



The Sidhe: The Heart of All Worlds, Book One

Charlotte Ashe

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The book's dreamlike tone is a pleasant change from the grim and dark novels that characterize the modern fantasy genre.

In *The Sidhe*, author Charlotte Ashe portrays a world where the magical sidhe of the faerie world are enslaved by human nobility. Against this backdrop, a royal steward falls in love with a slave, unleashing a chain of events that rocks the foundations of human and sidhe worlds alike.

After winning a coveted position serving a prince, royal steward Brieden jeopardizes everything he worked for when he meets his lord's newest slave, Sehrys. Falling desperately in love with the sidhe, he concocts a plan to help Sehrys escape and return to his homeland. Having endured atrocities at the hands of the prince and his previous owners, Sehrys finds it difficult to trust the human, even though he accepts Brieden's aid. Both human and sidhe enemies pursue them on their journey to the faerie homeland, while scheming nobles take advantage of the distraction. But when Sehrys begins to reciprocate Brieden's feelings, he discovers true courage not in casting off the mental and physical bonds of slavery but in learning to follow his own heart.

Despite the urgency of fleeing from a violent prince, the pair's journey proceeds at a dreamlike pace. Their concerns about being pursued are often contradicted by how often they engage in sexual interludes. While the intimacy mirrors their growing emotional connection, the frequency and length of these graphic encounters sometimes veers into gratuitous territory and distracts from the overall plot.

During Brieden and Sehrys's journey, political strife tears apart the human royal court as foreign nobles work to oust the prince and his family from power. Aid offered to the fleeing pair by one of these nobles maintains a tenuous connection to the main storyline, but the brief glimpses into the surrounding political machinations prove underdeveloped. The promise of change also leaks into sidhe culture; much like the political shift in the human world, the sidhe unrest remains unresolved, providing fodder for future books.

There are few technical errors in this high-quality package, although the amateur cover illustration lacks visual appeal. Extended snippets of untranslated sidhe dialogue require utilizing the glossary, but the narrative often provides enough context to make cross-referencing unnecessary.

Although it's set against a backdrop of change and warring cultures, *The Sidhe* focuses on the healing and transformative powers of love as human and sidhe bridge the divide between their two races. More romantic fantasy than political fantasy, the extended sex scenes often bog down what would otherwise be a breathless escape from various potential captors.

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VERNIEDA VERGARA (June 8, 2015)

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