



The Riddler's Gift

Greg Hamerton

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In a time when the world was ravaged by chaos, one kingdom remains; ordered, isolated, protected. Then Tabitha Serannon awakens an ancient power and the world begins to change.

She is hunted for her talent. The Shadowcasters whisper in her ears as their evil closes around her. Soon the Riddler walks beside her, but is he on her side?

She has a moment to learn the magic before she loses her grasp of the Lifesong, but the path she must follow leads into Darkness; into terror, treachery and desire.

To survive she must give voice to a music that she hardly understands, an enchantment that will echo through all time.

The Riddler's Gift Details

Date : Published July 31st 2007 (first published June 1st 2007)

ISBN : 9780958511841

Author : Greg Hamerton

Format : Paperback 643 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Magic

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From Reader Review The Riddler's Gift for online ebook

Nick Reys says

Life isn't fair. When one takes the time to think things over, he can come up with a thousand ways to illustrate this. One of them should be that Greg Hamerton isn't a well known author of fantasy literature, cause he sure deserves to be.

I discovered Hamerton with a little bit of luck. I stumbled upon the Fantasy Book Critic-blog and right around that time, they published a very positive review of his second book. Triggered by that and the positive comments on the first, I purchased both books on Hamerton's site. Something I don't regret at all.

The premise of the book fits the tried and true epic fantasy-recipe. Darkness ahead and beyond and the faith of it all lays in the hand of a little girl who's discovering her powers on the go.

Everything aboard for another epic rehash it seems, but Hamerton handels these ingredients very well and instead of rehashing he is refreshing.

For one, the novel is fast-paced. Little words are wasted on the big descriptions. The setting is translated into words, but only as much as necessary, which is quite a relief cause you never find yourself gaping at a full page dedicated to the beautiful flower with the bright red petals in the mistcovered field where the sheeps are waiting for... You get the picture.

This is also reflected in the buildup of the novel. After a preface, the story kicks in what a bang and tension is never really lowered after that.

The writing skills of Hamerton are also really fluid and captivating.

The plot is your typical epic fantasy, but there is something to it. Hamerton worked out this magicsystem consisting of axis, Sprites, Motes, song,... which gives everything a vivid touch and prevents the story from moving towards the obvious because of its limits.

Other things, such as the conclusion whole wizardfinding quest, is quite obvious halfway through the book. Whether it was intended or not, it's only a minor issue (if it is an issue at all) for everything that happens around it, is superb. Around page 450, tension rises dramatically as everything seems to fall apart and every step towards the light is countered by an even bigger step towards darkness. Right down till the last couple of pages, things are looking very bad and you can't but savour it all.

The characters are fleshed out very well. You'll love Tabitha and you'll love to hate the baddoers here. Apart from the obviously good and bad, there are these gray characters who's loyalty isn't clear and might influence the good...

An impressive fantasy debut that left me longing for more. Greg Hamerton is definately a name to watch!

TC says

I get lots of requests to review fantasy books and I decline more than I accept, but this one piqued my interest. This is a long book, approximately 650 pages, and could fairly be described as a fantasy epic. The author has created a kingdom with it's own lore and history, and pits the Lightgifters against the Shadowcasters. With the dark on the verge of obtaining the upper hand Tabitha becomes crucial to the survival of Eyri.

While the story is primarily one of good versus evil there is also romance as she finds herself drawn to the Swordmaster Garyll Glavenor. She's young, innocent and in need of protecting and he is the rugged law keeper, devoted to his role. I found things to like about both of them, but really enjoyed the character of the title, the Riddler. He offers Tabitha cryptic guidance but his allegiances are unclear. He is a quirky character with plenty of mystery and magic about him. There are a number of other characters of importance to the tale and the story unfolds from a number of perspectives.

I enjoyed the level of detail in the world the author has created, and read on to discover whether the dark forces would triumph. However I found this book almost disheartening long. When I felt like I was well into the story I realised I had hardly made a dent and at times, wondering how much more could possibly happen before a final encounter, found my attention drifting. However unlike other books I have read recently, where I felt like an editor and could easily have suggested cuts to improve it, I didn't feel like there was a lot of unnecessary description or redundant scenes. Possibly the fault is mine, with so much going on recently having an effect on my concentration. There were certainly plenty of switches from joy to danger and vice versa, with twists and turns and a gradual building of the information available to inform the reader which kept me going.

