



Black Sun Light My Way

Jo Spurrier

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Return to the wintry landscape of Ricalan and the magnificent storytelling of Jo Spurrier, in **BLACK SUN LIGHT MY WAY**

Sierra has always battled to control her powers, but now her life and Isidro's depend on keeping her skills hidden from the Akharians as they draw closer to Demon's Spire. In the relics left by Ricalan's last great mage, Isidro hopes to find the knowledge Sierra needs to master her powers, but instead uncovers his own long-buried talent for magecraft.

When Sierra's untrainable powers turn destructive, she has nowhere to turn for help but to the uncertain mercy of an old enemy. What will Rasten do when she returns to his hands at last?

When Isidro believes he has lost all he loves, he finds comfort in the arms of the Akharian mage Delphine. But soon he is called into battle once again to stand against the greatest evil the north has ever known.

Black Sun Light My Way Details

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Author : Jo Spurrier

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From Reader Review Black Sun Light My Way for online ebook

Krystal says

If this was a movie, it would definitely be **rated R for violence and sex**. And I would definitely watch it.

Repeatedly.

Carrying on from the first book, our friends quickly make their way back to one another and grudgingly work with the bad guy we all secretly love, *Rasten*. He's kind of a dick but deep down he's traumatised and actually kinda sweet so **be prepared for some feels here**.

Sierra and Isidro are desperately in need of *training montages*, so they both learn a bit more of the craft but not nearly to the extent I anticipated. The magic is actually pretty vague and confusing and not particularly well-described. This book gets **a bit more political** (always my least favourite part of fantasy) and there's lots of talk of armies and negotiations and who is mad at whom etc. Relatively dull, but it fortunately doesn't go into too much detail.

Mostly I was just happy to go along for the ride. I wasn't trying to figure anything out, or determine what would happen next. I'm actually grateful to *Game of Thrones* for renewing my belief that main characters can totally die. It made the tension that much greater, and thus the story more exciting.

Some elements I did guess thanks to some pretty terrible writing, but it wasn't major spoilers. The writing is actually pretty decent in terms of atmosphere and setting the scene, it's just a little clumsy with setting up future events, leaving it slightly predictable in places. That being said, so much happened in this novel that I never really knew where it was going. **This book covers much more distance than the first!**

The core characters are still mostly lovable, and we get to know them a little more, as well as newcomer Delphine. Aside from her, though, there aren't any fresh faces. A minor disappointment, but not a deal breaker.

How 'bout sex, huh?!! I actually appreciated that it was dealt with in such a no-fuss manner. (view spoiler) I'm not big on sex scenes, but I was so thankful it was not revered and likened to suns, stars, explosions, fireworks and the like. Sex is just such a base human act, and it was nice to encounter a book that didn't make a big deal out of it. (view spoiler)

Here's a Fun Fact: This book actually gave me nightmares. Legit, woke-up-with-terror-and-disgust, nightmares. I dreamt I was having scones with the queen and there was a Smaug-like Chinese dragon flying around entertaining us but it flew too low and crashed into the ground and then some guy said, 'I'll do it, it's my horse' and then I realised that a horse had been the one controlling the dragon and on crashing it had broken something and it was thrashing around all distraught and dying and OH MY GOD I STILL FEEL LIKE CRYING OVER WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT POOR HORSE, I can't go into detail because you'll think I'm a proper psycho but safe to say I woke up feeling distraught and ill and wondering what the hell was wrong with me. Then I remembered a snippet of what I'd read before going to bed and, look, my imagination is clearly out of control but the point I'm trying to make is that **THE VIOLENCE IS REAL YO**. So, um, yay? I mean, I actually really enjoy violence in books (I swear I'm not a psycho) but this one kinda snuck up on me? It's definitely adult fantasy, though. It has some seriously brutal scenes.

I think I was more in love with the first book but I still really enjoyed reading this one. I think it was weaker in terms of the plot because it was all a bit unclear to me, but I'm looking forward to everything becoming clearer in the last book. I particularly enjoyed Rasten's journey in this one so will be interesting to see where he ends up!

