



The Ring of Allaire

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Master magician Blais was dead, murdered by the evil ice-lord Nimir. Now there was only Tristan, an ill-trained apprentice, to carry on the quest to rescue Allaire, a princess held in enchanted sleep in Nimir's frozen halls. Though a thousand master mages had already failed in the quest, Tristan must succeed — or all of Calandra would be doomed by Nimir's greed.

First Tristan would have to find the wonder-horse Valadan, who had vanished long ago. Then he had to secure the aid of the one knight among many who was a true Heir to the Throne. Together, they must overcome the Guardian dragon of Nimir's realm.

After that — well, there was still the tenth ring to be found, since Allaire was powerless without it.

Nothing, of course, was ever that simple. There were complications . . .

The Ring of Allaire Details

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Author : Susan Dexter

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From Reader Review *The Ring of Allaire* for online ebook

R.J. says

I have not read this book in well over twenty years, but I remember loving it and re-reading it several times as a teen, and that's good enough for me.

Tracey says

Full review (yes, even longer) at my blog: <http://agoldoffish.wordpress.com/2011...>

The basic structure of the story – of Allaire, and of the trilogy as a whole – is almost formulaic. A young man (19, I believe), orphaned very young and raised by, apprenticed to a wizard, is set on a huge quest even though he is not the most ... ept of lads. He finds himself shoved into a destiny he never would have imagined, and for which would never assume himself capable. But, in the classic tradition, there's no one else to do it: he is it. The first quest turns into a series of quests, which lead to one great Quest, to in effect save the world, with a wildly assorted group of traveling companions.

That right there could describe a great many fantasy novels. But that's where these books and formula part company. Tristan, the apprentice, should be cookie cutter: he's the young proto-magician who is called upon to be a hero, who can't even pull off a simple spell without disaster. But Tristan ranks high among my favorite fictional characters. The majority of the three books use his point of view, and he's an excellent traveling companion. For all his faults – and he does have faults – he also ranks high among the fictional characters I would like to meet. He is selfless in several ways; he is embarrassed by his many failures and fumbles and accidents but doesn't let that keep him from making efforts, and it doesn't distance him from others. He tries, he fails, he grits his teeth and picks himself up and moves on. And, too, he's big-hearted; his loyalty, once given, is solid.

He and his master Blais live quietly apart from a village by the sea in the east of Calandra, and muddle along quite well, making their living with love philtres and minor weather witchings. There's much call for the latter, because Calandra - and beyond – has for centuries been more and more under the spell of Nímir. No one knows exactly who or what Nímir is, but he's evil, and powerful, and bent on – to inappropriately reference C.S. Lewis – making it always winter and never Christmas. Kind of like this past winter, only to the point where if spring is seen it's brief and feeble.

There is a prophecy that Nímir can be defeated by a team made up of a wizard, the true heir to the throne of Calandra (which seat has been vacant for a very long time), and Valadan, the war-horse of Esdragon, a stallion who is said to have been sired by the wind and is effectively immortal. He is magic. And he's gone. But Blais, as it turns out, has been researching the prophecies for most of his life, and must have come across something, because Nímir kills him one fine afternoon while his apprentice is out. Tristan comes home to find his master vanished, and only a message and a spell left behind, a spell which puts him on the path to find Valadan.

With him from the cottage go Thomas, a cat who scorns the title of familiar, and who is another of my favorite characters; and Minstrel, the eagle-hearted canary who refuses to be left behind simply because he is small and fragile. Dexter's handling of animal characters should be required reading for anyone who plans to

do anything remotely similar - it's note-perfect.

It's a wonderful start to a wonderful series - four stars only to leave room for The Mountains of Channadran.

Josh says

A solid, if somewhat standard issue fantasy story.

This was one I thought I had read as a kid, but after reading it, I think I didn't actually read just wanted to and either never found it or never acquired it. Didn't find myself remembering anything about it as I read through it, so i think it's more likely I read a review of it in Dragon Magazine or something and thought "hey, this sounds good!"

And...it's fine? The plot by now is a bit cliched, but the book is 35 years old, so the save the princess/lost hero/coming of age tropes weren't quite as worn then as they are now. It's definitely more of a densely plotted book than most fantasy is today, and there's something to be said for that. It clocks in at a rather mellow 230 pages and still manages to introduce a troupe of characters, set up the world, and overlay the threat of a destructive black wizard with enough clarity to make it all interesting. The characterization is a bit lacking, but some of that may be a function of only being in Tristan's (our lowly apprentice wizard and hero of the tale) head. Tristan is generally likable, a fairly solid fellow who is basically nice if lacking on confidence a relic of his inability to master and control his magic after many years as an apprentice). The others don't get a lot to work with, which magnifies their faults and rarely shows them in the best light. Makes it hard to root for Allaire and Polassar much. Hopefully future volumes will do better.

