



Spellfire

Ed Greenwood

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The Fire That Burns

It can lay low a dragon or heal a wounded warrior.

It is the most sought-after magical power in all Faerun.

And it is in the reluctant hands of Shandril of Highmoon, a young, orphaned kitchen-lass.

Now she's on the run from half of the evil sorcerers in the land, not to mention their relentless minions. But with the help of a handsome young wizard, some rough-and-tumble Knights of Myth Drannor, and a certain old mage of Shadowdale, she just might manage to stay alive.

At least until tomorrow.

An all-new expanded version of Ed Greenwood's classic tale, including a new forward by the author.

One of Ed Greenwood's most popular novels, Spellfire is being rereleased in an all-new trade paperback edition. This version has been completely reedited and contains added text and material that bring new excitement to the story. This edition also features new cover art and is classified as the first title in the brand-new Forgotten Realms series Shandril's Saga.

Spellfire Details

Date : Published August 12th 1988 by TSR (first published July 1st 1987)

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Author : Ed Greenwood

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From Reader Review Spellfire for online ebook

Taddow says

I first read this book long ago in my youth and I had fond memories of enjoying it. Going through my book collection, I happened to stumble upon it and decided to relive the past nostalgia- boy was I wrong. This story was a chore to get through. I got the impression of it dragging from scene to scene and filled with a secession of coincidences and conveniences. In the end I was left feeling pretty disappointed at my shattered memory.

Luke Scull says

Shandril Shessair is an orphan girl who works as a kitchen hand in The Rising Moon inn in Deepingdale. Restless and wanting to see something of the world, she joins up with a passing group of adventurers and soon discovers that she possesses the rare and devastating ability known as spellfire. This immediately makes her a target for any number evil organizations keen to use her powers for their own nefarious ends. It is up to the likes of Elminster of Shadowdale and the Knights of Myth Drannor to ensure that no harm comes to Shandril. As her journey unfolds, she meets a young apprentice wizard named Narm and the two quickly fall in love.

The first novel written by Ed Greenwood, the esteemed creator of the Forgotten Realms setting, is a decidedly odd book. As far as entry points go, it's a surprisingly poor introduction to the famous setting, throwing characters, organizations and locations at the reader left, right and centre. That an extraordinarily rich, detailed world existed in the author's head is obvious to see: however, it feels like he was in a such a rush to introduce the reader to the vastness of his creation that fundamentals such as the pacing of the story rather went out of the window.

Ed Greenwood possesses an unusual writing style, embellishing his dialogue and even his prose with archaic affections that are occasionally whimsical but sometimes clunky and hard to follow. This makes the novel harder to get into than it really needs to be. I'll confess that upon reading it now, for the second time (my first was in the 90s!), there's a certain poetic quality to the book that I perhaps didn't appreciate the first time around. For every confusing passage of text, there's a beautiful line that lands clean.

Spellfire's story is very straightforward. Shandril is the Chosen One, a teenage girl who can wield destructive powers capable of shattering a dracolich. One gets the impression Mr. Greenwood wanted this book to be a love story and coming-of-age tale in addition to a miniature grand tour of the Forgotten Realms (or at least the Dalelands). Unfortunately, Shandril is extremely average and unremarkable in every way except for her spellfire. She's not particularly heroic nor compassionate. Her love interest, Narm, is equally dull. He is also responsible for one of the book's biggest flaws, which is his senseless decision to return to Myth Drannor after his master was brutally slain by devils for no good reason at all other than to have him meet Shandril again later.

In truth, a lot of the plotting doesn't make a great deal of sense. Shandril is a giant walking target for every bad guy in the Realms, yet she and Narm are constantly put into situations that place them and their protectors at huge risk. Everywhere Shandril goes, the bodies mount up. Elminster and others justify this as the moral approach by citing the freedom to allow Shandril to make her own choices and grow into her own

person - but that's a cold comfort for the hundreds of dead she leaves in her wake wherever she goes. Also, she is rarely (if ever) left alone and unguarded, even when enjoying some private time with Narm, rendering that stated intent rather hollow. In one scene, no less than two mage allies eavesdrop on their lovemaking.