Dennis says

After struggling with the first book and continued to struggle with the second one was well. Great character development as always, but the plot felt really stale in the beginning. But luckily it picked up after about the third of the book and I was not able to put the book down anymore.

Just ordered the third book and can't wait to read it.

shari.macdonald says

x excellent

Like this series a lot. The character were greatest of twist an turns. No end to the trouble they get Into fast paced an very good plot lines.

Rochelle says

Black Sun Light My Way is the second book in the Children of the Black Sun trilogy, and I have to say that I liked book 1, Winter Be My Shield, better than this one. This one was a whole lot darker than the first. I really think this is a great book, but it was harder to read and I had to stop in some places and take a breather.

SO MUCH HAPPENS IN THIS BOOK, it felt like I was reading books 2 and 3 one after the other. About half way through this book turned and went in directions I didn't like (one thing I have to say about this book is that it definitely isn't predicable). It broke my heart. Issey, how could you? And Sierra, you poor, poor girl.

The numerous characters really shine in this book. They are full of personality and felt so real. Their bravery and loyalty is unshakable, willing to do whatever it takes to ensure the people they love are safe. All the old characters you fell in love with in the first book are back, and there are some new ones too. A new character that I loved was Nirveli, she was such a totally different character than you usually read about. I don't want to spoil anything so that's all I'll say about her. We meet Kell in this book and he is one of the most disgusting, evil men I have ever read. I absolutely hated him.

The ending was quiet violent. This book is not for the weak stomached that's for sure. I am weak stomached, which is why i don't read too many of these grim dark fantasies, though some, like this one, are just too good to resist. I hate reading about sexual violence more than any other type of violence and there is so much in this book because of the reality of the world it is set in. It is not described in graphic detail by any means, but just the mention of it is enough to sicken me.

One loose end is tied up in the book, but that leaves so many other that aren't, and I have no idea what lies

waiting for these characters in book three – I have big hopes for Cam and Mira, but I am utterly terrified for the other characters. Despite that, I can't wait for book three.

Aside from the darker parts, I really enjoyed this book, it was a compelling read with an intricately woven plot and thorough world building. If you can handle the darker parts than it truly is a stand out fantasy and I highly recommend it. Jo Spurrier is a fantastic writer and she has created a cast of enchanting characters that will sink deep into your heart and stay with you long after you close the book.

Janna says

I so incredibly want Sierra and Rasten to be end game but I know it will never happen. Am I too afraid to read the last book and have my pipe dream crushed?

Rain says

'Middle book Syndrome'. Pace too slow, and enough of the pain & suffering drawn out in repetitive detail. Nonetheless, I liked the first, and will read the third.

Erin-Claire says

This review is informed by having finished all the series, but I'll just repeat the review in each one.

Overall I'm glad to have read to the end of the third book, I thought the story was worthwhile and well done, the character development definitely improved over the series, and the magic system was pretty original (I would really like to read a series set later in time that explored the magic a lot more).

Warning for spoilers ahead.

Characters:

Sierra – did we ever really get to know her? Motivations were often a little unclear and seemed more to suit the plot than actually fit her character, and her character moved further and further from the limelight as the series continued. The character development was limited in a way because the reader never really got to know much about any of the characters. While avoiding info-dumping is important, I really wish I could have got a sense of each character's back story fairly early in the book, because I was still trying to piece together exactly where everyone was from and how they fit together halfway through the third book. Having said that, Rasten's character arc was fantastic and the characterisation of his mental state mostly very believable.

Magic system:

Totally lacking in clarity! A bit like characters – there was an info dump on how magic worked somewhere in I think the third book. This should have been somewhere near the start of the first because it was never completely clear til then. The reader needs to understand the system so it's not a distraction wondering if you understand it yet.

Torture:

Torture was a central theme of the book. Questionable whether it was perhaps too much, too often. Was it really believable? Especially, is it believable that anyone can put up with that much? The author does a fairly good job of showing the post-traumatic injury done to everyone by the torture, especially in the second and third books. But is it realistic?

Slavery:

I could just about cope with the torture scenes, but the whole depiction of slavery was a bit too much – made me want to throw the book against the room. I don't really enjoy slogging through those 'how much awful can we put the character through before they rise in triumph on the other side' type books (although the redeeming feature here I guess is the lack of rising in triumph...)

