



Black Leopard, Red Wolf

Marlon James

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Tracker is known far and wide for his skills as a hunter: "He has a nose," people say. Engaged to track down a mysterious boy who disappeared three years earlier, Tracker breaks his own rule of always working alone when he finds himself part of a group that comes together to search for the boy. The band is a hodgepodge, full of unusual characters with secrets of their own, including a shape-shifting man-animal known as Leopard.

As Tracker follows the boy's scent—from one ancient city to another; into dense forests and across deep rivers—he and the band are set upon by creatures intent on destroying them. As he struggles to survive, Tracker starts to wonder: Who, really, is this boy? Why has he been missing for so long? Why do so many people want to keep Tracker from finding him? And perhaps the most important questions of all: Who is telling the truth, and who is lying?

Drawing from African history and mythology and his own rich imagination, Marlon James has written a saga of breathtaking adventure that's also an ambitious, involving read. Defying categorization and full of unforgettable characters, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* is both surprising and profound as it explores the fundamentals of truths, the limits of power, the excesses of ambition, and our need to understand them all.

Black Leopard, Red Wolf Details

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Author : Marlon James

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From Reader Review Black Leopard, Red Wolf for online ebook

karen says

as you can see, i am very far behind in my reading challenge, and this book is largely to blame. i have been looking forward to this book for a whole year, and i'd planned on spending the day of its release reading all 620 pages cover to cover, with occasional breaks for restorative snacks. that was the plan.

insert laughter of god(s).

instead, this took me nearly a week to get through. it's certainly possible for a human to read it in one very intense day, but it would not have been enjoyable, to me. this is a book that needs to steep and settle; you need to live in its world for more than one day.

it is my favorite kind of book: brutal situations, written beautifully.

it's as violent as *The Book of Night Women*, as sprawling and circuitous as *A Brief History of Seven Killings* and someday i will read my copy of John Crow's *Devil* so i can provide a third simile here.

it is a dense book, and i can see it losing some readers along the way. marlon james is a phenomenal writer, but he has no interest in holding your readerly hand. keep up or don't, it's all the same to him. his books aren't difficult to understand; the challenge here isn't tied to his language or concepts, both of which are very approachable, but in your having the patience to see the big picture he's tossed you somewhere in the middle of.

You have come for a story and I am moved to talk, so the gods have smiled on both of us.

and the imprisoned tracker *will* talk - telling all the stories that brought him to this place, and all the stories he heard along the way. so many stories, so many characters, so many digressions tucked within digressions, all hiding tricky sticky things whose import you won't understand until much later.

but what of the child, whose death tracker gleefully reports on the very first page, the little boy who disappeared and whose safe return was so essential to the future of the kingdom that tracker and a ragtag band of mercenaries, shapeshifters, witches, etc. were hired to locate him and bring him back? what about him?

as tracker will accuse another character, "*Right now, your story has meat where you will not talk, bone where you do.*"

james will make you work for his meat, but even his bones will satisfy you.

and so will his filthy double entendres and euphemisms, if you're into that sort of thing. i sure am.

there's a *lot* here. i'm still kind of reeling from it. i don't have a strong epic fantasy background, and going into this - despite all the maps of imaginary realms and the large cast of characters* listed in the front matter, i felt reasonably confident, figuring - 'how epic fantasy can this really *be*, coming from a man who has never

written epic fantasy before? it'll just be james trying on an epic fantasy coat to see what it's like, yeah?

but no, it's the real deal. i don't know where this beast was nestling in the folds of his historical/crime fictiony brain, but apparently there is nothing he can't do.

don't get me wrong, there are times i was confused as hell because he'll mention something he hasn't yet explained, so you think, 'wait, did i miss something?'

don't worry. you didn't. it's coming.

but it can be a lot to absorb - there are a ton of characters, most of them are unreliable narrators, many of them have special abilities or limitations, and all of them will shift relationship statuses throughout the course of the book from friends to allies to foes to lovers, or a combination plate of those aforementioned things, there are magical doors that my brain doesn't understand, stories will be told more than once, the devil is *always* in the details and there are *a lot* of details. there is also a buffalo. and an anansi/spiderman who jizzes webbing.

but nearly all your questions will eventually be answered.

greg asked me at several points during my reading of this how it was. and every time, to his immense frustration, i would say, "it's really good." because, unless you are michiko kakutani, this is a hard book to talk about without sounding like you're recounting a fever dream. her review is [here](#).

and even though she fails to mention the jizzwebbing, it's still a much better review than whatever it is i'm doing here.

trigger warnings: all of them. and many that never existed before this book.**

in conclusion, a tremendous achievement. i hope he's not gonna george r r martin this trilogy, because i'm already ready to give him another week of my life, reading challenge be damned.

play me out, marlon...

