



The Fire and the Light

Tracy A. Akers

Ruadora Publishing (October 2006)

Softcover \$12.95 (336pp)

978-0-9778875-0-7

Adolescent cruelty is legendary and opens this first volume of the *Souls of Aredyrah* series. The world has split into two opposing halves the nations of Tearia and Kirador the light and the dark the blond and the dark-eyed. And each group is relentlessly determinedly prejudiced to hate whatever is different from their own.

Tracy A. Akers has begun a young adult saga with great promise and relevancy to events current in the world. Her story revolves around Dayn a Tearian stranded in a world of the wrong color. While he has always felt like an outsider he's gone even further astray by committing the unpardonable sin of talking to dark-eyed Falyn. Dayn's fair coloring has labeled him a demon among Kiradyans and Falyn's brother is resolved to drive off the intruder.

But the prejudice doesn't stop with coloring. On the other side of the mountains in Tearia the red-haired violet-eyed prince Ruairi is heedless of the oppression suffered by the Jecta—those who are marked in some way or somehow less than perfect—until he becomes one after his hands are burned and scarred. Driven from the palace and forced to live in the Jecta part of town—even stripped of his name which means *Red King* and renamed Reiv—he too despairs now that he wears the shoes of the undesirables.

The division between these two world begins to crumble when Dayn flees Kirador his sister Alicine in pursuit. They head into mountains supposedly haunted by demons and according to Kiradyn doctrine beyond which nothing lies since “the rest of the world was long ago destroyed burned into the sea during the Purge of Aredyrah.”

There is a world beyond however and the nation of Tearia. There they meet Reiv who had been fleeing his own joyless existence. Together they realize that the faiths and histories of both Kirador and Tearia are nothing but lies.

While the story has weak spots—the Tearian Riev acts out of character a number of times and all the young people periodically exhibit behavior that doesn't ring true with their emotions or the situations—the plot is compelling and the dilemmas offer great potential for growth not only for readers but for the author's storytelling abilities.

If the saga lives up to its potential it could teach young readers valuable lessons about the cruelty of prejudice and the consequences of the lust for power.

MARLENE SATTER (October 20, 2006)

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