



The Gift of Dark Hollow

Kieran Larwood

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The bard tiptoes out of his room, the crow-dream still echoing in his head, making him twitch at imaginary creaks of iron wings . . .

The bard must leave Thornbury. It is not safe for him to stay. Rue, his new apprentice, travels with him - keen to learn his trade - and hear the next installment in the legend of Podkin One-Ear . . .

Podkin and his fellow rabbits have been sheltering in Dark Hollow after their battle with Scramashank. Paz tends to the rabbits with sleeping sickness; Crom meets with the war council . . . Podkin has nothing to do! Frustrated, Podkin goes exploring and discovers an abandoned underground chamber. Armed with the Gift of Dark Hollow, Podkin learns to moonstride, and Paz is rewarded with a magical gift of her own . . .

The Gift of Dark Hollow Details

Date : Published September 5th 2017 by Faber Faber (first published 2017)

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Author : Kieran Larwood

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From Reader Review The Gift of Dark Hollow for online ebook

Noodles78 says

Just as fabulous as the first. Brilliant characters, intriguing story and just god damn awesome!

Kieran Fanning says

Every bit as good as book 1. Beautifully structured and written, this series already has the feel of a classic. Wonderful world-building. Lord of the Rings with rabbits. Loved it!

Jenni Frencham says

Larwood, Kieran. The Gift of Dark Hollow. Faber Faber, 2017.

The rabbits are at war with some evil borg-like creatures that take rabbits and turn them into monstrous part-machines. Podkin and his siblings are living in hiding, but they learn that there is a special gift that has been hidden. If they can acquire the gift, then they can forge some weapons and possibly defeat their enemies. But there is a long journey between their hiding place and that of the gift.

This is a perfect gift for fans of fantasy involving talking animals such as the Redwall series. The story is intense at times but not overly violent or scary. There is some great world-building in this story and the characters are well-developed. Highly recommended.

Recommended for: tweens

Red Flags: minor fantasy violence

Overall Rating: 4/5 stars

Read-Alikes: Watership Down, Redwall, the Warriors series

I received a complimentary copy of this book through Netgalley for the purpose of review.

Katy Noyes says

Like a shorter Redwall - rabbit fantasy adventure series.

I devoured the Redwall books as a pre-teen, a wonderful saga over many thick books about mice (and others) battling an evil character, with mythological elements.

This series reminds me of those, but are much more accessible for a slightly younger audience, and have a wonderful bookend narrative structure, with a storyteller telling an apprentice (or audience) the internal tale. It works brilliantly, as the narrator himself is a character in his own stories (we as readers know this), and he

has his own story outside of the one he is telling.

Podkin One-Ear, told about previously, has another of his long backstory told to the storyteller's new apprentice, as the Gorm (mechanised rabbits intent on destruction) continue to ravage the land. Still young himself, and along with his sister and baby brother, he forms alliances and comes into the possession of magical items that may be useful in the fight against evil.

A gripping adventurous fantasy, with some mature touches (one character must kill something every day without fail) and a story that doesn't pander to a young audience.

Love the period feel of this, and the structure is refreshingly different. I look forward to more stories from Podkin's 'bard'.

The audio version works well, as the story is 'told' to us, as it is to the listener within the book. It was easy enough to follow both the plot and who is speaking. I didn't listen with my son as we haven't read the first together, but I think he would enjoy the adventure in a year or two.

I would recommend this to readers/listeners aged 8 or 9 and above.

With thanks to Nudge Books for providing a sample Audible copy.

Kim Dyer says

I'm really glad to say that The Gift of Dark Hollow really improved on Podkin One-Ear, addressing a lot of the issues that I found with this story.

The novel starts to flesh out the bigger picture. We start to see more of the different races of rabbits that occupy the world, as well as the different tribes and orders that they have formed. The story goes beyond this, providing a few tantalising hints of the ancient race that came before. This really helped to draw me further into Podkin's world and want to learn more about it.

The story is structured in much the same way as the first instalment, framed as a travelling bard telling the tale of a legendary hero. This story in question is a snapshot of Podkin's life, telling the story of his adventures as he seeks out another one of Gifts. While the story is perhaps a little slow to start, it quickly becomes enthralling as Podkin is once again forced to find his courage and face the terrifying Gorn. This novel felt a lot better paced than the last, balancing the quieter scenes and action nicely to build to a satisfying climax.