Day seven, I saw that I was still a boy. There were men stronger, and women too. There were men wiser, and women too. There were men quicker, and women too. There was always someone or some two or some three who will grab me like a stick and break me, grab me like wet cloth, and wring everything out of me. And that was just the way of the world. That was the way of everybody's world. I who thought he had his hatchets and his cunning, will one day be grabbed and tossed and thrown in with shit, and beaten and destroyed. I am the one who will need saving, and it's not that someone will come and save me, or that nobody will, but that I will need saving, and walking forth in the world in the shape and step of a man meant nothing.

* i found it very helpful to read the character list/description at the front before starting each section.

** i take squeamish delight in my own triggers, and this book has both eye trauma AND birds, so ♥ ♥ ♥ for days

2/11/19

nobody loves no one

review to come

2/5/19

signed copy - BOOM!

today, we read.

2/4/18

so, when penicillin came 'round, and everyone was all stunned and grateful and, "ohhhhhh, we didn't realize how badly we needed this!" that's me. right now. wanting this with a fierceness.

come to my blog!

Eric Anderson says

You can watch my over-excited fangirl video review [here](#)!

What a wholly-immersive wild adventure this novel is! Going into it I knew Marlon James has a talent for writing intricate sweeping tales from having read his previous novel "A Brief History of Seven Killings". That book greatly enhanced his international prominence having won the Booker Prize in 2015. That same year I was one of the judges of The Green Carnation Prize and we also selected his novel as a winner - not just for the magnificence of his storytelling but the meaningful inclusion of gay characters and gay sex in this Jamaican story about the attempted assassination of Bob Marley and drug trafficking.

"Black Leopard, Red Wolf" is very different from that previous book yet still retains James' unique style, sensibility and alluring mischievousness. Touted as an 'African Game of Thrones', it describes a fantastical medieval adventure involving warring kingdoms, witches, giants, shape-shifters and a quest for a missing child. But it's all firmly rooted in African mythology, language and history. There have been significant examples recently of storytelling whose narratives aren't wholly based in an Anglo-Saxon past but draw instead upon traditions in African culture. From Tomi Adeyemi's "Children of Blood and Bone" to Akwaeke Emezi's "Freshwater" to the phenomenally successful film Black Panther, these tales insist upon the presence of African lore and pay respect to its cultural history whose influence has largely been absent from Western narratives. Marlon James does the same while creating a riveting journey that has all the marks of a fantasy novel but also explores sophisticated ideas about the meaning of storytelling and explicitly adult themes about ambition, relationships, sex and violence.

PorshaJo says

OK, I'm done with this one. I tried. Adding to my DNF pile, not to be revisited. I tried the audio. I love accents and this one was a heavy accent that required a lot of concentration on my part...and constant rewinding. I also had the print which I frequently had to use when I was confused. But it seemed I was more confused reading this one than I wanted to be. It's also very, very graphic. I'm not a prude but it just seemed to me a lot was unnecessary. I was so excited for this one but I've made myself a rule....don't spend your time on reading books you don't like.

Emma says

It seems rather simplistic to say the book isn't enjoyable, especially since I doubt that's what the author was aiming for in the first place, but this is no easy fare. While it's sold as a fantasy novel, it's styled more in the vein of the classical poetic tradition, an inventive and challenging blend of imagination, myth, and history. Of course, the African foundation brings with it different types of stories and forms than those which underly the Greek/Roman mythic tradition but the same fundamental questioning is at its heart. Like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it's an interconnected compilation of stories, featuring representations of violence and transformation throughout. Here, the overarching narrative is the tracking of a lost child, but this is a book of movement and journey, change and discovery. There's so much more to it than this one tale, instead it's a meandering exploration of an unknowable world.

