



Against the Light

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The Hierarchy, high priests of the religious order the Light, has installed King Ethan as the monarchical figurehead, ruling both the magical kingdom of Albi and its predominant religion. Scattered throughout the land, worshipers in the old ways of the Earth Mother are persecuted as heretics. And when young missionary student Rollo Woodbridge returns home to Albi, he is immediately arrested for heresy and treason, setting off a chain of events that plunges the land into utter chaos.

Against the Light Details

Date : Published 2012 by 47North

ISBN :

Author : Dave Duncan

Format : Paperback 402 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction

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From Reader Review Against the Light for online ebook

Trunatrschild says

I was a little trepidatious when I ordered this book, but I thought that maybe the worst it could be was stupid... I was pleasantly surprised. The plot isn't original, but the writing is so smooth and there are different threads for each Woodbridge child and there's actually a lot of tension and action, I found that though it's not going to be a classic, it's difficult to put down. The plot is that it's basically a Taliban-ish religion with a Jihad against the older 'pagan' religion, not really original, but one family with occult powers is wiped out but for some of the children and they go on their various revenge paths in their own ways. The bad guys are bad and the good guys are good and the plot moves along fairly quickly. I'd seriously recommend it as escapist literature, especially if you have time to read it... you have to put it down, it's not a short book! I think that if the author were to put his talents to the test, he could write a serious classic.

John Eich says

Last half of the book - 4 stars. First half - 2. Obscenely cliched theme--sensitive, good, earth-loving Mother-worshippers being cruelly oppressed by a patriarchal, corrupt and cruel, male-dominated Father-Sky worshiping church in political power--I mean, seriously?? The magic theory is weak and just sort of happens to fit the plot needs.

But...great characters. Really lifelike, with subtle traits that make them stand distinct to each other, and personalities that almost vie for the reader's trust and sympathy. The author has a gift in creating characters, and a very deft hand in describing them as they move through scenes. They carry the first half of the book.

Then, suddenly the plot kicks it up a notch, and the plot is compelling, driving forward consistently, and keeps one turning pages. That continues through the last page of the book, with an 'argghhh' experience at 98% knowing this won't get resolved in one book and a series is setting sail. Perhaps an 'ahhhhhh' if that second half becomes the norm, and there's more to enjoy. But argghhh now as I wanted a resolute and resounding conclusion. Still, great second half. So 3 stars to average...

Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

I have seen books by Dave Duncan before but Against the Light is the first book of his I have read. I got Against the Light from Amazon Vine.

Plot: There is much more to the plot than you see in the above description. There is religion vs. politics. Not everyone is who he or she seems. There are twists and turns, actions that seem right but only make things worse, characters who act without thought and just when things look like they will work out everything falls apart. This is the first book in a new series so not all is settled

World Building: Dave Duncan has put together a complex world. The rules that govern that world fit together and allow the story to develop in a smooth fashion. Because this is the first book in the series there has to be quite a bit of world building but it is skillfully woven into the story and does not impede the action.

Characters: Against the Light has a full cast of characters. The main characters are better developed than the secondary but even so some seem one-dimensional. I would not call any character well rounded but they do fit with their role in the book.

Action: Against the Light starts with action, ends with action and is action filled in-between. The characters act and react in ways that keep the action flowing smoothly and story moving in a believable direction.

Writing: Dave Duncan can write. Everything balanced. There was just enough of everything to keep me reading. I did not see wasted words or useless facts, Back-story was so skillfully woven in that it flowed without interfering in the story. All and all a very well written book.

I am more of a Science Fiction fan than a Fantasy fan but I enjoyed Against the Light and will look for future books in the series. If my TBR pile does not get to big I might try another of Dave Duncan's series.

47 North published Against the Light by Dave Duncan in 2011.

Anne Monteith says

I am glad that I kept on reading this book instead of giving up after the first few chapters as it developed into a book that was very enjoyable. It is another story that could easily have taken place many times in history, people fighting and killing each other in the name of religion. There are two different religions in this novel, the old religion of the Mother and the new one of the Light. After the God's War, the Light is in control and those practicing the old religion are persecuted. They must hide what they believe while pretending to conform to the new religion. Many of those that follow the old religion are gifted and have been branded as witches by the new religion.

