



# The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari

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**The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari** Sarah Black

"The General and the Horse-Lord: Book Two"

"Sequel to The General and the Horse-Lord"

Fresh out of the closet, General John Mitchel and Gabriel Sanchez are settling into their new life together when an old army colleague taps them for a rescue mission to Tunisia. Eli and Daniel, two former Rangers working security, have been arrested in Carthage, charged with blasphemy and thrown into prison.

With rampant unrest in the ancient city and an old enemy targeting them, John gathers a team to liberate the two captive men. When he discovers Eli's boyhood obsession with Al-Jazari's Elephant Clock, the rescue becomes complicated and strangely beautiful, and John and Gabriel have to risk what they love the most to bring their team home.

## The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari Details

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Author : Sarah Black

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# From Reader Review *The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari* for online ebook

## Julio Genao says

Review to come.

For now: \*happy sigh\*

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## Lady\*M says

When I start reading a sequel to a book I loved, I always approach it cautiously, on my tiptoes, so I can prod it first with a stick for fear that I'll be disappointed and that it will diminish my enjoyment in the original book. Sometimes that is a good thing, but other times it creates a distance that, even when the book is great, prevents me from fully experiencing the story. When she compared the sky to Turkish delight in the first paragraph of this novel, Sarah Black grabbed me by the collar and threw me, again, in the life of John Mitchel and Gabriel Sanchez and didn't let me go until John turned on the light in the last sentence. I remembered how I fell in love with these two mature, strong, loving men in *The General and the Horse-Lord*. *The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari* is continuation of their story.

Weeks after the events in the first book, John and Gabriel are living the consequences of coming out. They are not dramatic, but they add up: Gabriel's children, especially Juan, acting out; small insults from the people who found out they are gay; John's boredom due to unemployment. Additionally, Kim has involved Billy and Abdullah in his MFA project and his past and present are involved with Abdullah – something with which John isn't comfortable.

When an old colleague asks John for help in rescuing two former Rangers, Daniel and Eli, accused for blasphemy in Tunisia, he jumps at the opportunity to use his diplomatic and other military skills. The rescue takes an unexpected turn when the better part of his chosen family ends up in Tunisia with him, and John and Gabriel have to work hard to bring their people safely home.

There is so much to love about this book and so much it inspires you to think about. The love these two men have for each other, their gentleness, their thoughtfulness, their humor, shine through the pages.

“This is what I’m going to remember on the day I die,” he said. “Right before I close my eyes, I’m going to remember this, the way your hand feels, the heat of your leg against mine, the smell of the skin on the back of your neck, like burnt sugar.”

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I’m going to love him until the stars fall out of the sky.”

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You’re the only kick-ass general I know who needs three gay boys to dress him, John.”

“But I only need one gay boy to undress me.”

The men are not unscathed by their decisions. Gabriel fears for his children and not without reason. He has so much to worry about that he needs the time and space to deal with it all. While John is ready to merge their lives, he is also willing to give Gabriel what he needs. Theirs is a true partnership, founded on love and understanding, tender and passionate at the same time. Gabriel’s new way of fighting illustrates this perfectly.

This is also a story about family – biological and chosen. John is a born protector and mentor and so it is natural for him to take the young people in need of assistance and learning under his wing. Whether it’s Sam, young ex-Ranger, dismissed from the military due to injury and aggression issues, Jen, a colleague’s idealistic and headstrong daughter, Eli, rescued young man who suffered torture and rape, or Kim, his nephew who is much more like John than he is willing to admit, John with Gabriel’s help offers them support, wisdom and love. I enjoyed his interaction with these young people full of tenderness and humor. It was great to see that the General has as much to learn from them as he has to offer.

The book celebrates connectiveness between peoples and cultures, universality of human dreams and triumph of human spirit. It’s a book that doesn’t allow cynicism – another rare thing in contemporary literature. Aside from the single character who is more type than anything else, all the other characters, Americans and Tunisians alike, are decent human beings. And, neither one of them is boring – they have flaws and baggage like everyone else in this world. Sarah Black paints them with great sensitivity and humor. The writing was so beautiful that I found myself occasionally choking up.