And yet, it's precisely this which is its downfall. The pacing is uneven and the whole experience one of crazy disorganisation. It reads like a dreamscape, full of portent and stark brutality. The writing is often staccato, list-like, with small, well-crafted sentences that are a perfect foil for Marlon James' ability, showcasing his striking imagery and unusual connections. Yes, it's beautiful at times, but, for me at least, emotionless. There's so much power in the description, so much said with so little: 'my father was looking to win, not to play'. How much history and painful knowledge is in those few words? How much does it say about the relationship between father and son? And yet because the structure reads like *this happened and this happened and this happened*, I could see these moments and what they're supposed to mean, but I couldn't feel them. Interactions are like theatrical exchanges, more statements than conversation, everything performative and apparently profound. Characters have limited realism, some act as symbols, some merely a means of upping the violence levels still further. When read all at once, it's an endless and eventually numbing litany of misery and horror that loses any meaning.

What's even more distancing is the sordid humanity. The more myth I read, and I mean real myth not the sanitised Disney versions, the more it feels like an endlessly repetitive orgy of rape and violence, both human and divine. And this is no exception. The misogynistic narrator is obsessively sexual and the book is filled with references to and descriptions of abuse, rape, gang rape, borderline bestiality, and other sexual weirdness that seems to have no real relevance. Right in the opening pages Tracker taunts his jailor for wanting to have sex with a child. I don't usually do trigger warnings but this book should have big flashing neon signs. Actually, I don't really know how much of this stuff was in the book as a whole was but it felt like too much. Altogether tiresome and unnecessary. It takes a lot to make me flinch but the amount of times I wondered why the hell I was continuing to read this book was way more frequent than I'd usually put up

with. And why? Because it's Marlon James. Because he's this cool-as-shit writer and I'm the one missing something. Maybe I am, but I can't bring myself to care that much.

Would I recommend it? No. Not as a novel to sit down and lose yourself in. As an exploration of folklore and myth, sure. As an example of a particular style of writing, definitely. All I'd say is before you pick up this book, know what you're getting into.

ARC via publisher

Marchpane says

Black Leopard, Red Wolf is an epic sword-and-sorcery fantasy novel from Booker Prize-winning author Marlon James. This is not literary fiction dressed up in genre clothing! What it is: fantasy at its freshest and most exciting, deeply rooted in African history and myth.

Lone wolf Tracker and a rag tag bunch of shapeshifters, witches and mercenaries reluctantly team up to locate a missing child, encountering along the way all manner of winged demons, evil spirits, slavers, white scientists, and warring royals. Their quest takes them all over a spectacularly imagined fantasy world, where all is not what it seems. It's a dark, dizzying, vibrant, surreal immersion into African folklore; a grotesquery of nightmares.

The book is structured as a picaresque which reduced to its most simplistic terms consists of: Tracker and his band of travellers arrive in location – describe location's physical features, politics, culture – encounter some bad guys – describe bad guys' physical features, magic powers, motivations – BADASS ACTION SEQUENCE – and repeat. Obviously, it's much more sophisticated than that, but you get the idea. It's an odyssey. The cycle occurs more times than is strictly necessary for the overarching narrative to unfurl, but really this is the kind of book that's about the journey more than the destination. You're not just reading to find out how it ends (though there is that too) but for everything that happens along the way; for the incredible, vivid world that is wrought; for the characters and creatures that inhabit it. In this way, it is much closer to older storytelling forms - oral tradition, ancient folktales and myths - than to the three-act structure of most contemporary novels.

Potential criticisms of *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* – side characters are underdeveloped, political machinations are both murky and simplistic – are mitigated by the fact that this seems to be all part of James's master plan for the trilogy and will be redressed in parts 2 & 3. Meanwhile, this book manages to subvert almost every fantasy trope. Tracker himself is less 'hero on noble quest' and more like a world-weary PI from a hard-boiled noir, albeit one with enhanced abilities. From there, his character develops in fascinating and heartbreaking ways.

