



The Shining Court

Michelle West

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IN THE DOMINION --

those allied with the demons of the Shining Court feared the bargain they'd made. For to the kialli betrayal was a way of life, and every action was a means to gain greater power. And as the Festival of the Moon approached, the demon kin began to prey upon those in the Tor Leonne. But more frightening than their presence was their "gift" for the Festival, masks created not by human craftsmen but by the kialli. Even the magic and knowledge of the greatest of the Dominion's Widan had been unable to discern what trap the masks contained--and time to discover and avert this menace was running out....

IN THE EMPIRE --

the armies were mobilizing for war. But before they carried the battle to the Dominion, Seer Jewel ATerafin would be forced to follow her own destiny. For what she'd seen in vision she could not deny. And so Jewel, with only Avander to guard her back, would abandon House Terafin on the eve of its greatest peril and journey into the darkness which was fast overshadowing the mortal lands....

AND AMONG THE VOYANI --

the moment had come to make their final stand against Allasakar, Lord of the Hells, for they alone had kept to the old ways, guarding the ancient knowledge. But hounded by their enemies, and with one of their greatest treasures hidden in the Tor Leonne, could they withstand the power of the Shining Court?

The Shining Court Details

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From Reader Review The Shining Court for online ebook

WillowBe says

Hmmmm The stuff with Avander is pretty weird. Not sure why we have to go here. Luckily I read Warlord right before this, so i wasn't totally lost. I actually skipped half a book of Dominion stuff just to read the Jay/Avander stuff. That's the problem with the braided narrative. You have to wait, but it does inc the tension. Since I am waiting for War to come out later this year, I am trying to read the next four slowly. Plus am waiting for Riven Shield to FINALLY come out so that I can read something after SEa of Sorrows which is right after this book. So I'm taking it very slow!

Starfire says

For me, this was probably the weakest book of the set on first reading (although I should probably qualify that by saying that a "weak" Sun Sword book is still streets better than any other epic fantasy novel I've ever read)

I think I still feel the same way on this second reading - it was still good, but just too scattered, with not enough from my favourite characters, and a little too much from those I care less about (and yes, Margret still annoys me)

Plus, my reading tastes may have matured a little. I don't remember Kallandras striking me as quite such a supercharacter last time around. Nor did I notice that he... how do I put this delicately... tends towards Vanyel-esque emo-ism at times. Don't get me wrong - I still loved him, but that love was tinged by just the faintest hint of eye-rolling at times.

But all that said, it was still a wonderful read, and I'm looking forward to rereading Book 4 at some point in the not too distant future

Crystal says

I devoured this series as whole, so my review of one book has to cover my review of all the books. This is one of my favorite series (and Michelle West is one of my favorite authors). When I finished the series the first time through I was compelled to go back and re-read just the parts that featured my favorite character (Jewel). I keep this series handy, because it's one I reach for time and again when I'm in the mood for a good book. Sometimes I re-read the whole series and other times I just re-read my favorite parts.

Wise_owl says

This book was a difficult work to judge, but in the end it warranted high marks. Like its predecessors the book feels its length, and contains many layers. Unlike the first book, and more like the second however, it does feel like there are developments, both in the sense of the personal developments of the characters, and perhaps more importantly, in the grand sweeping Narrative Michelle West has been developing.

Though the story thus far interweaves the stories of character in the 'North', the 'South' and the 'Shining Court' of the Demons, I have preferred this story, which is set mostly in the South, to the previous volume, set principally in the North. While cultures intermingle, this one, like the first book, dwells more in the secret Harem's and conspiracies of the Southern Dominion. However it's also nice to see both characters converging from different points, and some surprises, well plenty of them. Without getting too into it, one of the major plot-threads assists in unravelling more and more world information, while hinting at deeper, uncovered truths that are slowly coming to light. You have the view of a world that has lives, had ages. That the world as it exists in this book is living on centuries, or even millenia of past history and magic.

