



Runebreaker

Alex R. Kahler

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Magic is sin

Aidan desires only one thing: to rule. Arrogant, headstrong and driven by the element of Fire, he will stop at nothing to bring the evil Howls that destroyed Scotland to their knees. But Fire is a treacherous element, and the very magic that brought him to power could burn his world to ash.

Especially with the blood of his fellow Hunters on his hands.

Driven by a bloodlust he can't control and dark whispers that may not be entirely in his head, he and his magic-eschewing friend Kianna will do whatever it takes to liberate their broken world. Even at the risk of confronting the Church. Even at the risk of losing his humanity.

But power isn't the only thing on Aidan's mind. He's falling for the intoxicating Tomas, an Incubus who offers everything Aidan desires. For a price.

And if that price burns the world down, well... Aidan is used to playing with Fire.

Runebreaker Details

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Author : Alex R. Kahler

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From Reader Review Runebreaker for online ebook

Biz (Formerly Rachael) says

All right, it's time for my favorite kind of review, RRH (Rachael's Rant Hour). This will be a mini-review, seeing as how I only got about 65 pages in, but first I'll break down what was GOOD in *Runebreakers*.

Good Shit!

- Lots of casual diversity! All the main characters are gay, trans, and/or people of color.
- That's it.
- No really, that's it.

And you know, I usually can pull through when a book has really good diversity because I love reading books with characters like me in it, even if the book itself sucks.

However, Aiden's whole vibe and his actions just make him **utterly unredeemable** as a character.

Listen, **I can stand main character's who are assholes**. I read #FashionVictim. I enjoyed Six of Crows. However, Aiden crosses lines that even Kaz Brekker himself would never think of crossing. Also, he's just **really annoying**.

So, we start off with Aiden having a nightmare, then killing someone half during his dream and half awake. He, understandably, gets kicked out of the (compound?? It's been awhile since I read this) he's living in. He then decides to torture a woman/creature to death until his best friend shows up and is like "wtf dude stop." Then he calls his best friend a bitch.

And *that's* when I stopped reading!

Listen, you can have characters **murder people** and **still be redeemable**. It can be done. But as soon as your main character uses hate speech that isn't challenged in the narrative... bye! **You are no longer valid!** I'm not even kidding!

His bff, Kianna, literally stops him from being killed, takes him back to her shelter, and then he calls her a bitch?? No thank you.

Also Aiden is *angsty*. Like, **really** angsty. Like, a-twilight-fanfiction-that's-a-Bella/Jacob-Hunger-Games-AU-written-by-a-twelve-year-old-going-through-their-emo-phase-and-posted-on-fanfiction-dot-net-in-2012-angsty. Every time he spoke I just kind of sat there like

Also his instalove with hot angel/demon boyfriend who literally shows up with his shirt off in Aiden's dreams was so. weird.

So really like, don't read this? Especially if you're a woman or close to that? Kianna deserves better.

KIANNA DESERVES BETTER.

Jason S Wrench says

So, I had no idea that this was actually book #2 in a series, which to me says that the author did an excellent job ensuring that new readers were able to keep up with what was going on in the book with no prior knowledge.

As for the book, it's an urban dystopian fantasy book where there are four basic factions. The Kin (the evil people), The Hunters (most of whom have some kind of magical ability), The Church (self-explanatory), and regular humans stuck in the middle of all of the above. The main character is an anti-hero named Aiden who starts the book off by killing someone (not too much of a spoiler), but then it kind of all goes downhill from there.

You end up rooting for the hero even though you realize he's a huge asshole and has some real baggage he needs to deal with. You're never quite sure if Aiden is evil now or going to be evil in the near future. He definitely has reasons for all of his actions, as misguided as those often are.

Overall, I found the entire book a fun read and I would definitely enjoy seeing the rest of the series when it comes out.