The author uses the English language to good effect, using some wonderful vocabulary without it feeling like he was trying use unusual words just to impress, which I always appreciate. I found it well written and if there were typos I didn't notice them. I would like to see where the series is going so would definitely like to read the second book.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

When I read a really good book, it's hard to write a review, because my words don't measure up to what I have read as an example of good writing. But, I do my best. Let me make it clear that I'm hardly a critical scholar when it comes to fantasy. Before I added this to my epic fantasy shelf, I checked out the definition of epic fantasy. As I read the description of epic fantasy elements, I ticked off a mental checklist, and this book fits all the descriptions of epic fantasy. Of course, as I said, I'm not an expert, but I felt that Mr. Hamerton wrote a story that took what was expected in an epic fantasy read, and did it very well, writing a story that mattered to him and captivated me as I read.

The Magic System

Interesting, and very complex. The magical system was one part science, one part high mathematics (those parts had me scratching my head a bit), one part spiritual, and one part philosophical. At times, it went a little over my head, but that's okay. I like to feel that I don't have everything all figured out when I read a book. I liked that the magic had rules to it. The magic couldn't come out of nowhere. It had to have a source, and the source could be depleted. In essence, even the most powerful wizard or magic-user could be magicked out. There was balance, although the 'dark lord' character, Cabal the Darkmaster, wanted to take that balance and shift it so he controlled all the magic available, so he could rule over all the lands. Thankfully, the good guys are fighting to keep that from happening.

Characters

The main character was a young woman named Tabitha Serannon. She was an endearing person, seemingly normal and not overly endowed with any particular strength, or so it seemed. Her gift was not something she thought greatly of. Her talent for music, and a good voice. If anything, it was a way to provide a living for herself, and it made her happy. Her mother was a Lightgifter (essentially a type of good magician with the power to heal using the force of light), and she one day hoped to follow in her footsteps, finding her parents' simple life as farmers not to her taste. As always, the yearning for adventure becomes a double-edged sword, and this young woman goes through a baptism of fire that is as believable as it is stirring. Although she has a bit of prodding along the way from an enigmatic figure named Twardy Zarost, otherwise known as the Riddler, nothing comes easy to this young woman. Through it all, I found her to be an engaging, likeable heroine. There is also Garyll Glavenor, the most formidable warrior in the land, the Swordmaster, who commands the Swords, an elite guard of warriors who protects the kingdom of Eyri. Love blooms between the couple, a love that is put to the test over the course of this book, each thinking they are not good or right enough for each other, and that life leads them in different directions. There is also Ashley Logan, an apprentice in the Lightgifters who also will face a very harrowing experience in this novel. And Mr. Hamerton gives us a truly harrowing villain in Kirjath Arkell, a Shadowcaster who is given the job of retrieving the lost ring coveted by the Darkmaster. You can guess where the ring ends up. Mr. Hamerton brought these characters to life, and I felt their pain and suffering as they fought an epic battle against the forces of dark, with the power to overwhelm them from the inside out.

Setting

Mr. Hamerton creates his own world that has a medieval feel. There is an added dynamic, in which the world is partitioned based on the deleterious effects of a power-mad wizard. Most people don't seem to know this save the eight wizards of the Gyre, who go through some incredible changes to keep this secret and to maintain a delicate balance.

Themes

I'll try to keep this from becoming too much of a book report and keep it simple here. The most dominant theme here is that each person fights an intimate battle against evil. Evil is a slippery slope. It starts out as a selfish need or thought that can lead to corruption. Each character in this book fights that battle, and some fight to the depths of their soul against succumbing to evil. It was very painful to see what some of the characters that I grew to love as I read this story went through, how they suffered, and their struggle against the effects of an evil that had worked its way throughout the kingdom. Although this message could seem fatalistic, I don't take it that way. In fact, there is hope in knowing that we do have a choice. It might not be easy, but we can choose to do what's right. We might fall, and fail ourselves and others, but that doesn't mean the war is over. We pick ourselves up again to fight the next battle. So there is always hope, in the end.

