

Sunrise: Pact Arcanum: Book Two

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According to author Arshad Ahsanuddin, his *Pact Arcanum* series is written in a nonlinear form. The events in *Sunrise*, the second book in the series, take place before the events in *Sunset*, the first book in the series. This may be confusing to some readers, but it doesn't diminish the entertainment value of the books or the force of the series' narrative.

Set in the far future, *Sunrise* is about Nightwalkers (vampires) and Sentinels (superhero magic users), both supernatural beings that exist side by side with humanity and have been at war with each other for thousands of years. The Nightwalkers want to enslave all humanity, and the Sentinels have elected themselves as humanity's protectors. The two species have entered a kind of stalemate until three musicians—Ana, Rory, and Takeshi—discover that they have been transformed into supernatural beings mightier than the average Sentinel or Nightwalker. They become the “Gifts of the Winds” and are assigned individual titles: The Wind of Earth, The Wind of Air, and The Wind of Fire. With the advent of their new powers, the three begin their training to fight and kill Nightwalkers. During a skirmish with a very old and powerful vampire, Rory is captured and turned into a vampire. Still possessing his soul, Rory makes a pact with a higher power to resurrect himself and his friends. Rory is infused with the power of the Redeemer, which makes him able to convert Nightwalkers into Daywalkers, a new race of vampires. The author writes: “Rory was driven to his knees by the power and triumph packed into that single word [yes]. The silent music flowed through him, making his soul vibrate in harmony to notes he could almost hear, and immediately forgot.”

There are some similarities between Ahsanuddin's characters and Anne Rice's characters in *The Vampire Chronicles* and *The Mayfair Witches* series. The works of both authors have an underlined eroticism. *The Vampire Chronicles* contain some homoerotic undertones and *The Mayfair Witches* series is mostly heterosexually explicit. The homoeroticism in *Sunrise* is overt, graphic, and romantic. For example, Ahsanuddin describes an intimate scene between a main character Nick and his lover Lorcan: “He looked at Nick gravely, keeping his emotions hidden, then he stepped forward and put his hands up to cradle Nick's head. He leaned in to kiss him deeply...Nick felt his thirst rise at the sexual stimulation.”

Sunrise contains some misplaced modifiers, a couple of awkward sentences, and inappropriate verb tense changes. However, the characters and story line are so interesting and exciting that the errors are barely noticeable. What is unforgettable about *Sunrise* is how artistically the author, a hematopathologist, transcends genres to create a seamless marriage between horror, science fiction, fantasy, and gay literature.

LEE GOODEN (May 10, 2011)

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