This was a well written novel with characters that are well defined. The plot development and pacing are good and I often found myself unable to stop reading because I wanted to see what would happen next. I think this the beginning of a new series and I look forward to reading the next book.

While this is a work of fiction, I found the parallel with what is happening in today's world. Until we learn to tolerate each other, including their beliefs, we will always have wars over religion. Personally, I do not believe that God, Jehovah or Allah or whatever name you call God wants us killing each other in His name but it has been happening since the beginning of time. Apparently, we refuse to learn from the mistakes in the past, instead we continue to make them.

4.50 STARS ** Receiving this book through Amazon's Vine Program did not influence my rating or review of this book**.

Gaby says

I'd read every book that I could find of Dave Duncan's King's Blades series and was excited to see another Dave Duncan adventure novel. Like his earlier novels, Against the Light has quite a lot of magic woven into the plot but this time the ability to use magic and belief in magic that divides political factions.

The extent of the bitterness and acrimony between the sides becomes clear early in the novel. The magic divide is reminiscent of the religious divide between the Catholics and the Church of England under Henry VIII, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. There are a number of violent scenes, but they fit into the plot, so they worked for me.

I particularly liked how Duncan tracked the three family members after the attack on their estate. He carefully plotted their career paths and their eventual reunion to give the reader a suspenseful and satisfying story. I devoured *Against the Light* and am looking forward to the next Dave Duncan novel.

ISBN-10: 1612182038 - Paperback \$14.95

Publisher: 47North (January 24, 2012), 484 pages.

Review copy courtesy of the Amazon Vine Program and the publisher.

Douglas Cook says

First paragraphs

SILAS DID NOT sleep at all the night before. It was neither care nor worry that kept him wide-eyed, staring into the dark. He had nothing to fear, for he was a diligent priest, serving the Light as well as he was able. His faith was strong; he had every confidence that his brief term of service in this world would be followed by life everlasting in the loving arms of his Heavenly Father. No, it was joy and anticipation that roiled in Silas Fage's mind during those long hours. Justice was sweet. Not revenge! He must not think of it as revenge. Revenge was violence and therefore forbidden by the Teacher—excepting violence against unbelievers, of course, which this probably would be.

Duncan, Dave (2012-01-24). *Against the Light* (p. 1). AmazonEncore. Kindle Edition.

Becky Stone says

Dave Duncan has written some splendid novels. This is not one of them.

The characters are flat incarnations of cliches and plot is no better (hate-mongering new church persecuting followers of old, Goddess-centered, magical faith). The daughter is beautiful, the sons are brave, and the evil characters are irredeemable. None of the characters, good or evil, are individual or dynamic enough to be endearing. I finished this book less than 10 minutes ago and I'd be hard-pressed to tell you even one of the character's names.

I didn't love or hate anything about this book. I never laughed, gasped, or cried. I also never worried, rejoiced, feared, or emoted much at all.

There are definitely worse books out there than this one, but I'm afraid that's the best thing I can say about it. If you have nothing better to do and this is the only book you have, you might as well read it for a while.

You'd be better off reading the King's Blades series instead, and then you'll see how good Dave Duncan can be when he's on his game.

Marsha Fuller says

Magic, religious turmoil, family inheritance, love and hate are all given a role in this "Can't put it down" book! Adventurous and thrilling!

Metaphorosis says

I've been reading Dave Duncan for a long time now - since *A Man of His Word's* first book (Magic Casement), at least. I've read a lot his books, and enjoyed most of them (The Alchemist's Apprentice was an exception that I found dull). Mostly, Duncan specializes in the very real feeling, likeable young hero. His characters may have special skills, but they act like you think you might, not like demi-gods.

So, a new book by Dave Duncan is a thing to look forward to, and I downloaded *Against the Light* without having much idea what it was about. (Though I'm a little irked that it's now 1/5th the price I paid.)

The book (without using these exact words), deals with a land where witches are persecuted, and believers live in fear of being caught. One particular family falls foul of powerful clerics, and pays the price. The story follows surviving family members as they cope in various ways. Strangely, though it's indicated the best witches are women, most of the witches here are men.