Just as an FYI - I read an advanced copy of the book for the purpose of providing an honest review. I do not know the author, editor, or publisher, so my review is totally mine.

Cori Reed says

2.5 Stars

Kate says

I received this ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Unfortunately, I could not get into this book at all. I found the writing to be subpar, the plot to be a bit boring and the constant grammatical errors and ebook formatting issues to be distracting.

Aidan was not a very intriguing and relatable character to me. As much as I tried to like the story since I tend to gravitate towards this genre, it feel flat for me.

Ashleigh | Wild Heart Reads says

Kahler follows up Runebinder with a fiery sequel. While Tenn has been fighting his battles, across the seas Aidan is fighting for power and there is little he won't do to gain it.

"There was no room in this world for sadness and regret. There was only the flash, the burn, the energy and excitement. Life was a flame, not a flood. You lived and you burned and you burned out. Drowning was not an option."

Runebreaker has a completely different feel to Runebinder, Aidan is full of rage and the pull of Fire and the whispers of the Dark Lady are hard to ignore. In some ways Aidan is unlikable; he's egotistical, arrogant and there are times when he seems irredeemable. However there is a reason for this and I think it's really important to read the author's note which explains why Aidan is the way he is. And I think it's great that Kahler has given us something of a queer antihero, because the book world has long given straight antiheroes the ok but it seems often queer characters and their personalities are forced to conform to a much more narrow existence in order to be accepted.

I really enjoyed getting to see some new characters (that said a fair few died!). Kianna was a particular favourite. A badass trans woman, Kianna refuses to take Aidan's shit and gives back as good as she gets. Kianna, despite fighting with the Hunters, also refuses to be attuned to any of the spheres and strongly dislikes magic. I'm hoping we get to see more of her in Runemaker because she's such a great character.

Runebreaker is a wonderful continuation of the Runebinder Chronicles. It sets itself apart, expanding the universe whilst fate draws Aidan and Tenn's paths closer and closer to collision.

"Why do you serve, when you were meant to rule."

Content Warnings: torture (mostly fade to black but some on page)

★★★★?(4.5)/5

This review and more can be found at <https://wildheartreads.wordpress.com>

Harlequin Books says

Miniseries: The Runebinder Chronicles

Ricky says

Well, at least Kahler's author's note at the end of the book directly addresses one thing that bothered me about reading this one: how bloody unlikable our protagonist Aidan is. Nowhere near as emotionally open as Tenn, or as loving, Aidan - likely because he's open to Fire instead of Water - is self-absorbed, destructive, and manages to be even more susceptible to the sinister machinations of a certain incubus. And he has a way of basically burning almost every bridge that he crosses, losing tons of friends and lovers in the process. But then when he's really in over his head, it shows, and that's when I can't help but sympathize with him. And luckily, this isn't the end of the road for this series yet, I'd hope - because the ending of this book promises, at

long last, a combination and possibly conclusion of the stories begun in this book and in *Runebinder*. Bring it on, Kahler!

Fen'Harel says

This book just felt 'meh' to me. Between the grammatical mistakes and very linear plot (no surprises, no exciting side character motivation) this book was pretty cut and dry.

I feel like it had a small improvement to plot compared to the first novel, but not by much.

I liked how the author didn't stray from difficult topics such as murder and torture - I enjoyed that in a not weird way! But the protagonist? He was just an angst-y teenager. I swear, I was waiting for the whole, "It's not a phase, mum!" to come out of his mouth.

I felt like this book had great potential but lost it with a terrible 'romance' with an incubus who, hilariously, didn't want to do anything with our main character. Imagine being rejected by an incubus! That's really awkward.

I understand that the different powers are meant to make people a bit different (aka water makes you emotional, fire makes you a turd etc.) but Aidan is just annoying. He tries too hard to be hardcore and all "feelings don't matter to me you're just tools for me" and it came across as a bit much. I would prefer to see fire use him and then for him to feel guilty or regretful but he can't stop using. Like an addict. This would have made him a far more interesting character for me.