This review could, basically, go on forever if I were ever so foolish as to try and capture every single nuance of this novel. I could tell you how funny I found John’s hatred for a particular cream couch or the constant Star Wars references. I could tell you how touching it was when Gabriel tried to explain to his General that Kim had grown up to be just like him (“The biggest heart, and a mind like a steel trap that you don’t even see”) or how beautiful it was to discover magical Al-Jazari’s inventions together with the characters. I could do that and more and rob you from experiencing this story by yourself.

But, I will tell you (or maybe it’s only my wishful thinking) that I see one or two more books with these characters in the future, because all is not settled in the lives of our General and his Horse-Lord, Kim and Abdullah have secrets of their own and their household has new addition – a young man hurt and in denial. But, until the Muse hopefully takes Sarah Black down those roads, I recommend you to take the plunge and join “The General and the Horse-Lord’s Training Camp for Young Jedis” – you will not be disappointed.

Picture of Al-Jazari’s Elephant Clock:

(view spoiler)

Review was written for Reviews by Jessewave.

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## Salsera1974 says

Sarah Black has the soul of a poet, and it comes through as she continues the story of John, the General, and Gabriel, his Horse-Lord. These two men are wonderfully imperfect, but they are altogether perfect for each other. They came out when Gabriel left his wife in *The General and the Horse-Lord*; now, they are finally building a life together. They are defining the contours of this new shape for love, one that no longer hides as friendship or depends on stolen time.

The task is hard, though, and the practical difficulties they must handle are not minor ones. Gabriel's son, Juan, is devastated by the loss of his family, and he is acting out as teenagers do; John, after leaving his prior job, is professionally rudderless and bored. In the midst of these dramas, John receives a call from a former military colleague -- there are two Americans who have been captured in Tunisia, and his expertise is requested in order to save those men and avoid an international incident (if he can). John, of course, jumps at the chance, and his XO, the man who always had his back, will not be left behind. So Gabriel packs up and heads off to Tunisia, too.

And this is the point where the novel really gets interesting. I wasn't sure, at first, why Black chose to send John and Gabriel off on this adventure, but I think I understand part of the reason. See, these two men are warriors, and they are *really* good at that job, and I think it was important for us to see them in their element -- defending freedom, saving lives, and doing so *in a theater of war*. We needed to see this in order to grasp more fully why they made the difficult, and dishonest, choices that they did. These men served their country so well, and if they had come out of the closet, they would have lost the chance to do so. More importantly, the country would have lost the brilliance of their work. So in a sense, we as readers have to ask ourselves these questions: To what degree was the sacrifice worth it? Does their value to their country move us closer to excusing the harm that they caused?

To her credit, I do not think she answers these questions in a pat or easy way. Because always, she lets us see the impact on the victims: Gabriel's family. Juan is a mess, and Martha -- his soon-to-be ex-wife - is in a vortex that is colored with grief and rage. We mostly focus on the fallout for Juan, but more so than in the prior novel, we also see glimpses of Martha's heartbreak. She must have loved Gabriel, and thought he loved her, too, if not for the ages, than surely *enough*. Knowing that her claim on him was less the call of love, and more the call of conscience, has clearly taken its toll. Was it worth it to marry this imperfect, but good, woman under false pretenses (while in love with John) and lie to her for years (by cheating with John for the entire time) so that Gabriel could do what *he* wanted to do -- serve his country and have a family? The question probably has no good answer, and that's just life. If nothing else, we now see what the country would have lost if John and Gabriel had been forced out of the service. That might have been okay; there will always be great generals. But if they had come out (or if they had both remained single), Gabriel would not have had his children, and they are not regrets.

There is more to this novel than I have said. She tackles loyalty, honor, the links between cultures, standing for democratic principles, and doing the right thing. She also tackles the passage into adulthood through the perspective of John's nephew, Kim, and asks us to think about the question, "What does it mean to be a man?" In dealing with those issues, we see Kim's selfishness and childishness, but we also see the size of his heart, the purity of his intentions, the suppleness of his mind, and all of his potential. This part of the story will resonate for anyone who loves a child who is incandescent, who needs polish to make the diamond-bright facets shine in the way that they ideally should.

