



The Illumination

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It gleamed up at her like a small golden egg encrusted with jewels of lapis lazuli, carnelian, and jasper. The classic eye, one of the most ancient symbols of protection.

Natalie Landau, a museum curator with an expertise in Mesopotamian protective amulets and magical beliefs, has received a puzzling gift from her sister Dana--a necklace with a blue evil eye pendant on it. The Evil Eye is a symbol of protection common throughout the world, with a history connecting it to many religions.

When Natalie learns Dana was murdered only hours after sending the gift, she begins to think her evil eye amulet had something to do with her sister's death. As she races to discover the origin of the pendant, Natalie is sucked into an international battle between powerful religious factions, each battling for the eye, which turns out to be far more valuable—and far more powerful--than she could ever imagine.

The Illumination Details

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Sanjac says

Novel written about Natalie Landau. She is archaeologist specialized for ancient pendants. Suddenly she has in her hands ancient pendant shaped like eye, also known as firefox. Different strange events occur, her sister dies, novelist/ex field agent D'Amato helps with finding out what is going on, and Natalie is almost sure it is connected with mysterious pendant.

Like fast happening of events and connecting information in everyday life and in this book. (Mentioned movie Lord of the rings, some historical events etc.) Nevertheless, didn't like the ending and whole shifting between events that are happening in the same time, made me a bit confused.

Jim says

[Warning: lots of backstory spoilers here, but nothing that spoils the main (contemporary) narrative.]

I've long been fascinated by the fact that "Let there be light" occurred on the first day, according to the book of Genesis, while the creation of the stars, sun and moon didn't take place until the fourth day. Even as allegory, it's obvious that the light in question on that first day could not have been our sun. For lack of any better explanation, I've always considered it to be a legacy of the Big Bang even as I failed to find a way to explain how folks in biblical times would have known about this relatively recent theory of the origin of the universe.

At the same time, I had never heard of a tzohar (or sohar) being mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament ark story. But something about it is there, I've since confirmed. And I've also long known about how J.R.R. Tolkien's works were laced with his Roman Catholic beliefs, but I never connected (even as passing theory) this strange primordial light of Genesis with Galadriel's mirror and the phial that she gave to Frodo as a gift before he left Lorien. "May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out."

It is the sum of these tales that forms the basis of THE ILLUMINATION, a fascinating contemporary story that is, essentially, a thriller about the fate of this light. The Israelis want it and claims provenance from Noah through David and beyond. Muslim and Christian extremist groups want it for their own reasons. The American government wants it for scientific reasons. And caught up between all of these factions are our likable protagonists: Natalie Landau, a museum curator, and Jim D'Amato, an MSNBC journalist who may or may not be something more.

The novel has its share of gaping plot holes (towards the end, in particular), but the premise is so cool and the principals so likable and the narrative so well done that, for once, I was able to ignore a lot of the cognitive dissonance. But honestly, in a lesser story, those plot holes would have been fatal. Here, I found them to be drowned out by all of the good and fun elements of the story.

Leya says

When Natalie receives a small gift from her sister, from Iraq where Dana is a reporter for a major news

station, Natalie feels like there might be hope to salvage their shaky relationship. But when she finds out that Dana was killed, and her cameraman is missing, Natalie cannot rest until she finds the truth behind the antique necklace and pouch. And she's hoping that Joe D'Amato will be able to help her.

I'm a sucker when it comes to action/adventure/intrigue type of stories, and mix religion into it I'm a very happy reader. I absolutely love the genre, and truth be told, I don't think I'll tire of it anytime soon. So it isn't surprising that I was hooked right from the beginning. I couldn't put the book down...good thing it was a P.A. day and the kids kept busy with video and board games...because I needed the time to read.

Compared to the authors' previous book, The Book of Names, this was more violent. Which within the context of the story I found that it wasn't out of place, but in my opinion there was a little too much of it. I think it may have helped my need to finish the book, I wanted the good guys to win. I enjoyed the explanation of the Light, the way it was created and the reason behind the various groups wanting it. I liked both Natalie and Joe, they made a good partnership, but it would have been nice to have more background on other characters.

Jeff Wright says

Nice action thriller to get lost in.

Linda says

This book was written in the same style as the previous one, "the book of names", with a lot of action and a very fast pace. The main character, Nathalie Landau, a Jewish museum curator, receives a jewel in the form of an eye, sent by her sister, who gets beaten to death right after having found the jewel, which she thinks is not particularly valuable. What follows is a continuous battle to keep the jewel out of the hands of the malignant people who don't hesitate to kill to retrieve the jewel, which appears to date back to the time of the creation of earth. The story never gets boring, but I feel the constant confrontations with the cold blooded opportunistic enemies, and subsequent heroism of Miss Landau, do not always make the story credible. A journalist is helping her, but he's a rather irrelevant character. Moreover, there is little sympathy throughout the story for the innocent people who are ruthlessly slaughtered, as if these are just common facts. I prefer a thriller with more attention for the background and motive behind the crimes. But the story gives us some background history, which is very interesting, for believers as well as atheists. Anyway, am looking forward to reading more books of the duo Tintori/Gregory.