Overall Thoughts

I want to thank Mr. Hamerton for the opportunity to read his book. Fantasy is one of my all-time favorite genres, but I am expanding my palate, trying to decide what I like in the various subgenres. So his offer to read his book was definitely one that I wanted to take him up on. Additionally, I like discovering gems in the literary world. Books that don't get a lot of exposure, but are wonderful reads. This is definitely one of those books. His writing was lovely. There was an ease and a beauty to Mr. Hamerton's use of language. He showed a poise in his use of language and the writer's craft. I was completely engaged with this story, even to the point where it hurt physically to read some parts. When the story took a very dark turn, I didn't despair, because I felt that I could trust Mr. Hamerton to bring to fruition a story that had a shining heart, which was what stood out to me from the beginning, despite some of the very dark elements. To be honest, I

felt that this book was scratching the surface as far as potential for further stories, as there were elements that were left unresolved. But, I was satisfied at the progression and the conclusion of this story.

When an author approaches me to review his/her book, I am always crossing my fingers, hoping that I will enjoy the book and give the author some good exposure. After *The Riddler's Gift*, I am happy to say that I loved this book, and I would recommend it to fantasy readers. From a layperson's perspective, I would consider this good quality fantasy, and I doubt that many readers would find much at all to be disappointed about herein. I would guess it would be quite to the contrary, instead. At any rate, I know I enjoyed it immensely, and now I am waiting to read the forthcoming book(s) in this series.

Lu (Sugar & Snark) says

My Rating:

7/10

My Take:

I won this book, and I'm so glad I did!

Tabitha Serannon has a hidden power, but to access this she needs to go through many trials and tribulations to discover her inner strength. With the help of an unlikely friend, she has to find her way. Darkness stands in the path she must follow, but so does love.

This book was really gripping and one I did not want to end! It was extremely hard to put down and when I finally did, I could not stop thinking about it!

I cannot wait for the next book in the series!

My Questions:

Can I read the next one yet?

Carrie Kilgore says

I thoroughly enjoyed this fantasy of 600+ pages (for those who tire at 300 pages, beware!). Personally, I loved the length, which gives the reader a chance to become immersed in the well-crafted world. Our heroine is a young woman with yearnings suited to her station in life; all too suddenly she is plunged into a nightmare and thereafter is kept off-balance as she struggles to cope with things larger than she ever imagined. The writing is good (almost no copy editing mistakes!), the characters are believable (even the nasty ones because we see their motivations), and we see enough of what's happening outside the small kingdom to feel assured the author will take us back for further adventures.

I was so happy to see complexity arise, rather than a simple good vs. evil motif. Not only does this lend realism, but will give readers things to ponder long after they put the book down. The pacing is good, with brief respites from fast-moving action (usually through description that further enriches the tale). The romance is handled very well, with both our heroine and her beloved beset by easily understandable doubts. I'm definitely looking forward to reading the next installment of the saga.

Nikki says

I got this through the goodreads giveaways, oh-so-long-ago. I've been meaning to get round to it for, literally, years. I read a section ages ago, and then never picked it up again, which should perhaps be indicative. So, I'm going to confess: I've never finished reading this, and I don't think I'm going to. I've read enough fantasy in my life that I'm quite cynical about it, and you'll have to give me something newer and fresher than the plot/characters in this book to keep me happy (most of the time: I do have my indulgences, I'll confess). Particularly as something about the writing struck me as awkward and stilted.

Flicking through, I see there's some kind of fuss about a ring -- how startling and original...

Nyssa says

This is one of the best fantasy novels I have read in a long time. It has all the elements I look for: the balance of good and evil, a coming of age story, the wise advisor, riddles, and epic villains. I thought the story was creative and it kept me interested. I loved trying to solve the riddles, and actually did pretty well! I fell in love with the characters, even when they were being really frustrating and I just wanted to slap them.

If you like fantasy writers like Terry Brooks, Raymond Feist, and Robert Jordan, then I highly recommend this book!

