



The Rifter Book One: The Shattered Gates

Ginn Hale

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Contains parts 1 to 3 of The Rifter series:

1. The Shattered Gates
2. Servants of the Crossed Gates
3. Black Blades

The Rifter Book One: The Shattered Gates Details

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From Reader Review The Rifter Book One: The Shattered Gates for online ebook

Nicole says

I picked this up from my library's book sale, intrigued by the cover summary but not really knowing what to expect.

Plot summary (mercilessly yanked from the back cover): "When John Toffler opens a letter addressed to his missing roommate, Kyle, he expects to find only a house key. Instead he is swept into a strange realm of magic, mysticism, revolutionaries, and assassins. Though John struggles to find a way home for himself and the two friends he's inadvertently brought into this deadly world, he cannot know that he is bound by blood to a different fate. He and Kyle share a destiny. Together they will wake the destroyer god--the Rifter--and shatter a world."

As for my actual review, all I can say is: wow, this is the best fantasy book I've read in a long time. I loved everything about it. The prose was consistently good/great, surprisingly funny (I laughed out loud multiple times), and the big reveal in the middle of the novel, though semi-obvious in retrospect, caught me completely off guard at the time. I liked every single one of the characters, which is good, because this is definitely a character-driven book. (On that note, it's always nice to find a fantasy series with an LGBT protagonist... though the first book doesn't have much in the way of romance, yet.) And the world building is excellent, both in the minor details and the major ones. I stayed up through the night on more than one occasion because I desperately needed to know what would happen next.

My only complaint is that the ending feels too abrupt. Considering that this was originally a series of 10 e-book novellas, and the first printed volume only collects a few of them, that's understandable. I have already ordered the second and third books from Amazon and they cannot get here fast enough.

Susan says

I've been burned by the MM fantasy genre before - not just fantasy with LGBT themes, the actual label of MM fantasy. The genre seems to be broadly pretty rubbish, often so fetishising of gay men it forgets about plot and worldbuilding entirely and often we're just left with reading about a pretty miserable, unhealthy relationship because the author is too focused on getting their rocks off. Which is why I put off reading this for ages. Which I now really regret. This was IMPRESSIVE. This has substance, character, uniqueness and some real thought and effort put into the entire package - so much so that it really stands up by itself as a fantasy novel.

There's play with timelines in the plot AND the romance, and it's intriguing and compelling as all hell. It constantly keeps me guessing and *engaged* in the plot and characters, without making me feel lost and confused. Very different. I also think it's better to take it in the omnibus rather than each of the 120~ page novellas. (also reviewing this as the omnibus because I pretty much read the first four books in one sitting lol)

I really like John, even though he's more on the good ol' boy fantasy hero scale of protagonists. I like that his homosexuality is treated casually in the story, even though he's been transported to a world where it's

~forbidden. I love his friendships with Laurie and Bill, I love those two and what a balancing, grounding influence they bring in the story. And his relationship with Ravishan is really... interesting, I'm not sure where it's going (since I assume Kahlil is his love interest in the end) but Ravishan is adorable – I love young, tenacious, talented heroes like him. The romance between John and Ravishan itself has been a really interesting slowburn, too, so I'm *really* pleased about that and keen to see where this will go!! and I love that this novel has FEMALE CHARACTERS (unlike SO MUCH M/M FANTASY) – still majority a sausage fest BUT. Kahlil may be my favourite, though, it took me a while to warm to his POV but it's by FAR the MOST INTERESTING.

The writing is great, Hale's prose does a lot of what I like to read in spec-fic. It's very evocative of the sights, smells, the feeling of being in an entirely new world – she captures the shifting of the seasons, the weather, the bustle of town life, or out in the wilderness. It was really evocative of places I've visited and seen, and that's pretty powerful writing if I'm able to exactly picture these places (I pictured the temple as monasteries in Georgia and Armenia, and Nurjima as Lisbon since I was flying back while reading and remember the trams vividly LOL) I wish she had spent more time developing John's life on earth but I enjoy the story so much I don't mind that she got stuck into it so early.

The major weakness to me, which is very much *to me* bc I'm picky, is the fantasy names. On the fantasy name scale of 'taking names right from other cultures on earth' to 'long-winded exotic sounding nonsense' it's on the latter side. Vaguely Arabic-sounding with lots of random Hs, lots of Dune-esque apostrophes which I guess are glottal stops?? (JA'AM) The fact that Hale deadset made up her own language and took into consideration conjugations etc is PRETTY AWESOME but the language itself is generic. BUT AGAIN I'm just picky about fantasy language and linguistics LOL. But I think it is what's stopped me from putting it up there with stuff like Nightrunner or Kushiel's Legacy. So far.

