



Champion

Anna Hackett

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Fighting for love, honor, and freedom on the galaxy's lawless outer rim...

Space marine Blaine Strong enjoyed being a composed, controlled member of space station security...until he was abducted by alien slavers. Forced into underground fight rings and pumped full of drugs, he's now seething with anger and out for revenge.

Rescued by gladiators and fellow humans on the desert world of Carthago, Blaine is fighting to be the man he once was. But when the House of Galen is attacked, he must focus on joining the gladiators to fight back. That means teaming up with a tough, competitive female gladiator who not only challenges him at every turn, awakens a fierce desire he's never felt before, but a woman who can sense the churning emotions inside him.

Gladiator Saff Essikani is the best net fighter in the Kor Magna Arena. Raised from young to fight, she bows to no man and uses her empathic abilities to win at whatever cost. With her House targeted and people under their care threatened, she'll stop at nothing to find those responsible. But then she finds herself face to face with a big, tortured man from Earth who affects her like no man before. As Saff and Blaine head into the desert to uncover a conspiracy, their incendiary desire flares hotter than the desert suns. But as Blaine's angry emotions rage out of control, Saff knows that unless he learns to embrace the man he is now, he has no chance of survival.

Note to readers: This sci fi romance contains a lot of action (think wild gladiatorial fights and daring rescues), tough gladiators (the warriors of the House of Galen) and a steamy romance (between a tough female gladiator and a tortured space marine). So if you like it fast, and gritty, and sexy, this is for you!

Champion Details

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Gail Koger says

Great read

Loved it. Lots of action, hot sex and great characters. If you're looking for an interesting plot, this the book for you

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

There was a bit more sand than usual in this entry in Hackett's sand, swords, and spaceships saga of gladiators on an intergalactic pleasure planet far, far, far from Earth's corner of the Milky Way galaxy. If you like your science fiction romance with a lot of strong, sexy heroes, very evil bad guys and more than a bit of "can't go home again" angst, this series is a winner. But you really need to at least read the first book in the series, Gladiator, to see how it all fits so marvelously together.

And it's such a fun ride that if you like either SFR or gladiator romance, the whole thing is a winner.

But about Champion in particular, this entry in the series breaks the pattern a bit, and I enjoyed it all the more for that. Up til now, all of the heroines have been the human women who were kidnapped from Jupiter Station and dragged through a temporary wormhole as slaves of the very evil Thraxians.

And the heroes have all been gladiators of the House of Galen, a house that is dedicated not just to fighting the good fight, but also to rescuing those, like many of the women from Earth, who are simply not meant to be gladiators.

This entry in the series still features one of the gladiators from the House of Galen, but this time it's the heroine. Saff Essikani is the team's net fighter, and she's damn good. She's also someone who overcame a childhood of being property, and understands all too well how those enslaved women feel.

The hero, on the other hand, the Champion of the title, is the first human male we've encountered who was also part of that kidnapping. Blaine has spent his several months of captivity in the underground fight rings, where his alternatives had been reduced to death or survival. He was rescued, along with three human women, at the end of Protector, but while his body may be free, his mind is still partially locked back in those cages.

He's lost the iron control he used to be famous for, due to the rage amplifying drugs the slave masters injected him with to keep him in the fights. The withdrawal is beyond painful.

But just as he's getting himself back together, the House of Galen is attacked, and every gladiator is needed to discover who is responsible, and finally put down their enemies, once and for all. And just as Saff and Blaine have finally discovered each other, they are both forced to relive their greatest nightmares, hoping that someone can free them, or that this time, they can save each other.

Escape Rating A-:For this reader, it had felt as if the series were descending into just a bit of a rut. A rut that was still plenty of fun to pull up a chair in and read, but not as fresh and new as at the beginning.

This book was a welcome change. Not just because of the gender reversal, where the woman is the gladiator and the man is the human, but also because the stakes got higher. One of the running threads in the series as a whole is that the House of Galen are the good guys, and the Thraxians and their allies the Srinar are very definitely the bad guys.

For admittedly loose definitions of good, bad and especially guys.

Up until Champion, the House of Galen has won every encounter. Those wins have meant increasing numbers of slaves freed from their captivity and either given good jobs or returned to the families from which they were stolen.

In this story, evil fights back. And it scores some really disgusting wins. But it's necessary. Evil never just curls up into the fetal position and slinks away – at least not without seriously trying to reassert its evil ways and getting cut to ribbons by the forces of good. This is that attempt. And as so often happens, it succeeds, at least at first, because no one sees it coming. As it so often does, evil attacks through the noncombatants, and scores a big surprise victory.