Ultimately, though, this is the story of two men who were blessed enough to have their lives come together in love and in the light. They have waited a long time for this, and in line with Gabriel's description of his feelings for John, we know that they will love each other "until the stars fall out of the sky."

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## Ami says

I have been a fan of Sarah Black's writing ever since I read *Marathon Cowboys*. I think she is in class of her own. *The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari* is a sequel from *The General and the Horse-Lord*, which was released back in April 2013. Unlike the previous book, which left me feeling conflicted, this one is straight love. In fact, I can say that this is my favorite Sarah Black story to date.

The backdrop story about *The Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari* and the Carthage is so interesting (I ended up searching Wikipedia for *The Elephant Clock*!). I love how Ms Black also includes some 'current' tidbits, like *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* or how John's using a Kindle. However, what makes me in love with this story – and I am still thinking about it hours after I finish reading and sleep on it – is how subtle Sarah Black includes social issues without overdramatizing it.

We have Kim (John's delightful nephew) with his MFA project, asking about whether "racism really an extension of tribal culture or tribal identity". We have John working out to save the former rangers without making it a religious issue or American vs. Islam jihadists. Best yet, even if one of the former Rangers is beaten and brutalized inside the Tunisia's prison, there is still a positive attitude shown by the character.

For me, all the characters including each of John's team members in Tunisia simply shine. Though Kim — simply my all time favorite Sarah Black character — probably outshined everybody else in this book. He charms everyone — and his scenes are always a delight. From him pushing over a cream-colored couch as part of John's house décor (back in Albuquerque), to demanding that John needs to get better clothes, to making friends with the other team members when he is in Tunisia, Kim takes everyone by the storm.

Despite the situation that can turn serious, there are still tender romantic moments that touch my heart, as well as humorous scenes that make me chuckle (mostly involved Kim, by the way — he will just give John his grey hairs!).

*"Let's talk about you and me. Not about the past. I want to talk about the future. I want to tell you all the things I love about you. All the ways you turn me on. I want you to tell me all the secrets you've been hiding in your heart."*

*"I just want to wake up with our heads on the same pillow. This life, next life, forever and ever."*

*"I'm flying into DC via Albuquerque. Kim is flipping out. He went back to Nordstrom's with Billy and Abdullah and bought you two new shirts to calm himself down. You're the only kick-ass general I know who needs three gay boys to dress him, John."*

There is quite an action scene towards the end, as the team is making plans to escape Tunisia – with an elaborate plan which is worthy of a movie screenplay. It gives a boost in adrenaline for an already enjoyable reading experience.

For me, this can easily be categorized as LGBT fiction, rather than just MM romance. It's romantic, tender, thoughtful, hopeful, and at the same time celebrates the belief of dreams and humanity. I can't find anything to complain about. Not one.

*The book is provided by the publisher in exchange for honest review.*

**\*\* READ MY INTERVIEW WITH SARAH BLACK, COMING OCTOBER 28th \*\***

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## **Madonna196 says**

4.5 or a very very close 5. I melted into the continuing ebb and flow of the beautiful relationship between the general and his Horse-Lord. I loved the first novel but I think this one is an even more nuanced novel, with the characters fleshed out and alive and a great plot. The dialogue is clever and I laughed out loud, seriously out loud, a few times, particularly when Kim and the boys went clothes shopping for John. I didn't give it a 5 because, although I love Kim, he was a little over the top and annoying at times. \*I\* wanted to hit him over the head. The running gag about the couch was adorable. Loved how the action built up toward the end. John and Gabe were simply meant to be and I hope there's a book 3 and 4. It's great to read about a mature relationship for a change instead of the late teens/early 20's characters so prevalent in today's fiction.

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## **Elizabetta says**

### **The Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari**

The real-life inventor, Al-Jazari made a lot of cool mechanical devices but it's his elephant clock that stars in this story. YouTube it... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doYPp...> So Cool. You have to read this to see how this ancient piece of genius plays into the plot. (**now** I get the whackadoodle title.)

General John Mitchel soldiers on and to the rescue, this time back to Tunisia and facing, once again, old nemesis, Ali Bahktar. That punk who tried to slit his throat in a Bedouin tent many years ago.