Sometimes the plot would go in odd directions and small things would be lost. Like he killed Trevor or Travis or whatever at the beginning and then later in the book he mentioned they used to sleep together?? I went back and reread the first scenes and saw where it briefly mentioned that they had "shagged" (let's not talk about the forced UK slang in this book to constantly remind the reader where they are located). Now I'm reading reviews saying Kianna was trans? I feel like I'm missing vital points of information because it was never properly spoken about - it would get one line and then the reader would be expected to know and remember these things. This causes the pacing to be a bit confusing as I found myself lost and wondering why things were happening or why a character was the way they were.

And Aidan? Why was he so 'power hungry'? I understand fire might influence him in that, but not that much. Look at Tenn. He was a water user but didn't cry every five seconds, so why does Aidan have so many fire issues? It was just, "I want it" and that was the only explanation the reader got. The whole "I used to be weak" thing grew old too. So is that why he tortures and murders people? I just don't understand this character and why we're meant to care.

Also, the whole issue with the dark lady was actually really good! I liked that he was speaking to the 'big bad', but that was few and far between. Why would he work for her? It doesn't make sense. He kills Howls and other demonic creatures because he wants Scotland/UK free of these things. Then the person who creates them is just fine?

Also, he was meant to be in Scotland but pretty much struts to London in a few days? Come on, give me a break. I'm sure with a country that small it's possible to cross it very quickly, however, remember your world author! Things would attack them! Roads would be destroyed and unusable! Your world would NOT allow your characters to cross this easily. You had a great moment to have your characters bond as they crossed

Scotland to London where they could fight off enemies together and get closer which would mean the 'lighter scene' (I won't spoil that for you) would have been more emotional for the reader. They would have remembered the good times with those characters and actually be invested in this. Instead, all we remember is Aidan "shagged" one of them and... that's it. That's all their character development and personality in one bowl.

Altogether, this could have been a really great book. I think it lacked direction, motivation and an interesting protagonist. Tone down the angst, amp up the regret and addiction, and we'd have ourselves an interesting tale! Strengthen bonds with other characters and really feel free to extend the novel beyond the linear creation it currently is. Give it some meat. Please.

Tiera McMillian says

1.5 stars..maybe..I am on the fence here between not liking it and it was ok. **I received a copy of this via NetGalley and the publisher Harlequin TEEN in exchange for an honest review.** I originally wanted to read this book because I had read the first in the series and I was hoping and praying for maybe some explanations or some sense to be made in this book that the first one lacked. I will tell you right now you will get no answers from this book to questions from the first book. You will only end up with more questions and an intense dislike for the MC, Aidan who is probably the most selfish, self absorbed, and just mental MC I've ever had the displeasure of reading about. Being in his head was disturbing. Despite my dislike for him.. his sidekick Kianna was the bomb. She was ruthless as well, super strong character. I found myself fantasizing what her story would be.

I had the same problems with the missing world building and absolute lack of backstory that I had in the first book. I just feel like someone should have told the author upfront that without these details your story doesn't make the sense that it could. I feel like this story was supposed to be "the making of the antagonist" so to speak even if the actual antagonist is some barely known entity "The Dark Lady." I sincerely wish there was some myth or lore or explanations explaining this entity and her goals because her actions do not meet up with what she says she desires to this MC.

This book does not pick up where book one left off really.. we start a whole new adventure with a new MC, Aidan. Aidan starts his story by murdering one of his fellow hunters and having the intense desire to take over and rule the world.... yea nice to meet you Aidan. From there, Aidan gets into one awful mess after another driven by his greed and selfishness getting everyone around him killed or killing them himself. Pushed along by his desire for the incubus demon and whispers and vision of The Dark Lady to do their bidding while promising him all that he wants, he continues into a trap of brutal torture both mental and physical. It really seems as though he is being groomed to be the bad guy... of course I have no freaking idea where this is headed or even why...

