



The Ring of Winter

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From the cover:

For centuries, adventurers have sought the fabled Ring of Winter, rumored to possess the magical might to make the wearer immortal and bring a second Ice Age down upon the Realms. Artus Cimber knows where it is.

After discovering the ring is hidden in the jungles of Chult, he sets off to fulfill the quest that has devoured a decade of his life. Knowing that the artifact is hidden somewhere in the danger-filled jungles and recovering it are two entirely different matters, however--especially when a lost city, rampaging dinosaurs, and the villainous Cult of Frost all stand between Artus and his goal.

The Ring of Winter is the fifth in an open-ended series of novels focusing on the Harpers, the secret organization for Good in the Forgotten Realms® fantasy world

The Ring of Winter Details

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Author : James Lowder

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From Reader Review The Ring of Winter for online ebook

Jesse says

This is the first, and one of the only, forgotten realms books set in the Jungles of Chult. That was a huge draw for me, since I'm always trying to discover new things about this world.

There were all kinds of little things that I liked about this story; a dragon turtle that charges for safe passage, a four armed magical servant, and the bera of Mezzro. I also liked being introduced to the god Ubtao...I will say that I did not expect him to be like he was portrayed in this book.

There were several things that bothered me, too, but I don't want to ruin the story for the rest of you...

This was the best I've read by James Lowder.

Marc the Darc says

A well-done 1930's adventure serial style romp. A deadly island! Lost cities! Dinosaurs! Cannibalistic goblins! Magical servants! The protagonist, Artus Cimber, is a flawed, obsessed, good-hearted, and lucky adventurer, pursuing rumors of a legendary magical item which he has sought for years. His quest takes him to the island of Chult, where his coming sets off nation-rattling events. He is an enjoyable character, as is his prime nemesis. Even the wombat twins fail to be excessively annoying, despite their best efforts. If this were written by R.A. Salvatore it would have gone quite over the top, but Lowder writes with just enough restraint to avoid becoming ridiculous.

James Lowder also wrote the third book in the Empires trilogy (also in the Forgotten Realms novel series), Crusade, and events in that book are referred back to tangentially in spots, in a tasteful manner. The Ring of Winter is part of 'The Harpers' soft series, but the connection to that group is very tenuous; Artus Cimber is a former Harper who left the association, and while there was a threat that the Harpers would raise their collective head early on, the story really had nothing to do with them, except wherein Cimber's personal qualities were in alignment with their general goals. It was a better book for this.

I have been reading the Forgotten Realms line of novels in publication order, and with this, I am done with 1992! Audible sigh, why did I partake of this unforced quest? This particular book is a little rarer than most, I had to pay about three times the usual price to get my hands on a copy (physical, not e-book). I suspect that it had only a single print run; I further suspect that the 'Harpers' series was not as popular as others (*cough* Drizzt *cough*); certianly the two books in the Harpers line that preceded this were quite bad. Later Harpers books in that crossed over with other series (such as those written by Elaine Cunningham or Ed Greenwood) had better sales, I think.

Steve says

I picked up this book mainly to get some background for the new D&D adventure: Tomb of Annihilation. It is most definitely a mixed bag for several reasons:

1. I suspect, but can't be sure that the author may have been directed to stick to a 300 page limit. The book is very choppily edited and actually NEEDS more exposition and backstory for the lead protagonist... not to

mention the supporting characters.

2. I don't usually say this about fantasy, but this novel would have benefited from more world building. Yes, I know that it is set within an established fantasy world (Forgotten Realms), but at the time of publishing, almost nothing had been written about the jungles of Chult.

3. Cute animal sidekicks. The two wombat characters (literally talking wombats) seemed unnecessary and served almost no purpose. Furthermore, their backstory was never explained and barely hinted at. Were they once human and turned into wombats by some enchantment? Are they from a society of intelligent wombats? Were they "awakened" animals as in books like The Plague Dogs or Watership Down? It took me right out of the story at times... and I couldn't figure out if the author was trying to give them a faux Cockney or faux Australian (at least that would have made a little sense) accent.

Bottom line: There are hints of a great tale here, and I wish the author would have been given free reign to tell ALL of it.

Finally... this is ostensibly book 5 in a series, however, just to be clear, none of these characters appear in any of the other books in the series. The only connection here is the Forgotten Realms secret society known as The Harpers. There is no connecting narrative thread.

For D&D nerds: It is interesting to see which ideas Chris Perkins and Co. chose to bring forward to the modern depiction of Chult, and what was discarded!

