



Kill the Dead

Tanith Lee

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Out of the dusk he comes striding, the stranger, the man in black, inevitable as death itself: Parl Dro—Ghost Slayer.

Some have bought his services for gold, and some have blessed him for his work. But not everyone welcomes an exorcist who will remorselessly deprive them of their beloved dead.

Dro began his vocation at an early age. And now he will not be turned aside, no matter how you may threaten, curse or weep. He is seeking too the greatest stronghold of the deadalive: Ghyste Mortua, the ghost town in the mountains, and he means to destroy it.

If he will face that, what use the pleas of the desperate sisters, Cilny and Ciddey, what use the rage of Myal, with his genius for music and his imperfect talent for crime?

Only one thing, it seems, motivates Parl Dro.

His determination to kill the dead.

"Tanith Lee is one of the most powerful and intelligent writers in fantasy." —*Publishers Weekly*

"With Lee... expect the unexpected." —*Starburst*

Kill the Dead Details

Date : Published September 2nd 1980 by DAW (first published 1980)

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Author : Tanith Lee

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From Reader Review Kill the Dead for online ebook

Cheshirka says

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N Oelle says

It wasn't as pleasurable un-traditional, and elaborately inventive as others of my favorite Tanith books, but it was very classy, and classic. The lovable characters and commitment to the strong driving goals of the plot line really give you a reason to care about the events in the novel. One small complaint, although it was supposedly a horror novel and was compared to the Exorcist, it was not at all frightening. It was more of a supernatural, phantasmal fantasy romp than a horror novel. That being said, not looking at it as trying to be chilling, I got a really nice full rounded journey out of the book. I have to say I was actually very surprised for the first time in a long time by the ending, and I thought it was rather clever. It was a comforting and very enjoyable little read.

Leila Anani says

Horror/Fantasy – Parl Dro is an exorcist on his way to Ghyste Mourna a mysterious haunted village. On his way he meets a strange minstral Myal Lemyal and Ciddey Soban a half-mad witch who lives with the ghost of her dead sister. Just how are these characters lives entwined? Very good plot twist that I didn't see coming.

Themes:

- Life/Death
- Nature of “self”
- Tarot
- Love/Hate relationship
- Minstral
- Family relationships

Wise_owl says

Like much of Tanith Lee's work, Kill the Dead has an interesting, somewhat mythological premise that is than grounded in the actions of i's characters. It feels, on some levels, like a fairy-tale or ghost-story expanded and told in proper prose form.

It is the tale of an Exorcist, a Killer of the Dead, who pursues his task with fanatical devotion, and ultimately what that task means and how it affects the people around him. It brings interesting questions to the fore; He views Ghosts as unnatural remnants of people who feed off the living, but what about the living who can't let go of their beloved ones? The mythology she weaves, of the 'Dead Alive' with their rules and such feels as real as many other monsters or ghost-tales. For example, they have tells, like that their clothes never get wet.

The story is as much about the man as it is what he does, and about how life may be shaped and like the flat-earth books, about how destiny may make coincidences actually not coincidences at all. A great book for lovers of Tanith Lee, Good Stories, Fantasy and Ghost tales.

Dannii Elle says

This has reminded me exactly why Tanith Lee was my gateway drug to the fantasy genre and made me wonder how more readers have not explored the wonders of her writing.

Caroline Eising says

This book surprised me. I wasn't sure if I would like it. I've read very little supernatural fantasy, and a lot of bad television shows had made me wary of the whole genre. And that cover art! It has aged very badly. The ghosts are wonderful, but I didn't feel like I could feel anything for Fabio's dark-haired step-brother with the terrible fashion sense (that haircut! those sleeves! that neckline!). So I studiously ignored the guy on the cover, and instead replaced him with a cross between Jon Snow and Dr Gregory House, because our protagonist does seem to have a few things in common with the snarky doctor besides the leg. He's smart, and self-assured to the point of arrogance, and while seldom as witty he did seem to hold himself with the same sort of sneering stoicism that covers a dead sea of depression in some characters. I didn't 'like' like him, but he was fun to read about, and only partly due to his intriguing career.

I like that the ghosts had their own personalities and weren't just something for the hero to defeat. And there wasn't a simple 'ghost bad, people good' narrative, as much as it started out that was (partly due to the viewpoint of the main character). It got stickier as it progressed - more complicated. And while some bits might have been ruined by a certain movie I won't name in order to avoid spoilers, the ending was still satisfying (and left wide open for a sequel or simply personal speculation without being a cliffhanger - I am so sick of cliffhangers so this is a welcome relief).

The scenes are well enough described that I had little trouble imagining mountain streams, and leaning towers, cracked dry ground or even ghostly battles. It's good if your reader isn't confused or lost even when half the characters in the scene are intangible (or even most of the scenery).

A good entry point for the genre - at least I hope it is being pretty much new to this style of book. I hope there are more like this one.

Ian Banks says

There used to be hundreds of books like this: perfectly capable and entertaining stories that were told in a couple of hundred pages and stood alone. Then publishers and authors decided that they wanted to expand their universes and deepen their characters and we got endless series' and fat tales about things that could probably be summarised in a few pages.

Some of which I love deeply, of course.

Anyway, this is a book I had been searching for for ages because I'd read an interview with Ms Lee where she mentioned a novel she'd written featuring thinly-veiled versions of Avon and Villa from Blake's 7 (which, in the light of my first couple of sentences, is quite ironic as well). It's a good, fun read set in a generic Fantasyland that does just what it sets out to do. And despite a somewhat rushed denouement, it works.

