



The Tears of the Sun

S.M. Stirling

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Rudi McKenzie-now Artos, the High King of Montival-must fulfill his destiny. He wields the sword crafted for him before he was born. He has made friends of his enemies. He has won the heart of the woman he loves. And now he must defeat the forces of the Church Universal and Triumphant, knowing he may lose his life in the final battle...

The Tears of the Sun Details

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Author : S.M. Stirling

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From Reader Review The Tears of the Sun for online ebook

Geoffrey says

Tears of the Sun feels like a series of short stories fit together to make a novel. Rudi and Matti play very small roles in this book. Instead it focuses on the stories of several secondary and tertiary characters. There are visits to the past explaining the treason by House Lui and its consequences. There is a visit to the Buddhist monastery in Wyoming. There are a couple great battles including a covert op into Boise. Individually they are each good but collectively they just don't have the feel of the rest of the series.

I've been waiting impatiently to see how this story ends since the first book came out 7 years ago. The first three books are a neat trilogy of the death of the old world and the rise of a new one. Books 4-6 fit as a second trilogy of the journey to Nantucket. Book 7 was the journey back to Oregon and this one, book 8 is a lot of back story explaining events that took place in Oregon during books 4-6. This one just doesn't feel as much of a tight fit into the story arc as the first 6 books.

Perhaps he would have been better served to structure the series as a trilogy of trilogies. This one just feels a little indulgent and is my least favorite of the bunch. I'll still buy books 9 and 10 because I'm sure the finale will be worth it - I just feel this one to be slower paced than the others and that it is more sub-plot than plot advancement

John Patrick says

This was actually somewhat disappointing compared to the previous books in the series. The plot had no real focus and jumped around the timeline trying to hit on plot points that were happening currently in the timeline and filling back story with flashbacks. I very much liked all the previous books in this series but "Tears of the Sun" spends the whole book building up to a payoff that you won't get until the next book. When I finished the last page it almost felt like it was a chore to have read it.

Duffy Pratt says

I think I might be done with this series. In this book and the last, a character compares something someone else did to something out of the "Historiies." The Historiies is The Lord of the Rings. It's dangerous for a writer to have a character comment on the quality of his own work. There are ways that these books are now derivative of Tolkien, but they are not good ways.

In general, the plotting, pacing, structure, characterization, dialogue, and interior monologue have all slipped drastically over the last few books. And it's getting repetitive. This malaise seems to threaten many writers of epic, serial fantasy. For the second book in a row, Stirling has noted that there was a soldier noted for long distance travel on horseback named Major Assburns. The first time I rolled my eyes. The second, I almost quit reading entirely. Last book, I complained that Stirling killed off an important character off screen. Here, he does even worse. One of the major characters of first trilogy gets killed here. We see the scene where she gets killed, but Stirling writes it in a way that makes it impossible to know what happened.

But the biggest problem I have is that Stirling ends the book with the pronouncement that the prophet of doom, Sethaz, "is coming." And I don't care. I don't care if he wins. I don't care what happens to Rudi MacKenzie or his Lucky Charms speaking clan. I had some friends in film school who said that there some movies that could be drastically improved if, at the end, space aliens came down and flew everyone away into space. That's sort of the way I feel about this series.

Andy says

Three word synopsis: "Meanwhile, back home..."

H Gilbert says

It was just OK.

I really enjoyed Dies the Fire and the Protectors War. I liked Meeting at Corvallis.

However, when we jumped ahead - what - 15 years to grown up Rudi and his friends who grew up post-Change and seeing a world in which magic is reappearing...well my suspension of disbelief started to fray, and it's been getting more so with each installment.

There have been a few books that haven't advanced the plot much at all, and this one seemed to be little snippets about things that happened at home while the quest was on its way back from the East Coast. Seemed some brand new characters have sprung up - didn't know who they were and still don't much care - but I guess they're there to provide some plot thread for one of the many still up coming book.

Feel like Stirling went into this second round of Emberverses novels with an outline that he scrapped, as I was under the impression that there'd be the first trilogy - Nantucket (which strangely had technology exported to the far past) the second trilogy (in which technology has someone failed us) and the third open ended series of books where suddenly there be gods who have decided we are irresponsible children who just can't have nice things. Strangely they had no problem sending Nantucket to the past where they introduced gunpowder and what not to the folks back there...so go figure.

