



## The Shadow & The Sun

*Monica Enderle Pierce*

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**Among the living or the dead, he's never needed anything from anyone.**

Shadow Mage Gethen is a powerful necromancer, keeper of the border between the living and the dead, and brother to the king of Besera. But with his dark powers failing and a vengeful entity attacking, Gethen should be happy when a formidable lady knight appears at his gates. He's not. The price for her aid is steep—his allegiance in a war against his brother.

**In battle or in bed, she's never met a man she considered her match.**

Militess Halina is undaunted by the threat of war between her country and neighboring Besera. She earned her titles by shedding blood and breaking bones. She uses her body to reward soldiers who serve her loyally, and to punish those who don't. And Halina's never met a man she couldn't command or crush.

**Until now.**

Passion and power unexpectedly ignite when a blizzard traps Halina at Gethen's citadel. With the evil entity's onslaughts rapidly deteriorating Gethen's sorcery, they have little time to understand their unexpected attraction. But could their passion be the key to defeating an ancient enemy that's hell-bent on obliterating their world?

## The Shadow & The Sun Details

Date : Published April 22nd 2016 by Stalking Fiction

ISBN :

Author : Monica Enderle Pierce

Format : Kindle Edition 264 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Magic, Fantasy Romance, Paranormal, Witches

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# From Reader Review *The Shadow & The Sun* for online ebook

**a\_tiffyfit says**

~~review to come on release day ! pre-order now for 99 pennies~~

I'm starting to notice a theme: Read a book by Monica Enderle Pierce, give it 5 stars, desperately wishing for the power to erase my memory of reading said book so I can read it again and experience it all over again for the first time.

I was first introduced to M.E. Pierce's writing with *FAMINE*, her apocalyptic dark fantasy novel (Hello Horsemen). It is a fabulous read and I highly recommend it. It's been a while, so I think it's about that time where I can go back and reread it without having details fresh in my head so I can ooh and aah over the book again.

I then read *GIRL UNDER GLASS* (which I have yet to write a review for, but will! I'm a touch behind). This is a post-apocalyptic novel where we have warred with aliens. No less intense than *FAMINE*, full of adventure, strife, suspense, and yes, romance.

And then there's this novel. High fantasy. Romance. Suspense. Politics.

I am now waiting for sequels in three of her series. Why do I heart them so much? Not only does Pierce create this world that is so detailed it is nearly palpable, but she does it in such a way that I don't feel as if she's droning on and on and describing every vein of every leaf. No, there is no telling here. There is *SHOWING*. And that's how I like my books. You're plunged into the world of her novels without static, without a break, just seamless entry that seems wholly believable.

And then there are her characters. In this novel, Halina and Gethen are the main characters. Halina. I LOVE Halina. Why? She is no simpering maiden in need of rescue. She is unapologetic about her success on the battlefield, about being an amazing warrior, about caring for the people who are within her domain, and about her loyalty as one of the king's soldiers. She is strong, forthright, and moral. Her sex doesn't make her feel vulnerable and she certainly doesn't act like it. She doesn't use her physical attributes to get what she wants or to achieve her goals; she uses her mind. Gethen is the shadow mage, but he is wholly unexpected as to what we think of as necromancers/shadow mages.

Their adventure begins when Halina realizes that Gethen is right; the kingdoms have a mutual enemy that is driving both of them towards war. Together, they will fight against it. But will they be enough?

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**JoAnn says**

My first 5 ?????????? read this year!!

Maybe a review later...

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## Laura (Kyahgirl) says

3.5/5; 4 stars

Good fantasy story in the 'Sword and Sorcery' style with a bit of romance thrown in. This is a new to me author and I was glad to stumble across whilst digging through Mara's bookshelves looking for something new!

The events of the last part of the book seemed a bit off in their timing, maybe rushed, but it was still a pretty good ending.

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## Jacob Proffitt says

This was an unusual fantasy story in a lot of ways, starting with Halina. She's a capable, respected military commander and warrior and openly (not quite aggressively) sexual. Pairing her up against (and later with) Gethen, a wizard of ferocious (and disreputable) reputation made for an interesting tension as they go back and forth between a lot of different relationship axes (attraction, power, family politics, trust).