As part of fighting back from that attack, the House of Galen not only has to begin rally its allies for a hopefully final assault on the evil, but it also has to finally dig down and determine the depths of that evil so that they can cut it out by the root.

And that's where this story gets its heart. Saff and Blaine have to face and conquer their own very, very serious demons both to save the day and to be worthy of each other. While it is nail-bitingly scary in the doing of it, when they finally win through its absolutely awesome.

Dísir says

There are many Anna Hackett books that are probably scored permanently in my memory, and I'm beyond happy to say that 'Champion' will number as one of them.

I've been somewhat on the fence with the Galactic Gladiator series but Blaine/Saff's story is one that I truly liked and could get into without difficulty. It's the sense of true equality that I got between the both of them - physically, emotionally, with similar spirits of determination, loyalty and courage - which I thought made this story so enjoyable, along with that chemistry that Hackett has written into this unlikely pairing. Throw in the desert landscape, the thrills and spills and the action and 'Champion' is a fantastic read that brings a mish-mash of classic but epic movies into play.

Now that we're waist-deep into this strange, gladiator world, I'm starting to appreciate the sheer scope of Hackett's world-building again - this woman's got a heck of an imagination and enough gumption to bring it to life - and am actually quite amazed at how it's expanding in a manner that's making me want to know how the future books are going to go.

Still, I had an altogether satisfying experience, enhanced of course, as always, by the anticipation of the next book and pairing written into the end of this story.

Ira says

Our Alien girl got her Earth Man!

She is the only female gladiator of House of Galen, a kick ass girl but an Empath too:)

Awesome ?

♥?

Lee says

This Galactic Gladiators book breaks the formula of the first few, and it's the more enjoyable (for me) for it.

Blaine Strong has plenty of demons and trauma to deal with. He's a tortured hero who thankfully doesn't take it out on anyone...except maybe himself. Saff Essikani, however, takes no guff from Blaine, and calls him on his self-destructive impulses. Both characters are strong and likable, competent and wounded. Saff has some ugly things of her own to overcome, and she and Blaine have to lean on each other to overcome them. They're very good together, in bed, in the fight ring, or traveling together on not-camels.

The action and pacing are fantastic as usual, and this would make a great feature film. I don't like that there's teaser material for the next book in the series as this one.

Amyiw says

Scifi fluff romance.

This is really good until the middle where they don't kill the a-hole. And surprise surprise, he comes back to haunt them and cause great injury. Really? I literally was yelling out loud, while driving and listening to this through headsets and my daughter was like, 'what?'. "Kill him! argh!", "kill him already! argh!". 'what Mom?' daughter responds. She knows I am listening to a book but is really wondering. Usually I'm laughing or sighing but not talking out loud. So here I am explaining that they are not killing the bad guy, no they try to take him with them and when they cannot... they don't kill him, leaving him to do very bad thing again. Argh!

So this is at the 1/2 way point and it is a spoiler but... I'm leaving it as maybe others won't be as disappointed knowing ahead that something totally stupid is about to happen.

So 80% in now and just for this stupidity, I will not be able to love this.

Inka says

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Marta Cox says

Another dose of this authors Galactic Gladiators and this time it's the turn of female fighter Saff to make some hard choices. From the very start of this series she's been tough, focussed and fond of teasing her brothers in arms as the humans they meet steal their hearts. Now though there's a new man in the House of Galen and it's the very human space marine Blaine. He's escaped the underground fighting ring but he's damaged after all the drugs pumped into him . Still when Saff looks at him she sees his honour, his integrity and there's one thing Saff really enjoys and that's a challenge!

This series ticks a lot of boxes for me and I have to admit that these last two books have been fabulous sci fi romance with just enough action to entertain the most jaded reader. This book sees us catching up with not just Blaine (Saff's very own Earth Man!) but also the three women who were rescued at the same time. The problem is there are quite a few people who are very unhappy with the House of Galen and revenge is clearly something they want. No spoilers but things start to escalate very quickly as those who trade in slaves are desperate for payback and pretty soon it's clear that Saff and Blaine have a fight on their hands. One that will take them far from the arena as they face not just danger but the past as well.

This book had a really interesting plot with vivid descriptions. I really enjoyed the build up of the romance

but with such an ending its pretty clear that there's still a lot more in store for those who fight in Kor Magna.

Kylie Griffin says

My favourite of the Galactic Gladiators series.

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

Blaine Strong has been the iffiest of the humans captured and sold into slavery. He has been drugged and made to fight to the death before being rescued. Now he has to try to come to terms with what and who he is now and for that he needs help. Saff Essikani is the one to provide it but not without a lot of danger, tension and new problems for the Galactic Gladiators. The world building and back story was done in the previous novellas but there is some tucked into the story line if you missed the first stories. This one brings Blaine and Saff together in a rescue operation, sets the stage for the next story in the series and is a satisfying read with a nice romance for our two main characters.