Mitchel is newly-retired from field work and is bored out of his mind. He's wants back in the action... And it's action he get's in Tunisia, in spades, when his expertise is called on to handle a sticky situation there. And oh, yeah... He's still got Gabriel, love of his life, at his back, too. The humor and tenderness between these two long-time lovers moves them up into fave couple status. Middle Eastern conflict and gay politics. Only this author could so seamlessly weave together these tangled threads.

I love how Mitchel's family-- Kim, Billy, and Abdullah, gay boys all of them-- get mixed up in the fracas. We see how Kim and Abdullah's romance is working out, too. I really would like more about these two... Ah, love and politics...

This is a freaking great delivery of a freaking great story in a f. great series. Left a big smile on my face. Can this get any better? Why, yes. If there's a third book on it's way, immediately, all would be very right in the world. (and Kim ftw)

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## **JustJen "Miss Conduct" says**

Review written for The Blog of Sid Love.

I fell in love with the General and the Horse-Lord in book 1, and those feelings picked right back up when I started this book. The love John and Gabriel have is so deep and strong, it is hard not to see and feel it.

This story starts out a little slowly as John is now retired and finding his way. Gabriel is now an attorney, but John is feeling a bit lost. Kim and Billy are still living with the guys, and some time is spent on their activities. Abdullah also comes home and is in a relationship with Kim.

This really picked up for me when the General is called to DC to help retrieve two men who have been taken prisoner in Tunisia. He ends up having to head there without Gabriel as his backup due to a problem with Gabriel's son, Juan, that he must take care of. Even though they are apart, the connection is still there, and it is only a matter of time before he makes the trip to take his position by John's side.

The rest of the story is about the General and his newly-formed team working to get the recovered men home safely. If you're looking for a sexfest, this isn't it. These guys have such an amazing relationship, and that is never in question. This story shows them in action doing what they do best. Although there is some smexing, it really isn't focused on.

I really enjoyed this story. It is as good as the first one, only better, without the heavy burden of Gabriel's marriage, even though it is still being dealt with and mentioned here and there. This takes place in an Arab country, and I found the details to be very interesting and well done. The writing is smooth and moves along at a good pace. I was happy to see them accomplish their mission but was sorry to see the story end. I sense a slightly new career for the General in the near future and really hope we get to see more, as I don't think I'd ever get tired of seeing the lives of the General and the Horse-Lord.

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## **Secretly Reading says**

Originally reviewed for The Book Vixen



In a Nutshell: It's a rare romance I enjoy with no sex in it but these characters are so compelling and their emotional connection so strong that this book was one.

Why I Read this Book: I really liked book one in this series (my review) and was so excited for this book.

What I Liked: John and Gabriel have a palpable emotional connection and it leaps off the page. They comfort each other and provide the emotional support for the other without being asked. They are emotionally wide open to each other and I love this as a romance reader. For instance, when Gabriel learns his teenage son was being recruited by a gang, John jumps to action getting Gabriel organized for a trip to see his son and becomes his port in the emotional storm while Gabriel's guilt batters him. The men poetically tell each other how they feel about wanting a lifetime together and even go so far as to talk about how they want to die together. Might some readers feel this over the top? Maybe but I loved it!

What I Also Liked: Another beauty of book one that was carried over into this novel are the cast of characters that John and Gabriel nurture and help. John's genius but quirky nephew, Kim, returns along with his boyfriend, Abdullah. Kim's zest for life is infectious as he forces John to shop for new clothes and then helps concoct a plan to get out of Tunisia safely. The young men held captive in Tunisia along with the soldiers who help John and Gabriel rescue them become a family in this novel. Even Jen, the daughter of another General and political activist, becomes part of the military team and by extension, family. I loved watching all these relationships unfold and develop. This also provides opportunity for John and Gabriel's relationships with Kim and others to grow as they see the young people not as children to protect but contributing members of their team.

The plot of how the team gets out of Tunisia was interesting and had plenty of action too. I liked watching all these quirky and unique characters work together toward a common goal. I have no idea how accurate all the details are of Tunisia or the inventor Al-Jazari but I so enjoyed them.

What I Didn't Like: As much as I loved these characters, John and Gabriel's physical relationship is most definitely fade to black. They kiss and hug often enough but as to sex, all I get is they "make love". I'd be lying if I said I didn't miss sexy times but I could look past it and enjoy the novel anyway.