Indeed, most of the draw of the story (at least for me) was the two main characters and their interactions. Which is good because the setting is a bit sparse, which kind of surprised me. You get glimpses of different cultures and people and lands and nexuses of power and I can't help feeling like the magic could be interesting if we knew anything concrete about it. But glimpses is mostly all we get.

So it's a good thing the plot is decent and the threat had weight. And that Pierce keeps the story moving along at a good clip. There were some mild bumps and a few expectations that tripped me up (like the marked coin that made me expect a specific clumsy twist, only to allay that expectation, and then have a milder form show up after all) but for the most part, I was simply enjoying myself and the story as it unfolded.

So this is a weak four star read because of interesting characters and some good setting dynamics (despite being a bit light-weight) that dipped a bit sometimes but managed to end strong and fulfill my expectations for the things I cared about (mainly Gethen and Halina becoming a couple/team).

**A note about Steamy:** I actually expected more sex than there was giving how nearly aggressive Halina is. We got a single explicit sex scene with some strong flirting and such. So the lower end of my steam tolerance. I do wish Pierce had addressed how it is a woman could be so promiscuous in a fantasy (mostly low-magic) world without fear of unwanted pregnancy and/or disease. It wouldn't have taken much more than a hand wavy herb or talisman or something. Also, (view spoiler)

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## Katrina says

3.5\*

I totally agree with Mara - it is a very good book, but it did not keep me on edge and while I liked and admired Halina and Gethen I didn't fall in love with them. Will I read the next book? Most likely, but not immediately.

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## RedL. says

### 3/4 They saved the world stars

I took a gamble on this book because Grace Draven mentioned as it went up on Amazon and I really liked the cover, then I was intrigued by the blurb. Nothing unheard of, but there was just something, both characters seemed so strong. I hoped the author would pull it off, enemies to lovers, convincing magic. I was not disappointed.

The author opens the door to her world all at once, no slow introductions. All is there and all is believable. Neighbouring kingdoms whose hostilities have dangerously escalated, a bastard warrior princess who can never stop proving how formidable and useful she is in a typical backstabbing court, a powerful shadow mage who is nothing like we expect him to be, caught in between duties, trying to stay neutral and trying to save the world from an otherworldly danger. The writing is precise, almost flawless, the worldbuilding vivid and simple to grasp, the fantasy and magic utterly convincing. The description of Gethen's Citadel Ranith and its polar opposite, sunny, insular Or-Halee are some of my favourite parts. I was transported instantly, feeling like I was actually walking up and down both structures, either fighting not to be frozen to death or languidly getting high on perfumes, light and warmth. All characters are well defined, easy to relate to. Gethen's servants were just perfect even if a bit stereotypical, the villains were villains gloating about their own cruelty.

It was a bit of a slow beginning but then the story really sucks you in. I could not put it down, it kept growing on me. It's the dark magic, the danger, the mystery to solve running against the clock, the political games and of course, the relationship between the main characters. Alina is a warrior. An experienced, ferocious, skilled, take-no-prisoners warrior. Proud, liberal with her body, not with her affections, loyal to her denizens and even her evil father. She is scarred, unashamed of her body, she knows its strength and respects its limits. Throughout the book she never whines, she's never lost, afraid of being sexual or helped when needed. Damn, that was a refreshing female fighting lead. She's not perfect in any way, but she's not your typical snarky kick-ass wanna-be. She kicks ass, period. She knows her value and once she accepts a charge she's all in, her life on the line. Gethen is a shadow mage on the brink of transforming into something else, his powers depleting, unsure of what his new magic will entail and how he will be able to wield it, worried about the safety of the world more than his own, unwilling to serve anyone but his own values. More of a healer and a safeguard against crossovers from the Void than an evil necromancer, because that's who he chose to be despite the life that had been decided for him and how they tried to mold him. He might not want to mingle with petty human quarrels, but he's rooted in nature, in animals, in life. He deeply cares.