I am still super confused on what is going on, and I'm now at the conclusion that it is not going to get better. It is really unfortunate, but I won't be trying to complete this series. The anxiety and confusion just isn't worth it to me to cater to my "must finish" OCD on this one lol.

Devann says

I received an ARC copy of this book from NetGalley

I haven't read the first book in this series, but from what I understand this is more of a standalone set in the same universe with a small cameo by characters from book one towards the end. At any rate, I never felt confused while reading it and was sucked in right from the beginning. I definitely thought the world-building and magic system was very fun and unique, but what really made this book for me was the characters. I think I can probably explain best with an excerpt from the author's note at the end:

"Aidan has been called 'difficult' more times than I can count. Unlikable. Narcissistic. Anger-driven. Over a decade ago, when Runebinder first came to light, I poured a great deal of my own emotions onto the page. As I struggled with what it meant to be gay, as I yearned for a world where I didn't have to constantly explain myself, a world where I could be heroic, so was Tenn born of fear, of sadness and of the great desire to be normal. To be important to someone. And to something. Aidan is more than the opposite end of that spectrum. Aidan is the next step in the narrative."

Now I definitely have a soft-spot for 'unlikable' characters no matter what their sexuality, I'm pretty much that person always yelling at the hero in the book when they refuse to kill someone because that would make them ~just as bad~ as the other side, but having angry and unlikable queer character definitely adds another layer of relatability to the narrative for me personally. Anyway, I absolutely love my new gay murder son [and his future demon boyfriend] and also my badass bisexual trans daughter. Rarely do I ever get to read about such unapologetic characters [seriously, I was waiting for the other shoe to drop the whole time and I've never been so glad that it didn't]. I can't wait for the next book in this series.

Roger Hyttinen says

This is the second book in the Runebinder chronicles by Alex R. Kahler. I was excited when I received the ARC of this book as I loved the first book in the series, Runebinder. I assumed that this story would be a continuation of the first book, but it wasn't at all.

Though it's set in the same world, Runebreaker follows a different main character named Aiden, and the story takes place in Scotland. I have to admit that I was a tad disappointed as I was looking forward to reading more about Tenn's story, who was the hero in the first book. This book does connect back to Runebinder briefly at the very end but not really in any satisfying sort of way.

So Aiden -- the protagonist in this book -- is a Hunter just like Tenn in the first book. Hunters attempt to liberate the world from the evil Howls and Necromancers who have pretty much destroyed the planet. Aiden's magic is ruled by the element of fire so as such, he is hot-headed, arrogant, power-hungry and self-serving. The only thing that matters to Aiden is Aiden, and all he seems to want out of life is to rule, no matter what the cost. And he's ready to burn the world down to achieve his goal and destroy anyone who stands in his way.

So I really enjoyed the first book in this series and was super excited about reading this book. Unfortunately, I was extremely disappointed. I ended up absolutely hating the main character. He was an unbelievable asshole — murderous, treacherous, loathsome with not one redeeming quality.

He wasn't at all an anti-hero who redeems himself by doing the right thing at the end. Nope. That never happened. Aiden is 100% asshole. When he finally ran into a bit of trouble in the story, I couldn't muster up

even the tiniest bit of sympathy for him. In fact, I found myself thinking, "Oh my god, would someone just kill him already." This character was neither someone I could root for nor someone that I ended up caring about.

It's nearly impossible for me to connect to a story when I hate the main protagonist and that was the case with Runebreaker. The main character wasn't at all relatable and was wholly unlikeable, which caused me not care about the story at all. I honestly had to slug my way through it. It also didn't help that the eBook formatting was problematic which keep yanking me out of the story. This was not the book for me.

A big thank you to Netgalley for providing a review copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. This book will be out on November 27th.