Michelle Sagara West's work continues to be thoroughly enjoyable, if not exactly the easiest of reads. You have to pay attention for things can be readily missed and some of the emotional resonance of the book comes in the intertwining of these simple motifs.

Kaila says

Each book in this series takes me *forever* to read. It doesn't help that I keep dropping them in favor of literally anything else that looks interesting. This series does not grab you. It is ponderous. It is hard to understand. The writing is at times beautiful but mostly annoying and obtuse. The characters are not endearing, and because of the writing style, it can be hard to tell what happened to which character. There are important, character-defining moments, and I end up forgetting them because they are either written vaguely or fall between the cracks of many pieces of meaningless information, so I don't pay attention to the piece of information that is meaningful.

Jewel I find incredibly annoying and a large part of the book is about her.

I still want to finish the series because I must admit I am curious where it is going. It's more than an idle curiosity, but not by much. I want to read all the surrounding books in this world and feel like I really *know* them. Maybe I read them out of order. Everyone else seems to love Jewel while I find her irritating.

Shannon says

This is a really excellent series and a higher star rating might be justified, but I'm not feeling it for a couple of reasons. First, because it's been several years since I read the first two books, so it felt like I was trying to remember bits and pieces of the story - it didn't overly impact the story, because each is fairly separated from the previous, but enough back story is needed to make it annoying (my own fault for not re-reading first). Secondly, there is a lot of set-up and wandering a, but little action, and given the dense language of the narrative, it didn't suck me in as much as it could have. However, I really enjoyed seeing Jewel (her stories in the House War series are what introduced me to this world) and it feels like the series is coming together.

My only complaint is that for all the love in this series - and there is a lot of family, country, epic kind of

love predominant throughout the books to-date - there is no romance, so everything feels a bit neutered and not entirely reflective of the human condition.

Definitely plan to finish this series this year, but just got a pile of books from the library, so I'm going to switch focus for a while and dive into something else.

Sarah (CoolCurryBooks) says

Michelle West's Sun Sword series is a six book long epic fantasy series starting with *The Broken Crown*. *The Shining Court* is the third book in the series, and you most definitely need to have read the previous books.

The third book returns focus to the Dominion. The focus is on Jewel as she travels south, the Voyani, the Shining Court, the conspirators, and Diora. The cast list that appeared in the beginning of the previous two books has mostly been removed, aside from two pages listing out the Voyani (many of whom are new characters). Perhaps you're expected to know who everyone is by now? Or perhaps the list of characters got two long for a list.

I found *The Shining Court* easier to get into than the previous two books, probably because this time I knew who most of these people were right off the bat. Unlike the previous two books, it didn't start off with a lengthy section from some new and minor character. I missed some of the characters from the *Empire*, especially Kiriell, but I'm glad the story has returned to Diora.

The Shining Court takes place roughly six months after the end of the first book, when the Festival of the Lady is almost arrived. The demons of the Shining Court have some plan involving the festival masks and they demand that the conspirators name the Dark Lord as a "consort" to the Lady for the duration of the festival. Pretty much all of the human characters suspect that whatever is going on with the masks won't end well, and the conspirators are realizing that allying themselves with the denizens of Hell may not have been the best PR move.

While the masks may be the overarching plot for this installment, there are plenty of smaller threads. Margret of the Voyani is stepping into the role of Matriarch after her mother's death. Diora is a prisoner, awaiting an arranged marriage. Kallandras and Teresa are working with the Voyani, as well as to their own ends. Jewel's travels have led her along a strange path not entirely of this world. I have warmed up to Jewel as a character, but I did find this plot thread of hers slow going. And if Avander ever becomes her love interest I will be mightily angry.

Three books into this massive series, I'm still invested. I particularly love the complicated family ties between Diora, Sendari, and Teresa, but more generally, I love how this is an epic fantasy series with such a wide variety of important female characters. That's something I've talked about in my reviews of the previous books, so I'm not going to go into it any farther here. Besides, if you're at this point in the series, you should already have noted the strength and quality of Michelle West's female characters.