I didn't really find the behaviour of the 'slavers' group that believable. It felt at times like the author had read the worst accounts of child abuse, torture and slavery and decided that in societies where these things happened, they must happen in their worst form, all the time, to everyone. Real people and societies are much more varied, their motivations and personal convictions clash. I didn't feel this came through well in the first book in particular.

Disability, acquired injury, trauma:

The way the author deals with the mental and physical trauma and disability acquired through a traumatic incident seems good (although speaking from limited experience or research). At least she doesn't have them get over it and get better, and especially not within an unrealistic timeframe. Because it's such a trope of fantasy books, I kind of expected Sierra's power would actually turn out to be a power to heal, so it was nice to be surprised here (even though her power was never really well explained).

Relationships and romance:

I liked the diversity of relationships, and especially a whole culture where monogamous relationships were not the norm (although it was never quite explained how the family system worked). The development of relationships between the characters, whether romantic or not, was one of the best bits of character development in the books and one of my favourite parts of the books.

Shaheen says

This book should be entitled "The Impossible Choices Plaguing my Favourite Characters, and the Heartache that Ensues." Sierra, Isidro, Cam, Mira and Rasten were all put through so much throughout *Black Sun Light My Way*, it was kind of a relief when the book ended!

I thought the strongest element of the previous book was the characters, and this is again the case. Sierra continues to surprise me, willing to make extraordinary sacrifices for her make-shift family - the people who saved her from certain death in the last book. The character that surprised me is Isidro - I'd never really doubted his bravery nor his god-naturedness, but he shines throughout this novel. The author does a brilliant job of examining the motivations and psychology of all her characters, and even though the focus is firmly on Sierra, Isidro and Rasten, I love the glimpses we get into Cam and Mira's relationship.

There's a lot of blood, violence and torture in this book, as we get intimately acquainted with the rituals of Kell the Blood-Mage. Although I found it disturbing, and sometimes had to skip over the worst parts, I never felt it was gratuitous. Even the sexual violence served a purpose: to show the very real dangers the slaves

faced at the hands of the Akharian Slavers, and to depict Kell's complete dominance of over Rasten. I was glad to find that Rasten became one of the key players in this instalment, and I feel like I have gotten to know him a lot better. He's a complicated character - groomed as a Blood-Mage and prone to anger and violence, but he shows that he genuinely cares for Sierra.

The expansion of the world is another aspect I liked about *Black Sun Light My Way* - we first came upon our Ricalan comrades in the full blast of Winter, and now, as the Thaw begins, we get to witness the new challenges that they face. I'd mistakenly believed that their troubles would lessen as the weather warmed up. The world-building is again impeccable, and I enjoyed the way that the Akharian and Ricalan lifestyles were explained, especially when the Akharian mage Delphine suffered from culture shock.

Jo Spurrier has delivered another amazing book in *Black Sun Light My Way*, and fans of *Winter Be My Shield* are sure to enjoy it as much as I did. This series is also perfect for those looking for something outside of the usual sword-and-sorcery of high Fantasy, and it is a great entry point for newcomers to the genre.

You can read more of my reviews at [Speculating on SpecFic](#) .

Anni (Tea in the Treetops) says

The second book in the Children of the Black Sun series delivers even more excitement, suffering and sparkly magic than the first book did, in rather unpredictable ways. I had a lot of trouble putting it down – certainly no second-book curse to be found here!

It was a full year ago that I read *Winter Be My Shield*, so the details of the story were a little hazy. Unfortunately there is no recap at the start of *Black Sun Light My Way* so I struggled for the first few chapters to remember what had just happened. I'll try to summarise.

Isidro and Mira have been captured and are now slaves belonging to an Akharian mage scholar, Delphine. She knows Isidro is a “sensitive”, so is using him to help her to find the lost cache of lore left by the great mage Vasant. Sierra has agreed to help her former tormentor, Rasten – to train with him to use her corrupted powers properly and help him bring down their master, the great mage and general psychopath, Kell. She is about to allow herself to be captured by the Akharians to join Isidro and assist him to find the lost mage lore, to expand her powers and hopefully be able to use that over Rasten when next they meet.

