



Clarion Review ★★★★★

GENERAL FICTION

Epiphany

Paul Harrington

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"The old world was ripe with raw power. Energy and magic, unbridled, flowed through everyday events and objects, fuels for the tales so easily dismissed as mere legend from the comfort of safe, predictable contemporary lives," Paul Harrington writes. Magic, power, and the gods had ruled the world, but now times were changing. In *Epiphany*, Harrington spins a tale of magic, intrigue, and battle around the biblical outline of the Magi's visit to the baby Jesus.

The three Magi, Melchior from Arabia, Balthazar from the Far East, and Gaspar from Ethiopia, are called separately. Each sees the star and hears the song of enchantment, the call to come and follow where it leads. The star brings the Magi together in the desert where they face a supernatural sandstorm and the heat threatens dehydration. Rescued by the Bedouins of Petra, they help to defend the city from Roman legions. But they are taken captive and brought to Jerusalem, where King Herod seeks to destroy the newborn king of the Jews and secure his own position. The Magi escape Herod, find the baby, and worship him, but Roman troops sent by Herod are not far behind.

At times the language sparkles with imagery, as when Melchior receives the call: "It first filled his ears as a roar, like that of a lion, and it made him sit bolt upright in the bed as a chill waved across his flesh. The sound then transformed seamlessly into a kind of celestial music. It was a tinkling, plinking, sparkling song that no man or instrument could ever mimic."

Information about the Magi is sparse, and Harrington seeks to fill this gap with an imaginative and thrilling story. His tale hangs together well and follows the main outline, if not all the details, of the Bible's account. There is obvious fictional invention, as when the Magi travel at supernatural speed to their appointed meeting in the desert, or when the star gives them the gift of tongues to speak and understand other languages—not to mention the presence of magic.

Though *Epiphany* is generally well written, the action drags at times, and readers may wish it were a hundred pages shorter. While some description of battle is necessary to the plot, the blow-by-blow descriptions become tedious. This novel will not become an instant classic, but is worth the time for readers who enjoy fantasy.

(February 26, 2010)

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