Clarion Review

Fantasy

The Fire and the Light: Book One of the Souls of Aredyrah Series
Tracy A. Akers
Ruadora Publishing
978-0-9778875-2-1
Four Stars (out of Five)

With its distinctive setting and intriguing plot, *The Fire and the Light* is an engaging start to a fantasy series for teens.

Dayn is a teenager living in Kirador, a city in the northern part of the land of Aredyrah. With his fair hair and skin, he more closely resembles the mythical demons that haunt the mountains outside Kirador than he does his own family; and because of his looks, he has been tormented his whole life. Determined to learn more about where he came from, Dayn flees Kirador with his sister, Alicine. In the southern part of Aredyrah, the kingdom of Teria experiences a tremendous shock when its prince, Ruairi, is injured in a tragic fire. With his burned hands, Ruairi is physically flawed, or "marked," and is subsequently cast into the Jecta, or "impure" population. Stripped of his royal title and renamed Reiv, the former prince longs to be accepted again.

Superstition and lies have kept Kirador and Teria isolated from each other. When Dayn, Alicine, and Ruairi's lives intersect, they must accept the limitations of their long-held beliefs before they can overcome their prejudices and fulfill their interwoven destinies.

Tracy Akers employs the classic elements of fantasy that readers love. Her intricate portrayals of the various regions, with all their political and social tensions, make Aredyrah come alive and invite readers to become fully immersed in the setting. A dangerously powerful Priestess of Teria, a mysterious prophecy, and the promise of a coming battle between good and evil create suspense, tension, and a sense of adventure.

The pacing of the novel is particularly suited for a fast read. Short chapters and the race to rescue Dayn and Alicine from Terian guards make the book a page-turner. Although the characters have some unique attributes, like Reiv's sense of pride, Akers' descriptions of their circumstances give them depth rather than their thoughts or behaviors. Regardless, all of the

characters, including those with minor roles, are interesting.

Topics such as bullying, identity, and sexuality are topical and relevant for teens. The book's larger themes, such as social justice, religion, and prejudice allow for further exploration and conversation.

As the book comes to a close, readers suddenly confront a variety of unresolved plot lines, such as the revelation of a portion of the prophecy and glimpses into the Priestess' growing control over the Terian kingdom. With these teasers, Akers sets the stage for her subsequent novels and leaves the reader wanting more.

Alicia Sondhi