate pace won't necessarily be to everyone's taste*, but were both big advantages for me.

In terms of the writing style, I consider Dart-Thornton to be virtually the only contemporary author who actually manages to evoke the old-fashioned fairytale/mythic style of early fantasy authors like Tolkien and Eddison. This is something many fantasy authors try and abjectly fail to do, whether because they do it by half measures (resulting in a weird mix of modern and old-fashioned language) or simply because they aren't immersed in old literature the way those early authors were. To actually succeed (at least for me) in pulling off this kind of style is a really impressive achievement. I imagine that the reason Dart-Thornton was able to manage this is that she, like Tolkien, has extensively studied the kind of stories she evokes and draws inspiration from - in this case, old Celtic folk/fairytales, many snippets of and ideas from which are woven through the story.

The actual plot is comparatively simple, allowing more space for worldbuilding and atmosphere while at the same time averting traditional fantasy plot and structure clichés. So we have as our main protagonists a young man with a mysterious background (TM) and the girl he meets in one of the first places he visits when he sets out to seek his fortune with his group of friends. Same old, same old...until, instead of using this as the opening for a long quest narrative with drawn-out romantic tension driven by misunderstandings and external antagonists, the author instead has our hero abandon his journey to settle down and make a living as a hunter near the heroine's home. Opposition to their romance comes from a supernatural curse rather than external forces or idiocy, and isn't drawn out over the entire book (there is technically a love triangle, but the outcome is never really in doubt), as, highly unusually for the lead couple in a fantasy novel, they actually marry and have a child well before the end of the novel, with their daughter becoming an increasingly central character as she grows up**.

This slow-paced, more "domestic" style was, as noted, something I found very refreshing, and went well with the novel's approach to worldbuilding, which builds up the strange magic and fey creatures of the world while staying in one part of it (a wetlands region, quite unusually for a fantasy novel) and developing it to a high degree of detail with beautiful descriptions. Again, this relaxed pacing and development of the world through anecdotes and incidental details, particularly in the middle of the book before the eventual revelations and plot developments kick in, may not be to everyone's tastes, but evokes older, less plot-heavy fantasy.

If I have one criticism of *The Iron Tree*, it would be that the writing occasionally, usually in more sentimental scenes, tips over from beautiful and evocative into twee, comedic or diabetes-inducing. (Did the central couple have to call their daughter Jewel?) This isn't as pronounced, however, as in Dart-Thornton's other series-opener, *The Ill-Made Mute*, which goes full Harlequin at times.

Overall, though, this is a beautifully written and refreshingly different kind of fantasy novel, which I would recommend to everyone looking for a change from frenetic "teenage wunderkinds save the world" modern fantasy.

*Hence, I imagine, its woefully low Goodreads average score of 3.4, equivalent to the works of lazy cliché-factory authors like Morgan Rice, which is a travesty.

**And the protagonist of the sequel, which I haven't finished because Google sold me an incorrectly formatted e-book.

Alice (thereadingnargle) says

Non ci siamo!

Non so nemmeno da dove iniziare per recensire questo libro anche se ci sono tante cose che vorrei dire.

L'ho iniziato qualche settimana dopo aver finito il terzo volume della Trilogia di Bitterbynde, scritta dalla stessa autrice, e mi aspettavo di trovare in questa serie un'altra storia che mi appassionasse così com'è successo con la già menzionata trilogia. Purtroppo non solo questo libro non mi è piaciuto, ma mi ha addirittura annoiata per la maggior parte della lettura - se non tutta.

Non mi è piaciuto perché è lento, poco avvincente e perché non mi sono piaciuti i personaggi, ma proprio per niente.

Questa è la storia di Lilith e Jarred. Quest'ultimo lascia il proprio villaggio per esplorare il mondo e per cercare di capire che cosa abbia causato la scomparsa del padre. Quando giunge al villaggio di Acquitrino (qui vorrei spendere due parole sui nomi delle città, ma passiamo oltre), tuttavia, incontra - leggasi: vede - Lilith e se ne innamora al punto da lasciar perdere la sua ricerca per stabilirsi al villaggio per stare con lei.