Originally posted on [The Illustrated Page](#).

Lauria2 says

"we do not give our secrets away so lightly. knowledge is often a thing that slips between closed fingers. it is more like water than gold; it cannot be held."

"be like the lady's element. water can be struck, but the hand passes through it, and when the two are parted - water and attacker - it is the latter that bears the mark."

"the winds howled in peder's ears, and the howled with fredero's voice."

"he did not lie to himself; he had never lied to himself. it served no useful purpose. but there were some truths that were slow to surface, slow to demand the attention."

"she was driven by a pain that the damned know, and few others."

"you didnt love her in spite of the fact that she was a killer, you loved her because she was one. because she could do the things you were afraid to do without thinking twice. because she could do the things that had to be done without flinching."

"i have never lied; it is not my nature; a lie is beneath me; it is a tool of those whose truths are now powerful enough. i promise what i promise and i honor my oath."

"something in her tightened, some imperfection, some part of her that had been broken by the truth: that perfection, that obedience, never guarantees safety. that good and the reward of being good were for the discipline of children. she had done everything as it was to have been done; had been everything she had been taught to be; more. it had given her everything, only so that she might learn what loss was."

"people arent ugly; fear is. but some fears are very very ugly."

Renee says

It was as good as the first

This is a series to read over and over again. I do not regret my time spent with this book.

Estarra says

I really enjoyed the trip into the more mystical side of things, with Jewel being on the Winter Road for a large part of the book and finding out the background of Avandar in a Beauty and Beast-inspired setting (but both not following the expected development). I approve of her starting to trust him and him showing much more acceptance of how important she has become to him (of course we still have no idea WHY he became a domicis in the first place).

The views into the Shining Courts were interesting, and the exploration of the role of the Voyanni (gypsy-inspired, I think) and their magic - if I remember correctly we'll see much more of their importance in the

following books. This means even more powerful and decisive women like Margret, Elena, Serra Maria and Jolanna.

West experimented a lot more with jump cuts/scene changes, very abrupt ones at that. Sometimes that really worked - like when the Voyanni matriarchs and the Southern Wizards under the direction of Sendari independently from each other find out about the true nature of the masks that the Kialli lords have gifted to the festival of the Lady. Sometimes I really wanted to follow one line of action for a longer period and I thought it took away from the impact, like the cuts when Jewel meets Arianne on the Winter Road.

Oh right, quite enjoyed meeting some first-born. I hope we get to explore more than just Arianne and the Oracle.

The focus of this part of the story is firmly in the South. Once Avandar saves Jewel we do NOT have a look at the developments in the North at all, except for one flashback (which was a bit strange - seen after Evayne had mentioned it to Kallandras) when Evayne talks to Meralonne. I really enjoyed that we saw much of mature and tolerant Kallandras (and his various abilities) in this book in general. He and Avandar always at the beck and call of the Lady/ladies ^^.

No Valedan or Terafin or Kiriel or Mirialyn ACormaris though. But the book is big enough for all that.

While this is clearly a series that makes no sense if you don't start from the beginning, you always get satisfying action highlights - interim skirmishes with the Dark - in every single book and here it is the Wild Hunt coming to Tor Leonne and the Dark Lord trying to completely manifest in this world again.

All this next to family developments and people having to take and carry responsibilities they are ill-prepared for - Sendari, Diora, Teresa, Margret, the Radann, the Voyanni Matriarchs. To me it all works - but I may have dived into the book and overlooked some deus-ex-machinas ^^.

To me it all seems intricately interwoven.

I particularly found the portrayal of extremely mad and powerful sorceress Anne, pawn of the Kialli court, fascinating - combined with the continuing exploration of Lord Isladar, who keeps being the only character from the Dark Court Chosen whom I have any real interest in.

Celeriant and the stag were under-used but I think I remember dimly that they will have more of a role to play...