There is a surprising amount of (implied) sex in Spellfire. Greenwood's stated view of the Realms is one of sexual tolerance and freedom, so it makes sense. That said, the propondarance of (much) older men with young girls raises eyebrows, as does Elminster's ability to make attractive females fall in love with him. Here we get the first hints of the problematic, invincible Mary Sue the Sage of Shadowdale would become in later novels. (I'd love to know how many DMs over the years have been asked the question, "But what is Elminster doing?" whenever there's a threat of any significance.)

To balance out the above criticism, let me say that taken in isolation, the Elminster presented in Spellfire is a highly likeable old greybeard who mitigates his vast power with a much-needed sense of restraint and humanism. In fact, outside of the two main characters in Shandril and Narm, the characters in this novel are an incredibly colourful collection of heroes and villains, hinting at endless stories that have happened and will happen. The effect this creates is to imbue a sense of mythic awe to proceedings - of a living, breathing, incredibly detailed world that begs to be explored.

There are some that will rage at this comparison, but Spellfire strikes me as the Forgotten Realms equivalent of Gardens of the Moon, the first book in the Malazan series by Steven Erikson. Both are intimidating and initially inaccessible; both make questionable story-telling decisions and throw everything plus the kitchen sink at the reader from the get-go. More importantly, however, both succeed in painting a compelling history and a world that begs to be persevered with despite these issues.

Spellfire is a sometimes confusing yet always entertaining novel that will reward those familiar with the setting - more so than newer readers. As the first novel written by the creator of, and set in the cradle of, the Forgotten Realms, it is essential reading for fans, with epic battle scenes and D&D lore aplenty. Just expect a bumpy ride along the way.

Note: this review is for the 2005 revision of the novel. The earlier edition was poorly edited, cutting out chunks of text Greenwood wanted to include, and thus is a substantially weaker novel. That said, editing issues remain in this edition, such as a dragon described as being "as long as seventy Rising Moons or more" - by my calculations, that's at least 2,000 feet!

Matheus Rios says

Although the writting style is a little flat sometimes, and that the excessive number of characters and different plots are very confusing, this a fun introduction to the Realms, and a must read for Dungeons and Dragons fans.

Aldo Ojeda says

I wanted to like the first book by the famous creator of the Forgotten Realms, but, alas, there's nothing to like here. The plot is plain and uninteresting, does nothing to keep you reading. The most annoying thing, though, are the unidimensional characters, most of them are there to fill the dungeon-crawl formula (my own RPG

campaigns have had more developed characters). And I really, really hate ~~Gandalf~~, err... Elminster. I bet he was a fun character when Greenwood played as him in his D&D games, but here is just the most cliché wizard ever.

If you are interested in the Forgotten Realms setting, skip this one and go directly to Salvatore's books.

Zac Petrich says

Corny, to say the very least. I'm an enormous fan of the Forgotten Realms setting and the sword and sorcery style books it entails but, this book is too Disney Channel for my liking.

To be brutally honest, I didn't finish it. Shandril's character is one dimensional. Also, this might sound weird but, there's too many exclamation points and too many words in italics. For example:

"Do **I** stand and gawk? If I did, what would the guests eat **then**?"

"Shandril snorted. Great chance, indeed, of **that** ever happening!"

This dialogue and writing leaves nothing to the imagination and nothing left to be desired. This is much more suited for a younger audience. I have more to say about this book but I've already wasted enough time talking about it.

Chloe says

I read this book in second grade and it is responsible for landing me with a lifelong love of the fantastic.

Ranting Dragon says

<http://www.rantingdragon.com/review-o...>

Spellfire by Ed Greenwood is one of the very first novels published in the Forgotten Realms fantasy setting, and the first by the creator. It set the stage for what would become dozens upon dozens of books in one of the largest shared-world fictions ever made.

An introduction to the Realms

Being the very first major setting novel to be published in the Realms, which was originally picked up as a game setting rather than a fiction setting, Spellfire seems hell-bent on introducing as many characters, places, and concepts as possible. This makes the book a little hectic in places, with very few pauses for breath. However, it also does the job it was intended to do: show as much of the setting as possible in a few hundred pages. Various interviews and statements from Ed Greenwood have suggested that the original book was even longer, and that if he'd included everything he'd wanted to, that book alone would have been better served as a trilogy.

