



Revenge of the Elf

Lucas Thorn

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First in an ongoing Heroic Fantasy series, 'Revenge of the Elf' promises unrelenting action, oddball mages, and a foul-mouthed wisecracking heroine tougher than a hardboiled egg. Following in the footsteps of Conan, Drizzt, the Gray Mouser, Elric, Druss, and many more heroes of Sword and Sorcery, the elf called Nysta will carve her own epic path.

And that path will be bloody.

"So, I'd like to make a truce. You don't try opening my veins, and I won't melt your face off. The thing is, I want to sleep easy for one night without having to keep hold of my magic just in case. And I'm sure you don't need any more practice after what you did to those two out there. So, what do you say, Long-ear? Think we can agree to be polite?"

"Sure, Chukshene," the elf said, sheathing the blade and plunging the wagon's interior into darkness. "I reckon we can mind our manas for a bit."

Nysta is a new kind of elf.

When nine killers rode out of the homestead with blood fresh on their hands, they reckoned that would be the end of it.

The lost spellslinger was looking for a way out. He figured Nysta could lead him to the safety of a town called Spikewrist. And then there was the tragic creature born in the darkest shadows of legend. He reckoned she would fight the greatest fight of all.

But none of them counted on the violence she would unleash. Because in the Deadlands there is no forgiveness. No mercy.

Winter in the Deadlands could be cold. But the revenge of an elf would be colder.

Revenge of the Elf Details

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From Reader Review Revenge of the Elf for online ebook

Jonathan Edward says

First half of this book was utterly fascinating. The second half was utterly boring. This book was 5 stars until the characters got to the town of Spikewrist. Then the plot folded in on itself, the magic was not believable, the moment of vengeance too coincidental and the fight scenes just too damn long. I might try the authors second book in the series, hoping that his writing improves. What a terrible end to something that started so well. The author completely botched the latter half of the book. But there is promise in the writing style.

p.s. What's with all the f bombs? Do you truly think they add anything to the story? You are badly mistaken if you do.

Sadie Forsythe says

3.5, but I'll round up

I went into this book with high hopes of a strong, kick-ass female warrior. And I had reason to. The following is from the latter half of the Author's Note:

Nysta is certainly the culmination of many years of dissatisfaction in the presentation of female characters in fantasy.

As such, Nysta will never heal anyone with amazing healing powers. She will never drink tea and discuss dresses. She will not stand back and watch her boyfriend fight the monster.

She will not be rescued by the hero, because in my book, she IS the hero.

And in some ways Nysta is bad-ass. She's certainly skilled with a blade or two (dozen). But that's not really the same thing as strong. I could excuse all the tears and even the way her thoughts are scattered one moment and obsessive the next; she's grieving the loss of the love of her life, after-all. (And Talek seemed wonderful and worthy of her love.)

But the author fell into the same trite trap as many others when he made her a victim of sexual abuse and circumstantially forced prostitution as a child (starting as young as seven presumably). The book also starts with rape threats and whoring comes up frequently in conversation or insults. Nysta's very ashamed of what she had to do to survive and when discussing this history is the only time in the book that she feels fragile. I swear authors, there really are other ways for women to become strong. But you would never know it from reading fiction. How very pat.

I wouldn't even mention it, since it's basically the norm. Except that Thorn made it apparent in the above note that he was aiming to break the pattern of women's presentation in fantasy. Then why go with a plot device so overused as to have become cliché? Men don't have to be victims before they can become strong. They don't need that forging process and frankly neither did Nysta.

What's more, Nysta's presumed strength is of a very male sort. She can kill more people than the next guy

therefore she must be strong. But I would argue that's skill and something else entirely. Internal strength needs to be based on something more and Nysta lacks that. To paraphrase Chukshene, she's still just that scared little girl, servicing some minor noble on her knees in a dirty back alley.

So, I'll give it half marks for my hope of a strong, kick-ass woman warrior. She's kick-ass sure, but she didn't strike me as strong in any sense but the muscular type. Disappointing, to say the least.

The book also has a cool cover. But again, being as Thorn apparently wants to widen women's available and acceptable place in fantasy, I should ask why she's half-naked. Especially considering the book is set in winter and she's fully dressed in leather armour and a full length, fur-lined cape (mostly even with the hood up) for the entirety of the book. Again, for someone trying to break new ground, Thorn keeps falling into disappointingly well-trodden paths.

