



Born to Run

Mercedes Lackey , Larry Dixon

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Book one of a new urban fantasy series centered on hot cars, fast elves, and rock-n-roll. Good elves are intrigued by stock car racing, and bad elves run kiddie-porn and drug rings. Trapped in between are three runaways who are in serious trouble and about to get into more--unwitting pawns in a deadly game between good and evil.

Born to Run Details

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From Reader Review Born to Run for online ebook

Michele bookloverforever says

GOTTA LOVE THE FAE

Jim says

There are elves out there. And more are coming. But even elves need money to survive in the "real" world. The good elves, intrigued by the thrills of stock car racing, are manufacturing new, light-weight engines (with, incidentally, very little "cold" iron); the bad elves run a kiddie-porn and snuff-film ring, with occasional forays into drugs. Ranged on the other side of all that's good ---- Keighvin: elf lord with a problem, and the victim of a vendetta.-- Tannim: a human mage with a taste for fast cars and loud music.-- Sam Kelly: mild-mannered retired engineer with an Irish temper.-- Ross Canfield: a good old Southern boy who just happens to be dead. The people trapped in between: three runaways. Good kids already in serious trouble and about to get into more. Unwitting pawns in a deadly game, they will either be saved -- or led into a fate worse than death....

Ward Bond says

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Grace says

This book was rather difficult for me to get through as the subject matter is so heavy. I don't recommend the series to anyone who doesn't want to read about child abuse, neglect, or rape. Though the series approaches the subjects with the intent to inform and shock, the graphic nature may be too difficult for some.

All in all, the fantasy aspect helps the story get told. I was also rather impressed with the information in the

final pages of the book, after the tale was told, about where people could call or go to get help should they be experiencing like situations.

Droewyn says

I loved this series when I was a teen. It was the first urban fantasy I'd ever heard of, and I really dug the idea of magic living alongside the human world without anyone noticing.

Going back to it, it's definitely dated (the cool hero rocks a mullet and bleeding-edge technology is a car stereo with a CD player), but what I found really awkward was the dialogue. If someone called me by name that many times in conversation I'd be more than a little creeped out. People just don't talk like that.

Still, it was a nice nostalgia trip with some likeable heroes and uncomplicated mustache-twirling villains.

I want to bust out my Clannad tapes now.

TheCosyDragon says

This review has been crossposted from my blog at The Cosy Dragon . Please head there for more in-depth reviews by me, which appear on a timely schedule.

I seem to have lapsed into comforting fiction again. I don't know what exactly is comforting about a human mage that can protect his race car by magic, an urban elf that has a soft spot for children and a porn ring that has a lot more going on than you can imagine...

Tannim is a race car driver, but he's mixed up with elves and other fun things. His weakness is a poor leg and also that he wants to protect children, just like the elves. He's a likeable character, with proper flaws that make him seem real and believable.

The main character of Tannim better be believable, because the rest of this novel is pretty unbelievable. There are elves on the loose in USA! Not to mention ghosts, dragons and other otherworldly creatures. It's well known that elves have a weakness for cold iron, and it's fascinating the way that Lackey and Dixon produce ways around that.

It's nice that Lackey & Dixon don't feel that everything has to turn out perfectly. People are allowed to die, things can turn messy in a heartbeat and battles feel like they have a real element of danger. You find yourself on the edge of your seat so quickly and you can't stop reading.

I think one of my favourite characters is Sam, the old engineer. He's so quirky and quick! I also have always had a soft spot for the Irish, and Sam's a good old Irish breed. Sam takes everything in his stride. Soda siphon here we come!

Something you won't see from Sam or Tannim is character development. Rather, their characters are very consistent, just as I would want from adult characters. The children on the other hand harden up very quickly, and do change. The storyline involving Jamie is particularly sad.

I can't emphasise enough how complicated, but also at the same time, simple, this plot is. It's told from several perspectives, so it's possible to get a balanced view on most of the characters. There are so many different things going on, and it seems like the bad elves are the only ones that are aware of the majority of things. It really worked for me.

I would recommend this book for adults, probably not teenagers, as there is detailed descriptions of drug use and the various things involved in making snuff and child porn.

Foggygirl says

I loved this SERRAated Edge series and continue to re-read the books in the series.

Drew says

This book is pure unadulterated escapist fantasy. It may not be Pulitzer Prize material, but Lackey's detailed descriptions take you to a different place. The human mage was a pretty cool character with a heart of gold. If you like fantasy especially urban fantasy, you'll love this one.

Kathy Davie says

First in the SERRAated Edge urban fantasy series revolving around elves, magic, and racing cars. The focus is on Tannim.

