



Sacrifice of the Widow

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Goddesses vie for the soul of people...

Halisstra Melarn, convert to the cause of the goddess Eilistraee, was sent to the deepest depths of the Outer Planes to kill the demon goddess she once worshiped, but instead was transformed into a hideous creature bent to the vengeful will of her former mistress.

For the Queen of the Demonweb Pits not only survived her Silence but evolved into something greater than she was before - something that no longer needs to share the domain she calls her own.

Could it be that the War of the Spider Queen has just begun?

Sacrifice of the Widow Details

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From Reader Review Sacrifice of the Widow for online ebook

Steven Cole says

Hey, now, this was pretty fun. It's a reasonably fast read, not a whole lot of depth, and yet with characters that feel compelling in their own way.

Smedmen spent less time with the Dungeons & Dragons minutiae here than she did in "Extinction", but pieces of D&D lore are there for those with the background to spot them. (Which is fun..)

Ian says

Not bad but not really my thing.

Jason Folkens says

This book was one of those books that I had difficulty putting down. The author clearly spent just as much time on the protagonists as she did the antagonists. Not only that, but there are a few characters that appear to be playing both sides in the struggle, and the author unfolds the story brilliantly. The ending was absolutely fantastic, as it's perfectly set up for it's sequel.

What's more, this book holds answers to questions that you might have with regard to pantheon changes in forgotten realms. If you enjoy Forgotten Realms literature, this is truly a must-read.

Once I reached about page 170, I couldn't put it down until I finished...

Terry Hunt says

The beauty of drow elves

I would like to say that I enjoyed this book. If you like the drow elves give this one a try...but first start with the war of the spider queen series, else this wont make any sense. I am tired of the whole drizzt story as it seems drizzt is a god like character who dies then comes back. Well this book has drow heroins who face a more gritty situations

Also it has great characters, even the villians, who I was getting to really like. Lisa also shows the duality of the drow and the way they handle success and self doubt among their everyday life. There is drama here to make you smile, sad as well as make you wanna scream yes or no!!! I thoroughly enjoyed this book and fixin to buy the next.

Brenda Cothorn says

Lisa Smedman's new book, *Sacrifice of the Widow*, is the first of three in the new *Forgotten Realms* (FR) series, *The Lady Penitent*. This series is a must read for any *Forgotten Realms* fan. It brings about the Drow transformations that change the world of the *Forgotten Realms* forever and offers the story behind the Drow Pantheon changes in the *Forgotten Realms* Role Play Game books.

The two Drow goddesses, Loth and Eilistraee, mother and daughter, play a game of sava where the moves they make upon the board change the land of Faerûn. Each is intent on winning the game, a game that has been going on for as long as mortals have been in the Realms. A wager is proposed by Loth that the winner take all and death is the reward of the loser, witnessed and enforced by Ao, the overgod. As the goddesses move their pieces about the board, their mortal worshipers progress through the Realms, doing the bidding of their goddesses while Vhaeruan, brother to Eilistraee and Loth's son, plots treachery unbeknownst to them.

Each chapter begins in the familiar FR style, providing the "Year of..." and the DR date, allowing Faerûn historians to easily place these events into the *Forgotten Realms* timeline. Fans will recognize Qilué, High Priestess of Eilistraee and Chosen of Mystra, as she scrys another familiar character, Halisstra Marlarn, Eilistraee's Champion and wielder of the Crescent Blade. Qilué watches as Halisstra is slain, despite Qilué's help, but doesn't realize that Halisstra won't be joining Eilistraee in her eternal dance. Fast forward three years and we meet a new character, Halisstra's brother, a wizard and the only other surviving Marlarn after the fall of Ched Nasad. Q'arlynd's adventure begins when he locates a portal to the surface and makes contact with priestesses of Eilistraee after accidentally killing one of their sisters. He learns his sister made her way to the worship of Eilistraee and begins a plot to rebuild House Marlarn with his sister as its head and he at her side. Another new character is introduced to fans when the Darksong Knight and novice priestess to Eilistraee, Cavatina, is ordered by Qilué to retrieve the Crescent Blade from the Daemonweb Pits, Loth's home plane.

