



Sandstorm

Christopher Rowe

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A hero rises from the ranks of slaves!

The genasi control almost all of Calimshan for their djinn overlords—all but a few outposts like the floating Island of the Free, where escaped slaves from Calimport's coliseum run their own brutal games. There, Cephass, a genasi with no memories of his past has spent his entire life fighting. But one day a circus of misfits, lead by the crowlike Corvus Nightfeather appear and free Cephass—and for the first time Cephass can harness his inborn powers and control the stones and dirt beneath his feet.

The newest **Forgotten Realms**® author brings his talents to an area that has changed dramatically with the fresh take of **Dungeons & Dragons**® 4th Edition. The powerful elemental race of the genasi and the xenophobic and ruthless cultures of Calimshan are revealed through the rise of the **Forgotten Realms'** newest hero.

Sandstorm Details

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Author : Christopher Rowe

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From Reader Review Sandstorm for online ebook

Travis says

Sandstorm by Christopher Rowe

Sandstorm is a stand-alone novel set in the Forgotten Realms setting of Dungeons and Dragons. This novel is Christopher Rowe's debut novel, but he has written a few short stories along with writing a short story set in the Forgotten Realms called "Feast of the Moon" for the Realms of the Dead anthology. Sandstorm was released in March 2011 and was published by Wizards of the Coast LLC.

After only knowing how to survive in a gladiatorial arena all his life, Cephass tries to escape his prison. He is denied touching the solid ground, else his earthsouled genasi heritage may manifest. Thankfully, his chances for escaping may have just improved. Watching the floating earthmote and the young genasi gladiator with interest is Corvus Nightfeather, a kenku (a humanoid hawk). The kenku, along with his circus troupe, named the Circus of Wonders, plan an escape/rescue attempt for the young genasi. After the successful escape, Cephass finally touches the earth and hears its song, but learns that his rescuers have plans for him.

Criticisms:

1) Plot. There is one major problem with Sandstorm and it's the hard to follow plot. The story starts off simple enough with Cephass escaping from the gladiatorial arena and slavery, then becoming the strongman of Corvus' circus, and then learning what it means to be an earthsoul. These things alone could have made for an entertaining story and could have taken it in a whole different direction. Instead the plot is a confusing mess of elements thrown together, creating a mess. Truth be told, it's hard to talk about Sandstorm's plot because I honestly couldn't follow it past Cephass learning the abilities that all earthsoul's have. From that point on, it seemed like everything jumps around from one scene to the next with no rhyme or reason. There were even some scenes that didn't need to be included because they added almost nothing to the story, other than to add another element to the ever-growing mess of a plot. They just felt like padding instead of an actual plot. If Sandstorm kept going with how it started, it wouldn't have been such a confusing mess.

2) Antagonists. The other problem with Sandstorm is that there weren't any real antagonists. There were a few characters that could be considered antagonists, but none of them really felt like they were. The problem mostly comes from the short time that these characters appear in the story. The most dominant of the supposed antagonists only appear for an eighth of the book, not really giving them much time for the reader to feel like they were the villains. It also didn't help that after they showed up, there were large gaps between their next appearance. It got to the point that whenever they showed up, I forgot who they were. However, this little issue wouldn't have been so bad if they actually came off as villains instead of just another character thrown in. The supposed antagonists all felt like just new characters or, in some cases, background characters. They didn't feel developed or even that important in the long run. If Sandstorm had any antagonists, they sure didn't make their presence known.

Praises:

1) Characters. Sandstorm did have an interesting and diverse cast of characters. While the main characters could have used a bit more development, they were still interesting. Most of the interest comes from the main cast being very unique. The main character, Cephass, was the more basic of the cast, but still had that unique quality to him. The main thing about him was that he saw the outside world through fresh and new eyes. It may have not been anything that new or that fresh, but it still was interesting to experience. I just wish that there would have been more of this with his character instead of him seemingly 'going with the flow' after the a few chapters. On the flip side, Corvus was the most exotic character, but this is mostly due

to his race. I haven't read any stories featuring or talking about kenku's but now I'm interested. Corvus was full of mystery and you never really knew what he was planning, which made him feel different from the rest of the main cast. You never really knew what side he was on. The other characters in the Circus of Wonders really did steal the show. From the deadly acrobatic halfling twins, Shan and Cynda, to the old, crippled ranger, Mattias, they were memorable. The twins were unique because they couldn't speak and had to use body language to get what they want to say across. This did work surprisingly well and it seemed like I could understand what they were trying to convey. With Mattias, you never really know who he really is. For almost the whole length of the novel, we only see him as an old, crippled ranger. He does seem to be very competent, but I was surprised by how competent he really is. However, the character that stole the book is the goliath Tobin. Tobin was just something else and wasn't what I would have ever expected. When you picture a huge goliath, you would assume that he would be a strong, maybe dumb character, but Tobin really isn't those things. All Tobin wants to be is a clown and entertain people. Sure he was strong, but he was constantly entertaining. Tobin had charisma and it really showed through reading. Overall, Sandstorm has some great characters that made the story feel unique.

