



Birthright

B.J. Keeton

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Damien Vennar used to be a god. As a technomage of the Charonic Archive, Damien had the power to create entire universes. Then, five hundred years ago, he gave it all up. He suspended the nanites that made up his bloodstream and began to age—and eventually die—like anyone else. For centuries, Damien has lived among those who once worshipped him, his real identity fading into myth and legend.

Hundreds of years later, when Ceril Bain finds Damien's old sword buried in his grandfather's garden, he is put on the fast-track to follow in Vennar's footsteps. Over the next six years, Ceril trains as a technomage aboard the Inkwell Sigil, a ship with the ability to travel between dimensions. Just as Ceril is preparing to undergo his Rites and finish his training, the Inkwell Sigil loses power. Stranded in space with no way back home, Ceril and four of his classmates are given their final assignment: go into uncharted territory, find a way back home, and bring back the one person who can fix the ship—Damien Vennar himself.

While away, Ceril and his team find themselves in a predicament when they confuse an attempt at first contact with an attack and kill two of the world's winged inhabitants. They are shortly captured and imprisoned, and the only thing keeping them alive is their angel-like captors' belief they may be the subjects of an ancient prophecy about a group of magic-wielding messiahs. But that's impossible. Isn't it?

Birthright Details

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From Reader Review Birthright for online ebook

Dorothy Schwartz says

I have no idea what I read

The reading was easy. Just not clearly understood. Tp many unfamiliar names and places and situations. Relations were not clearly described.

I will try to get through book two and see if it holds any interest. It got a bit too gory for me at the end.

Stephanie Morrow says

This book isn't one I would have normally picked up, not being a fan of sci-fi or all that keen on violence. However, I am glad I read it. I wish there was more character development and more of an emotional connection to the characters. I kept reading wishing that I felt something but when it came to the basics all responded to everything with violence, be it intended or not. I could not identify with any of the characters and while they may have had different names and jobs, they all came across as being almost the same person.

I love the idea behind the book, but by the last quarter I was tired of the violence. It was a lot of maiming, disfigurement, and missing limbs. The rationale behind the actions of everyone was that they 'had no other choice'. It even ended with needless violence.

Still, the premises for it was great and as the first book I've read like this it was a pleasure even if it wasn't exactly my cup of tea.

Scarybooster says

In my honest opinion, this is the best book I've read in years. The last time a book has held my attention this much was when I stayed up for 24 hours in 1996 to read all of Tad Williams' Green Angel Tower book in the Memory, Sorrow, Thorn trilogy.

This book took me totally by surprise. Being a self-published book I thought it might have numerous flaws. The only flaw was me thinking that. I'm not saying the book was perfect, but it was amazing none the less. There were only a couple things that I found I did not care for.

Cons:

1. The Prologue was boring to me. It was uneventful and it almost made me shelve the book. There was a lot of back and forth dialogue that was just slow feeling. That said, chapter 1 hit the ground running and the book never let up from then on.
2. This is my personal preference: I thought the book chapters could've been broken up into large sections or "acts". I was a little confused when the author jumped from new student to 1 year later, then 6 years later. I

think larger sections would've helped the tradition for me. Again, this is my personal preference and in no way did it detract from the story.

3. When the author went from new student to year 1, he recapped some Ceril's bullying problems. I feel this recap was unnecessary and redundant. Just a couple chapters before I read the same exact thing. It felt like a TV show season premier recapping the pervious season. Luckily, this was the only time he did this. The reset of the book flowed nicely.

Pros:

1. At first I thought this was going to be another Ender's Game or Harry Potter type school kid story, but the author surprised me quickly. He kept me on my toes through the whole book. Just when I thought I knew where he was going, he threw me for a loop and kept me guessing. It was amazing and crafty.

2. The characters in the story were bold and stayed out of cliché roles. I felt very connected with the characters, but surprised when they did unexpected things. It was refreshing to have characters unchained from normal formulaic roles.

3. The writing style was balanced perfectly. Not once did I lapse into a comatose speed reading session. The author had an amazing grasp on visual descriptive writing and snappy dialogue. It was refreshing to see the story unfold and not just read words on a page.