Peter Greenwell says

A fun and easy read, but utterly devoid of any kind of character building or tension. This is certainly one of the more popcorn Forgotten Realms outings.

Rick Underwood says

I wasn't a fan of this book. I generally find books based on games not that great and this was no exception. The hero is not really a hero, he's arrogant (expects people just to give up the thing he's looking for simply because he's been looking for it for a long time), he's useless in most situations and gets through scenes because of the help he gets, and he's overly emotional. He's kind of like Bella from Twilight - people like him or fall in love with him for no particular reason. Not only that but he lives in a world where undead exist, and when he sees a ghost he's all disbelieving and thinks he's insane. The author just seemed to hope we'd like him because he's the protagonist of the story. I didn't like him at all. The story was ok, I liked the work the author did on the lore of the land, and the book wasn't longer than it needed to be. But overall this is not a book for the average fantasy reader. Read it only if you like the Forgotten Realms books or want to know more about some of the history of the jungle lands of Chult (as the latest D&D adventure Tomb of Annihilation is set here).

Daniel says

Good introduction to some lore of the Forgotten Realms, especially for those running D&D games. I didn't find the characters to be overly deep or dynamic but a fun story overall.

Graham Houle says

This was a good book and also one in a series....but it can certainly be read as a stand alone novel. Entertaining and new characters were what highlighted this book and although not very many major characters I would recommend it to a Forgotten Realms fan. The Harpers were minor figures in the book, and that was a drawing point for me since I am not really that impressed with "the Harper" series or characters.

Matt says

A brief summary followed by a book review. A starred rating has been purposefully avoided.

WARNING: SKIP TO THE REVIEW TO AVOID MINIMAL SPOILERS

*****SUMMARY*******

Artus Cimber and his adventuring companion, the old mage Sir Hydel Pontifax, travel to the jungles of Chult looking for the fabled Ring of Winter, a magical artifact that bestows its wearer with immortality, the ability to wield snow and ice, and the power to bring forth an Second Ice Age. Legend has it that the ring is a power of ultimate destruction. However, Artus believes he might be able to use that power to fight for Good. As a one time member of The Harpers in his youth, Artus has become disenchanted by the society's inability to fight Evil on its own terms. While the members of his former semi-secret society have sworn to protect the realms of Faerûn and fight for Good, the ideals of Artus' youth can not live up to the realities of politics or the limitations of a small, disconnected group who are unwilling to make the kinds of ambiguous decisions that Artus will ultimately act on.

Also searching for the ring, and following closely behind, is their longtime rival Kaverin Ebonhand, the leader of the Cult of Frost who has made a horrible pact with the God of Murder, Cyric The Prince of Lies. After being killed and sent to Hades by Artus and Pontifax, Kaverin secures a second chance at life only by promising Cyric that he will lay waste to the lands of Faerûn in Cyric's name. However, only until after the bargain is sealed does Ebonhand discover that he awaits a fate worse than death if he dies...a second time.

On the sweltering jungle island of Chult, Artus will fight off dinosaurs, Barati tribes made up of cannibal Goblins, evil assassins made entirely of ice, and a seemingly indestructible four-armed, silver-skinned being from the Mulhorandi pantheon known only as Skuld. At one time bound to Artus as his own protector, Skuld's powers have now been twisted under service of Kaverin.

Artus will also meet the inhabitants from the long lost city of Mezro. Peopled by the native Tabaxi humanoids, the city, and the rest of Chult, is ruled over by it's absent God, Ubtao. Though absent from his people's lives, Ubtao has chosen 6 Mezroan paladins, known as barae, to rule and keep the Tabaxi people safe in his stead. Each paladin is granted immortality and awesome powers, much like the ring that Artus has

been searching for over the past decade.

Artus will help the Mezroans to defend their secret village from an invading horde of Barati, a legion of shape-shifting pteranodons, and the magical Skuld, all led by the Goblin Queen M'bata and Kaverin Ebonhand. Along the way, Artus will meet the 1500 year-old founder of the Society of Stalwart Adventurers, his life will be saved by two talking Wombats stranded on Chult years ago, he will have to decide whether his guide may or may not want to kill him, and ultimately he will discover his destiny and find love.

REVIEW**

The Ring of Winter is book 5 of 14 in The Harper series of the Forgotten Realms. While some of the books in this series are sequels to earlier Forgotten Realms novels, and other Harper stories lead into their own series, this is a completely stand-alone book. Which, for those who read fantasy, is refreshingly rare. The protagonist, Artus Cimber can only be found in one other short story "The Family Business," which can be found in the first Forgotten Realms anthology entitled, The Realms of Valor (of which I have not read at the time of this review).

