



## This Shrinking World

*H.L. Cherryholmes*

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**This Shrinking World** H.L. Cherryholmes

Book 1 of 9 book series.

300 years ago, in a nameless world, a prophecy passed unfulfilled. A secret society that formed to prevent its occurrence believed it was their doing, while the secret society created to ensure that the prophecy came to pass wasn't certain it had been stopped at all. Eventually, along with the mythology of time prior to the great Lizard Queen's expansion of this world, the prophecy of Lacáruna fell into legend.

Split among three nations, nine ancient books hold the key to this world's creation but no one has the ability to read them. And many have come to believe the world is shrinking. The indications are there—nations' leaders falling ill, swamps drying, militaries gathering—that is, if those signs are being interpreted correctly. No one knows because the prophesied Lacáruna, a female from another realm and the only being who can read the Lizard Queen's language, never arrived.

What they don't realize is that Amy Darlidade is just a tad late.

Taking a break from a stressful workweek, Amy, recently divorced CEO, drives out to her desert getaway. While on a morning jog she crosses paths with an orange lizard and, on a whim, chases it into a field. Suddenly, she finds herself under a starless sky confronted by oddly marked and strangely colored people who claim she's there to rescue the world from evil's grasp and expand it once again. But not everyone wants that to happen so there's a price on her head.

This is far from the relaxing weekend Amy had intended.

## This Shrinking World Details

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Author : H.L. Cherryholmes

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## From Reader Review This Shrinking World for online ebook

### Queen Spades says

*Note: This work was provided by the author in exchange for an honest review. Also, this is the abbreviated review--full one can be found on The Review Board website.*

I liked the dedication the author gave to the building of the world and the presentation of the characters. I even like the funny interactions between the main character Amy and the two steadfast traveling companions Licha and Jandro. I cannot take too much away from the syntax or the storytelling air of the author.

However, while reading, I kept waiting for the plot to become more pronounced and the pace to develop speed along with the urgency of travel to protect Lacaruna. Several strands of conflict unfolded and I hoped that at least one would have a resolution. That would have made reading pages upon pages of description worth its salt.

Unfortunately, I have way more questions than answers, including why Amy is so preoccupied with nakedness and other people's body parts. She is described as being almost forty but each time someone gets naked, she is enthralled with it—particularly the genitalia. It may not have any point in the book, but the way it is continuously harped on makes it seem important.

The “cliffhangeresque” (okay I may have made up that word) ending made me scratch my head at its composition. It seems like this was once an epic book but one decided later to make it a series—that's the only way that this construction makes any sense. Yet, as it stands, *This Shrinking World* reads like one very long prelude as opposed to the actual start of the series. Just because a work is part of a series doesn't mean that everything is left unresolved—if anything, at least put one conflict to rest before proceeding on to the rest.

Another thing that didn't work for me in the copy I received was that it was divided into simply parts, like Part One, Part Two, Part Three. The reading would have been smoother for me if there was a bit more division, like Parts, then Chapters.

### **Verdict: 2.75 Stars rounded up to 3**

The cliffhanger effect, multiple strands of unresolved conflict, and the pacing did take its toll on this work. The way it was written was the only thing that kept it from being lower on the scale for me. I can only hope that a few of the openings will get resolved in the 2nd book of the Series.

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### Melissa Smith says

I was “supposed” to write a review of the entire volume one for this post, but this review is just for book one, *This Shrinking World*. You see, I thought this was going to be a trilogy but each volume has three full books included... not novellas, but full length, regular sized novels. Fine, I'm a great speed reader. I can handle it, right? Nope. The problem is that these books are good. I wanted to really delve into it and not just skim. So, I only ended up finishing one by the deadline! I absolutely love epic stories, so knowing that I have eight more books to read is actually a huge plus.