2) Pacing. Sandstorm is also a fast paced and exciting read. As soon as you pick up the novel, you're hooked in and you may find it hard to put down. The action was fast and made you want to keep going. It even seemed like this is one of those books that you could finish in a day, if you had the time. It was just exciting to read and it never felt boring or slowed down.

Side Notes:

1) Genasi. Sandstorm really helps give you an understanding of what and who the Genasi are. It's the first book, to my knowledge, to really delve into the race.

2) Current Events. If were wondering what happened to the nation of Calimshan after the Spellplague, Sandstorm really delves into it.

3) Cover Art. I have one word to say concerning the cover art for Sandstorm; awesome. It's just awesome. I can't explain it better than that. It's exciting and while it's mostly muted browns and grays, it feels colorful and vibrant. It's full of action with having Cephas looking like he is about to smash the displacer beast's (the panther-like creature) head in with his double-headed flail. It's exciting and really gets you pumped up for what you're about to get into.

Overall: 3/5

Final Thoughts:

Sandstorm is a good book that has a lot of problems holding it back. The plot is hard to follow and at times seems almost nonexistent. The book does start out very promising, but it seems like there was too much happening all at once along with it feeling like there was way too many things to cover. Also, there didn't seem to be any antagonist or villains. There were some that could be considered the "bad guys", but they never seemed to be there enough to be considered as the villain. Once again, it seems like the book had too much going on and felt like it was meant to be more than a stand-alone novel. Thankfully, the characters were unique and very memorable, the best being the goliath clown Tobin. The other characters were still good, but are never going to be as memorable as Tobin. Also, this book is a fast read. As soon as you pick it up, you'll lose track of time. Overall, Sandstorm did have a lot of potential, but it felt as though it needed to be longer or split up into another book. For new readers to the Realms, this may be a little confusing at times, but it is fairly easily to follow with little to no knowledge of the world. As for a general recommendation, I do think that Sandstorm is worth a read, just be prepared for a confusing plot.

Francisco Becerra says

I liked the way Rowe portrayed Calimshan, a territory so well developed in the RPG books, but so neglected in the novels. There are even moments in which his writing shone powerfully, showing his love for the tale. However, the poor pacing (specially in combata); a huge, underdeveloped cast; and a sudden rush in the ending, diminished the strength of the story.

Shannon Clark says

While billed as a stand-alone novel I suspect this may just be the start of a new series or at least I hope it is as there feels like more is going on with many of these characters than is covered in the novel.

S.A. Thorup says

This book started out pretty interesting, and I liked the main character, although I had a hard time picturing him (the version of him on the cover is pretty cool). Other characters were alright, but not memorable. Like other Dungeons and Dragons books I've picked up, this book assumes the reader knows everything about the D&D/Forgotten Realms world, so it doesn't bother to completely describe characters, and it gives little to no background on the races the reader encounters. I am not among those readers that knows the D&D world very well. I actually had to get on the Forgotten Realms wiki to figure out what some of the races were.

I was also confused on the relationship between the main character and the minotaurs, and I think it was starting to explain it more before I put it down. I would have finished this book were it not for the over-described gore.

2/5 stars.

Ryan D. says

I am very sad about this book. I have been reading Forgotten Realms books since I was in junior high and this is the first one I have read that is bad. This book was terrible. The characters were cardboard cutouts and the plot was flat, boring, and at times really hard to follow. There was no flow to the book it was a jumbled collection of scenes. I probably could have gotten around the story issues or the lack of story if the characters had been even remotely likable or compelling in any way. This book just lacked all of the passion for fantasy story telling and characters that I have come to love about Forgtten Realms. I hope this isn't an indication of the direction the books are taking.

Josh O says

I just finished the book Sandstorm by Christopher Rowe. There is a floating island in the desert owned by Azad the Free. Cephas has no memory before the arena, and the only thing he knows about is fighting. He is also a Genasi, or a person born of the elements. His element is earth. He has never been able to control the

ground or use his powers because he lives on a floating island. Cephas is the best gladiator in the arena, and always makes escape attempts. He has also failed over 600 times. When he is stolen from the arena by Corvus and his circus, he is granted his freedom. Cephas stays with Corvus and his allies. He soon discovers that Corvus has his own dark secrets that causes companions to die, and puts everyone in danger. Corvus then brings Cephas to Calimport, the biggest city in the southern part of Faerûn, where he soon learns the truth about Corvus, his circus, and his life before the arena.