My Take

It's an enjoyable story — using the sportscar racing as the story's setting is a unique twist — and must be some of Lackey's early writing as it is rather juvenile and could use some work. That said, it is clever with a clever substitution, replacing the iron in cars with fiberglass and other nonferrous materials to make it easier for elves to be around all that Cold Iron. I love the ease of using an elvensteed to test out prototypes in a wind tunnel too!

I like how "Tannim" describes magic as a discipline: "a way of describing an inborn talent that's been trained. It has rules, and it obeys the laws of physics. It uses the energy produced by all living things; it also uses the energy of magnetic fields, of sunlight, and a lot of other sources. It's a tool, a way of manipulating energies;...".

Things are only impossible because they haven't been done yet.

A nice bit on how SERRA was formed. Lackey/Dixon almost make it believable that humans were using magic before the elves arrived on scene.

Tannim has a very different approach to teen hookers. Expensive, but a good way to begin to earn their trust. One he'll use to help Tania who has run from a different, but still crippling kind of abuse. I'll say it again, some people should not have children. The Catholic Church is so big on counseling before you get married; I

wish they (and others) had a similar policy on counseling parents. Although, considering the Church's reputation for what they do with children, maybe that's a good thing.

Who knew elves would need money? I much prefer the Seleighe Court's reasons and methods to that of their rivals.

It is funny how Aurilia is the smart one but also the lowest in status; watching her manipulate her partners is interesting. The evil triad is shocked to learn that Fairgrove's elves are training humans to battle other elves, revealing their secrets, and I can see why it would be seen as a bad thing. Even if I can't get behind their plans.

It's a crunch of desires: the triad wants to take out Keighvin and doesn't care who they hurt to destroy him. It's only by luck, good planning, and good living that some of them escape. Although, there certainly were a number of incidents that could have been avoided if the Seleighe had been thinking. It's that first battle that steps things up between them, for it brings Niall over to Aurilia's way of thinking. Not so good for our side.

We sure get a tonnage of useless description. I'm not usually one to reject a "painting" of the setting, but I do like to have a purpose behind it. Especially when the authors are so keen to give information that makes you wonder what event they're prepping you for. It's such a letdown when nothing results. Now, when it comes to Tannim's bed...that makes sense.

That Foxtrot Xray is too funny when he morphs from Oberon to an aircraft-carrier parking director!

The Story

Fairgrove Industries has done well in designing cars and creating innovative engines, but now they need a front man. Someone who can be convincing enough to outmaneuver Fairgrove's enemies.

It's Tannim's job to convince the retired Sam Kelly to come out of retirement and put his reputation on the line.

For the Unseleighe are determined to take down the Seleighe and wreck their foray into human life. Even as they crank up their own entry into the human world with their snuff films and pornography.

The Characters

Tannim is a human mage employed at Fairgrove Industries, a racing firm that's creating some innovative engines. He drives a much-loved, almost sentient dark red Mustang. **Chinthliss** is a dragon shifter and Tannim's mentor.

Sam Kelly was a starving and abused little boy. As an adult, today, Dr. Sam (he has an electrical engineering degree) has retired from his job as a metallurgist at Gulfstream. His father, **John**, was brokenhearted over the death of his wife, **Moira**. It's Keighvin who gives John a second chance to do right by his son. What happened to his great-uncle **Patrick** makes it easier for Sam to believe in the Fair Folk.

Fairgrove Industries

Keighvin Silverhair is Tannim's boss and an elf who was raised by humans. **Rosaleen Dhu** is his elvensteed. Tannim reckons a fourth of the SERRA members are either elves or human mages. **Donal** is one of three elven mechanics who can be around a lot of Cold Iron. **Conal** is Donal's twin with the scorched head and a fellow prankster. **Rob, a.k.a., Skippy, van Alman** is Donal's human shadow. **Dottie, Jim, Cuil**,

Kieru, and **Janie** are in that first battle as well. Tannim finds out that **Padraig**, **Sean**, and **Siobhan**'s interest in polo comes in handy.

Ross Canfield is getting a second chance to make things right. **Marty** is the guy his wife married. **The Old Man** is a good mentor, and **Foxtrot Xray** is another good friend, though Ross knows Foxtrot is a part of the spirit world but not a ghost. **Vanessa** is another ghost, a child hooker before she died.

Derek Ray Kestrel is a friend of Tannim's with a knack for magic and spends his time with cars and guitars.

Kevin Barry is a pub Tannim frequents. **Terra Nova** is a Celtic band that **Trish**, the pubowner, sings for sometimes. **Julie** is a waitress at the pub. **Marianne** is the barkeep.