The focus on one character means that the book sustains much the same intensity and tone throughout its 600-plus pages. There aren't the usual narrative tricks to propel you along, and we know from the beginning that Tracker at least survives to tell his tale. So it's best to sink into the story, just let it unfold the way Tracker wants to tell it, and trust that James is in total control of his vision. Tracker has a way of skipping ahead, then circling back; of telling tales within tales, until you're thoroughly disoriented and have forgotten how many levels deep into story-inception you are. But he also provides helpful recaps along the way, invaluable for keeping the threads straight in a book this long.

It's interesting that James has chosen to give us only Tracker's slippery first person POV here, rather than alternating POVs of different characters. We know from interviews that the trilogy will include other voices and perspectives, but we're made to wait for them. Is Tracker telling the truth? Everything we think we know from *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* can be turned on its head in book 2 and that's sooo exciting. I just hope he writes fast!

Jennifer says

I felt oddly removed from this book at the beginning, and by the end I was crying every other page. So there's that.

Read By RodKelly says

By now, one can easily identify certain features that define the "Jamesian" style: cinematic violence, shameless sexuality, perverse, sharp humor and wit, flawlessly rendered settings, and virtuosic, rhythmic language. There is also the strong presence of the fantastic: ghosts and spirits, obeah women and demons who haunt the pages of his visceral stories.

Black Leopard, Red Wolf finds Marlon James at the peak of his powers, unafraid to shed the cloak of realism that won him the Man Booker prize in favor of a full-blown, epic fantasy saga. (And at a time when genre-snobbery is at an all-time high.) In the hands of this master novelist, the genre's conventions are blown apart and reassembled as something bold and subversive, aware of its capaciousness but incredibly nuanced and carefully built. It is a novel that resists categorization and description, set as it is in an impeccably and exhaustively researched world of folklore and myth drawn from regions of Central and West Africa, and exploratory of contemporary themes of gender equality and political corruption, queer identity and the exploration of love (and glorious sex ?????) between black men. The characters in this novel are sublimely realized. So much care went into their conception and I was stunned by the depth and range of emotion MJ was able to coax from his sundry band of flawed creatures.

Defying the Western belief in one definitive version of a story, BLRW is structured as an oral epic in which stories lead to more stories which lead to yet more, ultimately providing the reader with a conundrum of reliability: who tells the truth and whose story is being told? Marlon James chooses to leave that entirely up to the reader. There are many elusive layers of detail to sift through from the very beginning: a test of endurance, almost asking "do you really want to hear this story?" But once past its shadowy prologue, the story proceeds in a frenetic rush of action that totally engages the senses, creating an insanely, compulsively addictive reading experience.

Read this for the beautiful depiction of queer love that is the true heart of the novel, a total subversion of masculine isms and male sexuality in literature. Or read it for the dejected women who rail against a corrupt patriarchy, giving voice to the trauma and abuse suffered at the hands of thoughtless men. Read it for the thrill of the quest, the adventure, replete with monsters and demons, cities in the sky and markets where witches trade in baby parts, among countless other darkly fantastic elements. The immensity of adventure in this novel lends itself to an immensity of purpose which takes familiar novelistic themes and fantasy genre tropes, and radically molds them into a form both new and hypnotic in its scope and imaginative fearlessness.

Michael says

I read and reviewed this book for Lambda Literary, where my full review can be found; my thoughts also can be found on my blog.

Full of violence, suspense, and mystery, *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* charts the adventures of an unforgettable pair of mercenaries as they hunt for a lost boy. Taking place in a fictional continent based on Iron Age Africa, the colossal, six-part tale hybridizes fantasy, historical fiction, and epic. In terse but intricately constructed prose, Tracker, or “Red Wolf,” recounts not just his quest to find the lost boy but also his own coming of age, lineage, romances, and more. The novel reads as a collection of interlocked stories set in a civilization in crisis, populated by troubled mercenaries, unforgiving elites, and fantastical creatures; as expansive as the plot is, it centers on the intimate bond between the two eponymous Black heroes, Red Wolf and Black Leopard, as they struggle to survive, communicate, and love in an era beset by armed conflict and social tension. The novel is inexpressibly compelling, and the trilogy it begins seems sure to become a genre-bending classic.