It's tight enough to stick with, and the basic plot is a good one. For now, the denser plotting is a bit of a relief from the glacial pace of many fantasy novels, even if it does leave much unanswered about the state of the world and the systems of magic. Sadly, that balance is very much missing from most works.

Sheryl Tribble says

One of the better fantasy novels I have read, although as I recall I thought the author improved for each of the two sequels (which is often not the case). Classic fantasy tropes, but the plot is not so predictable as it first appears, and the characters (or some of the characters) are well-rounded and more human than usual for the type.

Also has a wonderful cat character, a believable bird character who is not a Noble Hunter, and a lovely magical horse. The plot makes enough sense I'm not constantly telling the main characters they're idiots, and although there are history info dumps here and there, when it comes to our characters it's Show, Don't Tell.

Nothing here to inspire Deep Thought, but as brain candy goes, highly recommended.

Massimiliano says

2.5 star actually. For one thing this is not quite the typical "The Lord of the Rings" rip-off...well maybe just a bit in the background stories. The main quest honestly does not terribly make sense, and the first half of the book suffers from it (the reader suffers as well). The super-evil Nimir is a cardboard cypher that almost does not oppose at all the protagonist after killing his tutor at the beginning of the story. After the company is hosted at Galan castle and a new character shows up, things get more interesting. Dexter is more at ease at describing the personal interactions between her characters rather than the heroic events of the main quest. Probably not my to recommendation, but not too terrible either in the end.

Nytetyger says

One of the best fantasies I have read in a long time. The characters are in the same vein as the David Eddings 'fantasy with humor' but these are a bit more 'real' and a lot more agreeable. A good start to a lovely series.

Devon says

I'm not doing very well at this regularly reviewing books, am I?

So, I read the first couple of chapters of this a long time ago, but for some reason I never finished it. Still, the image of the proud horse forced to become part of a carousel stuck in my head and I've always wanted the chance to find out what happened next.

It's a pleasant enough book, but it took me a long time to get even a little invested. Our hero is a foundling whose only inheritance is a sword, we have a long lost heir, they're on a quest first to rescue the beautiful princess from a nebulous evil, then to hunt the MacGuffin. There are plenty of ways to make an old story new, but I only saw the vaguest hints that Dexter might consider touching on them. There was nothing remarkable for me in the first part of the book, which felt a bit like it was just ticking the boxes for a standard quest as quickly as possible. Things did brighten up once we reached the city and the plot slowed a bit to allow some deeper characterisation, but whilst I did start to hope that a certain twist was being set up (which it was) and I enjoyed that twist, it came a little too late for me. By that point, I'd spent too much time worrying that the book would take the dullest path possible to be more than relieved that it didn't.

I did like Tristan as a character – he has qualities and flaws that make sense for a boy who's grown up in an isolated environment where he had more exposure to books than people – and I really loved Elisena. I liked what Dexter did with Pollasar and Allaire – the book won a lot of points for being (eventually) willing point out the flaws in these two supposed heroes without vilifying them. Part of the problem is Tristan's point of view gives a limited perspective on other characters (he doesn't have a huge amount of life experience to understand these things), so realisations can seem a little slow. I don't think this is a weakness in Dexter's writing. The real stars of the show when it comes to characters are the sassy talking cat, the fearless canary and the haughty stallion – if you like Tamora Pierce's animal characters, you'll love Thomas, Minstrel and Valadan. There are a lot of good potential things in this book and I wouldn't say I didn't enjoy it. I just think there was something even better lurking just out of sight. I'm interested to see if it can give me more in the next novel.

Christopher says

I read this trilogy 30+ years ago, and it's still just as good now as it was then. It may not have the meat that some readers want in a novel, but what it lacks in pages in more than makes up for in the writing and characters.

Joy says

I love this book. It takes some high fantasy tropes--worn ones at that--and does marvelous things with them.

Toni Moore says

Good, basic fantasy story, with a somewhat bumbling apprentice mage as hero. Tristan, the apprentice mage, doesn't take himself too seriously. At times his lack of confidence in himself can be annoying. I just wanted to slap him and tell him to get over it already! But he travels on his quest with a talented and sarcastic cat, a brave and optimistic canary, and a magical warhorse. The cat and horse can communicate with Tristan telepathically. They have some of the best dialogue. The villain is built up to be truly horrible, but when it comes to the confrontation, he's a little disappointing. The characters are well-drawn and the story of the quest is OK. This is the first of three books that make up "The Winter King's War." The second book is "The Sword of Calandra" and the third is "the Mountains of Channadrán."

Gwen says

I read this book when I was in late middle school or early high school, and then read it a bunch of times afterwards. Clearly I enjoyed it then.

I just finished reading it to my children. It's still good; however, I found Tristan to be a little bit creepy when it came to Allaire - focusing far too much on her beauty and far too little on her personality.

Anyway, my children liked it and begged me to buy the second book, which I have never read. So we are exploring that one together.