Tania Jane Delaney is the underage hooker who catches Tannim's eye. **Jamie**, an addicted lad who gets his money by hooking, and his girlfriend, **Laura**, another hooker, are Tania's roommates and friends. **Meg** had been her only friend as a child. And only because they had the same time for tennis lessons. **Joe**, **Tonio**, and **Honi** are other roommates. Unwelcome ones.

The Unseleighe Court

Bane-Sidhe, a.k.a., banshee, get their energy from your fear and from your dying. **Aurilia nic Morrigan** is in partnership with **Vidal Dhu** and both are with the local Unseleighe Court; **Niall**, a Bane-Sidhe, is a third partner in **Adder's Fork Studios** (they don't bother keeping records; its actors are either volunteers or don't survive the experience), a pornographic film studio.

Both sides fear **King Oberon**.

George Beecher is a private investigator with **Bruning, Inc.** who finds out the truth behind the job too late. **Terry** is a cop who works in Vice; he is friends with George and with Tannim.

Sidhe, the **Kindly Ones**, the **Lords of Underhill**, the **Old People**, the **Fairies**, and the **Fair Folk** are all names for **elves**.

The Cover and Title

The cover is black and gold with a touch of red in Aurilia's brief red dress as she prepares to lash out with her fire magic at a young couple. It's a black racing car behind her with a city skyline behind that. The title combines font styles to look as though "run" is on the run with the wind whistling through it, making ripples in the letters. The whole title and the data on the series information both look like decals from a racing car: the title is black against a golden brown background while the series info is golden brown against a black background and both are outlined in red.

I think the title is about Tannim, as he is *Born to Run* with that Mustang of his!

Mercurybard says

My favorite of these books, and my introduction to the genre of urban fantasy. The first 3 books of this series were Lackey trying to beat the reader over the head with Serious Social Problems. Here, it's teenage

runaways.

I love Tannim with his cool car and his odd friends and The Bed. He's as bad at taking care of himself as Toby Daye is, but his drink of choice is Gatorade, not coffee. I love that when Fairgrove is going to be attacked, his friends hide it from him and send him home to rest because his aim is awful when he's tired.

Sam Kelly, the 2nd main character, is a spry, retired engineer with the Sight. He's cut from the same cloth as my dad and granddad, and based on the pages I have dog-eared, teen!Merc thought so too.

The book, which I'm sure was hip when it was published, seems dated with its references to Bugle Boy jeans, etc. And mullets. So many mullets.

Tracy Poff says

This review also appears on my blog.

Born to Run is urban fantasy. The premise is that elves and banshees and various creatures and circumstances of the Irish and Scottish mythology are real. The good elves are relatively well-disposed toward humans, and will generally help people, and the bad ones hate humans and will try to do them harm. The modernization of this basic story is that the good elves, led by Keighvin Silverhair, are building racecars in order to get money to help children, since in the modern world magically-created gold isn't so useful, while the bad elves (and other creatures of the Unseleighe Court) are running a business creating kiddie porn and snuff films, enjoying both the monetary profit and the negative emotions.

The story plays out in the lives of the elves of Elfhame Fairgrove, the human mage Tannim, the retired metallurgist Sam Kelly, and the teenage runaway and prostitute Tania.

I like this modernization of the mythology. It serves as a great basis for the story, and it's an interesting enough setting to hold the reader's attention.

Unfortunately, the writing wasn't so good. It was very heavy-handed. I'd even call it amateurish, in many ways. The foreshadowing is obvious enough that they might as well have just said "check back in a hundred pages when this plot thread ties into the others".

(view spoiler)

Besides the plot-related issues, the book feels very like reading fanfiction--regular references to popular culture and scifi/fantasy literature. As for the former, being published in 1992, it's very firmly set in a late-eighties/early-nineties cultural milieu, which is probably a little more jarring now than it was twenty years ago. As for the latter, the only other book I can think of that made quite so many scifi references was *Inferno* by Niven and Pournelle, but it had a pretty good reason for it. *Born to Run* also ignores the Law of Conservation of Detail at odd moments, devoting, for example, two large paragraphs to describing Tannim's bed. Those kinds of things can add character to a work, when done well, but they just felt out of place here.