IMO: The General and the Elephant Clock of Al-Jazari has great characters and even better relationships, just don't expect any sex and you won't be disappointed.

\*review copy provided by publisher\*

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## **Day-thief says**

I wasn't a fan. My review for the first book in the series tells you why.

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## **Vanessa North says**

Puppies!

\*squeals\*

(For an explanation of that, see my review of *The General and the Horse-Lord*)

Okay serious now: is goooooooooood, read it!

I think any review i write of this book will sound like an ode to Kim instead of an ode to Sarah Black, who has mad skills and deserves all the applause.

Also, the puppies are starting to play rough, but they're still sweet cuddly guys at the end of the day. Squeeee.

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## **Kaje Harper says**

I love older MCs and established, growing relationships, and I got both of those with one of my favorite couples, in this sequel to *The General and the Horse-Lord*. Gabriel and John are together, but their families are still in transition. Gabriel's kids and ex-wife are still absorbing both the day-to-day effects of him no longer living at home, and the long-term implications of his betrayal of his marriage for a love he could not deny with John. John's adopted nephew Kim, along with the other young men he collects under his wing, are figuring out what they want from life, and recovering from the stresses of the previous book's events. And the cover of *OUT* magazine, with John and Gabriel prominently on it, releases, with a ripple effect.

And John is bored. He loves having Gabriel in his life and home and bed. But he's not challenged enough.

Having left his teaching position on a matter of principle, he's finding that writing and scholarship aren't satisfying for a man used to being in the thick of the action. The terror he feels turning Kim loose in a furniture store with his credit card doesn't quite match the adrenaline-rush of active duty. So when he's asked to go over to Tunisia, and use his negotiating skills to get a couple of young former Rangers out of detention, he's eager for meaningful work and accepts (despite an antipathy for the man he takes the job from.)

The resulting adventures in Tunisia are exciting, sometimes emotional, with moments of humor (especially surrounding Kim, who shows up, and who shines brightly.) I loved that it is more about strategy, psychology, and thinking outside the box, than about guns and violence. I adore the secondary characters in this, especially Kim, and Eli, one of the rescued ex-Rangers, who is damaged and trying valiantly to salvage something lovely and worthwhile out of disaster. (And I'm delighted that Sarah Black has promised his story will continue along with the other MCs in the next book.)

I really enjoy Sarah Black's writing style, her realistic feel, and her ex-military characters with their intense loyalties and world-view. Highly recommended, and I can't wait for the next one. (Since I bought this the day it released, I unfortunately will have to. Best wishes to the author for speedy writing.)

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## **Lauraadriana says**

**I've said it before and I will say it again, Sarah Black in this genre is HER OWN STANDARD.**

I've never ever wanted to be a writer, but when I read her books, I almost want to. Just so I could know what it feels like to make something so lovely, that can move people like her books move me.

The General and the Elephant Clock of A-Jazari is the sequel to The General and The Horse Lord. The book that gave us General John Mitchell, and his longtime lover, fellow warrior helicopter pilot and all purpose badass, Gabriel Sanchez. John and Gabriel have been lovers for over two decades, but because of DADT they had to keep their relationship a secret. In retirement, they've decided to step out into the light and live like they've always wanted to. Not everything is rosy though, Gabriel has a very unhappy ex-wife, and his teenage boy is struggling with the changes in his family. John is trying to find excitement and purpose out of military life, and thus far it's been hard to find what fits.

Then there's his little tribe of young men. Kim his beloved nephew (and one of the best things I've read in years!) who is forever exploring and pushing the boundaries, looking for his own love, his own path. Billy the boy he's taken in after he was badly assaulted in a past relationship. Abdullah the son of his mentor and oldest friend. All these boys are looking to John and Gabriel for guidance, to show them what it should look like to live and love proudly. John is not a man who has ever shied away from doing the things that need to be done. But this time of his life proves more difficult than he ever imagined, he is feeling a sense of futility, like what he was born to do, is being done by someone else and they're fucking it up. I mean he's happy, happier than he's ever been, just to be able to wake up next the love of his life every morning, to love Gabriel in the light of day is like every dream come true. But still he is restless. He is BORED. So, when he gets the call to come on a mission to get two ex-military boys out of Tunisia who've been imprisoned while on vacation. John (and Gabriel), jump on the opportunity. What they've been wanting, a mission, the chance to do something great and purposeful.

