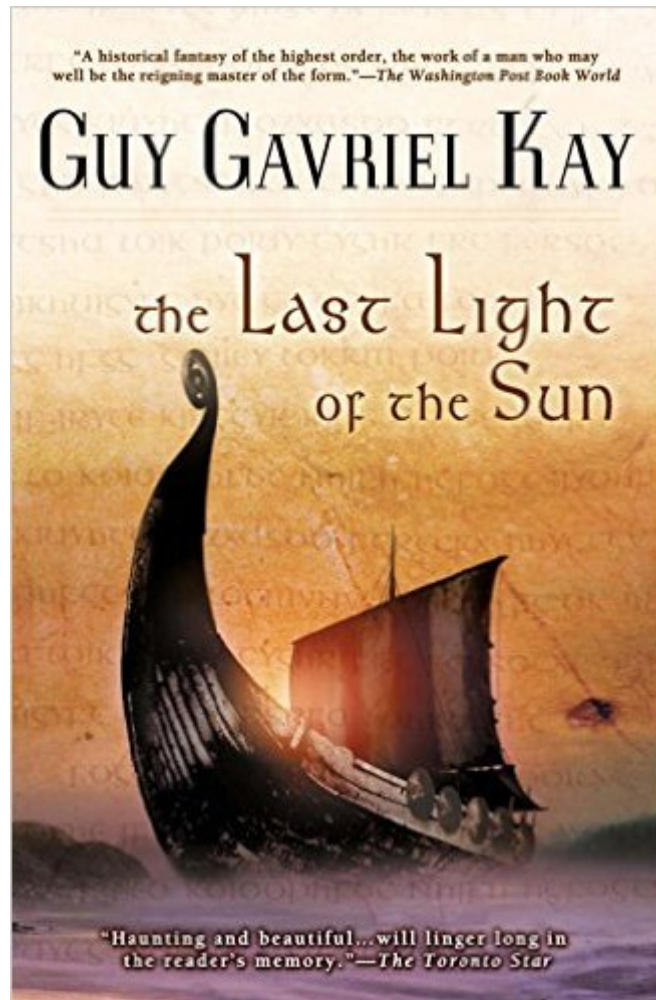


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The Last Light Of The Sun



Synopsis

From the multiple award-winning author of *Tigana*, *A Song for Arbonne*, and the three-book *Fionavar Tapestry* that "can only be compared to Tolkien's masterpiece" (*Star-Phoenix*), this powerful, moving saga evokes the Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse cultures of a thousand years ago. **Author Biography:** Guy Gavriel Kay has been awarded the International Goliardos Prize for his work in the literature of the fantastic, is a two-time winner of the Aurora Award, and has been nominated three times for the World Fantasy Award. His works have been translated into 21 languages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Among the many things he does well, Kay specializes in writing about a court - the intricacies, the intelligence, the glittering people, the poison behind the smiles, the price of ruling and the penalties of power. This book (although it still contains a small amount of this for one of the three groups of intermingling characters) reads very much like a Kay stripped of courtliness, artifice and glamor, and well it should. It is set, unlike his other books, in a place where people are still hacking out civilization from the surrounding forests. The courts we do see are precarious, new entities still fighting for their survival. Blood and death are much closer to the surface here, with no overlay of manners or graces to soften the blow. Kay's writing reflects this, by growing slightly choppy, cruder, more blunt. As an evocation of the timeperiod and the nature of the people that inhabit this world, it works marvelously. While not as bleak as George R. R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* books, this is probably the bleakest of Kay's works. I am writing this after only one read, and if

there's anything I've learned, it's that Kay's writing deserves more than this. He is a master of nuance and subtlety, so I know that when I go back to the book I will discover new things. But as of this moment, it doesn't rank first among my personal hierarchy of Kay's work. The characters I grew most attached to in the book did not have central roles, and I admit to finding Bern and Alun difficult characters to relate to. It is a good example of reading a book that you know, technically, is very good, but still have difficulty warming up to. This is all a long-winded way of saying that although I didn't enjoy the book as much as others by Kay (the Sarantine Mosaic duology and Song for Arbonne, specifically), saying you have a bad Kay is like saying you have a bad painting by Da Vinci. Such a beast is still head and shoulders above most other books written today.

Every Kay novel is worth reading compared to much of the drivel that is formulaic fantasy. But *The Last Light of the Sun* seems to be typical of Kay's more recent efforts. It's brilliantly researched, well written, has intriguing characters - but unlike his earlier works like *Tigana* or *the Fionavar Tapestry* missing a truly compelling plot. Still, very much worth a read. The tapestry is set amid the decline of Viking influence in say 8th or 9th century England. The plot revolves around Vikings seeking vengeance against the Welsh/Irish who scored the first victory against the Vikings in memory, and then moves to the English side of the border as a couple of Welsh principals ally with the first Anglo-Saxon king to both defeat and build his kingdom up against the Vikings before the main characters return to Wales for one final battle. Throw in a bit of Celtic myth as the magic/fantasy side of the plot and some interesting backplot on how the Viking raiders got to be where and who they are and you have the book. Kay does his usual great job in making all the characters, their culture, and their motivation extraordinarily well detailed and believable. Why only 4 stars? It's the plot. I think part of the problem is that for the first time since the *Fionavar tapestry* Kay is back on ground that most readers know well; part of the glory of *Tigana* and *The Lions of Al-Rassan* is that the average reader probably doesn't have a good grip on medieval Italy, Germany, France, and Spain, where Anglo-Saxon England has been rehashed in hundreds if not thousands of fantasy novels. Kay as usual does a brilliantly well researched job of getting the background more historically accurate than his peers, but you just don't get the same sense of the characters decisions putting their world on a knife edge as you do in his early novels. There are also a number of lookback perspectives by minor characters that somewhat spoil plot twists; a sentence or two is one thing, but several pages worth of describing how a minor participant ends up an old lady years after the events in the book gives you too much of an idea of how the novel will turn out. Another odd note is Kay's first attempt to fully include the rest of Europe and the Middle East and their religions

that he's built up through his several historic novels. While other novels have the one reference or so to Fionavar, this one has Jaddite clerics, the Emperor in Sarantium, and so forth. If you've read the previous novels, you're ok - but part of the fun of reading Kay is watching him develop worlds, and it almost feels like you're not getting the full deal given he's incorporating previous concepts. Still, as usual if you care about character development and history, its worth a read. I nitpick here more than usual because Kay is much more of a writer than usual.

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