



## **Sunstone**

*Freya Robertson*

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**Freya Robertson is the winner of the New Zealand Sir Julius Vogel Sci-Fi & Fantasy Award for Best Novel for Heartwood (The Elemental Wars Book 1).**

*The element of fire is on the rise...*

The Incendi elementals that dwell beneath the mountains have found a way to tap into the Arbor's roots, which stretch not only across the land but also through time, and King Pyra is determined to crush the ancient tree.

Twenty-two years after the attack of the Darkwater Lords, Procella and her three children are drawn back to Heartwood to investigate the rumor of strange fires springing up across the country.

Five hundred years later, a thirteen-year-old boy journeys to Heartwood to be sacrificed to the Arbor, but the volcanoes are rumbling, and the firebird is starting to wake...

Two thousand years in the future, when Heartwood has fallen into myth and men and women now live underground, and one woman's unborn baby urges her to escape to the surface.

Across three separate timelines, the Nox Aves scholars must work together to join their ancient sunstones, to overcome the Incendi, and to make the element of earth victorious once more.

Book 1: Heartwood

Book 2: Sunstone

## **Sunstone Details**

Date : Published January 10th 2018 (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Freya Robertson

Format : Kindle Edition 496 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Sunstone for online ebook

### Sylvia Becker says

I have recently read Sunstone, by Freya Robertson, and I ended up with positive but slightly bitter-sweet feeling. Sunstone tells the story of several interrelated characters who seek to save the Arbor, the land's holy tree.

This novel started with a great premise: a mix of viewpoint characters with different personalities, an epic quest to complete, and some fantasy touches. This is the second part of a series, so it is probably easier to understand and follow once you have read the previous book. I had not read it, though, and it was not difficult to catch up on the story. As I turned the pages, I found myself enjoying the novel more than I expected.

Overall, Sunstone was an interesting read. Yes, it does fall in clichés like other books in this genre, but it develops other unique concepts, and I liked how magic is applied to nature and dreams. My only frustration resides in the small details that made the novel less entertaining to read.

Read the full review: <http://www.jetpackdragons.com/2014/03...>

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### Koeur says

<http://koeur.wordpress.com/2014/02/27...>

Publisher: Angry Robot

Publishing Date: March 2014

ISBN: 9780857663900

Genre: Fantasy

Rating: 2.0/5.0

Publisher Description: The sequel to Heartwood is here!

The Incendi elementals that dwell beneath the mountains have found a way to tap into the Arbor's roots, which stretch not only across the land but also through time, and King Pyra is determined to crush the ancient tree. Twenty-two years after the defeat of the Darkwater Lords, Chonrad's widow Procella and their three children are drawn back to Heartwood to investigate the rumour of strange fires springing up across the land. Across three separate timelines, the heroes must battle to join together their ancient sunstones, to overcome the Incendi threat, and to protect the Arbor and make earth victorious once more.

Review: Cover art is pretty good this time. Heartwood was good too, just not accurate.

This novel takes place down the road a bit from the first installment. Another threat to the Arbor, One Tree, whatever, is mounting with time-skipping fire elementals and the various timelines colliding at an "Apex".

I feel like Procella does about the Arbor Tree. Its a big life sucking fuckwit. It needs a human sacrifice (chosen one) to consume on an annual basis, which is kind of sicko. Why not just feed it a fresh corpse once

in a while. Why sacrifice good or still contributing people? Or feed it a goat maybe. Not only is the Arbor kind of a reverse cannibalistic vegetarian, it calls whomever it needs in order to continually suck the life-force out of them, like Procella's husband whom dies living that association. I would like to see the Arbor burn except that the planet might cease to exist without its presence. Its like an alien player in a reciprocal altruistic relationship (the benefit to the receiver would have to be larger than the cost to the donor). And well the cost to the donor is death.

The depth of the story line was more involved with this iteration, yet failed to take your imagination to an interesting place. More of the same world building ideas but mired in "feelings" and "inner questions" and rampant dialogue. I kind of miss the first novel, where you had "celibate" knights of the Arbor prancing around and screwing everything that wasn't nailed down.

My main issue with this particular installment resides in the author finding her voice. It is almost like a different person crafted this novel. Not a bad thing really, but I think she went in a different direction to the detriment of the world she previously built. There are WAY more pages of filler with regard to individual scenes where the characters ruminate internally about every possible angle or instance that lead up to their current position. What that does is stall the movement as it is rendered in such a way that it does not build character depth but rather creates whiney interludes.

