



The Silver Lake

Fiona Patton

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In Anavatan, the city of the Silver Lake, the gods manifest on a regular basis. But if you are among the unpledged, it is hard to survive, especially during the three-night-long chaos known as Havo's Dance. When Havo's storms sweep through Anavatan, anyone who is unaffiliated had best find a safe place to hide or they risk madness or death. But this year, three young street orphans have been chosen for special attention by Incasa, the god of prophecy. When that God's dice roll during the height of Havo's Dance, these three boys-thieves and con artists-will discover their destinies. One will be bound by a life-or-death pledge that will see him marked as the future Champion of the War God, another forced to walk a perilous road as he seeks to master his talent as a seer, and the last will be cast forth from the city and claimed by the hungry spirits seeking a way into Anavatan and the precious power contained in the Silver Lake.

The Silver Lake Details

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Cissa says

I really liked the world here. The gods are very present and active in everyone's lives- "meddlesome" comes to mind, in fact. This leads to a fascinating implied polytheology!

I also very much liked the approach to gender/sex; there are people who are "bi-gender" and who can apparently at will change their genders; apparently even other people can petition a god and have her/his gender changed. Committed relationships have nothing to do with the sexes or genders of the people involved, nor does parenthood.

On the other hand, almost all of our main POV characters are male.

I am not at this point sure if I'll continue with the series- while i really liked the world, it seemed long to me- and apparently extends through 4 more books!- and I would probably (petty of me, I know) find it more interesting if at least ONE of the main 5 characters were female.

Ivy says

Interesting book.

Heather says

The first book of the Warriors of Estavia trilogy grabbed hold of me and wouldn't let go. Truly unusual and engrossing world with a gorgeous take on religion.

Vanessa says

Anavatan is the city of the gods. Long ago six gods were born in the heart of the Silver Lake, and they have become of the patrons of everyone who lives inside this city nestled next to the lake. Well, almost everyone. There are a few, mostly thieves, who haven't sworn themselves to any of the gods.

Three of these thieving street orphans—Spar, Brax, and Graize—have somehow captured the attention of Incasa, the God of Prophecy, who takes it upon himself to manipulate their destinies. On the night of Havo's dance, a three-night-long chaos heralding the coming of spring, the boys' lives are forever changed, and we come to realize that Incasa intends for at least one of them to eventually join him in the lake as one of the gods.

The first couple chapters of The Silver Lake slowly build up to the events of the night during Havo's dance at the end of chapter 3, but everything continues at a fast pace after that. We follow the three boys as Brax suddenly finds himself sworn to Estavia, the God of Battles, and he must learn to become a warrior; Spar as

his latent prophetic abilities begin to blossom; and Graize as his genius-madness leads the plainspeople to war against the people of Anavatan.

Patton's world building is impressive, just short of over-doing it—which means there's a great deal of establishing the setting, but she isn't heavy-handed about it (although there is some obvious expository dialogue). The city of Anavatan and the influence of all-too-real gods is interesting to witness, as she explains the inter-dependence of the people and the gods on each other for their prosperity.

The politics and personalities of the people and the gods influencing events is fascinating, as well, although she could have played the politics up a tad more.

Patton's characterizations are good, but I had a difficult time sympathizing with the main characters, at least until the very end when I finally began to feel for Spar. Watching him wrangle through his prophetic visions and the interference of others was engaging; he's an emotionally scarred little boy who's spent his young life living off the leavings of others and being suddenly thrust into a community of those sworn to a god leaves him bewildered.

With all the foreshadowing I was expecting a certain outcome in the climax. And although the climax was exciting and well-built up, it didn't turn out the way I thought it would. In some ways I was a little disappointed because I would have really enjoyed it, but then would it have meant less than success for the main characters? Or did they really succeed like they think they did? And how much of this did Incasa expect, was it part of the plan?

I guess I won't know until the next book.

Morgan says

Interesting series set in a land similar to Turkey, chronicling four young boys whose actions are leading to the birth of a new God... definitely a unique voice in the fantasy genre. Can't wait for the next one.

Vanessa says

"Gods are big, and They'll do you if you let Them."

Imagine a world in which everyone 100% knows that the Gods exist, because... they pop up out of their magical lake regularly to visit/fight for their believers.

Everyone is sworn to one of them (or technically should be - but you know how these things work) and their life revolves around them (which is ironically not as awful as it sounds). No atheist anywhere, but it doesn't mean the whole religion thing is any less complicated.

Imagine a world where bi-gender people exist who can switch between genders as they want. They can decide to live as a man or a woman or they can switch around depending on their mood.

Imagine a world in which you can marry any person you want, regardless of gender. You can even adopt

children without any problems. No one bats an eye.

So yes, it's a very interesting world. Of course there are some of the usual fantasy clichés (our protagonists are street rats at first, there are people who want to invade the magical city, prophecies etc.) but it's all neatly packed into pretty unique worldbuilding.

I also really liked the characters. Our street kids Brax, Spar and Graize have three distinct personalities that all need some serious character development, but they're children so you know they'll get it. Spar, the maybe powerful seer with a profound distaste for the Gods, being the most interesting to me. His bond with his adopted big brother Brax is the cornerstone of this story so far and truly heartwarming to read about - especially when he defends him from the arrogant Graize, who seems to have only eyes for Brax and whose seer-abilities seem to be so much stronger than Spar's own. Brax himself, who at the start of the story only knows devotion to his family and then starts to see one of the Gods in another light, actually reads as the main-main character in this book.