Chenoa says

Overall, I enjoy this series, but it needs some heavy editing - especially this book - for both length and awkward writing (for example: "At his feet, literally paralyzed by her own fear, was a woman who would perish when her heart stopped beating.") The other books (in all three interconnected series) have kept me hooked with character development - I'm ready to give up the series halfway through each one (when it's extra-slow going), and then some new character enters, or some major character development happens, and I give the next book a chance. That didn't happen in The Shining Court. I'm not sure now why I'm reading the next one, except that I hope things pick back up once I catch up to where House Wars picks back up (w/r/t internal chronology), since those are most recent and best-written.

Mary B. Grove says

Yet another astonishing volume in one of the best series ever

West has the singular gift of being able to write beautifully nuanced emotion, and it makes her characters both memorable and truly individual. In this volume, Diora, Teresa, Sendari, Margret and Jewel reveal themselves painfully and yet exquisitely over the course of the book, and the events and questions that scar them so deeply are indelibly marked in the reader's heart as well.. they wrestle with remaining characters the

Mei says

I don't know how she keeps all these separate story arcs and characters straight in her head, but whew. These are as epic in their own way as the Malazan series; all intertwined narratives and histories and a cast of thousands, all of whom have their own little moments of glory. The rhythm of the books is not as consistent but ultimately it does not really matter as it is a rich story which I have enjoyed.

Katyana says

There was a lot that was great in this book ... a LOT. I loved seeing Jewel and Avandar's relationship evolved, and I loved getting hints of who he is (or was). I loved meeting the Voyani Matriarchs, not just because of their personalities (which were great) but also because of the feeling, the weight, of history and magic there. Like, these people have forgotten so much of who they are, and wisps of it drift up occasionally, and they are awesome.

I struggled with all the time spent with the Tors and Tyrs, because quite frankly, I hate those guys. I hate all the men of the Dominion, and I just don't have sympathy for any of them, even the ones that are a little conflicted (I'm looking at you, Sendari) or seem like they are good honorable men with other men of power, but their disdain for the rest of the world - and women - are unforgivable (that would be you, Sendari and Alesso... I see your bromance, but it just can't overcome my loathing for you).

And Diora's plot just felt like a whole lot of waiting. And I didn't understand why, honestly. She told Teresa that she couldn't leave yet because there was a woman who she wouldn't leave without, and wouldn't be ready for another week. And ... I have to assume (view spoiler) So that, to me, just felt like a manufactured delay to make all the threads of the plot come together on the night of the Festival, and while I get that in terms of story structure, Diora's arch in this book - the endless waiting, and her feeling sad and lonely - was a yawn.

And I missed the den, and Kiriell and Valedan and Meralonne. They've become important characters, and it is hard to have a whole book without them.

Also, is it weird that I ship Kallandras and Jewel? I know that's probably weird - I think it's because they are the two characters I have come to care most about, and so of course I'm like "and now, KISS!" ... but it seems like the author is going more Kallandras / Evayne. Which ... I just can't like Evayne. I get that she's

made sacrifices for this great war - horrific ones - but she treats everyone like pawns, where she is the only game player. Her condescension is appalling to me, her lack of compassion is irritating, and I just really really hope Jewel doesn't become her. I feel like this world already has an ice-cold bitch seer. What it needs is a compassionate one, who will TRY to save people, even if it seems futile. One who is driven by her heart. Because otherwise it is just two players at the game, who are ruthless and will sacrifice anyone ... and what are we cheering for? If I want that, you may as well let Sendari/Alesso/Cortano win, because that's exactly who they are.

So yeah. Fuck Evayne. She's a necessary evil, but she can't ever be the heart, the leader, of the good side... because she has long ago kicked her heart to the curb. She's an ally, yes. Never the core.

And Kallandras feels like he's got such a dark core - hidden underneath his pretty blond bard exterior - of self-loathing and death... someone like Jewel could help return light to his life, the same way she did with Duster and Kiriel. I guess I just want that for him.

Jutta says

i don't know why i'm still reading the series. it just started to get a bit interesting towards the end. the writing style is just not what i enjoy.