Xing says

This is a reread for me. Originally, I read The Rifter as 10 different installations. It was more than a roller coaster of emotions for me - it was more like being chained to a wooden rack that gets picked up and ravaged by a tornado. That first time, I flew by each of the ten novellas without paying much attention to detail. So it has been a pleasure to revisit this series, but being able to look at everything with a clinical eye instead of being driven by my emotions and the need to know what happens *next*.

This book compilation contains the first three volumes of the series. It is probably the least exciting as well, because readers are introduced to the world of Basawar - an alternative to our own earth, which is named Nayeshi. Except instead of the modern day earth we all know and love, Basawar is a violent and destructive world filled with religious persecution, witchcraft, and political strife.

When John, Laurie and Bill are sent to Basawar, they endure repression, illness and isolation. We see how these group of friends are forced to change under the circumstances of this new world. Meanwhile, Kyle's own adventure back to Basawar in order to find John and company leads to its own little twist of events.

I'll admit: I was confused during my first read. I felt like I was missing something when the POV switched from John to Kyle. The language of Basawar kind of got muddled along the way (despite the dictionary at the end of the book). My advice? Read the story carefully. This isn't one of those series where you read the first installment, take a break, then come back to read the second installment several weeks (and books) later. I mean, you *can* (no one is stopping you!), but it's easy to get derailed; especially if the POV changes with

the new installment. With the language, don't freak out over it! When John first learns Basawar, just know that anything important for readers to know will be mentioned in English as well (because John will still "think" in English over the important dialogue). Later, if you get confused with a word here or there, then simply look it up. It certainly isn't something to freak out over.

And if you ARE confused with the plot at first, just know that is perfectly normal. Most people don't really get what's going on *completely* until halfway into the series (I am basing this on my own experience and through feedback from my GR friends). You know enough to not be frustratingly left in the dark, but the complete picture will reveal itself when all the subtitle puzzle pieces are assembled (you got to love that AHA moment!).

So as usual, Ginn Hale is a masterful creator of worlds. I still remember Basawar vividly months after my initial read. And even though I absolutely hate Basawar due to all the bad shit that happens in the book, it felt very familiar upon reread. I've got to applaud Ginn Hale here - if I ever see her in public, I will hug/tackle her and demand an autograph which will be enshrined at my apartment next to my Buddha.

Characterization also gets an A+. John and Kyle will always have a special place in my heart. And the best part? We are dealing with *mature* characters! John and Kyle aren't whiny, petty, or impulsively stupid. These are men who have lived through hell and continue to do so in order to survive. John is an ecology major and spent much of his time outdoors back in Nayeshi. I think his time spent in nature gave him a very grounding personality - one that allows him to think before he acts. Kyle is a person who seems to struggle to discover his true personality - an opportunity he didn't have the leisure to explore when he dedicated his life to become Khalil.

While I would classify this series as a romance, just note that there is no explicit sexual encounters between the two. This first compilation has one kiss scene and later installments have off-page or vaguely described sex. So don't read this if you're looking for something to make you feel hot and want to get nekkid (though there's nothing wrong if you do!). :D

What you get when picking up this series is a dark fantasy tale. There is violence of many kinds (burning people alive, war, torture/skinning, massacres, etc.). There is witchcraft and sorcery. There is much regret and guilt. There are just as many confusions as there are revelations. And then there's the beginnings of love. Love that overcomes the boundaries of two worlds, of different timelines and of fate.

Because when the dust is settled and the wash of blood has seeped into the cracks of dirt, there's still something fleetingly beautiful peaking through the gore.

And man, the journey was sure worth it.

Valentine says

Well, this was an...

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interesting read. I like that Ginn Hale clearly wanted her readers to work to understand the world and the plot of the story- I rarely see that approach in anything other than math equations, and it was very refreshing in

this book. The only downside is that I was quickly able to guess who Ravashin and Jath'ibaye were. Still, that's more of a "it's not you it's me" issue, and I'm pretty sure that the author meant for it to be that way, as she'll spend the rest of the series expanding on *how in the hell they got that way*. There were also a few typos here and there, but that didn't bother me too much.

Now onto the characters!

John/Jath'ibaye- I really, really like this guy. It's odd, how being so different from him(me not being particularly gay or male), I found him to be a relatable protagonist, with his quiet, reserved demeanor. It made seeing some of the things that he had to go through later on...very uncomfortable to read. I just wanted to hug him. ~~I have to applaud Ginn Hale for being so good at making me feel the feelz over nonexistent people, more so than a lot that I actually know.~~

Bill & Laurie- At first, I wasn't all too fond of them. They reminded me too much of the average Useless Sidekick duo, who ends up either

a) being killed off, or

b) surviving, while still continuing to be useless to the story's progression. But they grew on me a bit, and I'm hoping that they do more in the future.

Kahlil- NO. SWEET ADORABLE CINNAMON ROLL. YOU ARE TOO GOOD FOR THIS WORLD.

