



The Soldier

Kate Aaron

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Love is the strongest bond.

Three months. That's all it took for Kai to forsake freedom and learn to love his new life as pleasureslave to a wealthy Thirskan Underlord.

Finding himself surrounded by his own people once more, he should have been happy, yet they are not how he remembers them. Distrustful and disgusted by his relationship with not one man but two, they make it abundantly clear Kai no longer fits in.

Beaten, starved, and tortured, when the chance comes to escape, Kai is barely strong enough to make the journey. Even if he succeeds, how could anybody ever love the thing he's become in order to survive?

CONTENT WARNING: This book contains scenes of graphic violence. Reader discretion advised.

62,000 words.

THE FREE MEN SERIES:

THE SLAVE

THE SOLDIER

THE MASTER

The Soldier Details

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From Reader Review The Soldier for online ebook

Elena says

Loved it! It's as simple as that!

Although I got really hooked by Kai's story after about 25-30%, it just flowed smoothly from there...

For me, this part of the Free Men trilogy was better than book 1 The Slave - maybe because this part's narrator, Kai, is so much more a complex figure than Tam...

He's tortured, he's damaged, he's troubled... and yet... He's also fierceless, resourceful and disarmingly, shyly devoted to the two men he grew to love.

I loved that little scene over the mountain pass when he... (view spoiler). It showed his other side, his former self - so vital to be brought back to Kai in those horrible, ugly moments of captivity and then his single-handed quest for a way to help set Lysander and Tam free.

This part of Kai's journey brought to my mind:

The choices he makes (both consciously and deep down in his big, stout heart), the way he fights and cares, and his warmth in dealing with those seemingly nonsignificant - Strawberry and Sara - it all makes me love Kai even more!

I'll definitely carry on with this beautiful, eventful story...

Helena Stone says

In my review of "The Slave" I tried to be objective and talk about the story and all the subjects it addresses without getting to gushy about it. I can't do that again. Every review bone in my body is screaming at me to quote from and gush about this book, and so I will.

This is Kai's story. We got to know him through Tam's eyes in "The Slave". In "The Soldier" we hear what happens after Tam, Master and Kai were attacked at the end of the first book, leaving both characters and readers on a knife's edge.

This book takes us into the heart and mind of the soldier who lost the man he loved before being captured and sold as a slave. The sentiments with which he remembers those moments in the desert stole my breath.

"I wished it [the sand] would swallow me, wished I could disappear completely beneath the surface and sleep the eternal dreamless sleep."

And that was just the first of many times Kai's pain tore at me. Be prepared to have your heart broken as you watch him suffer. I almost wanted to curse Kate Aaron's descriptive powers as I could almost smell his

scorched skin, as his pain became so vivid I could almost feel it.

“I was my agony.”

Kai is a beautiful soul. His first concerns are always for the two men he’s grown to love during the three months of his enslavement. Being back among his own people doesn’t change that loyalty and neither does the torture he has to endure. His fears for their safety are bigger than concerns about his own life. Kai’s biggest fear is that the damage done by the torture he endures at the hands of his own people might turn both Master and Tam away from him in disgust.

“Yet, despite everything, I couldn’t find it within me to wish I’d never been his slave.”

With ‘The Slave’, Kate Aaron gave us a relatively pain and angst free story with a massive cliff-hanger at the end. The Soldier is anything but pain and angst free. Physical as well as emotional pain is visited upon all three men. Poor Kai is lost. While Tam and Master at least have the certainty of having been captured by enemies, Kai is left with what feels to him like nothing. The people who captured him are his own but don’t want him anymore. Tam and Master feel closer to his heart than any of those who hold them prisoner, but is he still with them now that the situation has changed?

“We could never go back to the way life was before, but as long as Master and Tam would have me, I was theirs.”

I did mention Master was an enigma in my review of ‘The Slave’, didn’t I? Well, an enigma he remains. More suggestions are made and a few veils are lifted, but the story seems to present more new questions than it answers old ones. Who the Master is and what his motives are remains something of a mystery. One which I guess won’t be solved until the final book.

Like I said, your heart will break, time and again and not just because of the ordeals Kai has to face and the feelings he is struggling with. Tam is suffering at least as much.