I thoroughly enjoyed The Ring of Winter. The author, James Lowder, had already written Crusade (the 3rd book in The Empires Trilogy) and alludes to the events in that book frequently during the first quarter of The Ring of Winter. However, the reader does not need to know the details of that story or series in order to enjoy Artus' adventures. The addition of Cyric to the story must have been due to Lowder's second Forgotten Realms novel written soon after, The Prince of Lies (the 4th book in The Avatar Series). Cyric is a truly horrific God, and his involvement always makes for a disturbing read. Incidentally, the two aforementioned series are two of the best of the early Forgotten Realms novels.

Artus is an interesting protagonist. His connection to The Harpers as a former comrade lends a complexity and ambivalence to the role of membership with the group that is previously unexplored in the series. Kaverin plays an antagonist motivated not only by Evil, but by the horrific consequences of his mistake; a mistake that anyone might make in similar circumstances.

Like all the Forgotten Realms books, this story is full of magic, Gods, and destiny. I appreciated the author's light handedness with the love story, which only gets a subtle nod. The comic relief by the two Wombats are a bit George Lucas-esque, but this aspect of the story, also common for a Forgotten Realms book, is small. The battles are well written, the magic is fun and interesting, and the mythos of Ubtao and the barae is quiet engaging. Artus may avoid death a bit too easily at times, but this is no different from a DM adjusting the game for a group of poor dice rollers.

The plot reveals some twists and turns, but nothing the reader would not be able to guess themselves. There is minimal character development. The Harpers storyline provides a bookend to the novel, and the overall end is satisfying. Unlike some other Forgotten Realms books, it doesn't feel like the author rushes too quickly to end the story in order to finish up by the 312 page mark.

I'd recommend this book to a Realms fan or to someone interested in testing the Forgotten waters. It's a fun, well written read.

Joel says

It took a while for this particular tale of the realms to grab me, and I'm not sure if that was the story itself of

the narrator, but once it got moving and the action moved into the mysterious jungles of Chult I found the whole thing really engaging and a lot more fun than I expected.

A great one for D&D or fantasy geeks who love rangers, dinosaurs, pirates, villains with hands made of actual black stone for no discernible reason other than the name "Ebonhand" sounds cool (not kidding), goblin queens with flowing blonde hair (yes, really) and Laurel and Hardy-esque anthropomorphic wombats (still not kidding).

Markus says

A tale of Artus Cimber and his journey to the enigmatic continent of Chult to find the fabled Ring of Winter. This was a great research read for running the current most recent D&D campaign, and a good introduction to the next, which is set to take place in Chult.

Overall, this book was not bad at all. It was short and quite enjoyable for a cliché-ridden shared-world fantasy novel.

Demi says

I am at a point in my Dungeon Master career in which I have research to do that only exists in the novels. Saturday morning adventure, wildly out of order in a series—it's like I'm 13 again.

This was good, and more importantly, it gave me ideas.

Bill says

A good read

If you like fantasy reading, you should like this book. A little more 'pulpy' than typical Forgotten Realms fare, the jungle setting gives this book a unique feel among the FR books. The story is well written and the plot laid out well with good pacing and a story that takes a different perspective on the culmination battle.

Eric Watson says

Primarily read because of any possible ties to our ongoing Tomb of Annihilation campaign. It's a short, easy read with paper-thin characters, but it's a decent little swashbuckling adventure in the jungles of Chult. Too many goblins and not enough of everything else, however, as Artus Cimber hunts the Ring of Winter, befriends goofy talking wombats, battles dinosaurs, and meets the immortal defenders of Mezro. The brief but intriguing Ras Nsi cameo and the climax featuring the unleashed Ring of Winter are the most relevant sections to ToA, though Artus himself is a generically boring hero. Not a horrible book but not exactly a memorable adventure.

Daniel Willis says

Another book in the Forgotten Realms Harpers series, in its favor it does not read like the traditional fantasy genre novel. The author's notes mentioned he borrowed from his childhood memories of pulp fiction and action serials, and one could easily imagine this with Indiana Jones as the lead character, with magic and sword instead of gun and whip. However, ending was very abrupt and unsatisfying. Took away from what was otherwise a decent book.

Doug Kallies says

This was a fun book. I especially liked the info on the Land of Chult and the description of the Tabaxi culture. Artus Cimber made for a good hero and the descriptions of the religion of Ubtao were excellent. A good addition to the Harpers series.