As for the rest of the story, I'll give it half marks too, because I liked it in a lot of ways, but feel very little compulsion to continue the series. For one, Thorn has a tendency to overuse things. Nysta, and to a lesser degree Chukshene, have a habit of dropping puns and one-liners. At first, it was funny. Then I couldn't decide if it was genius or just cheesy. By the end and the 100th such occurrence, I'd started imagining a 'ba-da-bum' and a laugh-track in my mind each time one of the characters dropped a clanger. It had been wholly reduced to Dad Joke level humour and definitely fell on the super-cheese side of the equation. Same thing with Nysta's constant threats and Chukshene's endless needling, it was effective in the beginning but just disruptive to the narrative by the end.

And the end, or lack thereof, is one of the biggest reasons I don't think I'll continue this series unless I come across the sequel as a freebie. The whole plot of this book is set up by the blurb to be about Nysta hunting down and killing her husband's murderers. However, she doesn't find them until about 80% into the book. Then there is about a one-page altercation in which most of them escape. That's it. That's the entirety of the fight between her and the men she's hunting.

She fights some robbers, some zombie type things, walks, rides a horse, cries, refuses to eat, talks and talks and talks, but she doesn't fight the Bloody Nine much at all. Then, just at the end something else entirely happens, opening the plot to a much wider path and the book ends.

You don't get the satisfaction of seeing Talek's killers caught or much of a sense of vindication on seeing them realise that Nysta isn't 'just a whore' but a dangerous killer they should fear. You don't know what's possessed Nysta (she's unconscious at the end). You don't know why Chukshene is sticking with her. You don't have much more than a hint at where the series is headed. It's just one big question-mark, making this whole book feel like little more than a prologue to something more. It is not a stand-alone book.

The writing itself is pretty good. Mechanically readable with believable dialogue (outside of the puns). There were a couple editing hiccups, but not enough to bother me. I was confused with the world-building. The author does set up a rather complex religious and political landscape, but it's set up, not described or explored. So, I only ever had a vague understanding of it. It was enough to follow the story, but not enough to feel fully invested in it.

The author also seems to have an odd attachment to spiders. Chukshene runs with his knees too high, like an injured spider. A hill looks like a spider squatting. Runes looked like spiders dancing. Someone is described as cold, like a spider. Plus, apparently Chukshene just doesn't like them and they can get as big as a hand. I second Chukshene here, hate them, so I notice these things.

All-in-all, if I had gone into this book with different or no expectations, I might not be as disappointed with it as I am. It's not a bad book, a lot better than many indies I've read. But I really wanted that strong warrior Thorn promised in the beginning and I didn't find her. (Maybe we just have very different ideas of what makes a woman strong, but I still finished in a sulk.)

And as one finale snarky side comment, though she never drank tea, Nysta did in fact discuss a dress, a red one. Maybe not in the 'I'm a pretty-pretty princess' way a lot of fantasy, especially YA fantasy (which this is not, it's harsh, violent and gritty, with lots of cursing—none of which I mind) does when they want to let a man provide the woman with the femininity she's obviously lacking by being a fighter, but still there was a dress, it was discussed.

Jeffrey A. Dewey says

Darkness

The start of a very dark saga, the death of a scarred loved one resulting in seeking vengeance against those only to release an unknown foe from its confines

Peter Cornell says

Decent Read

I kept expecting something to happen to make the book something special. It didn't. The ending just left me hanging. Disappointing.

Vicky Camp says

Read it in one go.

I recognised the bits of influenced writing in this book and was glad the author acknowledges it in the end. If ever a character was reincarnated in grand style this one has been. Nysta is all an anti heroine needs to be and I can recommend her story to anyone who enjoys fury and mercilessness in the face of overwhelming odds.

T.O. Munro says

I should by way of disclosure admit that some months ago Lucas Thorn wrote a thoughtful and fair review of my first book on his website. This is a fact that Lucas did not tell (share or tweet) to me and which I only discovered recently entirely by the accident of googling my own book. However, we have exchanged views about the review-starvation that can afflict indie authors and the discovery of his review gave an added impetus to put my goodreads activity where my tweets were (or as we might have said in older days, to put my money where my mouth was).

Revenge of the Elf is a book without pretension, it is about coarse language and bloody violence as Nysta pursues revenge across a frozen and desolate wasteland. The titular heroine is so hard bitten and bad ass she would make iron nails look like cheese-strings. I had read the first 10% as a sampler and been intrigued, but I held off for a while from buying it based on some middle of the road reviews on the amazon website - the kind that damned with the faint praise of few stars. That was a bad decision on my part.

