



War of Shadows

Gail Z. Martin

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The newest novel in Gail Z. Martin's breathtaking Ascendant Kingdoms saga -- a tale of unpredictable magic, battling warlords, and the lust for vengeance.

The lines are drawn. The war has begun.

Blaine "Mick" McFadden has scored a victory and restored the magic, but new threats rise from the wreckage of the kingdom of Donderath. While the magic remains brittle and undependable, warlords both mortal and undead vie for power, fighting for control of the ruined Continent. McFadden and his unlikely band of convict heroes must choose their allies wisely as renegade talishte take long-awaited vengeance and powerful mages seek to control Donderath's next king. Blaine McFadden must protect those loyal to him against the coming storm, and find a way to bind magic to the will of mortals before it destroys him, because time is running out...

War of Shadows Details

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Author : Gail Z. Martin

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From Reader Review War of Shadows for online ebook

Sasha says

It took me a while to get into this one as it has been about a year since I read the last one. There are a lot of characters to keep track of which doesn't help. Otherwise it was pretty good. This does feel like a long book - there are times when it could be better paced. but still I want to see how this continues.

Aron Leonard says

I can't get enough of this book, like all her other books, it had me gripped from the first page. great characters and vivid descriptions. would recommend to everyone to read this book.

Christopher says

Two stars lost. Found the ending, after all the build up of the contesting Warlords armies to our protagonists, fat too rushed and shallowly dealt with.

Melissa says

Really enjoying this series but I think I enjoy the Penhollow, Connor, and Wraith Lord characters more than Blaine.

Stacy says

Now that Blaine is the sole anchor for the magic, he is dying. Amidst numerous battles for the land, the race to find thirteen new Lords of the Blood to anchor the magic is a race against death for Blaine. We realize Quintrel is being controlled by a divi, Reese is imprisoned by the talishte Council of Elders, and Blaine's brother, Carr, is being controlled by the madness which seemed to control their father, enhanced by the madness that came with the un-anchored magic. Blaine joins forces with other warlords, and in the midst of everything, is able to marry Kestel. We are better able to see the character of the Wraith Lord, and we learn more about Carensa, Blaine's former betrothed. Most of the book focused on battles being fought. In the end, the magic is restored, though no one is sure quite how it will work, Reese's maker (Thrane/Hemlock) goes to Pollard to try and possibly free Reese/take control, and he is successful in disbanding the Council of Elders. There were a few times I think the wording could have been better, and some unnecessary explanations on magical items, or why people were doing what they were doing. I'm excited for the rest of the series!

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews

In *Ice Forged*, Gail Z. Martin introduced a reader to Blaine McFadden; a noble youth banished to an icy prison at the edge of civilization for killing his abusive father. Not content with this twisted beginning, Martin then rained down a magical apocalypse upon the world of the Ascendant Kingdoms, destroyed magic, and sent a hardened Blaine back to his homeland on a crusade to try to save that very magic. A journey that captivated in its blending of fantasy and post-apocalyptic themes.

In book two, *Reign of Fire*, the story picked up with Blaine and his friends (mortal and vampiric) frantically seeking to survive in this world-gone-mad and uncover a way to re-anchor magic. For since the apocalypse, magic itself is wild, untamed, and beyond human use; its only remaining manifestations in the world the sorcerous storms that ravage the land and the hellish creatures it sometimes spawn to prey on humanities survivors. Naturally, though, there are people who struggle to keep the magic untamed, seeing in the chaos a means for themselves and their kind (vampires!) to assume their rightful place as homo superior. The quest and clashes that ensue see Blaine and his companions encounter ancient mysteries, nihilistic vampires and their mortal minions in a world frantically clinging to civilization.

Now, Martin has returned to the saga of Blaine McFadden in *War of Shadows*. While magic might have been re-anchored in the world, it is highly unstable and terribly dangerous to use, and Blaine's simple quest has now evolved into something more: A campaign to unite, or conquer, the warlords who are fighting over the carcass of the Ascendant Kingdoms!

For me, the single greatest achievement of Gail Z. Martin in *Shadows* was finding the right balance between the different genres she has been attempting to juggle throughout this series. With the large role vampires have played in the *Ascendant Kingdoms* series so far, these urban fantasy darlings have sometimes overshadowed the rest of the story (for me anyway), but in this installment, Martin found the perfect proportions of traditional fantasy, medieval urban fantasy, and post-apocalyptic, mixing them together into a near perfect recipe for pure entertainment.

Added to this, Blaine has been gifted in *Shadows* with several compelling enemies. Human and non-human beings whose motives, struggles, machinations, and rationales are all laid out clearly for readers, so that these characters become real people who grown beyond the “villain” archetype into true competitors for Blaine.