Ronald says

A great read, lent out my original copy back in the day. So was so pleased to see a re-issue from fantastic books. Ordered on online and devoured it in two days. It had still got the good story and characters that I remembered. And as the two main characters are based on Avon & Villa from Blake's 7 it was easy to put voice's to the men.

Melanti says

[*The Sixth Sense* (hide spoiler)]

Brannigan says

While browsing my local used bookstore I came across this beauty. I saw the title and immediately fell in love with it. Once I pulled it off the shelf and saw the cover I knew this would be a good book. It just screams classy retro, the double necked guitar at the feet of a man who could be a hero or late seventies rock star. The ghosts on the cover were amazing, a skeleton without a head, a naked lady ghost and the goblin ghost that appears to have a real brain floating in his ghost skull. The triple threat was the awesome back cover description.

Kill the Dead is so much more than I expected. I was thinking it would be a Conan-esq character but fighting ghosts with maybe some cheesy horror or fantasy cliches. Instead, it was the perfect blend of fantasy and horror. When I think of Gothic, this is what comes to mind. It was very much a mood read. Each sentence seemed to be written to evoke foreboding doom. I loved every minute of it.

Parl Dro is the dark mysterious hero hunting and destroying ghosts. He's a man on a mission to find and

destroy Ghyste Mortua, an entire town of ghosts. Along the way, he discovers a small village with a decrepit home with two sisters in it. However, one sister is a ghost. Parl does what a ghost killer does, which causes the other sister to vow revenge on Parl. At the same time, a minstrel down on his luck crosses paths with both the vengeful sister and Parl. The three of them find themselves at odds throughout most of the book.

Tanith Lee does an amazing job of introducing each of the characters and slowly but steadily unveiling their backstory as well as their true motivations. The care and timing of the character reveals is something I feel we are missing in today's stories. Things seem to move much faster now, which isn't a good or bad thing, but I do enjoy a slow build up when done right and Lee does it right. Each of the characters add to the mood of unease, as none of them are truly good or evil. They each have multiple layers to them, which ache with reality. It adds to the tone of the overall story, this sense of something being slightly off.

Lee's world blends well with the characters and mood of the tale. It's worn out and in ruin. I don't think there's anything new or shiny in this world. It has a dull tone and color palette. Even the ivory white bones inlaid in Myal's double necked guitar are stained yellow with time. With all of this ugliness Lee is still able to bring a lot of beauty to the book with her lyrical prose.

Kill the Dead is a haunting fantasy that, once finished, demands to be reread. The ending will leave you surprised and rewarded. I want to reread it just to see if I can find any clues Lee might have left out in the open for me. The pacing is slower than most modern stories, but I would ask you to embrace it and allow it to take you on this journey. There is minor violence, language and implied sexual situations. I would recommend it to teens and adults. I'd recommend you add this book to your personal library.

My Favorite Line:

“Lend me your knife,’ Myal said slowly. ‘I can kill you with it. It won’t take a minute. I’ll clean it after.’”
page 55

mark monday says

Tanith Lee keeps it classy in this fun and rather old-fashioned fantasy adventure about a ghost-killer, the musician who follows him, and a vengeful young witch's ghost. together they encounter a tragic and threatening ghost city, one that comes complete with a ghost forest and a ghost lake in the form of a five-pointed star.

"Tanith Lee keeps it classy" is my callow way of saying that this does not really read like a Tanith Lee novel. none of her usual writerly flourishes, no strange, so-lush-it's-carboniferous prose stylings. there are no sadistic heroes or masochistic heroines (or vice versa); creepy sexuality in general is kept at a minimum. gender roles are straightforward. the narrative is also straightforward: there are some flashbacks and memories recounted but no dreamy meanderings that blur the line between fantasy and the reality of the story itself. the tone is not reserved and distancing, it's lively and amusing and often outright comic. Lee the comedian! wonders never cease. about the only thing remaining of the Lee I know is her usual twist ending, which in this case really works.

so if a person had told me that Kill the Dead is a classy novel where Tanith Lee discards her usual trademarks, I may not have even bothered to read the book. I read Lee specifically because of all the weird and often twisted things I listed above. the combination of all of that is what makes her awesome and it's the

reason why she's been one of my favorite authors since forever. fortunately I first read this novel when I was a kid, loved it, and so just reread it despite recognizing even as kid that it was something very different for Lee.

my guess is that it's her version of a mainstream fantasy novel. it even has - gasp - a genuinely heartwarming ending where faith in humanity is restored etc and holylol were you on happy drugs when you wrote this Tanith? what this means to me is that this brilliant, iconoclastic author could easily put out mainstream fantasy novels if she so desires. she just does not desire that, at least not too often. for that, I'm thankful. but I'm also thankful for this wittily deadpan, perfectly accomplished, charming little island that somehow exists in the middle of her otherwise dark, stormy, and disturbing oeuvre.

Avis Black says

Lee's funniest fantasy novel. Recommended.

Milliebot says

3.5 stars

This is a solid little paranormal fantasy adventure. My favorite part was the dialogue between Dro and Myler (pretty sure that's not his name but I'm too lazy to look it up and I wasn't pronouncing it right in my head anyway). It was simple and sharp and made me chuckle. Also I didn't see the twist at the end coming, though I probably could have if I'd given it thought...But I usually don't lol.

Lauren says

This has to be one of the most enjoyable single novels Tanith Lee has written. It's dark, cutting, & laced with Lee's very dry wit, & is quite an adventure into the realm of the dead.

Gray says

A long-time favorite. The main characters are based on two characters from the British sci fi show "Blake's 7." Tanith Lee wrote two episodes for the show and had a special fondness for these characters. As a fan of "Blake's 7" myself, I compulsively read this and loved it years ago. Planning to read it again.