This story is certainly not for the faint-hearted. There's a LOT of torture and rape is frequently mentioned even if it's not described in explicit terms. I can't quite remember if the first book was quite as dark as this instalment, but wow, I certainly needed to read something a bit lighter once I got to the end of it all!

Despite the darkness, this is an absolutely enthralling world. The magic system is amazing, with corrupted sympathies drawing power drawn from pain or pleasure – usually through torture and humiliation of others. The system has painstakingly detailed rules and rapidly expanding lore – I hope we get to learn more about the Akharian mages, as well as the lost Ricalani magic.

The characters are what makes this story really come to life. Poor Sierra! With her power draining everyone around her, she is forced to leave her friends. I found it a little off-putting that she would immediately run into the arms of another, but even more strange to me was the path that Isidro took as soon as Sierra left –

without spoiling anything, I suppose depression can make people do unexpected things, and Isidro does spend a fair amount of time down in the dumps. Rasten's growth as a character is brilliant – I was really cheering for him there by the end! Delphine being part of this story lent an interesting cultural contrast between the Akharian and Ricalani cultures, with the Ricalani's communal living and multiple wives baffling her.

There were so many unexpected turns in this story, I have no idea where it can all go next, but I can't wait to read more in this cold and cruel world, although I am slightly worried about what more Jo Spurrier can put her characters (and readers) through! Highly recommended to high fantasy fans, but just be forewarned about the grisly nature of the story.

This review was originally posted on The Oaken Bookcase in August, 2013.

Lindsay says

A very satisfying conclusion to the ~~duology~~ wait, what? This is a trilogy isn't it? A very clever way of subverting the "boring second book" of a trilogy.

Sierra, Mira and Isidro are slaves of the Akharans at the start of the book, and about to enter the Demon's Spire, the great store of ancient Ricalan magic. Not far away is the Ricalan army and the Mesentreians are also in the mix. Isidro grows into his magic, Rasten continues to be a complex character and Sierra becomes more tragic. Delphine is something of a revelation as well. It's difficult to describe much of the situation here without spoiling the hell out of this book and the previous one. The marketing blurb is a precise example of this, basically giving away half the plot of the book.

Gone is the plodding pace of the first book. The plot in the first half is dizzying in its progress, and the second half is a surprise too, in that it covers stuff that you don't expect to be addressed until the final volume. Ultimately, the trilogy is not what you expect it's going to be from the point of view of the first book.

Looking forward to the next one.

S.B. Wright says

Black Sun Light My Way is Jo Spurrier's second novel and the follow up to Winter Be My Shield (reviewed here). It's book two of what I suspect will be a trilogy, though it's ending surprised me – it didn't feel like the traditional middle of a trilogy. I like to be surprised and I am eager to see what Spurrier does in the final book. I thought I had a handle on where she was going, now I am not so sure.

At the end of Winter Be My Shield, Sierra having managed to learn some control of her powers lets herself be caught by Akharian slavers in an attempt to get closer to Isidro and the potential treasure hidden at Demon Spire. An uneasy alliance is formed between Rasten, Isidro and Sierra as they manage to manipulate the Akharian's and gain access to Vasant's treasure trove of Ricalani magic.

Much of what I thought to be the goals of the major characters seemed to be resolved by midway through the story. It turned out to be a decoy by Spurrier an easy victory before she really tightened the screws on the characters. Much of the tension achieved in this novel comes from the testing and twisting of bonds between those characters. Much of the physical danger and tension comes again from isolating the characters from their allies and from each other.

Rape as a threat to characters and bystanders features heavily in *Black Sun Light My Way*. Spurrier, as she did in *Winter Be My Shield*, didn't restrict the threat or act to female characters. I like(appreciate maybe is a better word) that she takes this realistic approach (modern fantasy seems to skirt around the use of rape in conflict as a weapon used against all genders) but the prevalence of it as a way to manipulate the readers emotions came close to being overused for my reading.