Especially Sarra. Fug. A real first class whiner. Real snoozer of a character too. See, she is preggers by some high ranking dead dude, and still lives in utter squalor, BUT.....the Chief Select (Comminor) of the underground (Embers) and every hot guy within firing range wants her. Because she has this "hidden depth" about her, that she herself fails to see (which only makes her more alluring). So the Ember-dude gets to bang her, well because he can, and she lets him. Her excuse is that if she didn't he would know her band of peeps were escaping to the surface. But Sarra is conflicted about Comminor because how could a heartless leader make love/rape so tender? Double fug. Again with Sarra and a few others we start to run into the NRSOW (Nora Roberts School of Writing), where human desires supersede rational thinking. Comminor is constantly internalizing his love/anger for Sarra and his "special connection" to her. Ummmm, yeah. You and every other guy out there.

The fight scenes continue in their usual tradition of being absurd. Procella is the former Dux of Badassland, and takes out a bunch of guards, and the big-bad guy, Hunfrith. All in a few minutes, inside a tavern. There is this garish descriptive quality to the fight scenes that makes you feel like you're in a Robin Hood movie. "HAHA! No one will be allowed to best me, the greatest knight ever!!! HA HA!! Why I have had more battles than you have teeth in your head...HAHA!!! I will allow no Wolfian scum to soil my good crotch...HAHA!!" Or Hunfrith and his guards talking about raping her repeatedly, and how much fun they are going to have passing her around. It is like talking to Dr. Evil.

My last issue is more with the overuse of phrases and certain words that tend to expedite the scene development rather than building scenes that are robust. I lost count of the phrase (and similar phrases) that utilized "wryly". He smiled wryly...she grinned wryly etc. etc. Also the phrase "He moved his thumb over her cheek", or "moved his thumb across her lips", or what I dreaded most and lost count of was "cupped his/her cheek". You might have been able to hear my moans of despair every time that phrase was used. At one point the author uses "cupped cheek" and "thumb brushed" in the same sentences. Triple fug. This is usually evidence of an indie author, or an author in the early stages of a writing career. It is akin to a downspout dripping water. If you focus on it, it will drive you crazy.

I really want to like this series. I think it is a great story line with an inventive world in which to create within. The characters are not rendered favorably enough to exist in this world in a believable manner.

Dunno why Angry Robot books keeps publishing this particular author. I usually associate their publishing house with quality cutting edge scifi/fantasy. They might want to invest in a good editor or a few beta readers to refine their selection process.

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### **Judy says**

I received this book as a Goodreads giveaway. It is a sequel to Heartstone. Although I haven't read the previous novel I was able to read Sunstone as a standalone without too much difficulty. However, there were some references which would have been clearer if I had read Heartstone, accordingly I would recommend readers to read the books in order, to fully appreciate the story.

Lovers of the fantasy genre will enjoy this book but it is not the book to pick up for a casual read as the story is complex with a depth that is thought provoking and has many layers. It is more suited to the reader who likes to immerse themselves in the fantasy world embracing all of the details which bring it to life.

The story is well crafted with excellent descriptive detail which doesn't disrupt the flow of the narrative. Characters are well drawn and have rounded personalities, their strengths and weaknesses giving rise to behaviour which is appropriate. The dialogue is well written and fits with each character yet there aren't any overly long speeches which deflect from the action.

Although this is a fantasy book with magical/mystical elements it is not beyond the imagination for a population to hide in caves underground beneath a burnt out world. The type of society which developed would depend on the resources available to it and the result could well be like this story.

There is a good balance between description and dialogue which keeps the story moving along at a steady pace. The way the time lines are woven together drawing past, present and future into one story is effective and cleverly done so that the reader is not left confused.

All in all I really enjoyed this book. It is an excellent read and a well written, well balanced book. A new name to watch for in the fantasy genre for the future. For another book in this series is surely coming.