For those of you who love adventure and suspense to lead instead of romance, you will be happy. The romance is a thin red line, something subtle and precious blooming amongst all the perils they have to face, but is not the main focus. Dangers and creeping evil are coming from all sides. This couple of opposites will mistrust each other for almost three quarters of the story and there is only ONE sex scene. The growing UST and slowburn, though, were **magnificent**. So many little and big things were driving them towards each others and apart at the same time, the admiration, the yearning, the intensity of every little physical contact scorching due to their brevity. These two had dead Shadow Mages, Rime Witches, all kind of demons, magical monsters and natural disasters to fight, they had their priorities straight. The only sex scene we got was sensual more than descriptive, it came as the very much needed confirmation of their bond and desire, but it also had a purpose in the development of the plot, in Gethen's future. And I loved that till the end in

that scene, he checked on her, sought permission. He could have beguiled her a million times but no. He wanted all of her, he wanted to be wanted just as much. Still...I would have liked more steam, I had been waiting for that one scene for **SOO LOOONG** ...sigh....

Why not give 4 full stars or even 5 stars if so many elements were so good? Because, after much thinking, some of the good things were also the same I had to (slightly) criticize:

- both Gethen and Alina have strong cores, they had to fight to survive, they were both abused and/or ignored growing up and they literally had to build themselves, physically and mentally, to survive and grow in their skills. They made choices even when all choices had been taken away from them. I liked that the author didn't decide to play little-shrink and heavily refer to their past, the little photographs she drops here and there about their past are very neat, yet I feel that more could be done with it. Especially with Alina, it could have been much less vague. I understood much more Gethen and his way of being/thinking than I did Alina, and I mostly felt for him.

- Gethen is a vegetarian and the way he touches and handles his wolves (and all the other forest's animals) made me fall for him like a block, yet when the Rime Witch commits the biggest atrocity against all his animals, we didn't get the emotional response that I would expect from his character. They were hunted and hunting, pressed for time and he was enraged...but I missed some pain...strangely, Alina was more moved in this situation than he seemed.

- Alina is amazingly strong, maybe too much. She never once says I love you. I don't think this is a sign of independence or strength. Not being able to say it, or openly feel it, is actually a big problem in my opinion. Perhaps she was unfamiliar with the emotion, but still. I know there are different thinking schools about it, I need to say it, I need to hear it, even if just once. We know she cares and worries, we see she loves him, but she never opens up. Gethen on the contrary is so straightforward with her, declaring his desire, admiration and love without a second thought, no matter the dire situations they were in. Sometimes a funny comeback is all that's needed, some other times both characters need to be on the same emotional wavelength, without it meaning melassafilled lines, for the scene to be really gripping and to make me cheer for the couple. I missed some of this with Alina. Even before his transformation, I found Gethen so much warmer than her. It detracted even from the best moments for me.

- I liked the danger, the horror and the magic so much I wanted more angst, the fight scenes were so good!

- The hints the author gave us before something bad was about to happen or someone was about to turn were SO transparent to me that I wondered a bit about the sharpness of the characters in certain moments, I would have preferred to be completely surprised and shocked. Also, some adjectives and descriptions were too repetitive.

Even with these remarks, I thoroughly enjoyed this reading and I would recommend it to anyone in search of a strong, non-bitchy female lead, a hot, sensitive non-self-centered mage and light but perfectly constructed magic fantasy. Some elements will remind you of Grace Draven. I will certainly continue with this serie, I hope to read more about these formidable two as well.

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## **Rebecca says**

Halina, the bastard daughter of the king, is a fierce warrior and respected leader. Currently her kingdom is at

war with the kingdom of Bersera and she is sent as an emissary to the Shadow Mage to secure his allegiance. There's one big problem, the Shadow Mage might live in her kingdom, but he's the brother of the King of Bersera. Halina isn't discouraged though, he's a man and she's never met a man she couldn't conquer.

Gethen is a powerful Shadow Mage and Necromancer. He has no interest in choosing sides in this war. He's busy trying to convert into a Sun Mage and defeat a powerful witch out to destroy everything. He has no time for the beautiful lady knight knocking at his castle door.

The two get stuck in a blizzard of magical origins and realize they need each other to defeat the evil Rime Witch. By defeating her, they'll not only save the world, but possibly end the war brewing between the kingdoms.