Of course there are a lot of other side-characters: fun old lady seers, stern young warrior seers, foreign princes, farmers, nomads, the Gods themselves who keep meddling in human affairs...

The other two that are worth a mention by name are Kemal and Yashar, a gay couple of warrior priests for the Goddess of War who become the new adoptive fathers of two of the boys. They were my favorites (especially Yashar and his humor), because you could really feel how much they love each other and their new sons. Wish there had been more of their backstory.

There were only two things that stopped me from giving this book five stars:

- 1.) It was kind of hard to get into. There were several POV switches (even late in the story, when I didn't expect a new character to pop up) and probably even worse, there was no glossary. I think it would have helped a lot, especially in the beginning. Of course one sort of gets the meaning of most words from the context, but you kind of miss things while reading when your brain is busy asking questions like: "Does abayos mean father specifically, or just parent?" over and over again.
- 2.) Some things are left rather vague, which makes the world building wobble a bit, like for example how bi-gender people work. They just think about it and all of their organs and hormones rearrange themselves? Do they have to do something specific? Can they avoid periods forever like this? What happens when they get pregnant in female form? Can they accidentally switch their child away? So many questions.

Nikki says

Actually, I couldn't really get into this one. I liked the kids at the beginning, but lost interest quickly when the author veered off to other characters. Too many strange names, complicated gods, and politics that I didn't understand. I didn't even make it to the third chapter. Ah well.

John Carter says

Yes, it does say "Book One of *The Warriors of Estavia*", but there are Book Ones and there are Book Ones.

This is not Book One like *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*—complete in itself although part of a much larger story. This is Book One like *The Fellowship of the Ring*: “You must get the next book or you will Never Know”; the only difference being that *The Two Towers* starts the next day or the next hour after *TFotR* while the seers here all agree that the next branch in the streams of possibility (and therefore, one assumes, the opening of *The Golden Temple* (Book Two)) won't occur for another five years.

I wish it were otherwise. The story's very intriguing. However. Patton seems to have got caught up in the thrill of world-building. There are six Gods, but only two of Them (she's insistent on the capitalization) have major roles; so when one of the others is mentioned you've got to flip to the inside flap of the jacket to remember who's Hearth and Home and who's Healing—or who's (“goodness, I forgot there was one!”) God of the Arts. She uses words from the language of her characters: for instance *delos* and *delinkos*, one of which means “apprentice” and the other, if I remember correctly, merely “child”; but which is which I couldn't tell you. Certainly “apprentice” could have replaced whichever word it was. You have to remember that words ending in *-os* are singular and an *-in* ending means the word is plural (so that more than one *delos* are *delin*; but that *-in* added to a word is an affectionate diminutive. Geography is important, but words like “lake”, “sea”, “island”, or “peninsula” are completely unknown, so you don't know whether you're talking about land or water, let alone which kind. (The only exception is the Silver Lake of the title—but even that is more often called Gol-Beyaz.) It's important to know on which coast of the lake towns are located and who's in which, but as there are a dozen or so of them and they're all called Something-Koy that's almost impossible. The hierarchy of both military and clerical ranks is never made clear (and is especially confusing in Estavia's service, because all Her priests are first and foremost officers in Her army).

As I said, a very intriguing story. But I just don't have the energy to spare to wade through two more volumes of it.

Alas.

Danielle says

Too much of the book was spent describing and dwelling on the many, many gods of the world. Not only that, but the pantheon and theology (in-general) were not advanced in nature or terribly unique. The characters did not make up for my loss of time. So why...? I didn't get why I was supposed to care. Not the finest mindframe from which to exit a book.

Prattle about gods... boring.

Marie Reed says

I'm shamelessly giving this book 5 stars. I truly enjoyed the way it was written. The dialogue was amazing, especially between the two main characters and their father figures, as well as the disjointed words of the primary antagonist. I enjoyed the concepts and theology the book brings to light as well as the nods to history (since this takes place in a fictional Turkey). Both a fun and awe-inspiring read. Get lost enough in it and you will be cheering and jeering at the end. Looking forward to reading the next in the series!

Jonathan Edward says

Curious. Bold. Refreshing. Unexpected.

These are some of the words that came to my mind as I read this book. It is unlike any fantasy story I've come across before. Ripping the reader away from "Western" culture, it is placed within a made up world resembling ancient Turkey. This was the main reason I wanted to keep reading: the very fact that it was so "un-Tolkien." The temples, the Raki, the Gods, it was all fresh and new in my experience.

Four stars. Not five because the beginning is rough. Chapter one is worth another read through at some point.

Two star for pushing me into a new cultural context and making me curious enough to look up names of places and food and drink in the Turkish language.

One star for a deeper experience of the fantasy genre, which can be found on page 247.

One star for ending the book with a believable and entertaining finish

Kourtnie McKenzie says

I picked up this book to get to know more about what DAW was accepting from female authors. I was surprised to find the people I was reading PoV from, with children (young teens) and homosexuals for main characters. It also used a parallel plot, just like my book; very enjoyable.

John Lawson says

I'm having a seriously hard time finishing this book. Even if I do finish it, it won't get more than one or two stars.
