

The Ansgar Treasury: A Windflower Saga Collection

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In this gentle fantasy world, faith, hope, and love build a lasting legacy.

The Ansgar Treasury by Aleksandra Layland is an omnibus edition consisting of part one of the Ansgar Trilogy and three novellas located in the same world.

The stories stem from the life and legacy of Ansgar, the youngest son in a fledgling royal family whose recent dynastic war has resulted in a nascent unified kingdom struggling to define itself. Uniquely influenced by the Baha'i religion and focused on family and the nature of good governance, *The Ansgar Treasury* explores a richly evoked world through several generations of this ruling family as they grapple with life, love, and faith.

The son of King Bogumil, Ansgar is the youngest of five siblings and the only one sent to school instead of to his father's war of unification. At the end of his schooling, he's prepared to return to a now peaceful, united Kimbria, but a terrible storm blows him off course.

Ansgar barely survives, and his recovery results in a religious epiphany and the rediscovery of the Kimbrii, native peoples thought extinct by the Aspatrian colonial power Ansgar represents. His family thinks him lost, and the crown moves on as both parents die and his brother assumes the throne.

But as Ansgar heals, he's faced with the marginalization of the Kimbrii and the suffering his government has wreaked, even as he falls in love with their culture and the future high chief herself. Thus altered, Ansgar prepares to return and change royal life forever. So begins a family saga that will define a nation.

The quiet, measured work of establishing good governance and finding mates dominates this omnibus, a fantasy with strong romantic elements. What happens inside the royal family affects the nation, and the biggest thrill comes from watching two royal lines fight conflicts of cool politeness as they go about this work.

Perhaps the greatest threat in this novel is latent racism between the Kimbrii and Aspatrian peoples. Interestingly, whiteness is what's going extinct in a world where the already small Kimbrii population integrates into Aspatrian society through intermarriage. Across generations, lovers from these different worlds unite kingdoms, reshape cultures, and establish a dynasty.

A drawback of this emphasis on dynastic alliances and family legacy is that explanations of extended genealogy come to dominate the storytelling. Kimbria is a well-constructed world that seems fully formed around the characters, but stories often emphasize explanations and details about the family at the expense of compelling narrative action.

Very light on dialogue, the writing relies on summary rather than scene. It's easy to get overwhelmed by the story's many genealogical details and lose sight of the plot. More than once, an epilogue sums up crisis actions begun but not concluded in the stories themselves. If the story arcs weren't so tantalizing, these lapses and omissions wouldn't be nearly as frustrating.

The Ansgar Treasury is rich in world-building and characterization, offering a deep dive into a gentle fantasy world where faith, hope, and love build a lasting legacy able to sustain a nation.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (August 8, 2017)

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