Manny says

That night, Tabitha had a strange dream. She was on a long, winding road high in the Zunskar Mountains when she came to a little tavern. The inn-keeper welcomed her and gave her good meat and drink, which she was grateful of, for she had travelled far. When she had eaten and drunk her fill, he asked her if she was Tabitha Serannon, the singer.

"I am," she replied shyly. She had still not become used to her new fame.

"Then there is someone here that I think you will want to meet," said the inn-keeper. And he introduced her to another of the guests, a little man with a long beard and lively, piercing eyes. He reminded her in a way of Twardy Zarost, the Riddler. There was something alien about him, as though he came from another world. The man said his name quickly, but it was noisy and Tabitha failed to catch it, only that it began with a T.

"I am also a singer and story-teller," said the man. "As two members of the same profession, our host says we will have much to talk about. Pray sing to me of your world."

Tabitha had drunk a glass of the Dwarrow-wine, which she rarely did in real life, but in her dream this made her merry, and she wished to show the stranger what a fine singer she was. She stood up without further ado, and she sang of Eyri, of the white Dovecote and its Lightgifiers, and of the Amberlake with Stormhaven sitting in its midst. And she sang of terrible things, of Ravenscroft and its Master, and of the mad Shadowcaster who dared to summon the Morgloth. But somehow none of the song came out the way she saw it in her mind, Light and Dark mixed in a beautiful pattern, and she was disappointed in herself.

Then the stranger took the floor and began to sing of a place she had never heard of, called Middle Earth, and of a quest to destroy a Ring of Power, that was both like and unlike Tabitha's Ring. And she listened spellbound as he sang of Lórien and its Elves, of the Lonely Mountain and its Dwarves, of Orthanc and Minas Tirith and the Nazgûl and their Dark Lord Sauron and his ultimate downfall at the hands of Frodo and Gandalf. Every name shone like a jewel, and soon as she heard it she saw the thing it named before her. She gasped in wonder.

When the stranger had finished, she turned to him with shining eyes.

"You must have some very powerful spell," she said, "to create the names in your story. Please tell me what it is called, and help me to learn it too."

The stranger bowed low to her. "It is the simplest and the hardest spell in the world," he said. "And its name is Etymology."

Liviu says

Excellent fantasy debut set in an alternate Earthlike domain called Eyri which was isolated and hidden with strong magic from the rest of the planet by a cabal of 8 wizards called the Gyre.

The Gyre is facing the most powerful Chaos wizard ever Ametheus who brought destruction and misery to the rest of the planet, but they are not strong enough to fight him directly.

Setting up Eyri and introducing a magical artifact and an wizard observer/adviser, they hope to nurture new wizard blood away from Ametheus' interference, so while Eyri is a relatively peaceful medieval like land with an order of magicians of light - lightgifiers, there is also a hidden counterpart of the magicians of dark - shadowcasters to ensure conflict.

A new wizard will emerge only when a person can master both the dark essence and the light essence and across several hundred years, nobody has succeeded yet.

Tabitha Serannon is a talented singer daughter of a lightgifier mother and while working at an inn and entering in a local contest to represent her local town to a singing festival in the capital of Eyri in front of the king, she attracts the wrong attention from a shadowcaster Kirjath Arkell who has his own plans of accumulating power and independence from the ubber-shadowcaster Cabal, the dark master of the forces of the night.

Luckily the Eyri sword master Glavenor - a sort of chief constable of the kingdom with a magic sword - is at hand to save the day, but Arkell escapes and is set on revenge.

When tragedy strikes, Tabitha escapes with a strange ring and with help from the funny looking "Riddler" Twardy Zarost, she decides to become a lightgifter like her mother and find the powerful wizard the ring is destined for and give it to him/her so protecting it from the shadowcasters.

Of course things are not so simple and Tabitha is soon involved in intrigue, the struggle between the forces of light and dark and of course the big picture hangs over the whole of Eyri.

While The Riddler's Gift starts as a reasonably standard epic fantasy, it is a novel with a lot of energy that makes you keep turning page after page to see what happens. Slowly the characters start growing on you and you do not want to put the book down until done.

