ForeWord Reviews

SCIENCE FICTION

The Judging Eye: The Aspect-Emperor, Book One
R. Scott Bakker
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Sweeping in scope, populated by nations, this first book in a new series by author Bakker picks up twenty years after the events of his first trilogy, The Prince of Nothing. Readers of that series will find it easy to submerge themselves in the saga, though there's plenty here to draw in first-timers as well.

Anasûrimbor Kellhus, the Aspect-Emperor, has launched the Great Ordeal to prevent the resurrection of the No-God—or so his worship-ers believe. Kellhus himself is revered as a god, and the very force of his personality—aside from his uncanny powers—overwhelms everyone from his own wife, Esmenet, and his stepdaughter, Mimara, to Sorweel, son of the late king of Sakarpus. The one person to repudiate Kellhus is Drusus Achamian, a Wizard who has lost everything to Kellhus, including his beloved wife—Esmenet.

Achamian is determined to reveal Kellhus as a fraud, not a god. When Mimara, who has sorceress abilities, seeks out Achamian, determined to have him teach her, he refuses. But Mimara will not be denied; her own mother sold her into slavery years before and Mimara wants revenge. Achamian sees Esmenet every time he looks at Mimara, and for him the line between mother and daughter sometimes blurs.

There is a poetic poignancy in the pained relationships of these people. Mimara tells Achamian that her mother "used to tell me that…that she was your morning." "I no longer fear the night," Achamian tells Mimara: "…I no longer pray for the morn-ing."

Many other subplots surface during this complex tale: Sorweel's despair at his father's death, and his self-disgust at succumbing even a little to Kellhus' charisma and power; Psatma Nannaferi's determination to elevate the worship of Yatwer, her Goddess, as the White-Luck rises to challenge Kellhus; the uneasy relationship between Achamian and the Skin Eaters he has hired to take him to the Coffers—a journey he takes to find a way to defeat Kellhus.

The most compelling character is Mimara, who doesn't truly come into her own until the last quarter of the book. However, if future volumes live up to the promise of this one, she will be a powerful force. She has the Judging Eye of the title, which is an ability to see through and

beyond things, to see sorceries for what they are and recognize that which is hidden to ordinary people. (January[/i]

Marlene Satter