It is a shorter book than its page count might suggest, but it has a visceral quality that reads well keeping me turning the pages, or flicking the kindle. There aren't many books that hold my attention enough to be read in a few sittings over a couple of days. The opening scene with Nysta's husband, Talek is well written, drawing you into the experience of a great soldier brought low in enforced retirement. The writing has a terseness that keeps it tight and free of the purple extravagance of some indie prose. Description of scene and setting appear through the characters' story rather than as a writing exercise of their own, the book is about action and dialogue and the occasional internal ruminations of a guilt ridden central character drowning her sorrows in violence rather than drink, but all of it advancing the plot.

There is a gritty style to the book. The writing, dialogue and the action all have a certain edginess, an authentic voice of fury, desperation and despair and yes that means there's swearing, shitloads of it. The wandering wizard Chukshene is a useful foil to Nysta. Lucas said of their scenes that "they sort of wrote themselves" and you can see that in the way the constant war of words plays out between them. There is a natural rhythm to the entertaining abuse they exchange inbetween eviscerating a wide variety of foes.

Nysta is a distinctive character who I want to know better. A warrior who has so many knives she has to give them all names to tell them apart. An anti-archetype (well pretty much an anti-everything) she is not willowy or ethereal, more waspish and feral. This is indeed a very different kind of elf.

The world building is subtle, all seen through the lens of the character's viewpoints and dialogue, but there is enough to stimulate a certain curiosity. A world of (at least) three gods who came and fought each other on the earth. None of them seem to be particularly godly, walking amongst the living and apparently as fond of a good piss-up as the next man, but their bar-room brawls last for centuries and desolate continents. Throughout the book we get tantalising glimpses of the mythology and culture of different people is from the character's interactions rather than through any tedious infodump.

There was a moment when Nysta flung a knife at a noise in the forest that I was reminded of an entirely different fantasy book, albeit it twisted through a wormhole of distortion. Chukshene, the wizard, works well as the coarse and cowardly lion to Nysta's anything but dainty Dorothy while they follow a ragged trail about as far from the yellow brick road as it is possible to get.

The book as a whole rattles along at a brisk pace driven by its expletive fuelled dialogue and it's non-stop action and there were times when I could perhaps have wished it a little slower, a little more measured. The opening scenes with Talek were among my favourite, perhaps because the violence was curtailed by Talek's physical impairments and so dialogue and interaction took precedence over raw action.

Of recent books that I have read it reminds me most of "Those poor, poor bastards" the first in the Dead West series. There was the same rapid acceleration to unrelenting action and the same authenticity of voice in the f-bombed dialogue and the same relief that the breathless pace was confined to a relatively short book. This is a sprint of a read, not a marathon.

There are some points of style one might question, A dearth of pronouns or even nouns to take the subject in a sentence for example. Instead of "She could move...." or "Nysta couldn't breathe...." we get "Could move...."

and "Couldn't breathe..." It adds a certain sense of urgency and pace to the text, but there is simply the question of whether it is overdone. The borrowed references to other works and the punning humour that other reviewers found distracting did not affect me in the same way - perhaps because I was forewarned, perhaps because I am an undiscovered borrower myself.

But the essential question is, is this a good book? is this a great book? Well it is certainly good, I wanted to finish it and I'm glad I did; that isn't always true when I read indie books, in fact it isn't always true when I read any books. But then again, this book always had a headstart over the others, I mean look at my recent reads "Half the World," "Those Poor, Poor Bastards," dammit look at my books, "Lady of the Helm" "Wrath of the Medusa" d'you see what it is yet? The common theme?

Bad assed female heroines! What's not to like?

Dick Martin says

I have read all three of his books in this series and they just keep getting better and more intense in Nysta's journey to what I think of as finding her true self and purpose. I don't know what the future holds for this elf but I know I can't wait to read the next book.

Lisette says

This is one of those unique cases where I hate how the book was written, and I flat-out despise the puns that ended every chapter, yet I want to keep reading. I like the characters, and I like the story, and I am willing to ignore my irritation over the writing style in order to get to them. It's great to see such a strong, independent female lead.

I do hope to see some flashbacks of Nysta's husband. I adored him right away!

Andrew Hale says

Entertaining but some reservations.

While reading this, I quickly felt like I was reading a western. I liked it for that. I didn't like the excessive foul language. I'm disheartened that one of the toughest characters is talked about in past tense because he's dead. I cheered for Nysta and Chukshene although they both are miserable, foul, and murderous (the last one more so Nysta).

I do, however, enjoy a gritty and dark tale of revenge. I'm not sure what will come of the storyline between the three gods, two maniacal warring males and the seemingly more "righteous" female. I agree with the author that helpless or weak females aren't entertaining but I would disagree that most fantasy stories present them as so. Since the 80s at least, I have seen story after story of a female-focused lead that was above males in all regards. In reading many stories, male leads are usually flanked by a mixture of strong and weak makes and females but always at least one strong female without making it a point to point out to the reader "look at my strong male character". In this story, and with the author's after-story words, he seems to be pointing out

"look at my strong female". I just want a good story.