I honestly didn't like this book very much. The authors way of writing was very confusing, and his details were a but weird. I had a hard time understanding things and often had to read them several times over before I even got an idea of what he was talking about. The story was also very confusing and it didn't make much sense to me. It kind of seemed like most of the stuff that happened had nothing to do with what the actually story was about.

I would give this book a 2 out of 5. I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone, even if they really like this genre.

Robert says

Disclaimer-If you read the review and feel there is a spoiler in it, please let me know and I will remove that section. Also, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. Thank you.

Sandstorm is Christopher Rowe's first full length novel in the Forgotten Realms setting. Aside from this, he has published a short story as well in the FR world.

Sandstorm is a little hard to describe as far as the plot goes. One plot deals with Cephas who is a genasi slave forced to fight in the arena. As the story progresses he finds out more about who and what he really is. A second plot follows the ambitions of a circus leader who is more than he seems. Some subplots involve other characters who want to use the lineage of Cephas, a hidden meaning in a certain book, and a love interest.

The novel has a great beginning and really had me interested after the first few chapters, but after that, it becomes a bit blurred as to what is really going on and how the main plot is to follow. The pace moves decently after the wonderful pace at the beginning. As for the characters, I liked them in this one. This is the first book that I have read with only one human main character in it. The characters are written well so as to appeal to the reader and yet sometimes were made to seem too likable so it was difficult to tell who the real villain was. One of the characters I really enjoyed was the Goliath, but to many he may be more of a nuisance as he seems to be in the story more for comic relief, but I do enjoy a light touch to fantasy every now and then.

Some criticisms:

1. The focus of the main plot. This is not a book that explains directly to the reader what the main purpose of the story is about. It is more picked up through paying attention to the details so as to get a fleeting grasp of it. This may make it hard for some of the younger readers to fully enjoy the story as they may become confused as to the purpose of this story.
2. The fact that there seems to be no real villain in the story with any real ambitions as to why they would be the villain. There could almost be a couple of different ones, but there again lacks the real ambition of their

actions.

Some positives:

1. For those who want to know more about the genasi race, this story adds some really good background information and even adds some nice details to their abilities and some possibilities to what they can become.
2. The beginning was great. Mr. Rowe did a tremendous job of setting up the main character and introducing the reader to his predicament. It was wonderfully detailed and was one of the better gladiatorial arena set-ups I have read.
3. There are some really nice descriptive details throughout this novel especially in the fight scenes. The two of my favorites are the gladiator fight in the beginning with a displacer beast and the fighting style of the Halfling sisters later. The reader is also given well enough details of the surroundings without being overbearing.

Sandstorm is an average novel that could have been much better with a more focused plot. I will say that I was not looking forward to reading this after the disappointment I felt with his short story in the anthology *Realms of the Dead*. I will add that I felt there was much improvement from that story to this novel and if Mr. Rowe keeps honing his craft, he can become one of the better writers in the FR world. For those new to the realms, this one is not bad but you may want to consider other books to get your feet wet. For die hard fans, you will want this one to complete your collection. If you are looking to try the fantasy genre that utilizes a shared world, the same thing goes for those new to the realms, you could do worse, but you may want to try something else.

Happy reading.

-dimndbangr

Joshua Mandell says

I often don't have much faith in Wizards in terms of their book publishing, because a lot of times it seems as though the books that they publish are just Dungeons and Dragons adventures worked into a badly written novel. I've reviewed a number of books by them, however, that seemed to be different from the norm. The Legend of Drizzt series, for example, as well as the Draconic Prophecies.

This is also among those books.

The story opens with Cephas Earthsouled, a genasi gladiator, on the Isle of the Free. This place is ruled by escaped gladiators who decided to become masters of their own games in the place that they moved to after they escaped from their slavery. He is being watched by Corvus Nightfeather and his Circus of Wonders. Corvus is really a shadow agent for several different warring factions, but he has founded a circus to help him move from place to place with less notice.

And the people in the circus aren't really in on his games of intrigue; they actually are in it for being in the circus. Cephas is the heir of el Arhapan, the man in charge of a major city, the city from which the Freedmen

originally escaped. Corvus intends at first to bring him to the WeavePasha in another city, elsewhere, but the warring factions for which he works alternately and often at the same time may have other things to say about that.

I won't spoil anything more. This book's great. Do you like fantasy? OK good. Read this then.