This is an interesting case for how first books introducing new worlds ought to be. I think if you are

intending to share the fiction, as the creator, you owe it to your own artistic vision to claim as many pieces of proverbial turf as you can in your debut. With *Spellfire*, Greenwood sets out hard rules for how magic works, sets up multiple major heroes and villains, and establishes a significant number of rules in regard to religion and politics. He drops enough hints scattered around the world to enable him to come back to them at any time without any future authors doing anything that would make them impossible. I think though, that if you've created a large world you aren't intending to share with other authors, something like *Spellfire* would have seemed uncomfortably busy and fast-paced to the point of creating comprehensibility problems. It felt like it was trying very hard to grab and hold your attention as strongly as possible, which leads into my next point.

Definitely a world for gaming

As a lifelong player of *Dungeons and Dragons* (2nd edition AD&D through 4th edition) and many other tabletop roleplaying games, I was struck throughout this book by how much it felt like the narrative of a game of D&D. The pacing was extremely quick, and the action felt like prepared set-pieces. Even a lot of the dialogue during action and combat felt like what you'd hear around a gaming table. If you'll forgive some gaming jargon, I'm pretty sure we even saw several skill checks, saving throws, and critical hits. This isn't exactly a criticism of the book, but it causes it to feel less like a novel and more like a gaming module. This might have been the point given the situation at the time it was written, but it still serves as a caution if you aren't looking for blow-by-blow action and plenty of it.

Spellfire's use of this style to communicate the game elements set the stage for a lot of the early TSR publication in the Realms. Plenty of the early 90s authors in the *Forgotten Realms* started off designing game modules for TSR and D&D, and it shows in a lot of the fiction. It wasn't until later years (in and around the Wizards of the Coast buyout of TSR) that we started to see more traditionally styled fiction in the Realms, but I feel it never truly lost that gaming element that was built into it.

Therefore, a great deal of structure

For readers who like their fantasy worlds to still be logically structured, *Spellfire* and the *Forgotten Realms* are a setting for you. At times, you can see the dice rolling in the background, and the rules help avoid a lot of the really frustrating fantasy tropes. No wizard in the *Forgotten Realms* has ever been out of magic, but at the dire final moment finds the strength for one last attack to save the day. When these guys are out of spells, they look around for rocks to throw, and it's actually quite refreshing.

It's really nice to see a world where the authors can concentrate on actually telling the story they want with the characters they want, and not have to worry about whether something 'can be done' or not. The rules are already there, there are sourcebooks for it, and while that may sometimes seem constraining, I would imagine that it is also very liberating to be able to go in knowing that if you follow those rules, you're not going to accidentally mess up something important for all the other authors sharing the world.

Why should you read this book?

I believe Douglas Niles' *Darkwalker on Moonshae* was published a few months before *Spellfire*, but the *Moonshaes* were really not used much in the overall fiction (which is a pity as I do love Celt-inspired settings). *Spellfire* needs to be read for the same reason you need to read *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* by Weis and Hickman, or *The Color of Magic* by Terry Pratchett. There is always value in reading the first book of a long-running series. For that reason alone, every fantasy reader needs to pick up this book.

But beyond that, Ed is absolutely hilarious. I've had the pleasure of playing D&D with him on a few occasions, and he's actually toning it down for his books, which are still pretty wild for *Sword & Sorcery* fantasy. His dialogue is snappy, witty, and contains just enough jargon and vernacular to make you know

you're in another world, but in a way that allows tone and context to communicate the meaning exactly. (Stlarn it!) His pacing in this book might be a little break-neck compared to other authors, but it certainly keeps you engaged. He also has this strange knack for just sliding in lines here and there in first-person for the more minor characters; these brief lines give you enough of a snap-insight into their character to make you identify with them a little bit more. The Forgotten Realms is one of the most successful fiction universes ever created, and Spellfire will give you a very good idea why.

Brett says

My feelings for this book are a bit biased I'll admit...because this was the first fantasy book I ever read, and I've been reading the genre ever since...