Rosebud says

Revenge.

Blaine Strong was abducted from an Earth space station by Thraxian slavers, drugged, and made to fight or die in an illegal underground fighting ring. Though rescued and now freely fighting for the House of Galen on Kor Magna, his burning drive is to locate the Thraxian & Srinars responsible and deliver some good old fashioned payback, Earth style.

The House of Galen has been attacked and three of their females abducted. There are laws governing the planet and the Thraxians have violated the most sacred of them. The House of Galen will have their revenge.

Saff has known true evil and lived through it. As the premier female gladiator for the House of Galen, she now controls her own destiny. Feeling she can help Blaine deal with his own personal demons, Saff is shocked to discover her feelings go way beyond empathy for a fellow warrior. She'll have to deal those feelings after getting revenge for the brazen attack on her House and help free her friends.

The time has come for the House of Galan to collect on some overdue revenge

* * *

This is the fifth installment in the Galactic Gladiator sci fi series this time featuring Saff & Blaine. It can be read as a stand alone, but as always, to fully appreciate the story, it's best to have read some of the previous installments.

I enjoyed returning to this world building of sci fi arena gladiators who fight with basic tools and personal skill sets such as the ancient Romans did. This updated version did incorporate alien technology, powers, and flora/fauna elements for the futuristic time line which really opened the possibilities of gore and exciting

fight scenes. If only 'some' of the differing gladiator houses would have played by the rules it would be perfect, but then the author wouldn't have a story to tell now would she.....

This wasn't one of my favorites in the series for the simple reason the plot and story lines are becoming cookie cutter remakes of each other. The bad guy elements are the same, the heroes (different main characters of course) are the same, it's just the variables to change up how things play out that change. The core romance between the main couples does add that extra zing to the story which is probably the biggest draw for me.

I'm not a big fan of the continued action/adventure that is incorporated into this story as the individual scenes are rushed and condensed. While I appreciate a story line that moves along, I like to feel that each individual scene has enough time to develop into being meaningful and supporting to the overall plot. I just didn't get there with this installment.

Saff & Blaine. I appreciated matching these two characters up and loved their chemistry. The adult content scenes between the two did provide that extra heat that I love to read. My only regret is that I didn't have the emotional attachment to them that I wanted to.

This is a SciFi romance that fans of the series and author will appreciate. I'm a fan myself and anxiously waiting for Galan's story, which I'm crossing my fingers comes sooner than later. I'm also hopeful Zihm makes another appearance and maybe gets his own HEA.

Kristiej says

And now here we are at book five. This is a reversal of roles book. In this one Saff, our heroine is the lone female member of the House of Galen. She's fierce and she's a warrior and she can keep up with any of her male team members in the ring.

Blaine was an ex-marine, now working as security on the space station before it was attacked. When it was, he had been sold to an underground fighting ring and kept drugged to keep him more aggressive and fighting harder.

Saff is drawn to Blaine as he is to her but the drugs have done a number on Blaine and he's not the same person he was before and he's having a hard time accepting this. Also he's a protective type and finds it kind of hard to accept that Saff can handle herself just fine. He keeps wanting to jump in and save her and this annoys Saff as she IS a gladiator for one of the best Houses on the planet.

And this one certainly is good enough to keep me wanting to keep on.

namericanwordcat says

Happy to see a human male get matched with an alien female. The fact that they are both amazing warriors is great as well.

I like the romance between them as the hero heals from his emotional wounds from being a captive.

The action is fast paced but it sometimes out balanced the love story and wasn't as interesting as it repeated some events in the earlier books.

However, new characters that I am interested in do get introduced. I will keep reading.

Meleeta Morris says

Taken from his world forced to fight

Blaine overcomes being forced to kill, being made an addict against his will and having his freedom stolen. He finds love in the most unlikely place with a unusual warrior woman.

Paraphrodite says

4 stars.

The only male Earth abductee that we know of, Blaine was drugged and put into illegal fight rings. Together with 3 other Earth women, he was rescued by the House of Galen. However, their enemies infiltrated the House and managed to re-capture the women. So, with Saff, the only high-level female Gladiator from the House, they went in search of the women who were rumored to have been sent to a mythical desert fight Arena.

I quite enjoyed this, especially as the author has expanded this alien Gladiator world a lot since the first book. Also, the author gave Blaine and Saff backgrounds that made them quite believable and you can't help but cheer them on to their HEA.