There was some anachronistic dialogue that jarred with me much as it did with book one, phrases or figures of speech that sound out of place because they are modern. But then we are reading fantasy; who says fantasy needs to be written in with an equally unrealistic 19th century English vocabulary?

What continued to impress me was Spurriers research and her use of it in bringing the Wild alive as a very visceral setting. Pregnancy as a plot device was an interesting and realistic addition to the story and adds another layer of emotional connection between characters that I am sure Spurrier will use against the reader in book three.

Despite the points mentioned above Spurrier has an engaging style. This was an easy book to slip into but very hard to get out of - I read from midway to the end in one sitting. If you are a fan of Trudi Canavan's work and are prepared for the adult content then I heartily recommend *Black Sun Light My Way* and *Winter Be My Shield*.

This book was provided by the publisher.

An interview that I conducted with Jo for Galactic Chat can be found [here](#).

Nicole Luiken says

Intense, but very good with complex characters and situations. The world-building is excellent. This is book two. Book one is *Winter Be My Shield*.

Dark Matter says

Nalini Haynes reviewed this book; for more reviews by Nalini, see [Nalini Haynes on Dark Matter Zine](#).

Black Sun Light My Way is book 2 in the *Children of the Black Sun* series, the first being *Winter Be My Shield* (reviewed [here](#)). I interviewed Jo Spurrier, available as video or as an MP3 download.

Winter Be My Shield is so epically awesome that I've spent a lot of time pondering that tome since reviewing it. I've considered removing and/or rewriting my review because my opinions have changed upon

reflection and I learnt I made at least one error: the polygamous society is based on a real-world society in Siberia. I haven't changed my review because reviews are typically first reactions to first reads; to alter my review a year later seems ethically questionable.

Black Sun Light My Way continues the story of Sierra, a powerful Sympath – person who gets magic from other people's pleasure or pain. Kell, the Sith-like Blood Mage who is the truest villain in the story, sends Rasten, his Blood Mage minion, to hunt Sierra down and return her to him.

Rasten is suffering from Stockholm Syndrome, learned helplessness and deep-seated rage against Kell for all the suffering Kell has inflicted upon Rasten for ten years. Rasten's plan is to work with Sierra to defeat Kell but first he needs to convince Sierra to join forces.

Isidro was captured by Kell and tortured for the power Isidro's suffering gave Kell. The damage to the bones in Isidro's right arm has left him with a permanent disability and susceptible to great pain. Isidro is Sierra's love; her magic helps him – sometimes – and hurts him at others.

Delphine, from a race of conquerors who subjugate their women, is now a prisoner of the people who were once her slaves. Delphine falls in love with Isidro, creating a romantic triangle where issues of race, politics and society are explored. Society is particularly developed as Delphine learns more about her captors' lifestyle where marriages tend to comprise a minimum of two women and two men because their harsh environment requires a team working together to survive.

The second in a trilogy, *Black Sun Light My Way* builds tension, masterfully developing the plot and characters. And the conclusion. OMG. I didn't see that coming. Now I have to wait for the final instalment, WAH!

Highly recommended, Jo Spurrier's *Black Sun Light My Way* is more than a debut trilogy, it's BRILLIANT.

Mark Webb says

This review forms part of my contribution to the Australian Women Writers 2014 Reading Challenge. All my 2014 AWWC reviews can be found [here](#).

Black Sun Light My Way by Jo Spurrier is the second book in the Children of the Black Sun trilogy. You can read my review of the first book, *Winter Be My Shield*, [here](#).

The political and social system that was introduced in the first novel is solidly developed in this second novel. We learn a lot more about other societies, and the gradual expansion of the readers world view is handled well, with information provided at a good pace. There are nice touches which show the depth of the world building - for instance, the marital structures of a society mired in a harsh environment that incorporate multiple partners of both genders into a family unit. These elements provide some real depth to the story.

The series continues the portrayal of a hard and dangerous world, where characters aren't trying to be too nice. Issues of torture and rape are canvassed, and Spurrier doesn't shy away from exploring the real consequences of these actions. To that end, the character of Rasten (the main bad guy's apprentice) is used as a vehicle. Over the course of the novel, the readers perception of Rasten transforms from a pure villain to a

more complex, tragic figure who has been scarred, both physically and emotionally, by long term abuse. While his actions remain unsympathetic, he becomes more understandable.