So far, so good, and fodder for a good Duncan story. Unfortunately, much of the first half (and some of the second) feels more like a thorough sketch than a complete and edited novel. Though Duncan doesn't aim to be Vance, and his style is simple, here it's a little *too* plain - even oversimple. The same is true of several of the plot elements, which are laid out and then followed without elaboration. One or two of the plot devices are just not credible, and overall, it feels half-hearted.

It's a fun read, but it's not up to the Duncan standard. This is especially true of the ending. The book just stops, quite suddenly, without even quite putting the final touches on the resolution we've almost reached. Apparently this is a standalone novel, but it reads very much like the first book in a series. If it were, I'd buy the next one; this may not have been great, but Duncan is usually pretty consistent, and I'm willing to believe the quality will improve.

All in all, fun light reading, but not of the caliber Duncan usually produces.

Amanda says

I mostly enjoyed this book; it has pretty well thought out characters, an interesting and somewhat complex world, and a story that's reasonably entertaining.

The three siblings are pretty obviously acting as stand-ins for a certain moral stance, with Rollo being on the

extreme side of goodness and forgiveness, Maddy being good yet driven by revenge, and Bram being completely driven by revenge. I think that Duncan missed an opportunity with Bram to create more contention between him and his siblings. (view spoiler)

I was pretty on-board with everything until the last few chapters. The end feels hastily cobbled together, almost to the point that it doesn't even seem like an ending. I assume that Duncan is setting up the makings of a sequel, but he did it in a very *deus ex machina* sort of way. Speaking of *deus ex machina*, I got a little tired the "familiars" always making sure that the characters did the right thing. It really seemed like a way to make sure that Bram went in the right direction because all the other characters with familiars hardly ever consulted them.

Overall, it's a relatively fun read, even though the ending was kind of a let down.

UPDATE: This is an incredibly forgettable book. Two years later, I don't even remember having read this book, and my own review doesn't jog my memory in the least.

Mitchell says

I found this book in the cheap Kindle section of Amazon, and it was highly rated, so I decided to check it out. I thought this book was quite compelling as it did not fall easily into the usual fantasy cliches. Rather, as I found out at the end, it is based on the religious struggles in England in the 1500-1600's. In this book, there are two major world religions, one of which led a uprising against the other several hundred years before the book. The other, worshiping the Mother, went underground, with clandestine rituals and missionaries. The new state religion, worshiping the Light, continued its crusade to stamp out followers of the Mother. The story follows a family of Mother worshipers, and and followers of the Light are, for the most part, painted in a negative light. However, there are honorable and horrible people on both sides, which is realistic. Also, at least at the beginning, you really got the feeling that everyone was a untrustworthy narrator, seeing events unfold through their own perceptions. The characters, I thought, were well developed as they all find themselves in unique situations, facing unique sets of choices as they move forward. I found myself questioning the various talents, omens, visions, and miracles that happen in the book; it seems implied that all the magical talents are given by the Mother, even to those working to stamp her followers out. It seems like a lot of the miracles and messages acted at cross-purposes, which hints to either writer error or poor character understanding of the gods themselves or their portents. In any case, really enjoyed the book, and I'd be interested in more books following this storyline.

M.A. Kropf says

The Woodbridge family are worshippers of the Mother, an old faith that has been supplanted by the Children of the Light. The followers of the old faith are endowed with various talents which enable them to influence the actions of others, seem invisible, or manipulate physical objects, among others. The Children denounce these talents as witchcraft and persecute those of the old faith as heretics. Rollo Woodbridge, the eldest, went to a neighboring country to study his craft, as he has been gifted with more of the talents than most. When he returns home to serve as a clandestine missionary, he is arrested and tortured, with execution to follow. The Hierarchy of the Light use the opportunity to attack his family. Maddy, the daughter, is married off to a distant relative of the Church leader and his politically connected brother. The rest of the family is attacked

and presumably killed. Maddy swears revenge and leaves her husband to work her way into the high society to gain the position she will need to do so. Rollo is rescued, and their youngest brother, also a major talent, is saved by his familiar, a black dog named Smut, who leads him away from home at the right time to avoid the massacre. All three are determined to change the world they live in, each in their own way and not knowing the others have survived. When their fates begin to converge once again, they will need to work together and with former enemies to get their revenge.

