

The Child of Light: The Wayfarer's Journey

A. R. Pearson

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A. R. Pearson's character-focused fantasy novel continues the exhilarating story of a family's love amid expressions of dark magic.

A. R. Pearson's fantasy novel *The Child of Light* traces a years-long war between dark and light magic, with a focus on family and true love.

Eight years after the murder of his wife, King Jack debates the fates of his two young daughters, Aranelle and Annette, when their proclivity for magic grows apparent. A war has been raging for decades, and Jack—with Aiden, the commander of dark magic known as the Dark Knight—is at its heart. Prophecies, motivations, and revelations of long-kept secrets clash as Jack strives to protect his daughters, defend his kingdom, and defeat Aidan all at once.

A jump twelve years in the future occurs late in the book, with now-adult Aranelle and Annette as its pivotal characters. The change is jarring; it leaves some plot strands behind. From there, the story moves to a satisfying, cathartic conclusion for Jack and his daughters.

The mechanism of magic in this story is striking, especially as it is genetically inherited and because of the intimate ways that people access their inner powers. The women-led Theanic Order trains magic users once they've come into their powers; sexual encounters with stronger users can also make their magic more potent.

Spell-filled battles between Aiden and Jack's crew are exciting, while characters who tease each other offer reprieve after tense scenes. However, though it is possible within the story for characters to bring dead people back with magic, the methods and rules behind resurrection are not at all explained. The world outside of Jack's court is also underdescribed, even when locations beyond its borders are mentioned in passing.

References to previous events are made, but without enough context for new readers. The identities and backgrounds of most characters are assumed, rather than stated. Keeping track of the large cast—including Jack's royal court and extended family and Aidan's comrades and spies—is difficult, though a list of characters at the end of the book is helpful.

Transitions between character perspectives are seamless, and all characters narrate in distinctive ways. Annette and Jack's second wife's narrations highlight important aspects of the tale that Jack is unaware of, showing both sides of their relationships. Jack is in charge of most of the tale, though. His inner monologues convey his worry and anger. When faced with demanding circumstances, he thinks of his daughters' futures before his own, even when he's overcome by a desire for revenge. Annette's moral imperative to protect her family, paired with the envy she feels toward her sister and the love she feels for Aiden, informs her decisions; she is pulled between dark and light forces.

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AIMEE JODOIN (February 3, 2020)

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