The main character in the Lizard Queen series is a female, which is what I prefer. However, I'm always hesitant to read a female main character when the author is a guy. A lot of times, the author gets a lot of things wrong and I ended up cringing. Not so with this book, H.L. Cherryholmes does a fantastic job, I never once had a problem with how he wrote Amy. If you're looking for a strong, likable female protagonist who isn't a teenager or close to it (most of them seem to be lately), you want to read this!

Instead of going on to book two, I really want to just re-read this one first. This book is deep, with stunning detail and many layers. It's so well written and I would really recommend this to everyone.

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### **Philip says**

I always finish a book once I start reading, but this is not going to be one of those books I finish. Got my reasons. I read some of the other reviews and it seems the book is a 4 to 5 star. Not for me, I'm sorry. I'll be kind and give it a 2 star.

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### **Jleavens says**

A great start to an intriguing and complex saga. The book introduces an entire world, which is detailed and rich. It promises more to be revealed in future books in the 9-book series. There's a story within a story, a unique philosophy, and a mysterious prophecy. Our world is clearly connected to this other world (is it the past? future? another dimension?) but how and why is unknown yet. A mystery I want to keep reading to solve.

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### **Harmony Kent says**

Reviewed on behalf of The Review Board by Harmony Kent.

I received a free PDF copy of this book, in exchange for an honest review.

Amy is a nearly-forty-year-old, recently divorced CEO looking for a quick weekend break. What with impossibly-orange lizards running through her office, and a mysterious golden bangle turning up out of nowhere, not to mention her waking up beneath a starless yet clear night sky after going out for a morning jog, a quiet weekend looks set to be the last thing that our heroine gets. And then she meets the funny-coloured natives with strange stripes on their skin, who speak a language a bit like Spanish but not quite, and who are convinced that Amy is Lacáruna—prophesied to arrive in their world three hundred years ago to help it expand again. While the camp she wakes in is friendly and welcoming, not everyone in that world wants Lacáruna, and soon, Amy—along with three companions—has to go into hiding.

This is the first book in a series, and is most definitely not a standalone novel. The world building is fantastic, and everything you could want in a fantasy story. However, that's just about all you get in this first volume. It's a start. It doesn't give you a middle bit or an ending. The character building is strong, mostly; but the tale lacks an antagonist to balance the protagonists. The plot becomes bogged down in all that glorious detail, and once Amy and Co leave the camp, is filled with what they eat, where they travel, and how they bathe. The heroine seems to have a huge hang up about seeing the natives naked, or being seen naked herself, and it comes across as a tad more than the normal levels of discomfort we might be expected to feel if in similar circumstances. The reasons behind this strong reaction are never explained. Just when the

plot gets going, it stops. The book finishes. With a lot more questions than when it started. Loose threads abound so much that it's all in danger of unravelling before your eyes. For some reason, the plot seems to be top secret. Not one plot point reaches resolution by the time you turn the last page. The whole book has been given over to world building, with some character building in there, but the plot pacing makes a snail look good. Add to this the passive writing style, the many small yet significant errors, the repetitive nature of the narrative (in many instances, telling what has just been shown), this makes for a frustrating read. It started out strong—real strong—a good contender for high marks, in fact, but then it fizzled out. It just didn't go anywhere.

The point of view is third person limited, and the author does a good job of maintaining this without any head-hopping, which gets a thumbs up-from me. However, more than a few times, native words are used that our displaced heroine doesn't yet know. She won't know them until the latter half of the book, and yet here they appear.

For this to work as a first book in the series, more than mere set up is required. The reader is apt to feel cheated after reading the last word. The story includes a hint of romance, and a hint of a deeper mystery—but hints are all the reader gets. It's not enough.

For imagination and descriptive agility, it gets high marks, which is let down with passive writing, punctuation and spelling errors (including missing words), and a lack of plot and pacing. Such a shame, as I fell in love with this book in the first pages. Then I fell out of love so badly it soon came time for a divorce. As it stands, it gets 6 out of 10 TRB stars from me, which equates to 3 out of 5 stars on other rating scales.