I've read the existing 11 books in this series. I write this and can't believe it, but I guess I'm in it for the long haul (which seems to be getting longer every time another book in the series comes out). I will finish this series, just hoping that things get a bit better - pacing, characterization, less food porn and description of the heraldry. And please, keep the Mackenzieisms to a dull roar. Most ridiculous dialogue ever. Blargh.

Kris says

The eighth book in the Emberverses series picks right up where the seventh book ends. This story was a departure from the previous books in the series as the author felt the end to explain events from the past as he also keep the present story line moving forward. This was done as a series of flash backs told by various characters and seemed to be an unnecessary digression as it could have been told very quickly at one time. This makes me think that the author is setting up something in the last two books so I will wait and see how

unnecessary it might have been when I have finished the series. The current plot moves ahead nicely with some good action and the death of another main character which Stirling is unafraid to do at anytime. He also is moving D'Ath into a more central role along with Rudy so I think she will be an important part of the final confrontation. Almost all of the characters from the original trilogy have fallen to the side except for Sandra and or in the case of Juniper or Signe they get some cameo's. This book may be pivotal in the series as it feels like the author is moving some plot points around to set up the end confrontation but it felt less head long in the narrative which I like in the previous versions. I am curious which direction he takes over the last two books of the series and I hope he keeps the fast pace with the spare narrative style to the finish. Over all this was a decent addition to the series but the next two books will determine that more fully.

Pithy review: Good but uncertain what it means for the future.

Donna says

After four books of travel and Rudi Mackenzie's triumphant return from his quest, I was excited to read, at long last, about the war he'd have to wage to secure his newly-formed kingdom. Too bad this was not that book.

The Tears of the Sun has a massive problem with structure and focus. Half of it bogs down the arc of the series with a full account of Odard Liu's family. There's zero suspense about their fate, because we learn what's happened to them before their story is told. The flashback transitions are awkward, their introductions feel like the frame stories of a sitcom clip show.

The rest of the novel involves a lot of sitting around and talking about war prep. There was one interesting mission into enemy territory, but that ended on a vague note of frustration once I learned, many chapters later, how it had ended.

In addition to those issues, the prose constantly stalled out thanks to tedious descriptions of every meal, outfit, and significant building. This is the eighth book in the series, and it's set in one of the areas that readers are most familiar with. Do we really need multiple lectures about castle construction and layout at this point? The story stretched for excuses to tell us how to get armor off and formal court dress on, and hearing every meal described down to the style of bread they ate made me wonder if the characters hadn't stumbled into Redwall.

Thanks to the book's inability to stick with details and storylines that moved the overall plot forward, the ending was deeply unsatisfying.

James Mackay says

Though it was engaging enough to get me through it's 500-odd pages, I'll confess to being somewhat disappointed. The further we get from the Change itself, the less I enjoy the series. Rather than being a story about how people adapt to the loss of modern technology, it becomes more and more a traditional fantasy series, which simply doesn't interest me that much. As others have noted, the fact that this volume is largely covering ground that's already been covered, albeit from a different perspective, you get a feeling that the series is treading water. The characterizations seem to have gotten a bit lazy, from the Lucky Charms

Leprechaun speech patterns of the MacKenzies, to the John Hordle's constant use of "Roit!" The ruthless and terrifying lady with a sword is another Stirling staple that needs to be retired - Lady D'Ath has never been very compelling, and is less so here.

To me, it seems this series is running out of steam. It certainly isn't up to the standard of the first few books, The Peshawar Lancers, or the Nantucket series.

Melody says

Where was Stirling's editor? Ay-yi-yi. Eight books into the series, you needn't tell me about all the players in detail. Especially the dead ones, for pages and pages. Yep, Norman was a bad guy, got it, now let's move on already.

The Liu backstory was entirely too detailed, and the way it threaded through the entire book was fairly annoying. As others have said, there are about 200 pages of actual new book here, and nearly 400 of filler, backstory, rehash & description of the freaking gloaming and the succulent roast pork with a slight crackly sweet glaze.