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### **Monica says**

This novel was originally published with Avid Reviews: [www.avidfantasyreviews.wordpress.com](http://www.avidfantasyreviews.wordpress.com)

Sunstone is Freya Robertson's new novel and her sequel to Heartwood. The events of Sunstone take place twenty-two years after the setting of the first book, well after the defeat of the Darkwater Lords. This book, like Heartwood, takes a while to engage the reader. The plot also follows a very similar formula, and involves another threat to the Arbor. It is a well-written novel, but has a slow moving plot that does not significantly contribute to the world building established in Heartwood.

The story begins when Chonrad's widow Procella and their three children come back to Heartwood to explore rumors of elementals that have discovered a way to tap into the Arbor's roots. These Incendi elementals have caused strange fires that combust mysteriously across the world, and since the Arbor's roots

spread through time as well as the land, it will take heroes from three different timelines to join together their sunstones and defeat this new threat.

Sunstone is written on an epic scale, and separately all the elements of the story are fantastic. The world, while not completely unique, really takes hold of the reader's imagination, and it is filled with many interesting cultures. The elementals are extremely creative antagonists, and their threat to the world is thrilling. The characters are diverse and likeable, even if I did not find them completely engaging. The problem is these elements are not brought together in a way that appeals to the reader, and I found it very difficult to engross myself in this book. It is obvious that the author planned the book excellently, but when it came to putting characters, plot, and setting together, she did it in a way which made the story flow but which was not very exciting.

My main problem with the story was that there was far too much internal monologue from the characters and not enough action. I am not always a fan of fast paced novels, but I like my books to have a good balance between depth and excitement, and this novel did not live up to my expectations in this aspect. I was also unsympathetic to many of the character's problems, and many of the action scenes were not written in a way that seemed authentic.

Overall this book is mediocre. It is mildly interesting, but I often felt bored when reading it, and I sometimes became annoyed with the protagonists. Because of these issues, I would give it a rating of 6/10.

I received a copy of this book from Netgalley and the publisher in return for an honest review.

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### **Debra Martin says**

SUNSTONE is the second book in the Elemental Wars by Freya Robertson. I read the first book and though it was enjoyable, there were too many characters to keep track of in all their different quests across the land in the hopes of opening the Nodes. In this book, the author pares down the cast and writes a compelling and interesting read. The story follows three different groups as they are called by The Arbor, the tree that is the living force of the land, to come to its aid. The Arbor is in trouble and strives to bring about the APEX, the singular event that will have past and future events converge with the present. The ancient sunstones must merge across timelines into one, but the Incendi, fire elementals, will do everything they can to prevent it. If the Apex does not happen, the world will be turned to ash and the Incendi king Pyra will rule forever.

It was easy to follow each group's adventures and perils. Ms. Robertson kept the tension high and never strayed from any one story too long. That was the problem with the first book, but in SUNSTONE, the continuation of each journey was never further away than a chapter or two. The climax was exciting, the magic inventive and the characters well-fleshed out. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I would suggest reading HEARTWOOD first though to fully understand the story. Recommended.

I received a copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

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### **Wendy says**

The events that occurred in the previous book, Heartwood, resulted in significant losses, but also in a greater understanding of the mysterious Arbor, the great tree that is the centre of the world of Anguis. Saving the Arbor brought the rival factions of Anguis together to serve and protect the tree and for a time, there was peace.

But everything changed when the Fire Nation attacked.

Now, 22 years after the Dark Water Lords rose up against the Arbor a new threat looms and heroes across time must do their part to stop the Incendi from razing the world with fire.

Readers of Heartwood will recognize many characters, including Procella, the noble military woman and former Dux and protector of the Arbor. Sadly, her husband, Chonrad, responds to a summons from the Arbor which brings about his death shortly before the book begins. But this story belongs to Procella and their three children, Orsin, Jolen and Horada, who each have their own roles to play in the events. We are introduced to several other new characters, including a young prince who is escorted to the Arbor as the Selected sacrifice, and a group of rebels seeking escape from their underground captivity.

As always, Robertson's world and character building is incredible. Anguis continues to enthrall me with its beauty and its many realms and unique people. It is also interesting to see how Anguis differs as the separate time lines flow together. It still amazes me how Robertson can manage so many characters and their respective quests, without losing the depth and purpose of either.