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## **Patricia Hamill says**

This Shrinking World introduces the reader to an intriguing new world, one with a rather unique connection to our own. Amy, a successful CEO on the eve of her 40th birthday, has been seeing and experiencing some odd things and not all of them are in her head. Sure, perhaps the shadowy figure in her room could be from that place between waking and dreaming, but what about the orange lizard that scampers across her office and elsewhere? Those might be in her head, but her assistant had no trouble seeing the golden bangle. On a whim, she decides to run off to her hometown for a bit of rest. And that's when the already odd things take an even weirder turn.

I really enjoyed this story, particularly the way the parallel world is revealed, slowly and and through Amy's eyes. No info dumps here. I also liked the process of figuring out just how the world is connected to ours, and how its people came to be, the origin story. I'm still not exactly sure, but I have plenty of theories. I'm curious to find out which of them, if any, are correct in the later books. There's also a hint of romance, but just a hint. Nothing racy.

It was also refreshing to find a fantasy world where the people speak variations of Spanish mixed with English, rather than some fictional language that's nearly impossible to pronounce. That the setting is likely parallel to Southern California is supremely interesting to me. Thin boundaries, and all that. It made me glad that I've been brushing up on my Spanish.

On the other hand, the story gets a little caught up in the tedium at times: grooming, traveling, changing clothes, eating. Still, each of these things reveal a little about the people, the history or the setting, it's just not quite as action packed as some might like it to be. I also found the dialog between Amy and her earliest companions a little off at first. I didn't care for how Amy reacted to her rescuers, particularly when they were trying to sneak her away to safety. Finally, it's only fair to say that this is one hundred percent meant to be read as a series. It ends with much to be resolved and many questions yet to be answered. Not exactly a cliffhanger, more of an intermission.

Overall, I liked this book. It might be a good bet for those who enjoy fantasy that doesn't reveal a whole lot up front, particularly for those who like trying to figure things out from clues and context. I think people who like stories that feature alternate realities and parallel worlds would also dig this.

I received a review copy of this book in exchange for an honest, non-reciprocal review on the Pure Textuality blog.

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### **Justin Robinson says**

The best part of *This Shrinking World* is the world-building. It's just great. It's wonderful to encounter high fantasy that's not just another medieval England Tolkien clone, and there are tantalizing hints dropped throughout of a deeper mystery going on. The only downside is that this is nearly all setup. If this were a standalone, I might be mad, but as the keystone to a 9 book series? I'm definitely coming back for the rest.

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### **J.B. Garner says**

From [jbgarner58.wordpress.com](http://jbgarner58.wordpress.com):

Some literary cooks delight in the art of recipe-making. They are filled with the passion for creating entirely new literary worlds, whipping up brand-new recipes, and painstakingly picking out and detailing every ingredient of that new recipe. It can turn into a wondrous meal, filled with startling new flavors, or turn into a mushy, half-baked mess with some ingredients over-used and others half-baked. *This Shrinking World* is the first of nine books in a series dedicated to a new literary world in this fashion. Does it come out fully cooked or does it collapse like a poorly-executed soufflé?

Before we find out, let us take to hear the Starving Review creed:

I attempt to rate every book from the perspective of a fan of the genre.  
I attempt to make every review as spoiler-free as possible.

*This Shrinking World* is dense. There's no other word I can use to describe it. Let me add, though, that 'dense' is not 'bad'. Still, to say anything else would be a lie. This book delivers ingredient after ingredient, one after another, all in service of an ambitious world-building recipe. The author is striving to create a truly new world, connected to our own but dramatically different and, in many ways, that work pays off. There's a lot of material here and a lot of passion injected to make this new world a living, breathing one.

That's fantastic, you may be wondering, but a beautifully crafted world does not a fantastic story make. It's just one part of a blended whole that makes for excellent literary dining. Again, here, I cannot lie: the world is the best part of the book. Again, this isn't to say the other elements are bad, but they don't have the strength or the attention laid onto them that the core world-building does. Let me explain in depth ...