“I can’t do this again, Kai. I can’t. When they attacked, when I thought Master was dead and I was going to have to watch them murder you too, I couldn’t bear it. I wanted it to be over. When you hit me, before I passed out, do you know what my last thought was? (...) I thought you’d killed me, and my last thought was ‘thank you.’ – Tam

Kate Aaron’s language is beautiful whether she uses it to describe her men, the ordeals they face or Kai’s inner thoughts:

“Overhead, the rings glowed cold and white, indifferent to the toils of one small man lost and alone in the middle of the vast and unending desert.”

Oh Kai, how you broke my heart.

“I cried for what I could not have because if I allowed myself to cry for all the things I had lost, I feared I would never stop.”

And this, o my God, all the feels:

“Don’t tell me what you think I want to hear, because I want to believe you so badly, and if you’re wrong, it will only hurt me more.”

Just in case you’re starting to worry this book is all violence, pain and heartbreak, let me reassure you. There are moments of astounding tenderness, life confirming selflessness and pure beauty a plenty.

“We were more than possessions, more than dumb animals of inanimate things. We were men; we got to choose who owned us. In that moment we both chose him.”

I fell in love with Tam when I read his book. Now that I’ve read Kai’s story I feel like a bit of a traitor. I still adore Tam but my heart firmly belongs to Kai. The precarious balance between his strength when it comes to physical challenges and his fragility when dealing with matters of the heart touched me on a very deep level.

Four weeks from today the final part in this trilogy will be released. I will be marking of the days between now and November 24th. The world Kate Aaron has created has sucked me in. Her characters have lodged themselves in my heart. And her words, her beautiful words, have made me a fan for life.

Dia says

2.25 stars

I saw many of my friends loved this book much more than the first, The Slave. Unfortunately I can't say the same. Actually I'm pretty disappointed. But that's what happens when you have too high hopes.

Lately I tried not to start new series with the same characters, knowing it's pretty hard for the authors to keep the flow from the first book. And it's great when the author knows how to bring new elements, unexpected turns and more suspense. Here we kind of got all of these, but I still couldn't help in feeling disappointed.

This second book is **very** different than the first one. I don't know why, but I enjoyed much more the lightness and hotness we got in The Slave. I usually prefer angsty books, and here we got A LOT of angst, BUT I got bored while reading this one. I also skipped some pages because I expected SO much more and this book didn't deliver.

When I finished The Slave, I was dying to read the next book. I was so curious about Kai's intentions towards Tam and their master. (view spoiler)

The beginning of this one was way different than I expected. Kai, Tam and Lysander (their Master) were kidnapped and the mercenaries torture Kai to extract information. This book is told from Kai POV. We get how much he loved Tam and Lysander and how much he sacrificed himself for them, but they don't interact much and actually I was SO disappointed by their Master (view spoiler)

This story has a lot of action, many cringing scenes and also torture. We do get some suspense and surprises on the way (view spoiler) but I still got bored by all the pages full of descriptions and I really missed their interactions and hot scenes between them.

I don't think I'll read the next book, even if it's the last one in the series and it's told from Lysander - their

Master's POV. I just don't really care how their story will end.

Kazza says

This book is killing me....*gah!*

The Soldier is told from Kai's POV, it starts the same day The Slave concludes on its cliff-hanger.

Kai is explored so much more. What he endures, what he has already endured, is gut-wrenching. I was so heartbroken at times, so angry, so unsure what was going to happen....I lived it. There is less sexual interaction in this book, more stolen moments in an enemy camp, more psychological issues, self-doubts, expanded world-building, some sadistic moments, tension, and action. It leads beautifully into The Master with an excerpt from that book at the end - I think I am going to be an emotional wreck when I read it. There is no cliff-hanger ending here, but one *critical* factor is left up in the air and several other issues are purposefully left dangling. I cannot wait until November 24th.

You get some details from The Slave in this book, but you *really* need to read The Slave first to gain the full impact of this beautiful (ménage) relationship.

Longer review <http://ontopdownunderbookreviews.com/...>

Chelsea says

This book was a great continuation of the series. Definitely a different feel to the first book, much more emotional and tense, simply because of the situation our threesome find themselves in. This story pretty much covers the captivity of these men and how they survive. Being told from Kai's POV we learn alot more about where he came from and more depth into his feelings of himself and Master and Tam. It was heartbreaking hearing about how he was always an outsider and never felt expected anywhere other than those few months at Ortiz.