So thanks Ed! :-)

I was a young teen (or close to it) when I read this book and I remember it being full of magic, wonder and even having some serious dramatic moments in it...at least for my age...

But even now I KNOW I enjoy reading books by Ed Greenwood. His writing style is interesting, his dialog for some of his key characters (certainly in some later books) is rich and believable, and his character 'Elminster' as featured in many of his books is undoubtedly one of the greatest fantasy characters (wizards) of all time.

I can't get enough of Elminster.

Victor says

The story is simple: Shandril has always longed for adventure, and when she is able to leave her predictable life behind, she does so. Everything is very ordinary until she discovers she possesses this powerful form of magic which she is not able to harness or completely control.

I feel that Greenwood has many elements to craft a fantastic story. This is the original Forgotten Realms novel and it contains a great amount of information about the world and some of its characters. However, Greenwood errs in his entire treatment of the story. Instead of a powerful lead character, we have an insecure character who is reminded of her insecurities by the constant shielding of her companions. Also, Greenwood find ways to introduce a love scene when perhaps it was out of place. Finally, the multitude of characters makes the reader be particularly lost, and these characters are so powerful, they are able to get the upper hand at all times.

Th result is "Spellfire". I felt at times that the author was patronizing me and that really bothered me. Also, because we have super characters, the opposition came about as completely useless. I felt that the majority of the times, the villains only were able to launch desperate attacks, without any strategy and their participation was circumstantial at best. Not only we have one main villain, we have many organizations trying to get a hold of Shandril's magic. I felt it became an auction to see which villain came up with the most outrageous plan. Because of this, I feel that there was no actual threat, and no substantial story to tell because the outcome would be decided.

The treatment of Shandril by the many characters also bothered me; they constantly shielded her, and protected her. This is very noble, specially fighting against the forces of evil, but in doing so she did not, in my opinion, developed as proper. Shandril just happens to become an object everyone is willing to protect, and because everyone is constantly on their guard, the rest of the ensemble lost wonderful opportunities to become likeable and to show us their stories. Shandril did not need to do anything because her companions would defend her.

It was until the end, when Shandril was finally on her own, that an actual story could have surfaced, albeit too late. It was at this time that I really enjoyed the action trsnaping in the pages and felt that the author was finally trying.

This is a book to the most devoted fans. I do recognize that many people really like this book. It has tinges of brilliance, but the magic power, as well as the story, were not sufficiently harness to create something concrete.

Dan Chapman says

A true story of herpes.

It was awesome. I could not ever put it down for to long. You will love this series of stories

Kiri says

This is the last read for this particular copy. It has been through years of worldwide travel, reading, and more than one flood. (I'm not going to elaborate on that tussle with the geese) So I shall bid a tearful farewell to Shandril, her friends, and my old battered and beloved copy as I take it to the recycle. Don't gasp if your reading this.. it is in no condition to ever be read again... believe me if I didn't recall the missing parts it wouldn't have been readable these last few times. =)

I've not read much else in this series - which I understand is very good - but obviously I have enjoyed this trip into the Forgotten Realms. I don't think I can write much about the story without spoiling it. So I will leave it at this, If you have a chance to pick this up and read it - do so. I don't think you will regret a moment spent on this adventure.

please note my affection for this novel stems from my early teen years. I don't apply the same stringent criteria to it as I do other items read as an adult. You have been warned

Roman Kurys says

I really wanted to like this book. The first book that started all the Forgotten Realms adventures and with a lot of promise to boot! Cover art made me salivate and then I started reading and the more book progressed the more angry it made me.

Characters: 2

Very unlikable characters made this book very boring to read for me. It was as if everyone in this book wants to protect Shandril. (A genius name, probably the best part about characters was their name). And I mean...everyone. From the first moment they lay their eyes on her they want to either kill her or protect her. What???

Such good potential to make great characters and it just did not work for me. Maybe Greenwood is banking on more development on the next books? I'm not sure, but in this one story drove the characters, not the other way around and it made for boring characters.