Not only that, but several old (and a few new) secondary characters come into their own here. People whose fresh voices and personality shine through, not only spotlighting themselves but also other portions of the ongoing saga from other than Blaine's viewpoint. Especially compelling is one character dealing with his growing vampiric traits (You'll understand once you read the novels.) and another attempting to brave an untenable situation with a madman, whom she once viewed as her mentor. Both of these “side” plots real highlights of the story.

Obviously, nothing is perfect, and *War of Shadows* isn't the exception. While it was highly entertaining and filled with more than a few great scenes, there were still times where the narrative slowed to a crawl. It wasn't as if these sections were filler material or massive info dumps, because they were not. Rather, it felt as if Gail Z. Martin added a few too many unimportant details or allowed a conversations to become a bit too repetitive before it ended. None of this was horribly noticeable, but it did cause me to skim more than a few

pages here or there throughout the book.

All in all though, I have no major complaints with *War of Shadows* or where Martin is taking the *Ascendant Kingdoms* series. Sure, the vampires get to me sometimes. (There are just so damn many of them it seems.) But if this novel is any precursors to what is to follow, I can put up with the blood suckers, and I would encourage you to as well, because, if you are a lover of genre blending fantasy, this series will not disappoint.

I received this book from Orbit and Netgalley in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank both of them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

Jacob says

The best book of the series yet! The last half of this volume was the most engaging part of an engaging series. Intense battle action and epic plot lines racing to their conclusions! Very excited to start the final volume after this and see where it all goes!

Hilary says

[You never need to suspect Blaine or his friends, but all their enemies - or those allied with them - seem ready to switch angles without difficulty. (hide spoiler)]

Scott says

This is one of the netter books on the series imo. Many threads are tied up.

My biggest complaint is that it seems to me the chapters jump right into another scenario. I think the one thing that is missing here is a little more back story into some of the characters. That is what I have struggled with the most. More backstory on the warlords that have come into play would have made the story a little richer and why some warlords sided with Blaine and some were against him.

The Vigus angle was interesting, but the divi is not really explained until the end of the story. I hope that is not a spoiler, but like I said. I think it would have added more to the story and made it a richer more engrossing tale.

At least a couple of the characters bite the dust and their deaths are used in a very good way to move the story along and provide closure to the certain parts of the story arc.

The ending was nothing like I expected. An obscure reference earlier in the story comes into play at the end and it seems like we are moving on. The epilogue is very interesting and seems to be moving the arc along in a way that I thought it might as it neared it's conclusion.

I like the talishte, I like the part they play. And I like the new 13 lords of the blood. But I want a little more back story to enrich the overall characters.

Meril says

Martin's writing is competent but this book is at the stage a lot of epic fantasies get to where the cast expands and we spend less time with the characters we got interested in back in Book 1, as well as the march of the plot overriding any emphasis on character or setting. Also, Martin has this thing for vampires. I get the feeling the vamp drama may start getting more time than the human drama in the next book. (Although I do have to say that there is one chapter where Martin does very well in conveying terror in her characters, as well as some excellent descriptions of body horror.)

(received via Goodreads First Reads)

Mitchell says

I've come a long way on this series. When I read the first book, I wasn't all that impressed. Primarily, I thought the vampires were sort of thrown in as an aside. I think I went in expecting one thing and was disappointed that it turned out to be slightly different. However, I did pick up the second book and, once I accepted the vampires as an integral part of the world, I really enjoyed it and got into it. So it was with pleasure that I picked up War of Shadows.

Once again, the story focuses on Blaine (or Mick) as he tries to bring some semblance of order back to his country that was shattered by war and a magical apocalypse that left a society dependent on magic bereft of it. In the previous book, Blaine, as the last surviving "Lord of the Blood" managed to tame the magic once again, making it possible for human magic users to manipulate it. In this book, however, we learn that since he was the only human involved in the ceremony, the strain of the magic is taking a toll on Blaine and is unpredictable and dangerous. Plus, the country is still be carved up by various warlords, some of whom have personal vendettas against Blaine, and all of which are trying to secure as much of the new magical power they can.

I enjoyed this book and was happy to continue the adventures of the group of exile convicts who are now trying to piece something of the country that sentenced them back together. This book had a lot of major battles, politics, and magic as alliances are made or forced and each group tries to expand or defend their territories. The over arching theme though remains focused on the magic: how to make it more predictable again and how to keep it from draining Blaine. Martin keeps you guessing as things that are hinted at early on in the book, that you'd expect to happen in Act 3, are passed over or pushed to the next book (series?). I am glad I kept going with this series and look forward to what's coming next.