I found this book very enjoyable. It's been a LONG time since I've read a medieval fantasy and this was a good one to get back in the groove with. It has some of the things that people find difficult in this genre, like trying to remember all the names and titles (or maybe that's just me, I'm a bit scatterbrained) but the story flowed well and the mythology was easy to understand. I loved that a woman was the hero of the story, which is something lacking in this genre. I LOVE a good dose of girl power! This is Book 1 and the full title is The Shadow and The Sun ( Militess and Mage Series ) and I'm hoping for more soon. The world building is really amazing and detailed, without dragging on and boring me ( I have to be honest, The Wheel Of Time did that to me a couple of times).

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### **Mara says**

3.5

I so enjoyed this fantasy with its touch of romance, its heroine, and the romp through lands unknown :)

The only con is that I could not find it completely compelling. For how much I liked it (and I did), my heart wasn't in my throat even at the worst times. But I would suggest that you do read this book.

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### **Shari Kay says**

Maybe. Not usually a big fan of the beta male (except Archer =)

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### **Dawn says**

++Spoilers (most likely++)

Got this one for .99 and what a delightful surprise it was to find how good this book was!

The writing is technically very good. Little to no editing issues. Well developed characters and secondary characters as well as an antagoniost that is not just purely evil but has a story behind them. Bravo!

I would definately recommend this book to my friends. This author's writing is certainly in league with

Grace Draven as fantasy goes, unfortunately she lacks Draven's romantic touch.

The author is adept at world building and had logic and reason behind the magic and spell work she gave to the mages. In short, it was magical yet believable.

This is not a cliffhanger, there is an 'end' a HEA thank goodness, but it does end so one need not continue with the series, but I certainly plan to.

A brief summary:

There is a war brewing between two lands. The feud between these once allied Kings started over a really simple and ridiculous reason. Little did either of the Kings realize that it was not just a war over trading salt, but a war that was instigated by a Rime Witch who was released from her hold in the Void.

Gethen is a shadow mage whose powers are fading as he makes the transition from shadow mage to sun mage. He has been the one person who's sole responsibility has been to keep the wraiths and Rime witch contained in the void. As his magic weakens, his protective wards are as well. Unfortunately, at the same time, the Rime witch has been released. On top of that, his brother (Zelal) is threatening and demanding Gethen's aid to fight the war against his enemy. AND! Zelal's enemy is seeking Gethen's aid to fight Zelal. It is when Halina, appears at Gethen's keep to negotiate for his aid that the story begins.

Halina is a fierce warrior and plans to either gain Gethen's aid or kill him. The Rime witch has manipulated the weather, causing Halina to be snowed in with Gethen, and it is over these next few days she realizes that the Rime witch must be dealt with first, for she is everyones common enemy.

There is far more involved in this tale then I have just described. Too much to continue without re telling the entire story. In short, Gethen gains strength through Halina, they fall in love etc....

Overall a great tale with much magic and fighting.

My criticisms:

1. I think Gethen's love for animals could have been played up more. I didn't feel as much of an impact to his devastation at seeing the the dead animals in the Ballista as I should have. Yes he was a vegetarian, yes he refused to kill animals to absorb their power, but there should have been more to show his passion and connection with the animals.

2. Halina is a warrior, and I like that, but she could have been a little more feminine. We know she loves Gethen, but she never tells him. Even after he declares his love for her she doesn't say it. She should have been shown to have more passion for Gethen, which would have made her connection to Gethen seem stronger, more powerful. The author should realize that passion and love do not equal weakness. A warrior woman need not be emotionless to be portrayed as strong.

Otherwise, I really liked this story. Both MC were sexually experienced, Halina more than Gethen. Gethen's past was only rarely mentioned, never detailed and nothing more than a passing thought. Halina on the other hand was more of a rake (but only in the past not after meeting Gethen). Finally! It's good to see at least one author turn the tables.



There is only one detailed love scene towards the end. But again, I wished there was more romance. Perhaps it will grow in the next in the series. I do hope so.

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### **October says**

Well, damn! How many authors ever introduce their heroine by the line "In battle or in bed, she's never met a man she considered her match."? Now this I gotta read!