All my cons were minor things. They were mainly my preferences and probably more advanced readers would disagree with me. The story though was superb. I've been bored with the stagnant fantasy genre and I never could stomach Scifi writing, but the way the author blends the 2 makes a very riveting story.

I can't say how much I enjoyed this book. I know he has 2 more books left in the series and I can't wait to read them. If you haven't bought or read this book, you should. It's a steal being only \$4.99 on Amazon.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

In recent months, I have been taking a greater interest in fiction projects on Kickstarter, and I have the author of Birthright to thank for this. His book was the first project I've ever backed, and since then I've had the joy of discovering more authors, both independent and established, who have turned to such crowd-funding sites as an alternative to traditional publishing.

Not to mention, sites like Kickstarter are also beneficial for writers with great ideas who plan to put out their work by themselves -- writers like B.J. Keeton, with his novel that plays with genre conventions. Birthright was successfully funded in the summer of 2012, and all the hard work came to fruition earlier last week when the completed book went up on Amazon and backers like myself found ebook copies in our inboxes.

Birthright is the first book of a planned science-fiction/fantasy trilogy called the Technomage Archives. It begins with main protagonist Ceril Bain's discovery of a mysterious sword buried in his grandfather's garden. Gramps identifies it as a Technomage sword and tells Ceril stories about these high-tech wizard-like members of the Charonic Archive.

Six years later, Ceril is himself preparing to become a full-fledged Charon in his own right, after training and

being educated aboard a space ship capable of inter-dimensional travel, called the Inkwell Sigil. However, right before he can begin the final step to become initiated into the order, the Sigil loses power and becomes stranded in space. Together with four of his fellow classmates, Ceril must embark on a mission into uncharted territory to find a legendary Technomage who may be the only person alive with the power to help them.

Know that famous quote from Arthur C. Clarke about any sufficiently advanced technology being indistinguishable from magic? I keep seeing this book's premise as an exploration of that very idea, with its creative blending of sci-fi and fantasy elements. This hybrid-genre book is unlike any I've read before. The "science-y" bits are fascinating and imaginative, always piquing my interest to find out more details behind the technology. At the same time, so much about the Technomages are magic-based and shrouded in mystery, enough to keep the hardcore fantasy fan in me happy and in her comfort-zone.

Like many self-published works, I think the book can benefit from additional rounds of editing and revisions just to sort out the pacing, tighten up the plot and tweak things up a bit, but I'd imagine writing and putting out a book on your own can't be easy or cheap. Bearing in mind it is an indie author self-published book, I really do think Birthright is quite fantastic as it is. The only real rocky part I felt was towards the beginning, before the "Six Years Later" kicks in and we skip ahead to Ceril's life aboard the Inkwell Sigil. Still, the marked difference almost makes me think this might be deliberate, to reflect Ceril's young age and innocence at this earlier stage in time, his simple and naive way of looking at the world and people around him. In fact, while reading the first few chapters of the book, the point-of-view and tone made me think Birthright was meant to be a Young Adult novel.

However, this definitely shifts as soon as we skip ahead the six years, which occurs about a quarter of the way into the book. It is noticeable enough that it almost feels like Birthright has an unspoken Part I and Part II. For me, it's like the book actually starts at this point six years later, when the plot picks up, the action and adventure begins, and Ceril grows up to become a more complex and interesting character.

Speaking of which, I find there really are no standard "cookie-cutter" protagonists in this book, and that's a good thing; like real people, they are multi-faceted and sometimes so hard to pin down. So many times I found myself shocked (for better or worse) with a character's decision when they do something completely unexpected, which keeps me wondering and on my toes. Ceril himself is not someone I would at first think of as a hero or even a leader (he's always saying things like how he has no desire to become a soldier because he doesn't want to risk himself, or that he doesn't want responsibility for other people's lives, not to mention he's the kind of person who would carelessly sleep through an alarm on the most important day of his life) and it's fascinating to see him grow into the role.