The characters are, for the most part, interesting. The main characters are well-developed and intriguing and the author wisely chooses a very relatable viewpoint character, which allows us, the readers, to learn about this new world along with her. However, I found two quibbles on the character front. One is minor and that is the fact that the book, while written in a third-person limited perspective from our non-native's point of view, is crafted using the terms of the alien world itself. This may not sound like a problem but I found it slightly distracting for the narrative to use terms that the viewpoint character doesn't even begin to use until

about 60% of the way through the book. It's a minor point, but it still stuck in my head.

The second characterization issue dovetails with my largest issue with the plot itself. There is no antagonist. Yes, technically, there *are* antagonists in that there is an overall threat and opposition to the protagonists. However, they have no face, no focal point, at least none that show up in this first book. It doesn't mean there is no conflict either. However, without a driving force or a relatable antagonist, there is no counterbalancing force in the narrative to the strongly-developed protagonists. In addition, between the lack of tension caused by this absence and the (sometimes) excessive descriptions lavished on the world and its people, the pacing of the plot becomes quite glacial.

Let me clarify this a bit more. Unlike many pacing issues that totally kill the plot, This Shrinking World's plot continues to move along, even when it's reduced to a crawl. It's easy to forget that the characters haven't really done anything for ten pages when the reader gets wrapped up in the intricacies of this alien world and that makes the proposition easier to forgive but, at the end of the book, it certainly left me feeling like I had eaten a very airy, fluffy creme pie. It was tasty, but it really didn't fill me up very much.

It may sound like I'm being quite critical but let me be clear: there is a lot that is done right here. The plot is very logical and nothing seems contrived or out of place. The characters, as well, are well-developed and consistent. I liked all of the protagonists and do look forward to reading more about the alien world the author creates for us. However, while I think This Shrinking World is a great prologue to a fascinating series, it is weak as a stand-alone volume. It feels like the book ends just as the story really gets started and, while that may not seem like an immediate issue when you know there's more to the series, it can leave your readers feeling empty and, perhaps, even a little cheated, especially if they paid as much for the start of a tale as they did for a full, complete story that ALSO starts a longer narrative.

At the end, I'll say this: This Shrinking World is dense with a fascinating new fantasy world with great character, but light on actual plot. A brilliant introduction and an auspicious start of something but that is all that it is at the end of things: a start. I look forward to reading more though and, if it develops as I think it might, I may end a future review with the suggestion to the author to combine volumes to make for stronger individual tomes. If you don't want to invest in a long-term series and are looking for a quick read, I would suggest you knock off at least 1 star, possibly 2, from my Final Verdict as I cannot suggest anything less than commitment due to the nature of this book.

FINAL VERDICT: \*\*\*\* (A flavorful start for a new series and a dense new world, but too light of a plot to stand alone!)

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## **Anne Martin says**

I almost loved this book. The first part, when Amy wakes up in another world is fascinating. The discovery of this new place is quite interesting too.

What bothered me... two things, which are closely related.

From the middle of the book til the end, they go on a quest to find more about the prophecy. The problem is that except them walking, eating, washing themselves, etc, nothing much happens and it sadly gets to be boring.

Then you finish the book, and you have not learned anything new. You -or I hoped to understand some of the mysteries of la reina... but no, it will be for the next book!

Who ever said books have to come by three? the Hunger Games did it and made it, but each book had an end and you could stop after the first one without feeling cheated.

Here, you are just good to get the next one in hope to get closer to the questions of the prophecy, of the

Lacaruna or of the relationship between Amy and Dack.

It should not be like that. Can you think of Gone with the Wind published between three books, with two or three hundred pages anywhere to make it thick enough to be cut into three parts?

The book could be very good, if a bit shorter and more complete.

The way it is, it is not worth more than three stars.

PS if someone could explain to me why Amy is so scared of being naked, or of others without clothes, I would appreciate.

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