The heavy-handedness I mentioned comes through not just in the foreshadowing, but in the moralizing the

book engages in. The most substantial theme of the book is that there are children in very bad circumstances, forced to live as no child should, and that this is a real problem. True and important. But they try too hard, I think, to convince us. A relevant quotation:

Sam nodded, but he had reservations. Not that he hadn't heard about all the supposed abused kids, on everything from Oprah to prime-time TV dramas, but he wasn't sure he believed the stories. Kids made things up, when they thought they were in for deserved punishment. Hell, one of the young guys at work had shown up with a story about his kid getting into something he was told to leave alone in a store, breaking it, then launching into screams of "don't beat me, Mommy!" when the mother descended like a fury. Embarrassed the blazes out of her, especially since the worst she'd ever delivered in the kid's life was a couple of smacks on the bottom. Turned out the brat had seen a dramatized crime-recreation show the night before, with an abused-kid episode. Sam was beginning to think that a lot of those "beaten kids" had seen similar shows, then had been coached by attorneys, "child advocates," or the "non-abusing spouse." Wasn't that how the Salem witch-trials had happened, anyway? A bunch of kids getting back at the adults they didn't like?

Sam, being one of the good guys, comes around pretty quickly (he decides that elves are probably pretty hard to trick). I recognize that the authors are intentionally trying to head off the kinds of arguments people make in the real world, by having them countered in the story, but it still feels clumsy. And it's far from the only time in the novel when there's a scene that is almost certainly only present to counter some misconception that the readers may have.

I've said a lot of bad things about this book, but that doesn't mean I didn't like it. I'll probably read the others in the series, some time, and I'd even recommend the book--if you think it sounds interesting, you'll probably not be disappointed if you read it. Just don't expect a masterpiece. The plot is engaging enough, and it's not hard to care about what happens to the characters, particularly in Tania's segments.

I enjoyed Lackey's Valdemar series much more, but this book is a pretty solid 3/5, in my opinion. It used to be in the Baen Free Library, but it doesn't seem to be, anymore, so if you'd like to read it, you'll have to pick up a copy elsewhere.

Mikaela says

What I liked about it:

This is the first book in the Serrated Edge series, and it is a bit dated now. But when I read it, all those things turned into quaint details. This is a surprisingly complex book, and a book I urge everyone to read. Yes, I know it is an urban fantasy. The focus of the conflict is the animosity between Keighvin Silverhair and Vidal Dhu. If I explained how much it affected the book, I would spoil the plot. Fairgrove, and Silverhair, are genuine do-gooders. But since the world is much more technical, they cannot conjure gold. No, they need to earn money. And that's where this book starts. The plot moves on rapidly, and every decision, both good and bad, makes sense from the characters point of view. What makes this book so important is Tania, and her story. Tania is a runaway teenager. This is as much about her as it is about Fairgrove and Vidal Dhu. The characters had their flaws, both good and bad. Sometimes I wanted to scream at them, since they could be so stubborn.

So, that's what I liked but what I didn't like:

It might be because I haven't read her books in awhile, but I didn't like that there is always a runaway in her

books. Or at least it feels like that to me. But, on the other hand it is the strong social theme that makes her urban fantasy novel stand out. So, I guess it is something I have to swallow.

I am not sure if it is something I didn't like, but I was struck by the fact that it is unusual to have the classic Sidhe/ Unseeliege rivalry as the main source of conflict. That could be because I haven't read the right books.

Summary:

A bit dated, but still a good read.

Jen3n says

Oh, man. I forgot about these books. I was looking through Teej's book list, thinking that I should read all the book's that he had listed that I had never read (and immediately giving up; Teej, my love; where ever you are now: know that I love you and would pay you any service or sign of respect in my power... except read those Xanth novels. Ye gods... what horrible taste in books you had in some respects, Boy. Heh.) and I came across the SERRAted Edge novels.

They're marvelously awful. Wonderful Fun. Fast. Tacky as all hell. Very, very '80's in concept and execution, even though they were published in 1990 an '91 or thereabouts. The gist is that there are these elves, right? And they live in modern cities in modern times and they race cars for a living. But because elves get burned if they touch any sort of iron, the race cars aren't really cars, they're horses. Elven steeds gone all shape-shifty. Adorable. I could just cuddle them.

Because they were written by Mercedes Lackey, who has a firm grip on her genre, the series (an this first book especially) are quite readable and only sometimes cause one to roll one's eyes. Most of the giggling elicited from readers by the text are caused more from a giddy sense of delight in the brain-dead yahoo-fare and less from any snarky tendencies one might have. It's very easy to suspend one's sense of good taste and just enjoy these little treats for what they are.

Recommended, if you're in to this sort of thing.

Judith says

Nice little snack. Love the characters and want to read more. It is odd that I can't find the second book as ebook, only the first and the ninth book of this series.

Ryan says

I absolutely loved the high concept of this one - that the Fair Folk are still alive in our time, and they have latched on to modern elements of our culture, with the light elves wanting to just hang out, listen to rock and roll and modify racing cars, and the dark elves being drawn to the tools of modern organized criminal rings.

When we get into the plot of the novel, it falls off a bit, going into after-school special territory, but it's told with enough *joie de vivre* that it stays entertaining throughout.