Suzanne Schick rivera says

I couldn't. I tried, but this is the first book I have DNF'd in years. Right from the start it felt forced with gratuitous tropes.

Crazy4Books says

This sequels follows a different character on a completely different continent. I usually enjoy villain stories, but I had a difficult time connecting with the main character. Aidan was power hungry without ever giving us any real reason why. The trick with a good villain story is to make the reader care about them in spite of their flaws and that didnt happen here. Aidans fire urges and whiny internal monologue got annoyingly repetitive. His partner in crime Kianna was a fierce no none sense transwoman and I loved her. Her loyalty was admirable, but I honestly wish she wasnt so delusional where Aidan was concerned. He's selfish and doesnt seem to have a problem calling her names. I was happy to see Tomas show up.

I liked the world with its monsters and elemental magic. The creatures could definitely leave you with nightmares, especially the Kravens. The book is set in Scotland which was nice, but I wasnt a big fan of the way Aidan kept complaining about it. Im glad the world building was reexplained in a way that didnt seem too obvious. There were some other things I didnt understand though. Even if someone is immune to magic you could still use it to hurt them. We also get dreams meant to show us the past, but dreams arent usually reliable or in chronological order. Plus we get a prophetic type dream at the beginning that was never addressed. I just feel like there were quite a few things that could have been explained better.

I was disapointed to find out this wasnt a continuation of the first book. I was hoping to discover what happened after the events in Runebinder. However my main issue was the amount of repetition and filler. It just slowed down the pace and made me unmotivated to keep reading, even in the middle of a battle scene. Twenty pages to get from the wall to the castle was a bit excessive and this was a constant problem. Ive come to realize both books had main characters that just complained too much for me to connect to. I think Im done with the series and it makes me sad because I want more awesome LGBT+ YA Fantasy in my life, especially ones that are own voices.

*This book was received for an honest review

Megan Houde says

I won an early arc from goodreads and let me tell you I was so excited. I really loved Runebinder and the world Alex built. A world in which the apocalypse has come and all that was left behind were empty souls called the howls(once-human beasts spawned by magic) and people who were intuned with the elemental magic.

This book was completely different than Runebinder. Set in the same magically system world, but with the backdrop of Scotland, we no longer follow Tenn but Aiden. Aiden is an outcast and burning with the fire magic that he can't seem to control or is completely controlling him. He's set it upon himself to take down Calum, the Howl King of Britain, alongside his only friend Kianna.

I love how complex but real the characters are. I also love that Alex isn't afraid to explore sexuality within his characters; Aiden's gay and reading from a gay mans perspective was very enlightening.

Though I can't lie, I did miss continuing with Tenn and his story from the first book. You grow so in love with a character that it kind of takes a step back when it's someone else's story you're reading and the last is left unfinished.

Danielle Chambers says

3.5 stars. I didn't realize upon starting this book that it wasn't a direct continuation of the story. That it could in theory be read as a stand-alone. I think that threw me quite a bit. I knew the story followed Aiden from reading the description but I really thought it would jump between him and Tenn. it does not. Aiden is a basically brand new character in a whole other country.

Aiden is the opposite of Tenn. Aiden is an asshole who wants power and has no regrets about anything. He kills as he pleases and doesn't feel bad about it. All he cares about is himself.

The story is okay. Aiden definitely is. It my favorite character ever. I can see the appeal of a completely unapologetic character such as him, but it's not for me.

I really hope Lukas comes back in the next book. I enjoyed his character for the short time he was in the book. I'm so glad Tenn is back. I figured they would converge at some point and I can't wait to see what happens next now that Tenn and Aiden are together and unbeknownst to Tenn enemies.

I think the author made the right decision to start the series with Tenn's book. I'm not sure I would have moved onto the second book if Aiden had been the main character of the first.

I am curious who the POV will be in the next book or if it will alternate between the two. If it has to be one character I'd prefer Tenn, but I think alternating would be ideal.