Finally, as a big fan of massively multiplayer online games, I was also really geeking out at the book's description of "Instances" and of the way the characters would travel to and between these "pocket-universes" that exist in the same physical space as one another by using swirly-looking portals. The author admits to being an avid MMO player on Birthright's Kickstarter page, and it's always such a treat to read books by a fellow gamer and see gaming references and nods to MMORPGs in their work. If he decides to do another Kickstarter for the sequel, I would definitely pledge my support again.

See this review and more like it at [The BiblioSanctum](#).

Fuzzy Cow says

DISCLAIMER: I know the author. I payed for the book, and never talked to him about his work, but I do know him.

Ceril lives with a foot in two worlds. During the school year, he goes to the most advanced school in the system where he sees the marvels of technology and he learns what's possible. During the summer, he works on a small farm with Gramps, his technophobic grandfather, and learns all the history and lore his grandfather has gathered. All this changes when he's recruited into a program, where he learns about a second tier of technology, locked away from the public, with seemingly infinite possibilities and a secret dark history, of which his grandfather played a major role.

So... I really like a lot of the ideas in this book. I think there's plenty of contrast set in a pretty interesting world, but the things I seemed to care about didn't seem to be the things the author cared about. I have to admit, I kind of lied. The summary above is kind of what I want the book to be, more than what it is.

In reality *Birthright* is a very odd young adult book. It's about a teenager who gets a form of super powers, and learns about a dark past he doesn't quite know how to handle. He's thrown into trials he probably isn't ready for, and manipulated by forces that are far older than himself. He's young and inexperienced, but he has to figure it out. He's kind of angst-y, made even more so as he's compared against his optimistic youth. He's not a one-note sour puss; at any given time he could be delighted with the progress of technology, or mired by the unanswered questions of his sub-conscious. But it feels like his default setting is angst. With all that evidence in hand, I think it's safe to say that he's a YA protagonist.

This book sets itself apart from other YA novels by having less romance and a whole lot more violence. There is a potential romance, but it really isn't even a sub-plot (more an opening for a potential future). The violence is definitely a theme though. There's very little difference in the way of "good guys" or "bad guys." Morally, everyone is kind of nebulous. Because of this, both sides do really violent things, described in gory detail. This leads to a kind of tonal problem I had with the book. The protagonist's focus on the immediate problem guarantees that this is an action-adventure book (with some action choreography problems), pointing towards a fun less engaging experience. But then there's the aggressively detailed horror sequences that grab you and make you squirm. I don't really know who this is written for. It's really an odd duck.

With that said, I think there are some really good aspects to the story. Despite not being introduced until pretty late in the story, Ceril's support group is really good. They all have their own personality and agency. Not as much as Ceril, but if they can do a thing they usually try to do it. Also, I really like the world. In truth, most of the dialog is well done. I believe it could use some variety in the beginning, but the characters are expressive through it. Even better, they live in an interesting place, with a shadowy history and bit of a hint that everything is kind of connected somehow. It's fun to kind of guess what comes next, or realize the implied history of a curiosity. It's an interesting place with some interesting people, but it feels like it takes a side note to Ceril's peril.

To summarize, this book has an identity problem. On one hand, it's full of interesting ideas set in an interesting place. But the day to day activities kind of let me down. With quickly rushed though explanations, this is a half decent sci-fi fantasy. With messy choreography, this is a half decent action book. With a semi-developed angsty teenage-protagonist, this is a half decent YA book. There are horror elements, but not subtle enough to classify it as a horror. It can be enjoyable to read, or a bit revolting. The tones are all over the place, and I can't decide who this is written for. And if I can't tell who would want to read this, I

can't really recommend it.

Susanne says

Ungdomsroman. Læste kun lige en 6 del

Jim says

I don't know, I just don't know about this book. On one hand, I know it's not my kind of book, yet on the other, it was very, very interesting! I will tell anyone reading this review up front that this is a very violent book, at least for a couple of scenes. There is a lot of action during the course of the book and it is exciting, but the author can get very graphic, very quickly.