The ending is excellent wrapping up all the threads of the novel, though as usual with the first book in a series the big picture is only now start to impinge on our characters.

Though longish at about 640 pages, the book reads very fast and I finished it in two sittings since I was really absorbed by it after I got into its flow.

Highly, highly recommended.

Published originally in South Africa in 2007 and recently in the UK, this novel deserves a wide audience in the epic fantasy world.

Sally says

As I started the book several things jarred, town names like Flowerton just felt a little bit Enid Blyton, the story felt rather a lot like one I had read before (Rhapsody: Child of Blood, by Elizabeth Haydon - a singer who has to always tell the truth and works magic with her music). Also there were times when during reading I would suddenly be told things like the heroine, Tabitha, was lying in snow, but there had been little reference to the snow before, making me feel a bit like I was walking around with blinkers on.

Also the swordmaster, Garyl just felt too one dimensional at first and I couldn't understand Tabitha's attraction to him, nor his to her. This improved as the story progressed, but never felt completely realistic.

It had the feel of a first novel, and indeed it is, although Greg has apparently written previously about hang gliding. It also appears to be self published, it probably would have had a lot more crinkles ironed out if it had had more attention from agents, editors etc.

Saying all that, I did really enjoy reading the book. I found myself keeping on reading even though I knew it was late and my light should turn off. There was lots of suspense building up to events in the book, and a few surprises. Tabitha engaged me and I wanted to see things turn out well for her. I enjoyed the character of Twardy Zarost, he was fun and added some lightness to the story. I would have liked to see the character of Ashley developed more.

I will be looking out the next book and am intrigued to see if Twardys decision to break rules will have any consequences in the second book. Very intrigued to see how Greg Hammerton continues the story from where he first book leaves us.

Andrew says

I'm in two minds about this book. I love the main storyline and how it's set in a world that's on the brink of annihilation. I enjoyed learning about the wizards and their magic, and the evil characters really worked for me. I can't remember the last time I read a book where the evil characters were so good at being bad!

The main let down for me though was Tabitha. Rarely has a main character in a book infuriated me as much or as often as she. It seemed like she just wandered from one situation to the next with no clue what was happening, constantly getting the wrong end of the stick, and always moaning about something. If I could have reached into the book and gave her a slap I would have. It might have helped.

Sam says

Won this in the GR giveaways and my god I'm glad I did. Hamerton is well on his way to creating a fantasy series that could very well rival Tolkien in it's skill and imagination (and I don't make that comparison lightly, I can tell you). He has the dry wit and humour, moments of heart-warming tenderness and the magic, mystery and that little bit of mayhem that made Tolkien the world's first and greatest fantasy writer, and Hamerton is definitely following in those footsteps.

The story starts in Oldenworld, which is being ravaged by Chaos and the Sorcerer Ametheus. The Gyre, a group of seven wizards, create the olde worlde domain of Eyri protected by a very strong shield of magic which keeps Chaos out. Within this protected land a slow simmering battle between the King and the Lightgifters on one side and Cabal the Darkmaster and his Shadowcasters on the other begins to take hold. In doing so a young Truthsayer and Singer, Tabitha Serannon, is caught up when she stands up to a Shadowcaster intent on kidnapping a local child.

As the story continues Tabitha finds herself on the path to the Wizard and she must follow the path of both the Dark and the Light to obtain her goal. Helping in this task is the Riddler, an enigmatic and delightful character who can only speak the truth, but only in rhyme. Tabitha is also aided by Glavenor, the King's Swordmaster (head of the Swords, Eyri's Army), who saves her from the Shadowcaster and she in turn saves him from something worse.

This is an absolute epic fantasy story but once it grabs you, it is impossible to put down. Hamerton develops each of his characters perfectly and really makes you feel for them and get involved in the story wholeheartedly. At one point I was that engrossed I was muttering rather loudly that Tabitha couldn't see what was right in front of her (it was very frustrating I must say, but a huge relief when she finally got it). The story does develop at a slower pace than usual but this fits the tale perfectly and unknown to you drags you deeper and deeper into the story (hence my comparison to Tolkien, very much of a similar style).