Vincent O'Neil says

Okay, make sure you have some time to just settle in and read this thriller without too many interruptions. The pace gets fast and furious quickly.

It reads like it would be a great movie, except there is so much exposition to guide the reader from place to place - that would not make good dialogue.

The exposition, however, is absolutely fascinating. Blending two opposing cultures must not have been easy

for even the authors, as they acknowledge help from many others.

The plot revolves around a nice young Jewish lady being pursued by agents of many different fanatical groups, each determined to have her talisman for its own cause.

I'd love to start fact-checking their research, but nit-picking might spoil the effect. For example, did Noah had a God-given light in the ark? I dunno.

Just read it!

(Notice I never mentioned Dan Brown once!!)

Jo says

I listened to the audiobook while spring cleaning. It sure made that tedious task a lot more engaging. It's an action-suspense story, with a lot of religious and historical information that was quite interesting and a quick paced plot set in Iraq, New York, Rome, and Jerusalem. Rather a lot of violence. Engaging & resourceful heroine.

Emily says

3.5 stars

Beverly says

Like DaVinci Code. A couple being chased because they hold the "tzohar" a light, enclosed in a pendant, that is supposed to be a small bit of the light that existed during creation before the sun and the moon. All the religious groups, Muslims, Christians, Jews want it. Lots of people are killed. And as far as I could see, the item was not worth the bother. All that happens when someone uses the item, is a huge light shines and all the power grid goes out. I guess at the end, its existence is known, they are going to study it, and everybody left lives happily ever after.

This book is readable, but there's nothing new, and I've read better books of the same type.

Nancy says

I like the premise of a scholar investigating the history of an intriguing artifact and this book definitely had that element.

But, it also had the same scholar running around the world on fifteen minute's notice to follow-up an historical lead;

And, it had the same scholar deftly kicking and tripping and pummeling evil-doers with her mastery of some ancient Israeli self-defense system;

And, our lovely scholar must have been related to the Energizer Bunny (or Wylie Coyote) because she popped back up after every attack and still managed to run down the street or roll under a car to hide.

Yes, I found it all a bit contrived. But the base of the story was interesting and the pace was very lively. I think this is just not my preferred genre.

Judy says

I can never seem to say no to my neighbor's offers of books and hey it did turn out to be entertaining. Although I stay far away from organized religion, I did find it interesting to read about biblical history, which this story delved into as museum curator Natalie Landau went on the run, being chased internationally by Muslims and Christians who wanted the 2,000 year old necklace with the blue evil eye she has in her possession. It was fun to fantasize about holding an item that ancient and imagine it's powers could still be relevant in the year 2011.

Kaylynn Johnsen says

I really enjoyed this. I am finding myself more interested in ancient middle eastern legends and myths. I had never heard of the Jewish creation myth about a light source, Tzohar, different from the stellar luminaries. Or of the Tikkum olam, "repairing the world" or "perfecting the world" in which it is believed that each of us places a part in restoring perfection to the earth. And I didn't know that almost all early cultures were afraid of the 'evil eye' and many still are.

This novel has the same problem as most books, movies and TV shows. How do you keep the protagonist alive when in reality the bad guy wouldn't have thought twice about killing him or her at the first run in, but it didn't diminish in anyway the story for me.

Tiffany says

Loved it, loved it, loved it!!! Marvelous fictional story of "the Light" ... you know, God said, "Let there be light." And, there was light. This book is about that light! Supposedly, Daniel was the final keeper of the "light", and he hid it inside a golden "evil eye" pendant to keep it safe. It was lost for 3,000 years. This story revolves around the finding of the light and all the countries of the world wanting to own the light. The "Light" is found by a young woman reporter in the sand in the middle east and sends it to her sister in the US thinking its a trinket that someone lost. The journey of the "Light" and the battles, deaths, confiscations, etc. is the story. I highly recommend this fabulous book!

Deb says

Yet another book about various secret organizations trying to get their hands on a mysterious artifact but I lost patience with it. There were so many different groups "racing" around (they always seem to be racing) that it was almost farcical and few of the characters, even the couple in the center, seemed to develop past cardboard cut-outs. You have "scholar and partner trying to figure out what they have and dodge the bad guys' and very conveniently possessing unusual fighting skills. Other groups milling around include: Middle Eastern terrorists and their top hit man, Christian fundamentalist radicals and their top "problem solver" and various official and rogue government agents, from the FBI and other groups.

Reed Robinson says

Couldn't stand this book. Too many loopholes and illogical sequences of events. The authors tried for a DaVinci Code style action novel, and probably should go back to reading their romance novels. I'd never recommend this book. But I do plan on making use of this book later when I go camping - fire starter!