Keith says

Still a little formulaic, but it's nice that the dialogue isn't littered with the same phases. I enjoyed the pace at the end and some of the plot resolutions while still keeping the underlying tension active. I'm looking forward to starting the 4th book now.

Ryan Mueller says

Like everything else I've read of Martin's, this one falls into the good-but-not-great category. Her books are enjoyable reads for me. All the ingredients are there. Action. Likeable characters. Interesting worlds. But I always feel like there's a piece missing that keeps me from loving her books.

Rating: 7.5/10

Kate Johnson says

Pointless entry into this series, and the authors writing (which is amateur at BEST) is definitely not improving. Certain phrases are beaten to death (ever heard of a thesaurus?), the dialogue is almost 100% unnecessary to progressing the plot. It's almost like they edited out everything that makes a book fast paced and engrossing and kept all of the extemporaneous exposition that bogs it down. Which is a shame because the basic story of the ascendant kingdoms saga is good. But never before have I read battle scenes less exciting or witnessed character deaths that inspired less emotion. I will not be conditioning this series because I just can't deal with the horrible writing (or maybe I should blame the editing?) anymore. I'm sorry I wasted the time reading this book as well as the previous book, although book one, Ice Forged, was good.

Meredith Kaupp says

I am having a very hard time with this one. Just when I get interested, the chapter is over and we switch to a new set of characters. By the time we come back to the first set, they are doing something completely different. I just want to stop at the end of every chapter.

Douglas Meeks says

I have to admit that when I got this book and saw it was about 640 pages, I was sure it was padded and I would be doing a lot of scanning of chapters. Too bad that did not work out because it took me 4 days to get through it and put my review backlog even further behind because I did NOT want to miss anything.

Each of the books in this series has been exceptional, the first book dragged a bit for me but it has been full steam ahead since then. This book was no exception and as with most epic fantasy it maintains a level of suspense and stress for the reader because you are never quite sure if the author is going to kill off one of the characters you love.

The plots in this book are spaced out to get you deeply involved in one story then switch to another and so forth making a rotation of the several plots that are occurring concurrently in the story. Some you are sure are going to result in horrible outcomes for one or more of our heroic cast of characters and keeps you on the edge of your seat.

The fact that Gail Martin was able to write a book of 640 pages and NOT bore me and still make me wish the book had not ended is worth 5 Stars in itself. The fact she does this without resorting to cliffhanger endings makes her one of my literary heroes. Each book seems to wrap up enough of the story that you do not feel cheated and still can't wait to read the next one.

Bottom Line: An exceptional book in an exceptional series, I hope this does not turn into a Wheel of Time never-ending saga but finishes up with the next book since I feel there are only so many stories to tell before it becomes yet another epic fantasy people are tired of reading BUT that has yet to happen and with any luck it never will.

Christy says

I'm sleepy. I've kept myself awake to finish up this book. (Tim Gerard Renolds narrator. <3)

My conclusions are for the whole series. And I'm inedaquent.

Female author. Epic/high fantasy setting.

Vampires. (This would usually turn me off.) They're not explained. You get your info from the storyline. Brava. /bow. The vampire part isn't the usual in current writing, books, etc. They were integral but not annoying. They are an acknowledged reality in this world. She shows it.

I think all the POV's are from male characters. She does it justice. The women are strong, but we know this, gather it from observations, actions. Meh, I can't express it.

It was a good combination of action and thought. The writing was well done. I never found myself going "huh, what?!".

I've got a lot more thoughts and insights, but I'm beat.

Conclusion: I really enjoyed this series. The second book dragged for me, but that might have just been me. I've had an unrelenting sinus/ear infection plus bronchitis. And seriously keep in mind that I read this via audiobook. Tim Gerard Reynolds'narration really made the book resonate with me.

So, I know I said it before, but...Brava, lady. Very well done.

(And I know I just massacred a bunch of spelling, punctuation, etc. I haven't reread what I wrote. I'm not a reviewer. I'm just well-read and educated and cute and sleepy. Did I mention sleepy?)

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

Susan Baratta says

Love the series but the war and brutality and killing is overwhelming.

The Jokerster says

plodding storyline

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

War of Shadows by Gail Z Martin- The War of Shadows, the next book in The Ascendant Kingdom series, is a book I have been waiting for. It was great to see Blaine “Mick” McFadden along with all of his friends from previous books. This picks up when book 2 left off. Blaine has bound the magic but there are problems. The magic needs more than one person to hold it steady. There are others who want control of both the magic and the kingdom. This is the story of both Blaine and those who are his friends and those who are his enemies. Look for tension, danger, war and more of the magic that is part of The Ascendant Kingdom. Like the previous two books several problems are solved but there are more problems for Blaine and friends to face. A good addition to the series. I would have liked more time with Blaine and his original group but the time spent with other characters was interesting.