The detail Hamerton puts into his writing is fantastic, throughout the book you feel like you are there in Eyri and beyond, watching events unfold and feeling everything the characters do. You feel love and hate, joy and

despair, victory and defeat and everything in between. A brilliant start to what is bound to be a brilliant series, I cannot wait until the second installment is out...in fact I'm really not sure if I can wait to find out where Tabitha, Glavenor and Eyri itself goes next...I need to know now!

Karen says

Wow, what a plot! The main character, Tabitha Serannon is a charming young girl, a tavern singer with an amazing voice and a Truthsayer with aspirations of becoming a Lightgifter and healer like her mother, but then she hears the Lifesong and her whole life changes. Suddenly we are thrown into this magical world of Dark and Light fighting to rule the Kingdom of Eyri. Tabitha has to find the wizard who owns the magical ring she bears as she becomes aware of it's and her own capabilities and the power of the Lifesong. Tabitha is helped (or is she?) on her journey by the Riddler, Twardy Zarost, who was hilarious. I laughed many, many times at his great sense of humour. There were riddles to solve, evil demon beasts to fight, spells to cast, Light to save, characters to hate, characters to adore and of course there was love ... and who couldn't love the gorgeous male lead in this book, the Swordmaster Garyll Glavenor. A true gentleman and leader of the Swords who has a soft spot for Tabitha, and she for him.

Although this book is very long with 643 pages of small print (although if you find small print hard to read, there is also a Kindle edition), it is well worth reading. I found that I couldn't even begin to second guess where this plot was going. Fast moving storyline which becomes deeper and thicker the more into the book you move. The characters are well rounded and arouse an array of emotion. Hate, love, fear, hopelessness, happiness, thrills and exhaustion. You name it and I felt it for these characters. The ending is nicely rounded up with no loose ends, but I've come to love Eyri and it's wonderful characters and am looking forward to reading the second book in The Tale of the Lifesong.

Magical! That's how I would describe it. I was hooked from the very first page and I could tell I was in for a fabulous reading journey. Greg Hamerton did not let me down. If you love fantasy, go and lose yourself in The Riddler's Gift.

Angela says

The wizards believed in Order but then one defied the rest and brought Chaos, threatening to destroy the world. One sanctuary remains, a safe haven where one special person can develop the magic that might save them. When Tabitha Serannon takes a ring that isn't hers and sings an ancient song, she releases a power that she doesn't understand and cannot control. Will she learn to balance the Light and the Dark before it is too late? Or will the entire realm fall under the rule of the Darkmaster and all hope be lost?

The Riddler's Gift is a fantastic fantasy tale! It reminded me of the epic adventures written by Terry Brooks and Robert Jordan. There are many characters to get to know and different story threads to follow but Hamerton has written them in such a way that there is no confusion. Shifts between places and people flow easily. Each detail is important and nothing has been left to chance in the connections between the stories.

The overall story drew me in quickly. Unfortunately, I had very little reading time when I was reading the first paperback so it seemed to take me forever. This had nothing to do with the story though -- I really wanted to be reading it! I finally got some solid reading time when I got to the second paperback and

devoured it in just a couple of days. The small sections within chapters actually turned out to be a bonus for me when I was reading the first part because they were natural breaks where I could leave off even if I'd only had a few minutes to pick up the book.

The Riddler's Gift has magic, battle, good, evil, self-discovery, a guide, a journey, and even a bit of romance. In short, it is everything one would expect in an epic fantasy novel. It is also wonderfully crafted with the true voice of a story teller.

I am looking forward to continuing the adventure with Second Sight.

I received this book directly from the author in exchange for my honest review.

Wanda Hartzenberg says

This is an epic fantasy. And that is the cool part. I loved certain aspects of the book but in all found it too drawn out.

Less would have been more in this epic tale. However. Some of the characters in this book sizzles. Mainly the bad guys and the guys in the middle. It has been a long time since I have last found such horrible bad guys. And these characters were all multi faceted. I loved this and read the book to the end simply to revel in this genius.

The plot felt a bit pat. The hero a bit flat but oh boy, the evil guys rocked.