In the first novel, I found one of the main characters (Isidro) was a little bit too understanding of other people's points of view. A lot of interpersonal drama was resolved by him seeing things from the other point of view and then disarming the situation. While this was very sensible of him, it did sometimes feel a little too "easy" as a way of moving the plot forward. In this second novel, the character is portrayed with more issues, including bouts of severe depression. This lent a better balance to the character, and given that he features strongly it helped the balance of the book overall.

The book ended with at what seemed to be, at first blush, a surprising point. Spurrier sets up a particular "quest", which is actually resolved by the end of this book. While reading, I kept waiting for another complication to be introduced that would delay the completion of the quest and was surprised when that complication never emerged. However in retrospect I can see that it was a necessary step to allow the characters to grow. Without it, the third book would have run the risk of being repetitive. So, when I sat back and considered the book, the confusion I felt on first reading was well and truly resolved.

Overall this is an excellent second book to a trilogy. Well worth the read, however I wouldn't consider it a stand alone book. If you're interested, definitely go back and start with *Winter Be My Shield*.

I should also mention that back in 2013, Sean Wright, leader of the intrepid Galactic Chat crew, interviewed Jo Spurrier for the podcast. That podcast can be found [here](#).

I also reviewed this book on my website.

Tsana Dolichva says

Black Sun Light My Way by Jo Spurrier is the sequel to *Winter Be My Shield*, which I absolutely loved when I read it last year. This review contains minor spoilers for book one.

Before I started writing this review, I went and read over my review of the first book and I was struck by something I hadn't realised when I was reading. Although the two books follow the same characters and are linked by a logical sequence of events, they actually explore very different themes. While the first book dealt a lot with ostracism, particularly of mages, the second book deals much more strongly with difficult choices and personal sacrifices.

The torture (of various characters at the hands of the evil Blood-Mage Kell) is also dealt with differently. It seemed to me that in the first book all the torture was near the start and used to establish that Kell was in fact pretty evil. *Black Sun Light My Way* does something similar with recently enslaved people being raped (well, threatened by rape, I don't think any of it took place on the actual page) and beaten by the invaders. But the most horrific (to me) bits were later on in the book when Kell's torture dungeon was revisited. I didn't think any of the violence was gratuitous but it affected me more than in the first book, partly because of elements of choice Spurrier incorporated into the story (I can't be more specific without spoilers). This is not a book for the faint of heart.

I also found Rasten's character much more interesting in *Black Sun Light My Way* than in the previous book.

In *Winter Be My Shield* we saw him as the torture-conditioned and brain-washed apprentice to the Blood-Mage. In this book, we see a lot more of him and his point of view. The way he thinks in contrast with how Sierra (and, y'know, most saner people) thinks is often quite stark. There was a powerful moment when (view spoiler) It's impossible for the reader not to be on Sierra's side (I hope) and the whole scene was a stark and frustrating demonstration of just how much psychological damage Kell has inflicted on Rasten in four years.

On a cheerier note, Delphine, a mage from the invading country, becomes an interesting prominent character. Her role evolves significantly over the book and I found it most interesting when she was used to give an outsider's perspective on the characters we know and love. Spurrier uses her to great effect to highlight some of the differences between her culture and the other main characters', at the same time helping the reader understand how aspects of both cultures work. She was a character that at different times I cheered for and against, and that I could feel that way is a mark of Spurrier's excellent writing skills.

The last thing I want to mention is that I loved the ending. No details because spoilers, but it's not your usual book two ending. More got resolved than I expected, but there's no shortage of problems left for the characters to deal with in book three.

Black Sun Light My Way was an excellent read. I don't recommend skipping *Winter Be My Shield*, so if you haven't read the first book, do that first. In general, though, I highly recommend this series to all lovers of epic/high/big fat/whatever you want to call it fantasy. As I said earlier, it's not for the faint of heart, but on the other hand it's not significantly worse (in terms of ick and violence) than a lot of the genre.

4.5 / 5 stars

You can read more of my reviews on my blog.