Kai is incredibly strong and loyal throughout this book and while it was tense and emotional throughout the whole book, it was wonderful to see his devotion and love push him through his trials.

The three of them do have their moments together but probably 30% of the book is just Kai travelling and seeking help, and i just wanted to see them all happy and reunited.

Also another plus point was, this book wasn't super dooper long which i appreciate when reading emotional books, because i don't think i could have handled to much more happening to Kai (view spoiler)

off the read The Master

Joseph Tonlet says

Review is for the series as a whole rather than the individual books that comprise it.

Gah, sooo damn good! Without a doubt the sweetest 'slave story' I've ever read. *happy sigh*

Gina says

OMG this book tore me up inside, it was a difficult read, but also amazing and I could not put it down!
LOVE LOVE LOVE

Emily Seelye says

Better than the first.

?? Michaelle ♡?? says

4.0 Stars

So, in my review of the previous book I complained a bit about there being a bit too many sex scenes. Well, that'll show me, won't it? Because in *this* installment there was hardly *any* sex. LOL. Feast or famine I guess.

Of course, I really liked the story in spite of this. (Or maybe because of it?) Having all of Kai's thoughts and emotions on display like that as he figured his shit out, decided what he wanted and how to go about getting it (even as he worried he wouldn't be loved in return) actually made me warm up to him more than I did in the last book. I loved the dedication he showed to Tam & his Master and given the context of his original purpose & his ambivalence (and sometimes hostility) toward them, it showed a lot of character development. That kind of growth endears me to a story more than any other aspect of a book.

Can't wait to read Lysander's part of the tale, especially since I think those mercenaries might have been on the right track about his origin/birthright...

(Just thought of something: Kai describes Tam as "sex" - like maybe sex incarnate, but not in a slutty or shameful way, more as a manifestation of love and lust and intimacy - and since the last book was Tam's bit of the story, I guess it fits that there would be a lot of sex scenes in that installment. Huh...I think I might need to re-read the whole series once I'm done with The Master to see what else I might have overlooked or not connected. Like how the violence and torture in this one fits with Kai's personality/history.)

Dee Wy says

4.5 stars - Whoa! This 2nd book in the series follows immediately after the cliffhanger of book one. Where book one was in Tam's POV, this one is in Kai's more masculine POV. Now prisoners of the mercenaries who killed their guards and destroyed their home, Kai is tortured for information he doesn't have and Master and Tam are held in a single cell with no food or water. Amazingly, Tam comes up with a plan for their salvation. But it won't be easy.

Kai, the soldier, shows us he's not only loyal to his Master and Tam, but that he has the heart of a lion. He shines in this story, all the while worrying how they can still love him after his torture has left his manhood in question. I was deeply engaged in this story, on edge at what would happen next. A number of surprises here too. Couldn't read this one fast enough. Love this series!

Gigi says

Cover-gasm!

Bev says

Kai. My poor Kai, what a brave and tortured soul you are. Strong, resilient, damaged...but you're no longer alone. Brilliant yet again from Kate. 5 stars.

Just one quote. 'Lost and damaged I may be, but some fragile thing fluttered in my breast, its wings broken and feathers torn, longing to be set free.'

Katerina says

My handsome soldier. Tortured hero par excellence. Great reading experience. Recommended.

Tanu Gill says

I cannot get enough of my three darling heroes! It was so amazing getting a chance to be inside Kai's head, reading about how he finally realized what Tam had been trying to tell him all along- that even if he go sold as a pleasureslave, he would not want for anything and actually enjoy more freedom than he could ever find anywhere.

spoilers ahead

The events that happened in the story were terrible and so heartbreaking, and while the way Kai thrived and succeeded left me in awe of him, the undisclosed reasons for Lysander leaving him behind is eating at me. I want to know why Lysander did what he did, what was the whole story about his marriage to Neemah, Otto's truth, and everything else.

I am seriously applauding the author's magnificent work in this trilogy. Not a single sentence leaves you feeling unsatisfied. Everything from start to end evokes one or another emotion in you.

Now I am finishing my barely coherent thoughts here and preparing to start the next and last book, finally from Lysander's POV.

Tina says

Wonderful, sensitive, beautiful Kai... I'm in awe...