The story focuses on Halisstra's own transformation and struggle between her new nature & her old conscience and desire to serve Eilistraee, while Vhaeruan's plot, through his worshipers, unfolds and Q'arlynd, in typical Drow form, tries to find his most adventitious niche. The adventure is fluid and has a natural progression that carries the reader along. The combat scenes are typical, and somewhat predictable, for a *Forgotten Realms* novel. This book gives a stand alone story with the sava game as the carry over factor to the series. It also offers the "Oh My God, No Way!" experience that will have readers referring this book to their friends who are *Forgotten Realms* fans.

Smedman offers not only a classic *Forgotten Realms* style story but also an insight into the Drow race that has not been seen since R.A. Salvatore's *War of the Spider Queen* Series or Elaine Cunningham's *Starlight & Shadows* Series. *Dungeons and Dragons* or other fantasy fans will feel right at home with the races, characters and combat, both melee and magical. For readers who have never experienced the *Forgotten Realms* and the lands of Faerûn, check out this book and you will quickly become immersed in this world.

Graham says

The book was good. It provides the darkness one is looking for when reading about the Drow, but it lacks a little what I am used to from Lisa Smedman. To me it seemed like there was a lot of background and getting

to know the characters for the bulk of the novel versus seeing them in action. Granted this is only the first in a series I am hoping the others pick up the pace. When it comes to plot it had a good big picture idea, but the details fell short. Not hearing how Vhearaun was killed was rather saddening, and the twist with Halisstra and Selvetarm was kind of transparent. But, I would still recommend it to any Forgotten Realms fan.

Tony says

Gods plot against one another using their drow followers as pawns. Whether they are the priestesses of the dancing moon goddess Eilistraee, the assassin-clerics of the shadow god Vhaerun, or the wicked followers of the demigod Selvetarm, none lack a plethora of outrageous spells endowed them by their ever-warring deities. Amidst them is the Lady Penitent, the once-drow, now arachnid abomination that serves at the behest of the chaotic spider-goddess, Lolth.

The Sacrifice of the Widow is the follow-up to R.A. Salvatore's War of the Spider Queen; and even being familiar with this work, it is possible to get lost without foreknowledge of the drow gods of the Forgotten Realms universe. A map, along with a glossary or compendium would have been helpful, as there are many references to people and places that are not explained in this book alone. Be prepared to do some preliminary research online if you are unfamiliar with the subject matter.

Eilistraee is the benevolent goddess that the reader is supposed to root for, as the plot centers mostly on her drow followers; Cavatina, a devoted Darksong Knight; Qilue, the powerful high priestess and chosen of the goddess of magic Mhystra herself; and Q'arlynd, a battle wizard that has yet to fully commit to a deity. While the intentions of Qilue and Cavatina are quite clear, the neutrality of Q'arlynd makes for an interesting arc.

The rules of magic in this universe seem to no know bounds, which unfortunately eliminates any sense of real danger for most of our protagonists, when a healing spell is quick on the lips, or a last minute shielding spell saves them from imminent doom. And if all that fails, there's always resurrection.

Smedman is adept at creating horrific images appropriately suited for a battle between the pawns and creatures of the malevolent Underdark gods. Lots of goo, acid, blood, and other creepy fluids somehow find their way into this tale. She takes the reader directly into the characters minds as they experience the crunching of bones and the spraying of blood first hand. In a sense, this is almost a horror/fantasy novel.

Sacrifice of the Widow picks up and races to a refreshing climax towards the end; pleasantly unexpected for a first book in a trilogy.

Michael Ware says

Do I love my fantasy novels! Good follow-up to the War of the Spider Queen series. I believe there is another series following the War of the Spider Queen, it is hard to follow the timelines with Forgotten Realms, they are changing the setting through several series.

Gustav Grotius says

I enjoy stories about the drow. This one is rather interesting, since it highlights the relationship and mistrust between the males and females. I enjoyed it.

Adam Duclos says

This was pretty good, especially for a Dungeons and Dragons novel! The quality for DnD books varies widely, but this one mostly moved right along and was fun to read.

It also showed a game between Lolth and Eilistraee using Mortals and lesser beings as game pieces, which is always pretty cool. I like it when books like this have multiple levels of reality.

It also had a prophecy in there, that made the loyalties of two of the characters uncertain. The great thing was, we only got a first person point of view of one of them, and it was still unknown how it would go!

It was also nice that despite being a trilogy, it had a self-contained story in there, along with some momentous stuff, like the death of two gods! This came out just before Fourth Edition DnD, so the author must have been told that they could go wild. I'd say that this aspect of the book was better than the preceding 6 book 'War of the Spider Queen' series.