Ravishan- Another cinamon roll. Hmm. I wonder WHY he is such a cinnamon roll. Who really is he?

And there you have it. My trainwreck review of the first installment in the Rifter series.]

These are only going to get worse from here on out...

„•*°*~Gwendolyn~°**★°**★ says

A Wonderfully Shattered Book!

A journey with Kahil and John.

Something about these guys is just so magical. And That O.M.G.....Key?

I am intrigued by this puzzle of words and I am...

So with the key in hand (Johns hand) the door was opened, to another world....and, I followed them

into this puzzle of words. I entered this dual world, and I have no regrets. I love the puzzle effect of the words. And , gosh, with these 3 leading men, Kahil, Ravishan and Jahn to follow, I found myself in love these silent warrior's to whom I have had the pleasure of meeting in this discombobulated, yet intriguing ongoing fantasy. But, please know, that in this book(s) thus far are I find they are written in a dicombulated mind boggling jumbled puzzle....of a words and the timeline is carefree.

And....yes, I am still

I'm confused.

I feel like a spazz.

I'm lost.

I feel like this book is in itself shattered, because it is not giving me all the details, just bits and Pieces,.

And there is no smexyWTF?

But, I still love this read. I am intrigued.

Joël says

The book is nice, but I can't help but feel that something is missing for it to be a really good book to me. I just can't point my finger towards what that something is.

It does remind me that I had the same kind of feeling with the Tales from Earthsea books, if that is any help to get to figure out the 'something'.

Giedre says

The Rifter Book One collects the first three Rifter installments: *The Shattered Gates*, *Servants of the Crossed Arrows*, *Black Blades*.

Cat Bee says

This sucked me right in! If it were not for other commitments I would have finished this quicker. I cannot wait to read the next one!!

Jordan Lombard says

Series/Standalone: book 1 (includes the 1st 3 novellas)

Genre/sub-genre: Fantasy/MM Romance

Book Format: print

HEA/HFN: not yet

Relatable characters: YES

Abuse/Rape: no

Violence: some

Ratio of sex/plot: all plot

Well written/editor needed: well written

Would I re-read?: YES!!!

Personal thoughts: This is my third time reading this series. I already have it in ebook format, and loved it so much I bought the print edition. As soon as I finished reading this series last year, I wanted to start all over again at page one. This might have to be a yearly reread for me. I love the characters, the plot, the setting, the world building, everything about this is amazing.

V says

7.5/10 if I were being really picky (and I am) but definitely one of the better reads of the year so far.

This is a solid start to the series, and I'll be picking up the next because I'm so pleased to find a writer who isn't deliberately rushing relationships in this genre for the sake of fan-service. Instead, we have a solidly founded fantasy world, plenty of depth and well-balanced build on the details so that we don't get swamped.

Ginn is eloquent, as she was in *Wicked Gentleman*, but this feels less atmospheric, more plot driven, and has a whole different feel to it. I can't decide which I prefer.

On to the things I'm being picky over.

The skipping backward and forward in time felt jarring. Having such huge sections of the story with the two we begin with *apart* initially caused some impatience. It worked (just) by building a curiosity to know how things changed so drastically, but it takes time to settle into things as a result. The cross from one world to another was also a little testing - the character's reactions to there being huge crazy stones appear from nowhere felt a little unrealistic, but what the hell, it landed them where the story needed to be, and once there, things were much more entertaining.

Good stuff. Read it.

Arch Bala says

I ought to write my individual reviews for each book in the series but I figured that it's more proper for me to consider each book as part of a whole saga (containing seven arcs) encompassing thirty years in the life of John, a human transported into another realm – a world where his housemate Kyle came from.

The epicness of this series is just beyond me! I enjoyed and loved every second of reading this ten-part series. What I appreciate most though is the fact that as much as possible, the author tried solving all the loopholes in it. What totally bugs me is the conclusion which I would be discussing a little later on.

So John along with his friends (a couple named Laurie and Bill) were accidentally transported into Basawar (think of a Narnia-like world minus the talking animals), the place where his odd housemate Kyle “apparently” came from. Kyle is the “Kahlil” who was destined / ordained to kill John who's the incarnation of their god. He's the human seen by the oracle who will be destroying all of Basawar.

The plot of the story thickens as John meets the young handsome priest Ravishan who is training to become the next Kahlil. Meeting Ravishan made their tumultuous entrance into Basawar more bearable but their world is about to get more complicated as John and his friends found themselves under the Bousim household where John was forced to accompany Firiki (The son of the lady in Bousim household) into the doors of Rathal'pesha to train as an ushiri (in contention of becoming a Kahlil). There, John meets Ravishan again and has shown potential to become a priest himself. Due to discrimination, he was relegated as some sort of a medic priest. As the story goes by, John was able to piece everything together coming to the conclusion that Ravishan and his housemate were one and the same, although John first meets Kyle as a Kahlil and this kahlil in training – Ravishan is the guy he fell in love with.