At least in this story, whether intentional or not, there were actually strong males and females, minimally, but the main male is a scheming coward. No character was charitable and righteous but at least Chukshene kept helping Nysta when death was upon her.

I love strong characters, male and female, so I plan to move forward with the next story in the high hopes that Nysta and the female god Veil aren't representative of victims of a fantasy patriarchy that manage to overcome it all. I just want a good story with strong representation all around.

So far, I was entertained even with the Alice Cooper nod and cheesy one-liners and knife names.

Ruby Ridge says

Hot damn, this is one of the best fantasies I have ever read (and I have read a lot of them).

I absolutely loved the heroine, an elf outlaw Josey Wales (if you have not seen the movie you really need to).

I loved this book so much I have gone and got the next three in the series.

Nysta has become one of my favorite female characters, Lucas, please keep writing lots of sequels. Also if any movie makers are reading this - what are you waiting for?

Very highly recommended.

Five stars are not enough!!!

Kollisionwhispervortex says

F this F that.. pretty much sums up the story.

Fiannawolf says

Some days I enjoy reading about a character that is blunt and straightforward. Definitely a nice turn of events with regards to how he portrays elves. I like Berserk (the manga) just fine so the cursing and violence in the narrative didn't bother me too much. Basically its a dark fantasy and I came in expecting such things. Bought the whole series back when it was on a flash deal via Amazon. Looking forward to tackling the next books.

Recommended if books akin to the Witcher are your cup of tea.

The Shayne-Train says

This was the bloodiest, grittiest, Grimdarkiest fantasy/noir book I've ever read. Swears and blood, hatred and violence, and more swears, and secrets, and revenge, all bathed in blood.

And there was BLOOD. And SWEARS.

I am definitely going to have to read more of this series.

Justine says

I began reading this book with basically no knowledge of what I was in for, other than the author telling me, and I quote: “Prepare for blood, violence, blood, swearing elves, violence, blood...”. Obviously, this became a must-read for me and Thorn so graciously delivered on his promise.

This is a story that sheds light on the dark and consuming path of vengeance. On the pain and fear that fuel and bolster one’s resolve. On the worry of disappointing those you truly care for, those who always seem to find the good in you, regardless of your flaws. Yes, there’s coarse language. Yes, it’s gritty and stabby with buckets and buckets of blood and gore. But once you get past that hardened exterior, you’re left with an emotional tale of a woman’s trying journey after her husband is brutally taken from her.

Now that we have that out of the way, this story is BAD. ASS. We follow Nysta and the mage Chukshene as they navigate through a bleak and frozen wasteland in pursuit of the murderers of Nysta’s husband. This wasteland, aptly named the Deadlands, is the end-result of a long war between gods and is riddled with dangerous creatures and even more dangerous people. You can expect intense fight scenes, sheer destructive magic, secrets and peril lurking in every shadow, and nightmares of folklore past.

The gallows humor is strong with this one and Thorn’s pun game is on point. Call me crazy, but I actually love hitting a line that makes my eyes audibly roll into the back of my head. At the end of each chapter, a character always had some one-liner ready to go and I couldn’t help but picture Nysta or Chukshene breaking the fourth wall with raised eyebrows, goading me into immediately starting the next chapter. And that’s exactly what I did!

Speaking of Nysta and Chukshene, I really came to love these characters. Upon introduction, I was a bit unsure if I’d get into Nysta’s character, but as the story progressed and we gain more insight into her past and the truth behind the rough, unpolished edges, she quickly became one of my favorite female leads. While outwardly ruthless and relentless, she’s internally haunted by the ol’ familiar, all-too-human feeling of self-doubt that makes you view her in a completely different light. It also didn’t hurt that she’s a firm believer in the old adage “you can never have too many knives”. Chukshene...oh, Chukshene, Chukshene, Chukshene. What can I say? It’s always lovely when a character surprises you.

I really had a blast reading this one and cannot wait to continue my journey through the Deadlands - it looks like I have a lot of reading ahead of me! If you’re looking for something dark and violent and at times vulgar, then I highly suggest giving this a read. Onto book two!

Indigo says

Rape threats and homophobic taunts before we get to Nysta. Described as not pretty by her husband and then again by the narrative, which goes on to use an adjective usually used to describe the skin of a black woman. Done. Disgusted.