The novel also started to hint at a large story for the Bard, as much more time was spent on the present day plot. While nothing really comes of this in this book beyond him taking on an apprentice, it does set the groundwork for the danger that will inevitably follow. My only small issue with this story was really its ending as, much like the previous instalment, this was quite abrupt and gave the story an episodic feel.

The characters in this book were a lot stronger than last time. Podkin gradually learns that there are more important things than being the hero and the importance of acting in interest of the greater good. While he does receive a second gift in this story, I was glad to see that these were underused this time, giving Podkin plenty of time to use his wits rather than magical deus ex machinas.

Better still was the character development for Paz. While she was sidelined in the last novel quite horribly, this time she really came into her own. She finally seems to have settled into a role in which she is comfortable and gains an incredible Gift of her own. This time around, Paz's role is vitally important in the climax and it was nice to see her and Podkin working together to save the day.

All in all, I thought that this story was great. It really improved on the first book with its great world building and strong characters. I can't wait to see where Larwood will take the series next.

Elaine says

Podkin and his sister Paz continue to surprise the adults with their usefulness and bravery as Podkin wrestles with insecurity and wanting to prove himself. It sounds very much like other fantasy books geared for kids, except these are rabbits.

What I liked:

- the story within a story, with the current day bard's surreptitious behavior intertwined with the heroic story from his past;
- interesting to see more of the magical gifts come into play. i like the idea that each Gift has a weakness so it cannot make the bearer too overpowered.
- rabbits
- leaves room for more of the story as there's the unresolved plotlines of Vetch and the danger the bard is in.

What I didn't like:

- various unnecessary references to getting drunk in a book targeted for kids
- the Bonedancers that worship the Goddess of Death-just too dark for me

Cindy Hudson says

Longburrow: The Gift of Dark Hollow continues the tale of Podkin One-Ear, a young rabbit determined to save his community from the threat of the Gorm—evil mutations of rabbitkind. Teaming up once again with his older sister Paz and younger brother Pook, Podkin sets off in search of a Gift of the Goddess that may be able to cut through iron and defeat the enemy.

Author Kieran Larwood has created a second book in this fantasy series that's just as full of adventure as the first. Podkin, along with his family and friends, sets off once again on a quest that will bring him into contact with new allies and old enemies. To find success, he will have to face his fears and draw on the strengths of everyone in his group.

The Gift of Dark Hollow is great fun and should leave fans of the series eagerly anticipating the next title. I recommend it for ages 9 to 12.

The publisher provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Laura D says

The Gift of Dark Hollow continues the story of Podkin One-ear and it is just as good as the first book. Having survived the battle against Scramashank and chopping off one of his legs, Podkin, Paz and Pook along with Crom and the others hole up in Dark Hollow, a warren hidden within Grimheart forest. Hidden away from immediate danger Podkin starts to feel unappreciated and useless, consequently, he decides to explore their new warren. During this exploration Podkin happens upon the Gift of Dark Hollow and sets into motion a course of events that may just help the rabbits defeat the Gorm.

This book introduces several new characters, most notably Zarza, a bonedancer, Yarrow the bard and Vetch, who is a mystery but there are hints of his possible involvement in book 3. Like with book 1 all the characters are nicely fleshed-out and the relationships between the rabbits is heart-warming at times.

With 'The Gift of Dark Hollow', the Five Realms series continues to be a brilliant fantasy series full of great characters and action. Yet again I am looking forward to the next book in the series.

HP Saucerer says

A gripping, adventurous fantasy even more magical than the first. Beautifully structured and written with wonderful characters. An entirely captivating series - bring on the third installment!

Brenda says

The Five Realms series has the feel of a story being told around a campfire. Each book is told from the vantage point of an old bard, with the first book centered around a holiday gathering and the second a tale told while the bard and his new apprentice travel across the countryside. Occasional the bard pauses his stories of Podkin One-Ear to converse with his audience, in this case, Rue. The writing style so reminds me of Brian Jacques Redwall series with our hero Podkin One-Ear and his band of daring rabbits trying to fend off the evil Gorm army by acquiring magical weapons and going off into battle. The black and white illustrations by David Wyatt are gorgeously detailed and I especially loved the ones of Zarza the bonedancer, a new character added to the story. I'm really looking forward to the next book in the series.

** E ARC received from Edelweiss Plus **

Lauren Shortle says

I really do love these little series of books. It's full of fun and adventure and you really do fall in love with the characters and the writing of the books always makes you feel like you're there having the adventure with Podkin and his family. It's an easy going enjoyable book.