Kerry says

I have never considered my comments on books to count as "reviews". They're just my thoughts and feelings on the book I've recently finished. In the case of The Ring of Allaire this is even more true than usual as I barely talk about the contents of the book (a lovely and charming tale, it might perhaps be considered a little "old-fashioned" these days), and instead reflect on how reading it made me feel.

I had been looking forward to rereading this ever since I discovered Susan Dexter had updated it and released it as an ebook. It took me long enough to get to it that I now have all three in the trilogy waiting on my Kindle (or technically up on Amazon ready for me to download to my Kindle whenever I'm ready). I have fond memories of reading the series back when it came out in the 1980s and while it was more a case of feelings than specific memories, that was enough to make me want to read them again.

I was surprised by how slowly I read this - it took me two weeks, with other books read at the same time - which is unusual for me. And I wasn't reading slowly because I was bored or not enjoying myself, but more because that just became the pace that seemed appropriate. It turned into a leisurely read, and perhaps that's just what I needed over the summer holidays. (I'm also very tired right now, so again, maybe leisurely was best.)

For all that I read it slowly, I really did enjoy it. The story built and felt very familiar, for all that it must be 25 years or something since I read it. Here I mean familiar is a good way, just as I mean leisurely in a good way. It was a warm and relaxing read over a most un-summery two weeks of summer and that turned out to be perfect.

I remembered most of the characters pretty well (but I forgot Minstrel - how could I possibly forget darling little Minstrel, the canary) and I knew what the twist at the end was going to be, but that didn't hurt the story at all. Instead, it was interesting to watch the progress of plot and characters already knowing it, as I hadn't on my first reading. I don't think it changed my reading of the book (it certainly didn't change my feelings for the book), but it did leave me feeling justified about which characters I preferred, which I guess means the author did her job well.

I had no idea, while reading, what Ms Dexter might have changed and what she left the same. I have my paperbacks down stairs (and their covers are so much prettier than these self-published new editions, but I can't blame the author for that as I assume she doesn't have the rights to use the paper editions' covers) and I could have gone and checked it out, but I didn't feel any need to do that. I just followed the story and enjoyed it.

I'm looking forward to moving on to book two, but as with the reading of this one, I'm not feeling desperate to rush into it (which is good, since I started the 900-odd page *Ship of Destiny* by Robin Hobb today). Instead, I'm feeling decidedly leisurely about it. In this harried day and age, there often isn't much time for leisurely any more. Many thanks to Susan Dexter for allowing me to rediscover it with her charming trilogy.

Alexandra says

1st in series.

Omi ai says

Given that I'm usually skeptical about fantasy not written in the last 20 years, and that, from first glance, this looks like it will be a typical fantasy where the characters are lifeless and dull, they go on a quest and you couldn't care less about the result, but this is far from the truth in this case!

Yes, this is quite a short book at 231 pages, but you get taken straight into the action which is non-stop from start to finish. You feel a bit overwhelmed sometimes because there is no time to stop and breathe! But it is worth it! This was one of those books I just wanted to keep reading to see what happened, and subsequently, I'm now desperate to read the next 2 books in the series (which luckily I already have!).

Amazingly, for such a short book, it doesn't seem to lose its depth. The fault of many short fantasy books is that the characters turn out lifeless, the story rushed and a bit pointless, but this doesn't happen here! Wonderful!

On its own, without being part of a series, this book works wonderfully. It could be a complete tale in its own right, like all good books should.

I loved the characters, and although the human characters were great, the animal characters are as much the heroes of this tale as the humans are! Thomas the cat, minstrel the bird and Valadan the horse are all excellent characters! Thomas in particular I adored! What is it about fantasy authors and their abilities to give such great personalities to cats?! I think it's brilliant! And they aren't just sidekicks who happen to be travelling with them, they are real, useful characters who provide just as much to the story as the people.

The human characters, given that they are supposed to be the main characters, should also be mentioned. Tristan is a brilliant character, he isn't whiney or annoying, he's very accepting of things given that he is a wizard, but still interesting enough that you worry when tragedy strikes. The girls in the book, Allaire and Elisena are, rarely for books in general (in my opinion!), not overly annoying! They turn up and although they don't do much at first to push the story along, and really get in the way quite a bit, they are still loveable characters. Polassar is a strange one. He was a good character, he made me laugh, but I couldn't quite work out his purpose in the greater scheme of the book, but I'm still glad he was there!

I recommend this if you are a fantasy fan looking for a quick, enjoyable read, you shouldn't be disappointed!

James Kidd says

read it as a kid and loved it
Reading it again in the revised version on kindle. Loving it.

I read this book in its original form some 30 years ago. The hard copies are in the loft. On my second date with my now wife we talked about children's names. I said I really liked Tristan. Due to the power and magic of this book. It's not Game of Thrones. But it is not intending to be.

I'm not sure I have worked out where all of the authors' revisions come, but they I don't feel I need to. One to savour. But I didn't do that - I finished it in a damn rush!