I'm getting impatient with the religion in these books, as the series grinds on- I'm not sure I'm buying the wholesale adoption of oh, say the ancient rites of Odin, with all the assorted panoply, or the way, in 25 years, all the children are named from the ancient lays and nobody is named Jill or Jason any more. I get that Stirling is bringing the Powers back in a big way as the series goes on, but I'm not sure I can suspend my disbelief appropriately. Every book that comes out has each religion more of a caricature of itself than the last- in this one, the Catholics can't move without kissing their rosaries or praying to St. Somebody and the Wiccans are begging pardon of the trees as they climb them, while even Lady D'Ath is having a little moment with (who else) Athena.

Worth reading if you have read the first 7 and plan to read the next (2? 4? 39?). But don't rush off to the bookstore thinking you are going to be any closer to the big war, because you won't be.

Marin says

Ugh, in for a penny, in for a pound I s'pose. But damn, the quality of these books is declining faster than Astrid's grip on sanity. I'm three quarters in and finally got to an actual battle instead of a bunch of people sitting and describing things or having flashbacks. Eesh,

I'll finish the series more out of obligation than enjoyment.

Update... Does Sterling no longer have an editor? "...thick with blooming thickets of purple lilac and wild roses gone feral into impenetrable tangles..." Thick with thickets? Wild roses gone feral? Come *on!*

Ok, done, ends with a cliffhanger, of course. The best scene, and writing are towards the end where Tiphaine has to battle some supernatural evil. It was very cinematic and visually written, and moved well. Hopefully the last book is more like that. I'm going to read it, but I'll probably be just as cranky about it.

Ken Hoffman says

I have been a big fan of the Emberverse series, especially the first three, but it seems that this series is going the way of all long series: it is starting to change and be drawn out, much the way the Robert Jordan's the Wheel of Time became, Terry Goodkind's Sword of Truth books, etc. Sometimes you get the impression the story is being embellished not because it should be, but because the author simply can. After a while, a reader just rolls their eyes, and continues reading them not because they are superb and grand like in the beginning, but to just to see it through to the end.

"The Tears of the Sun" seems more like a placeholder in the series, as there is little advancement in the plot or the ongoing battle with the CUT. Its mainly reminiscence and back story of things that occurred along with events in other books but were not touched upon at that time. And is it gets more convoluted as we add more more characters and names and titles from a dozen or more completely different post-Change social/governmental systems; fun at first but it gets awkward and bulky.

Hopefully the next book will end Rudi's story and that of Montival, and maybe open up a new chapter in the Emberverse with new characters and a new plot.

Mieczysław Kasprzyk says

"Tears of the Sun" surprised me. I was expecting something much worse.

Recently, Stirling's Emberverse series has developed into some sort of pastiche, a mixture of Tolkien, Hollywood and some guide to foods eaten at great feasts in post-apocalyptic America. The story has dragged as it has been drawn out. No-one, reading this series, would believe that this is the same author who wrote "Island in the Sea of Time" or "The Peshawar Lancers". Stirling has obviously decided that this is going to be the masterpiece for which he will always be remembered and tried to make it momentous... and at times he's looked like failing. I loyally started to read this tome expecting more of the same. Others have criticised the flashbacks and slow build-up, so I was dreading the read....

This is not a slow book, it is not a food guide to the alternative universe that is the Emberverse. The Hollywood Irish and some of the language is irritating but, thankfully, there is not much of that. The story develops quite well and the flashbacks do have a continuity that maintains the storyline and pace (if I have a criticism then it is that the flashbacks should have been written as reminiscences with the storyteller at the centre of the action). Stirling remains a good writer; his power of description, especially of the landscape, is excellent. He knows how to build the story (but this time at a better pace) and to leave us wanting more. I had considered abandoning the series at this point but Stirling has managed to hold me in his grip.

Anna Erishkigal says

Nothing a good editor couldn't fix!