Io qui stavo già storcendo il naso e mi era venuta una mezza idea di abbandonare la lettura, ma ho deciso di continuare perché erano passate solamente cento pagine e non volevo dare giudizi affrettati - "solamente cento pagine", poi; un terzo del romanzo e non era ancora successo niente! Ebbene, ho continuato la lettura e mi sono annoiata ancora di più perché le seguenti sessanta pagine o giù di lì non sono altro che il racconto dell'amore tra Lilith e Jarred e blabla e ci ho messo un secolo a leggerle.

Poi arriva il colpo di scena - prevedibilissimo, ma comunque un colpo di scena - e la narrazione sembra proseguire un po' più velocemente, ma non ci vuole molto prima di ricadere nella lentezza e nei dettagli superflui.

Molto lentamente, dunque, si arriva alla fine del romanzo, che si differenzia da tutto il resto perché è talmente frenetica che quasi il lettore non capisce che cosa sta succedendo. E non rimane affatto sconvolto dalla morte di Lilith e Jarred (no, non è uno spoiler!) perché nel prologo l'autrice dice chiaramente al lettore come finirà la storia. Una scelta che io personalmente non ho gradito affatto.

In conclusione, non so se continuerò la lettura di questa tetralogia. Ho il secondo in eBook e, a quanto ho sentito dire, i primi due volumi sono autoconclusivi quindi se non mi dovesse piacere nemmeno il secondo sarò ben felice di non dover continuare a leggere anche gli altri due.

Meghan says

This was a lot better than I expected based off the mixed reviews it got. I don't think it's an "omg you must read this" book but I did enjoy the story. This book is pretty much setting the background for the rest of the series. It almost reads like a prequel as if she could have gone back and written it after writing the other books in the series but it's not the first in the series. I'm torn btw 3 and 4 stars it's a high 3 and low 4 really

more like 3.5 but i tend to round down so i went with a 3. I do plan to read more from this series and author!

Clare O'Beara says

This is a novel of contrast between the original desert setting and the marshland where it concludes. The fantasy shows Jarred, a young man from a desert town, who travels with friends to see the world. He meets a lovely girl called Lilith in a marsh environment and the people there come to accept him as one of them.

Lilith is afraid to marry because of a curse on her family. Through a couple of generations now, one of a couple has died early and the other has become paranoid about pursuit by invisible beings. She can't inflict that fate on Jarred and it takes a lot to convince her that Jarred just might be immune.

The language in this book is lovely, with lyrical descriptions of environments from the plants and creatures to the seelie (benevolent) or unseelie (malevolent) wights and brownies who live there alongside the people, kept at bay by charms. The author has delved into British folk history and Irish speech patterns and names for her world.

The only thing that made me hesitate about giving this unusual story top rating is that we do not see more of the environments and peoples on this clearly varied world. However as The Iron Tree is the first in a trilogy the later books must explore the wider reaches, and the end of this one is clearly setting up for such a tale in the second book. I did enjoy the read and it will stay on my keeper shelves while I find the next in the series.

Elsbeth Magilton says

I hate giving negative reviews - mostly because I worry authors read these and NEVER LET RANDOS ON THE INTERNET RAIN ON YOUR DREAMS - but I almost set this one down 3 or 4 times. I relented, but still that was hard to finish, which hurt because it had some things going for it. Great fantasy world building. It drew kind of randomly from many sources of folklore, but the plot was basically good and the backdrop was cool as hell. Problems for me were (a) waiting for the plot to actually occur was akin to watching paint dry, and (b) we endlessly talked about characters without actually feeling like we got to know them. This was one of the slowest and needlessly descriptive books I've ever read. Pages of useless information. I've heard so much about this author, I'm really bummed it didn't work for me.