This book is a complete adventure, the pace is fast and entertaining. We hit the ground running in Carthage. We move with John and Gabriel in Tunisia, doing whatever it takes to get the boys home safe, and while we're there we meet amazing characters that all make this world that she draws for us more colorful and kinder. Sarah Black has a style, a depth that is incomparable in this genre, she puts forth hard things, flawed people, harsh realities...But also she shows us the real strength behind friendship, loyalty, love, beliefs, passion...The things that make this world kinder and better. The ways she blends them, and makes a story that is foremost about people and love, it just leaves me enthralled. The thought that above all the differences there are amongst people, the common ground is always more vast, we just have to make the choice of stepping on to it. To see the world through the eyes that see where we can BE a better world than we have, where we can take the time to find the places where we did good things.

That's all on top of Gabriel and John themselves and that love they have. Gabriel was like some sort avenging angel, and John was righteous and heroic. It's not easy this life they are living at times, their love has costs. High costs, scary ones. But the choice of not having each other, is one that they can never take. I love these men, loved this book, the adventures were vivid, the things I learned enriching. I feel in love even more with the General, the Horse Lord and their tribe. I hope above ALL HOPE I will get to read about Abdullah and Kim's love story.

The special thing about Sarah Black is that she thinks about important complex things. Like the faces of young gangbangers, or the plight of women in the Middle East, and shows them to us in the same vein, with a face so much like our own struggles. About learning to walk in our own paths, of deciding when and where we must be adults, and how hard it is to finally let our children stand on their own two feet. She takes all that and strips it down to basic human things. That hard or difficult all the things in this world come down to basic feelings and solitary decisions. We either chose to the right thing, or we don't. We choose hate, or we choose love. We run away, or we stand up and face the consequences of that we've done.

Beautiful book. Sarah Black, you leave without words sometimes. Totally and completely recommend. I'd MAKE people read it if I could.

If you'd like to see what wine and food I paired this beaut of a book with, go to my full review at The Tipsy Bibliophile

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### **Julie Bozza says**

This is a terrific action-drama-adventure of a book set in Tunisia, featuring a whole range of vivid and interesting characters.

In terms of fascination, however, the General out-does them all. Sarah has created a unique and wonderful character in John Mitchel, the warrior-philosopher, and I don't think I could ever tire of reading about him. He's not perfect - there are times in this tale when things don't pan out the way he anticipated, and he makes a decision or two that might be considered questionable. But he is always brave, thoughtful, wise, fiercely loyal, and full of love.

I wish I had him in my life for real (and I wish I had the confidence to think he might want me in his life, too!) but for now I have these two wonderful books from Sarah - and hopefully, in time to come, perhaps further tales of the General, the Horse-Lord, and their Jedis-in-training.

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### **Leanne says**

Once again, Sarah Black's very real and utterly charming characters swept me off my feet and left me simultaneously laughing and weeping as I read the last few pages. As with so many of her books, there is a wonderful cinematic feel to this story. In another reality these two books would be adapted to film and they would be visually breathtaking, with a sweeping musical score (Alexandre Desplat!) and *everyone* would have their hearts broken, just a little bit, by John and Gabriel and their boys.

There is so much to love about this book. The love John and Gabriel have for each other, the mentorship with the younger boys (that all young men should have mentors like these!)... And the underlying message; that people from disparate, warring backgrounds *can* find a common humanity through music and art-celebrating ingenuity and creativity.

Little wonder I closed this book with such a fierce and intense feeling of joy and hope.

Thank you Ms Black.

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### **F. says**

This sequel didn't get to grab me like the first book because of the lousy format Amazon downloaded it as. I had sentences that went like this

and carried on thus down the page. Then there were the time jumps in the story with no spacing between time changes. Thus I was continuously taken out of the story wondering where the hell I was. So unfortunately a good story was ruined by the hopeless formatting. Still this is an author I will read again and wish we could hear more of this growing family. Definitely awkward to read - eh!!

So 4 stars for story, 2 for terrible format sent to me by Amazon

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