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### **Linda says**

Really enjoyable fantasy romance that reminds me of Grace Draven's work. Thanks to Mara for bringing this author to my attention! I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

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### **Tiffany Roberts says**

I finally got around to reading this treasure in my TBR pile and wish I'd gotten to it sooner. Full of magic with a very wicked mage and a strong woman who reminded me very much of Brienne from Game of Thrones. Halina was an amazing character, and I loved Gethen just as much. Can't wait for the next in this series!

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### **Celestine says**

#### **Shadow is deepest in the sun.**

True to its billing, this is a sword and sorcery fantasy wrapped around a romance. In this case, the sword is wielded by Militess Halina, the illegitimate daughter of a king, who is sent to Shadow Mage Gethen's holding to secure his allegiance and assistance against aggression orchestrated by his brother, the king of neighboring Besera. Unbeknownst to the lady knight, the kings and the killing winter are just puppets on a string held by a growing horror in the Void, which is barely being contained by Gethen. She arrives on the eve of his deepest struggles with this emerging dark magic, and the wily mage strikes a bargain with the woman warrior to watch his back while he battles the entity.

**"He admired her just a little bit more than he wanted to kill her. The woman had a steel spine, and she'd bend quite far before she broke. The trick would be easing off before she snapped and stuck a knife in him."**

Locked together by a blizzard in Gethen's half-destroyed castle, the suspicious Halina and the scoffing Gethen hammer out the details of their accord. With just two retainers, the place is isolated, and it eventually becomes clear to Halina that the mage wasn't lying about his inability to contain the dark spirit in the Void. As the two battle magical manifestations with physical, deadly intent, they feel a burgeoning attraction. As a

general in her father's army she is attracted to the powerful mage who has the "poise of a king and the control of a soldier." In turn, he is gratified and amazed at the bravery and fearlessness of this woman who doesn't begin to know how to submit to a foe, even when coughing up blood.

My one criticism of this book is that the extended magical theatrics are often without reason. The story between Gethen and Halina is one of mutual respect maturing into love, and I felt it needed to be matched by a personal or political purpose for the dark entity to manifest at that particular time and place. Rather, it is like Sauron expanding the doom of Mordor. Too late, there is a face and mythology put in place for the entity, and even then it was related to power and not person. Gethen and Halina spend considerable time in self-recrimination, worry and eventually battle, when at times all I really wanted them to do was get to a passionate clench.

I think people who enjoy the works of Grace Draven will find *The Shadow & The Sun* by Monica Enderle Pierce to be worthy of their time. The romance isn't quite as deeply felt, but the heroine is singularly wonderful. She is unapologetic in her approach and confident in her abilities. It is delightful to watch love sneak up on her. 4.5 rounded to 5 stars.

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## **TP says**

The first book "the Shadow and the Sun" and the second book "a castle to keep" of the Militess and Mage series by Monica Enderle Pierce was an enjoyable and interesting fantasy romance book.

But like my GR friend Mara said, it was not completely compelling.

There were some inconsistencies and some aspects were not totally thought through to make it to a better rating for me. Still i was hooked and enjoyed it much.

It was surely one of the better fantasy books out there, but it lacked sometimes passion and expressed emotions, especially when it comes to the leading characters. It had interesting and strong leads, I enjoyed. It had an interesting magical concept. And great action scenes.

They were strong male and female main

characters. Very refreshing. But at times not fully thought through. Sometimes i missed the reasons behind their actions and behaviour. Why was she so Unnecessary loyal to her self serving father? Same goes for the villains. They appear and disappear without any real reason. It is claimed at the end, that he thought his apprentice would probably overthrow him one day, but he just prepares for it by linking himself to and using several individuals. Why not kill the apprentice beforehand? Why take him on as an apprentice in the first place? I could go on and on with my questions. Same goes for the created magical world and it's potential. For example, an old spirit was summoned but not the right and fully extent of questions were asked, which were actually needed. Why not do it more often to learn and get more information?

I also had some problems with the name of places. Sometimes it was confusing, what is what now? A map would have been wonderful.

Don't get me wrong. I enjoyed the book. And the second book was actually better than the first book. I hope the author doesn't keep us waiting too long for the third book.

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