I've enjoyed all of Stirlings' novels, albeit they are difficult to follow sometimes because he weaves multiple, complex storylines and multiple character points of view through all his stories and (if you've ever tried to do so) it's no easy task. It's helpful to appreciate the highly detailed historical/sociological facts he weaves throughout all his storytelling (he is, after all, a historian). Mr. Stirling seeks to educate us about a subject he loves, not merely provide banal entertainment. Or, to put it in plain English, his writing isn't geared for the

young adult crowd many other such series are written for.

That being said, I found this book unusually difficult to get through. I got the impression he was trying to backfill what had been going on back home during Rudi and Mattie's quest to Nantucket because he needs it to explain what happens when the Prophet Sethaz comes for them. Perhaps these were even scenes written at the same time as the Sword of the Lady and High King of Montival and edited out because it bogged down the story too much? Its' hard as a writer when you start a whole new cycle based on newer characters in your existing 'universe' to cross paths with characters you love, but not bog down the story too much with the - old- story. I'm betting the young Liu characters are going to feature heavily in the next two books and I just love Tiphaine D'Ath and Ritva. However, I would have liked this story better if it had either been tightly edited as far as accurate historical detail and the thought-processes of other minor characters in the story, or had been published as two separate, smaller books highlighting each sub-story (the Mary Liu/children/D'Ath plotline and the raid on Boise), taking the time to relish the 'universe' each sub-story was set in. The entire present-tense, past-tense thing just totally killed the flow.

Also, Mr. Stirling killed off a long-running, major character at the end of a chapter in a way that, when the book finally returned to that sub-story pages and pages later, I had to go back and re-read the earlier chapter to even figure out that character had died. Worse ... they skipped ahead to the funeral and the character's death was written as a past-tense scene. I felt ... cheated. The character died a heroic death and it was barely a footnote ... an inconvenient former-major character killed off for no apparent reason with no emotion or real chance to mourn. And then the selfish woman the character had died for ... ridden with guilt ... and the buddhist monk's advice to that woman and the group? Lost opportunities! You could have had your readers in tears!

And then there were all the overly-detailed descriptions of how people dressed and what they ate for every single scene. And all the interruptions of dialogue where the character veered off on self-indulgent trains-of-thought. It broke the flow of dialogue and, honestly, if I never read the word 'cote-hardie' or 'parti-colored' ever ever ever again it will be too soon.

Last but not least ... all of a sudden in the final chapter we're cut back to Rudi and Mattie and the battle we've been gearing up for the entire book and it's like, what? Six-pages long and totally skipped all the bloody, gory, historically accurate fight scenes and military tactics we love to read and is OVER? It felt as though some publisher said ... 'we need this story now' so it was just churned out to end the book quick and hand it in.

On the other hand, the descriptions of why one particular minor landholding was chosen for its future defendability was fascinating. I could picture the people taking to the hills and harassing the CUT like the ancient Highland Scots harassing the British. Now THAT was a little side-trip that was interesting enough to include and I suspect the entire reason for a minor character's prominence. The reason educated readers ENJOY fiction such as Mr. Stirlings. But how we got there to learn that piece of information was choppy. Either fully develop Ingolf and Mary and their relationship in its own right. Or send a major character to that kingdom.

As my caption says ... there's nothing wrong with this story a good editor couldn't have fixed. But the editor - didn't- fix it. Shame on Roc publishing for focusing on the dollar signs and pushing out what I would consider to be a fairly rough draft and not taking the time to hammer the rough steel into a fine sword! I hope the next book is more polished.

Charlene says

I'm ready for this series to end. I was hoping this book WAS the end; but nope. I got sucked into the whole post-apocalyptic/alternate world and have enjoyed it to this point; but how much more build-up to the climax are we going to have to read, Mr. Stirling? Comon', Rudy, let's finish this!

Liz B says

I'm filing this as taking a break. Maybe I'll check it out again eventually--but I've been reading it (or avoiding reading it) for three weeks.

It's just that I'm about halfway through and nothing--nothing!--is happening. Meetings meetings meetings.

I go to meetings in my own life. I would prefer not to also read about them.

I very much want to know how everything works out in this series, but it's pretty clear that I won't be finding that out in this installment...so I think I'll wait till the next one comes out and maybe try again with this one then.