This was an pretty good book. The basic plot- old religion supplanted by new order which hunts down and persecutes them- is not a new one in fantasy, or fiction, for that matter. But it is handled well here, and the book really revolves on the characters more than the plot. All of the main characters are well done, although I did find it a bit disheartening to see Maddy fall back on the trope of using her sex to get what she wanted. On the other hand, it was this that led to the story its main romantic subplot. And, while all three siblings wanted to avenge their families, they were far different in their approaches. Maddy was shrewd and planned every step. Rollo preferred a non-violent course, and Bram was the impulsive hothead. All three grew and changed believably throughout the course of the story. Secondary characters were more than just window dressing, and added reliably to the plot.

The action moved quickly with few slow spots in the narrative. Some of the scenes with Rollo in the prison might be a bit much for their graphic description of his torture, but there was nothing overtly gory. The setting was defined, without being overdone. The feel of the 16th century time was good, despite some intrusions of modern bits that felt a little out of place. The ending left the way for a sequel without leaving too many loose strings.

This was an enjoyable read, and a good alternate history fantasy.

Mark says

I picked this up for free with Amazon's Kindle lending program for Prime customers. Figured I'd give it a shot. It passed the first page test and the price was right...

Not bad. Bad bad guys that really needed to get theirs. Good guys that weren't entirely pure (I love that). A kid who gets caught up in the cycle of revenge and ends up kicking off a war.

The premise is that there's a Theocracy that has worked to oppress a minority of the population. This minority has magical "gifts" that the theocrats claim are the work of the devil (or whatever). This has, understandably, encouraged the oppressed minority to go underground and sometimes fight back. Protagonist is a kid who loses his family, builds up a good store of rage, unleashes it with all the sound judgment that teenagers possess, and then has to deal with the consequences.

Not what I'd call a life-changing story, but a good read and I'll look for other works by Duncan.

Sheila says

At the start of this novel, as worshippers of the Mother hide their magical skills from the Church, a reader might be reminded of America's Salem and witch trials. But the countryside feels more like England at the

time of the Reformation, religious allies across the water and shifting schemes of politics. While firmly grounded in fantasy, this story evokes a very real era and issues as relevant today as they were then. The blessings of gifts, supernatural or otherwise can be easily misused, and power has always corrupted those who seek it too earnestly.

Three siblings survive, unbeknownst to each other, after a dramatic fire, and take very different stands against the murderers of their family. One will seek peace, another revenge by violence, and a third the political downfall of the accusers. Wisdom is tested against knowledge, free-will against prescience, and the innocence of youth against the manipulation of the betrayed.

The writing's evocative, the action fierce and graphic, the compromises painful and the plot beautifully told. Not for the youngest or most squeamish teens, this is one of those young adult/adult novels that grabs you by the throat and won't let go. But behind all the plots, reader and character alike are left to believe there must be a guiding hand. Mother, Father or Teacher, fate is never quite as random as it seems, and integrity is surely worth the cost.

The author creates a reformation land of Albi where followers of Teacher and Mother mirror the Catholics and Protestants of history, where faith isn't simple and might only pretends to be right, and where magic lies in the writing as well as the tale.

Disclosure: I received a free copy of this novel in exchange for my honest review.

Brian says

I was intrigued to see what this novel would be like since it is published by Amazon's own fledgling imprint, 47North. However, the author, Dave Duncan, is an established writer of fantasy and science fiction and has produced over forty titles with conventional publishers.

Against The Light is a compelling fantasy set in a country called Albi in which members of a forbidden matriarchal religion, whose adherents are sometimes blessed with magical talents, are persecuted by a hierarchical, patriarchal religion which brands them as heretics and witches, torturing and executing all those whom it discovers clinging to the older faith. As the author acknowledges at the end of the book, the story was inspired by the religious persecutions that occurred during the reign of Queen Elizabeth and the attempts by Catholics to overthrow the state which culminated in the infamous Gunpowder Plot.

That is certainly an interesting and unusual departure point for a fantasy and the result is a cleverly conceived story, well constructed with an engrossing plot and bold characterisation. A book of ideas, Against The Light is an exploration of the links between religious fanaticism, terror and statecraft. It is also a thoroughly gripping read.