At times, the story tends to be a tad bit confusing because of the interchanging timeline in it especially

during the second arc but as it went by, it's just like reading some sort of backstory although at one point – the past and the present (see, Kyle followed the trio into Basawar) meets (ala Lake House meeting of some sort) and their reunion was truly one for the books.

I actually cried a little for John who is now known as J'aitbaya. I cried because he's been living in Basawar for 30 years and was still nursing his broken heart from his separation from Ravishan. Although one and the same. Kyle still felt different from Ravishan. It's like he's simply a replacement of his young self. But all the same, John still love Ravishan and gave the same affection to Kyle.

Now the question bugging me at the end, is Kyle immortal now like John? After he passed on, he was possessed by the holy bones of the young Ravishan. Did he become immortal himself the way the oracles are immortals? I sure hope so because these two more than deserved to be together especially after what they have gone through.

To conclude this, I wished that more people would read this series because of its exceptional story that you'd regret missing. The humanity in it is truly heartfelt and the way John and Kyle have proven their love and devotion for each other was truly an amazing feat. It's just so beautiful it almost hurts.

'tis definitely one of my favorite series – another great feat to achieve by one of my new favorite authors – Ginn Hale who brought us the amazing Wicked Gentleman and the stunning Lord Of The White Hell. Indeed, Hail Ginn Hale!

Miriam says

John's new roommate is a little strange. He has eyelid tattoos. He carries a sword. He claims he's a milkman.

Wow, that was confusing. Good, but confusing. So many different times (moving at different speeds?) and places, and different names for the characters in different settings...

This volume is 1-3 of what looks like 10 novella length installments, and it isn't even a cliffhanger really, so little is resolved.

Abi Walton says

the Rifter series is confusing and a roller coaster of emotions but I am in awe of this series and Ginn Hale's writing. John or Jahn is in the past trying to keep himself and his two best friends Laurie and Bill alive in this strange world they have found themselves in, and Kyle who has a strong golden bond with John is thrown confused and alone into the future where the world he knew has completely changed. This book shows the audience the beginning and I guess a few years at the end of the novel and the reader finds clues along the way to puzzle together the middle it sounds confusing which it is but also mesmerising and incredible. I have fallen in love with John and Kahil and desperately want them to find one another again. However I'm still not 100% sure what is going on.

I have always loved Hale's work and therefore knew that although this series was long I would enjoy it. this book took me a while to get into as it wasn't an easy read as I had to keep referring to the front and back of the book to understand what was happening and so it takes concentration however the plot and the world that Hale has created is phenomenal. these characters have my heart and I need to know what is going to happen

to them.

Susana says

Any act can have terrible consequences: Even opening a letter addressed to your flat mate. That's what John Toffler, a biology postgrad student, discovers when he suddenly finds himself and his two best friends stranded in a strange world, with completely alien culture and language. John feels responsible, and he'll do any thing to take his two friends back to the world where they belong. But he does not realise that this new world is slowly changing them, and that will also have unexpected consequences....

So. I love Ginn Hale's books. All of them. They are full of wonderful stories. The Shattered Gates is no exception. In fact, it surpasses my expectations. This book is a cleverly constructed puzzle where the initial confusion is slowly replaced by awe as the pieces slowly fit together. We accompany John and Kyle through this carefully designed maze, and one cannot help to fall in love with the characters and the world created for them. Both John and Kyle are complex characters, both have a heavy baggage from difficult pasts, but they both have the resilience to adapt and strive to survive. Although by the end of this first book one knows the bones of their story, there is this urgent need to know more, what happened to them in between...

I really do not want to spoil the book, because it is an amazing journey and it would be a pity for any reader to be deprived of the sheer wonderment of slowly discover it on one's own. If you love magic, fantasy and fated love stories, you have to read this book. You'll be as hooked on this story as I am right now. Off to the second book!

Juushika says

The strangest thing in John's life is his tattoo'd, knife-bearing roommate--until he opens his roommate's mail to find a key that unlocks a strange, magical, dangerous world. The world of *The Rifter* is crafted with love: it's complex, robust, and unromanticized, and while I fail to find it particularly compelling it's undeniably real. But more worldbuilding that plot happens in *The Shattered Gates*, and though the book never drags the series promises to run a little too long. It's the dual narratives that make it worth reading: the protagonists have distinct characters, the alternating timelines give a broad view of the setting, and there's constant mystery and revelation as the two narratives begin to overlap. *The Shattered Gates* feels self-published--there's typos, stiff phrasing, and it could stand to lose a few hundred pages--but it's engaging and calling it "finely crafted" is something of an understatement. Whether I recommend it hinges on the rest of the series, but I'm enjoying it so far.