That said, the story did take a while to get moving... they introduced quite a few first person point of view characters, not all of them main characters. A good four or five side characters were introduced just so that they would have a chapter to themselves, then get killed off.

It was also pretty tough to take how dumb Eilistraee was during her godly board game. Seriously?

On the other hand, I like how it shows that Selvetarm had an avatar, a main body in the demonweb pits that was killed by beheading, but that his true form was the one hanging out with Lolth playing the board game on the World Tree, and only really died because Lolth killed him herself because she had to honor her game results because Ao was watching. Nice!

Back on the downside though, the author added in more game elements than normal, but did it badly. I mean, it's a DnD book, set in a DnD game world (Faerun), and it's great that the author added in all sorts of spells that you would expect wizards and clerics to be using, but they were either used incorrectly or better ones were ignored. Specifically, a big deal was made of the clerics raising each other from the dead, which is great, because that's a big part of the game that usually gets flat out ignored in DnD books, but they kept running into this problem where sometimes their bodies would be destroyed, so they sadly shook their heads and bemoaned their inability to bring them back from the afterlife.

First of all, some of them did have bodies, they were just digested. Gross, but whatever. So, the 'raise dead' spell might not work. However, they still had access to a druid who could have used another fairly low level spell, 'reincarnate', on them. On top of that, even Qilue is an epic cleric, yet she also freaked out over this, even though she should have access to all of the spells like 'resurrection', which can use even small parts of a dead body, or 'true resurrection', which doesn't need any part at all. Anyway, buck up guys! You can eventually get most of your friends back.

I do wish that some of the special things that happened, like soul theft and so on, were represented in the rules somewhere, because that would be pretty neat.

Oh, I also thought it was weird that when Qilue was confronted at the end of the book about how Eilistraee might be adversely affected by killing Vaerun and taking on his portfolio, she wasn't just like, 'Yeah, obviously that's going to be an issue.' Ah well. In the story, even the goddess seemed to be blindsided by that for some reason. It does make me wonder how the rest of the trilogy is going to go though. As Dark Helmet said in Spaceballs, "Evil will always defeat good, because good is dumb."

UnionReader says

Great read

A fun continuation of The War of The Spiderqueen series, which introduces a host of new interesting characters. We see more of the epic clash of the drow pantheon as well.

Tony says

Not bad. Continues the War of the Spider Queen series, which was pretty good in its own right. An easy read. Some interesting new characters are introduced and some pretty powerful characters you have heard of in the past take center stage.

Andrew says

After ruining the war of the spider queen series, I swore I would never read anything else by Lisa Smedman. However, seeing that this book continued the series I couldn't resist seeing what happened next and it helped that I found it at a used bookstore. Lisa proves in this book that she can write an interesting story after all. Despite quite a number of glaring errors concerning the drow, she pulled off an intriguing novel.

Mike says

I found this on my shelf. My nephew had sent it to me, added into an order, to get to the free shipping threshold. I thought, "This might be a good palate-cleanser to Kavalier & Klay." It's not good. I don't expect that anyone thinks it would be. I expect this would be unreadable for anyone not familiar with the tropes but it's fun reading descriptions of D&D rules acted out. Characters show up and die usually only lasting for a few pages. I won't be adding the name "Smedman" to my personal canon of authors but I'm honestly enjoying it more than Chabon's award-winning masterpiece. At least there is a plot with twists and turns rather than a gradual slow slag to the bottom.

Jimmy says

Lisa Smedman is one of my favorite authors from the *War of the Spider Queen* saga. The drow continue to be the most and best interesting characters, since my discovery of the Drizzt Do'Urden novels. The Lady Penitent trilogy delivers all the pain, horror, blood & gore, evil, and deception that I've come to love and expect from the drow elves.

Two rival deities play a dangerous sava game since Lolth's return from the Silence, in their struggle for dominance over the drow.

Along with the differences in the two elven worshippers, there are also similarities, especially in the consideration and treatment of males. Lisa Smedman fills this exciting book with great monsters like driders and with powerful wizards too.

One of the siblings of House Melarn is prophesized to betray the priestesses of Eilistraee. However, they don't know whether it will be the Lady Penitent who was once Eilistraee's champion or Q'arlynd whose heart and mind is torn between Eilistraee and the Spider Queen. With Q'arlynd's questionable pledge, and Halisstra's weak character and will, I wonder if the Crescent Blade will reach Lolth's throat.