Plot: 2

So overall the plot here had great promise. It just didn't pan out for me in the end. First quarter of the book or so happens in the cave, where people die and get resurrected and healed by potions...this is NOT a forgotten realms video game. This is a Forgotten Realms BOOK!!! AARRGGHH! That drove me crazy!!!

All sorts of different villains, which I liked.

All these villains are basically incompetent to the core. Which I didn't like.

If a villain hurts someone...let's just heal them. All of them. All of the time. Cause we got priests. WHAT???

I mean, c'mon!!!

The whole story just felt like you could just have had Shandril and Elminster and just delete everyone else. I mean she's smashing dragons back to back...defeating the strongest villains with a moderate effort, given. Just silly. Very silly. I get the coming of age story, but this was just dumb.

Setting: 1

I love the Forgotten Realms setting idea. Execution is so poor here that the entire time I was reading this book, I literally imagine Ed Greenwood with a few buddies in a room playing a Dungeons and Dragons table top and recording what happens. Greenwood was the dungeon master in my head, his best friend played Elminster and his daughter was Shandril (not sure if he had a daughter, that's just what I saw in my head while reading). Then 3-4 other friends on the table's sides.

I was infuriated that the entire book, and I mean the entire book felt like a long D&D tabletop session. It did NOT feel like I'm reading a book.

Now. With that off my chest. I am going to read Part 2 because

1. My OCD won't let me not read it.
2. I NEED to see how this trilogy got as popular as it did. There has to be light at the end of a tunnel. Here HAS to be! Please let there be light at the end of the tunnel.

Roman "Ragnar"

Geoff says

Ah, the memories this brings back.

I still have a major soft spot for all these Forgotten Realms books.

Maira says

I recognize all the merits Ed Greenwood had by writing the very first saga for the Forgotten Realms. But the book has many, many problems. For starters, those who are not familiar with this world - like I wasn't - will feel like this is a very strange narrative. Because it talks about people and places like you already knew them, never explaining where they came from or who they actually were. It is confusing, specially because Greenwood inserts so many parallel stories.

Also, the characters themselves seem to be echoes from the characters of other famous sagas (a.k.a. The Lord of The Rings), except the part where you get to actually KNOW everyone. In this book, all the elves have the same personality/aura, and if he was talking about one or another it didn't make any difference. People often compare Elminster with Gandalf, but I say there can be no comparison: Gandalf is way better written.

The feeling I had from it overall was that Greenwood wanted to write a love story, and it's really badly told. Shandril is not a heroine. She's just a girl who happens to have a great power within. Her beloved Narm frequently reminded me of Pod, the fool (but brave) shield-barer of Tyrion Lannister. The love story (or stories, to be fair, because lots of them are cramed in it) is poor, dull and sometimes irritating.

It mixes passagens where nothing seems to happen with everything happenin at once, and jumping "from the frying pan into the fire". I mean, three dragons in a row? Isn't it too much? Yes, it is, way too much. And all the passages jus reminded me of how much Greenwood wanted to tell a great tale like the one cited above, but just couldn't get there.

Anyway, it's nice to read fantasy that I had never read before, and I will continue reading the saga, eventually. But I will also stick with what everyone here is saying: there are better stories about the Forgotten Realms to be read. Hopefully I'll get to them.

Ralph Pulner says

2 rounded to 3 because I am a Realms junkie. This is not an outsider novel. This is barely even an insiders novel. If you ignore this advice enter at your own peril. The problem is Ed Greenwood's Realms is so rich, detailed and full of history (He created this world at the tender age of 5. FR wasn't released until 30 some odd years later.) he wanted to share his vision and stories with everyone. Unfortunately he shared it all in one, frantic dump.

The Good

The side characters are amazing. Elminster, Snow, the whole oeuvre of the Knights of Myth Drannor. Faerun and Toril is a living, dangerous place full of likable characters. It was interesting to see the inner workings of Zhentil Keep.

The Bad

Pacing, pacing, pacing. This book should have been titled Company of the Bright Spear, with a sliv burn of

getting to know her group and Shandril coming into her powers at the end. I would have loved to fall in love with all the members only to see them crushed in the end. Instead they are dead in the first few chapters and 700 other things happen until the end.

The Ugly

Narm. Battle after battle after battle after....the end.