Jack says

The Gift of Dark Hollow by Kieran Larwood

Warning: this review may contain some spoilers for The Legend of Podkin One-Ear, the first book in the series.

Fun and fast-paced, The Gift of Dark Hollow is the second book in the Five Realms series by Kieran Larwood. It picks up almost immediately where the first book, The Legend of Podkin One-Ear, left off. Podkin; his sister, Paz; his baby brother, Pook; their erstwhile guardians, Crom and Brigid, and a whole host of rabbits rescued from the grips of the merciless Gorm - including their comatose mother - are taking shelter in the warren of Dark Hollow, deep in the heart of Grimwood Forest. Meanwhile, in the other part of the story, our Bard has decided he had best be moving on from Thornwood, joined by Rue, a younger son of the chieftain, with him as a potential apprentice.

I felt that the pace of this book was slightly slower than the first book, especially in relation to Podkin's story: less actually seems to happen. However, this isn't really a criticism. In the first book, the Bard's story didn't feel important until right at the very end, but this isn't the case in this book. Knowing the Bard's true identity, we find him desperately hiding this identity from all comers, including other travelling bards and his new apprentice. This adds a whole new element to the story and one which I enjoyed.

As in the previous book, Podkin is joined by a whole host of characters. From the last book, we still have Crom, Brigid, and Mish and Mash. Of these, Brigid was easily my favourite. In this book, we are introduced to a new group, and I really enjoyed these new members of Pod's gang. We got a young, adventurous bard out for a good story, a masked assassin and a coward, who, in my opinion, only cares about one person: himself. They all added something extra to the group, forcing the acrobatic brother and sister of act, Mish and Mash, further back on my list of characters. The characters from the old book all got on so well, were harmonious in their goals, whereas the new ones add an element of conflict and mistrust, making the interactions that much more interesting to read.

One thing that I have been really impressed with in both the Five Realms books is the strength of the opening chapters. For both, Larwood has hit the nail on the head with the sense of intrigue inspired from both.

Like the previous book in the series, I would certainly recommend this book to people looking for a fun, quick read – and of course to children. Though, as with most sequels, it goes without saying that you should read the previous book in the series first!

Catch more of my reviews at: <https://jackshelton89.wixsite.com/jac...>

Anne says

I put off reading this as long as possible because I know the next book is not out in the U.S. until August 2019, but I dipped in and it grabbed me. I usually am ambivalent about series, because the following books never feel as fresh or interesting as the first book, but this one proves to be the exception.

The author's writing gets stronger with every book he writes. I continue to love the told-by-a-bard premise, and am finding myself more and more drawn into that world as much as Podkin's story. The author has seeded intrigue into the bard's story line, but even before then I found the bard's world just as well-developed as Podkin's.

Once again, my review does not do justice to the book. This is a lovely middle grade read for adventure lovers, fantasy lovers, and animal lovers. I continue to hand sell it at my library as perfect for Tolkien lovers and those not quite ready for Tolkien or Watership Down.

Robin Stevens says

Maybe it's because I grew up on the Redwall series, but I can't get enough of Keiran Larwood's Five Realms books. They're so compellingly told and exciting - and who doesn't love warrior rabbits?! I'm a huge fan pf Podkin One Ear, and I'm delighted to say that this second book doesn't disappoint. (8+)

Please note: this review is meant as a recommendation only. Please do not use it in any marketing material, online or in print, without asking permission from me first. Thank you!

Stephen Connor says

Podkin, Paz and Pook have survived - just - and are now holed up in Grimheart forest, avoiding the Gorm at all costs. Podkin, however, is feeling less than appreciated and goes for a wander in his new surroundings, where he stumbles upon a new Gift. This leads him to overhear a conversation about where another has been hidden, a Gift that can help them end the Gorm forever.

And so begins another epic tale of these wonderful rabbits. There are more of them, but this time, instead of running away from danger, they are choosing to walk right into it.

As with the first book, the relationships between Podkin and Paz, and Podkin and Crom, show real heart, while new characters such as Zarza and Vetch offer possible hints of what is to come in book 3.

Again, my favourite element of the book is the bard, who is on his own journey with an apprentice-to-be, Rue. He looks after Rue in a slightly curmudgeonly manner but ultimately shows the love he was once shown - a thoughtful ending wraps up his story (for now) very poignantly.

Another must-read.