This is a story about a young man going to school to find out what he wants to become, if they will let him. And I will also state very clearly, that this is in no way, a Harry Potter© type story; far from it. Ceril (and yes, my keyboard does want to spell Cereal), is our main guy. He's been working with his Grandpa for most of this summer and for probably a lot of summers past. It doesn't say anything about Ceril's parents, just that he's been working in his Grandpa's garden a lot and they both enjoy doing that. This sounds like a pretty peaceful setting. It is until Ceril finds a sword in the garden.

Yes, Ceril found a real special kind of sword which his Grandpa promptly took away from him and never said anything about it again. Ceril heads back to school again and is ready to start another usual fall term only this year he thinks he's going to get to pick his special field of study. He believes he want to study agriculture in order to go back to his Grandpa's garden and help make it produce more. Now all this sounds pretty boring and it did to me, expect when that sword starts showing up either at Ceril's feet or in his hand! It just appears! Ceril isn't sure why or what is happening, but he has this sword that glows like crazy and he is becoming the attention of lots of professors and even the Head Master.

He's quickly told that he won't be studying agriculture, that's for sure. He sword has shown him to be a budding technomage and that's what he's going to be one way or another. And then to top it off, Ceril accidentally kills a student when the sword appears in both his hand and the chest of a rather large and intimidating student!

It definitely is interesting reading to find out what happens to Ceril over the next six years. He's not actually at the school any more but he is studying. He has to find out how to control the sword through a lot of training and then he has to study just how this sword and others like it came to be. It's not magic, but darn near like magic. If you listen closely to todays news, you'll hear stories about tiny little machines that are now being built to do things for which they are programmed. These are called Nanites and Ceril and his world have tons of them.

Again, not my kind of book, but it really, really is a lot of science fiction. I might just even read the second book, "Lineage", that's already published! It's a good to great story.

Zephran Goldaras says

I recently read this book and was more than glad that I did. It was beyond captivating. I hated every minute that I had to put it down. The only problem that I had with the book was the quick jump in years that is needed for the story line. However, other than that, it was one of the best books I have ever read. I initially planned to give this book four stars, but after thinking about it, I am giving it five. Can't wait for book 2!!!

Max Cohen says

Let me preface this by saying that I really enjoyed the book. And once the author hit his stride this was great! This is the science-fiction mashed with fantasy series I didn't know I always wanted. Plus I enjoyed the exploration of the idea that any science sufficiently advanced becomes magic. However, the beginning drags a little bit and the hops through time are somewhat confusing as is the cosmology. That being said I can let most of that go as the book is a fun time. Sword fights, nano tech, fireballs, and angels this book was a good time.

David says

Very interesting concept. Like they say, advanced technology appears like magic to a more primitive race. Nano technology instead of blood. Ready for the next one in the story line.

Victoria says

It is a great book to read

Stanley Marshall says

Weird

Ok parts were good but a lot seemed contrived and the author seemed to be reaching in his style I just had a hard time seeing how some of the actions fit into the story

Catherine says

[Take the moment when Ceril kills another student. Come on, he was a child walking with a loaded atom bomb equivalent, and teachers were like "it's ok". Every one of them knew he actually summoned a sword out of thin air because he didn't like school making his life choices. Unbelievably stupid! And whe he "misfired" they blamed him! Talk

Kp O'Brien says

Disappointing at best. There was so much potential in the ideas in this book and so much room for pure awesome, but since the "technology so advanced it was like magic" was such a let down it ruined the story for me, not to mention there were a lot of inconsistencies.

Even after all that, the one single aspect of the book that I couldn't stand was all the pointless plot devices and pointless killing. It was as if the author couldn't imagine someone being motivated to do something other than killing someone. Need motivation to learn how to use a deadly gift, having a super cool weapon not being motivation enough to learn to use it, then lets accidentally kill someone so that the trauma and after effects form a flimsy plot device for something that should have been a natural development.

Cindy Cunningham says

Unfortunate turn

I was enjoying the narrative for the first half of the novel, but suddenly it took a violent turn and just never went back to character or plot development. Disappointing.