Unlike the previous book, the undertaking of the three major quests is a much more organic process. Robertson's video game – particularly (MMO)RPG – influence was evident in Heartwood, and proved a detriment to the storytelling when it came to the parcelling out of details and quests. I didn't find that to be an issue in Sunstone, and particularly liked the implication of the Arbor's sentience and manipulation of events (without it being an elaborate case of the tree orchestrating everything like Littlefinger). With the realm of Anguis and the Arbor mostly established, there is less need for the excessive detail Robertson provided previously. That said, Sunstone still suffers from an excess of tell over show, with the reader not being permitted to discern things on their own, or inner monologues that go on a bit too long. This makes the book a bit more pedantic than I'd like, though not enough for me to dislike the series over all. I am still very much intrigued by the Elemental Wars and am looking forward to what mysteries the Arbor will reveal next.

With thanks to NetGalley for the opportunity to read an advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

See more reviews at [The Bibliosanctum](#)

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### **Scott says**

I am giving this a solid 3 stars. I read the first book and did not give a proper review.

The world building is excellent. Especially this one. I enjoyed the three different timelines happening at once and converging at the same point and place. Interesting concept.

Characters are interesting, but I don't feel as though I "want" to be this character. And there is a little too much of the "love" theme going on between characters. They are enjoyable, and they do grow and the cast is changing. That is one thing that I am happy with, the characters are changing with the series.

I also like the changes that the Arbor is going through and that the tree is such a main part of the story.

It is an interesting concept and the story line is growing and not staying in one place. I saw someone compare

this to George RR Martin and I don't think it is quite at that level. But it is a good read and the story line looks like it may continue.

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### **Kdawg91 says**

I said after I read the first part I was interested enough to check out the second despite my issues with the story not totally being my thing.

The world building interested me enough that even though its more of the same, I am in for at least the trilogy. Good job Ms. Robertson :)

Thank you as always to netgalley and the robot overlords of Angry Robot.

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### **Felix says**

This eco/fantasy which has paladins & a somewhat confusing interwoven time-line. Not sure if I will read anymore in this series?

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### **Paula says**

Sunstone by Freya Robertson has a very enticing cover. The story is a continuation of an earlier book that I have not had the pleasure of reading. The Arbor tree's salvation is again in doubt. The vast magical world is filled with both believable good and evil characters. Also there are multiple story lines and timelines which made this a somewhat confusing read at times for me. Perhaps if I had read the first in the series it would have been easier to follow this one. So with that thought, I would recommend reading Heartwood before Sunstone.

Copy provided by NetGalley for an honest review.

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### **Rachel says**

I found it very interesting how this book was set 20ish years after the first one - seeing the main character that many years later drew me in immediately. And I loved the way the story threads all came together at the end. It just didn't always hold me through the middle.

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## **Sarah-Jayne Briggs says**

(I received this book for free as part of Goodreads First Reads giveaways).

(This review may contain spoilers).

I like fantasy books. Fantasy is one of my favourite genres. So when I was looking at potential giveaways to enter, the front cover of this book, coupled with the blurb, drew me in.

The idea of the Arbor was a pretty intriguing one. The explanation for the Selected eventually made sense, though I still wasn't completely happy with certain things that happened throughout the book in regards to the tree.

Although the three different timelines were a little confusing at first, I did grow used to the style of writing fairly easily. I found myself caring about what happened to the characters and I could empathise with most of them - Tahir and Osrin in particular. Sarra was, I felt, the weakest of the characters. She was very passive, rather than the strong sort of heroine I prefer.

There were a couple of characters who could be termed as 'bad', but they were more well-rounded than I'd expected. Of course, there were others who were completely unlikable, but at least those were few and far between.

Although there were quite a few characters in this book, there were only a few occasions where I was confused between the minor characters - and that was more in the third timeline, rather than the other two.

I really liked the relationships that formed between the characters, though there were a few contradictory moments that I noticed. In particular, I liked Tahir's closeness to the two adults guiding him. There was something very sweet about that.

Although this book was the second in a series, I did find it easy to follow. The characters weren't perfect, but they were well-written and I cared about what happened to them.

I would definitely read the preceding book to this and any later books in this series in the near future.

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## **Ashley says**

I honestly didn't have any clue what was going on at the beginning. But as the book progressed it turned into an unbelievably wonderful coming together. So much different than Heartwood but yet wove in some familiar characters and of course the Arbor. The way the book ends leads me to believe that another book will be forthcoming. I definitely will be adding it to my list of must reads! ?

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