Meike says

Fuck the gods!, as the protagonist of this epic would put it, this clearly is a 5-star-read, and I don't even like fantasy! James takes his readers to an ancient, otherworldly Africa, where themes of Greek and African mythology merge into a sprawling tale about the battles between different tribes and kingdoms, all of them with their own beliefs, powers, and cultures. We join our narrator Tracker, who possesses the gift of a heightened sense of smell, in the quest for a young boy -but the first sentences already give away the ending: "The child is dead. There is nothing left to know." The focus of this novel is on searching, and in more than one way.

In the central storyline of the book, Tracker joins a gang of characters who aim to find the mysterious boy for their powerful client - but at that point, they don't know who the boy really is and what they are getting themselves into. Among this illustrious group are a witch, a killer with superhuman strength, a magical buffalo, and of course Tracker's lover, the shape-shifting Leopard (and yes, Red Wolf is Tracker himself, but you have to find out why by reading the novel! :-)). The group roams the lands in search of the boy, encountering all kinds of people and creatures along the way.

Ultimately, angry and sensitive Tracker, who has no family, is searching for purpose, for meaning. He himself seems to be unsure whether he is good or even striving for what's good, but he clearly perceives the vacuousness in the hate and violence around him. He is lost and trying to be found - but by what? My guess is that this question may be central to the whole Dark Star Trilogy.

Another captivating aspect of the book is the way James adds more and more stories to that of Tracker: There are no shifting points of view, rather, other perspectives are revealed through storytelling. Yes, there are numerous stories the characters tell each other, thus creating a written text that heavily relies on oral traditions. The people choose to reveal themselves to Tracker, and often, they prove to be unreliable narrators, omitting important details or giving false information. This narrative technique adds a lot of suspense to the overall story and depth to the characters.

On top of that, James shines with his inventive language - he manages to give his characters unique voices that do not only convey thoughts and information, but reflect the spirits of the speakers. In fact, I would claim that it's the characters who make this story so addictive: Sure, the chase for the boy is suspenseful and the narrative arc is very smart, but the fascinating, often contradictory personalities of Tracker, Leopard, Sadogo and the others are what glues the reader to this text.

Asked when the next installment of the trilogy will be published, James answered: "Well, my publisher thinks in two years." I really hope it won't take longer! :-)

Feyzan - The Raven Boy says

DNF at 40%

it's a pretty good book, I suppose. if you like them dipped in dog shit, cows piss and utterly rotten.

If i were the publisher and someone had brought this book to me, I'd have advised them to consider getting some help. I don't know what is wrong with Marlon James, but I am pretty sure something is malfunctioning in his brain. Whatever the case, I am really curious to know what was going on in his life when he decided to write this book, and what kind of head space was he in when he thought it would be a great idea to write about child molestation, rape and murder. I mean this dude has crossed all lines.

This book comes with a trigger warning for everything known to men and more.

There is Rape on every single page.

Homophobia.

Incest.

Pedophilia.

Teleiophillia.

Child abuse.

Mutilation of bodies, specially of children's.

Cannibalism.

Violence.

Kidnapping.

Torture.

Foul language.

Gritty murders.

General disgust arising from superfluous description of genitalia, smell of butt cracks, weird creatures that rape with their huge penises etc.

If it were a stand alone book, I might have forced myself to finish it, but it's a fucking trilogy. **I can't, I just can't.**

To be absolutely clear this book is disturbing and disgusting.

Now let's move on to the plot and the writing.

Plot was interesting. If it weren't filled with disgusting, gory, creepy shit, I would have enjoyed it. However,

i can't say the same for the writing and the structure of the book. It felt like the book was being complicated for the sake of being complicated, like there were stories within a story, (inception level shit) and characters that only talked to each other in riddles.

Almost nothing was grounded in reality. It's was excruciating and painful to read because there was nothing I could relate to.

Edit: After recieving hate on my initial review, I decided to add this note to clarify myself.

I know it's an oxymoron to use fantasy and reality in the same sentence, I am not an idiot to not see that. My point is that almost all fantasy books have some real elements, either in the world building or in the characters, to make readers feel at home. However, this book felt like a course in quantum physics. I couldn't feel anything for anything and I mostly blame the superfluous writing for it. A simpler writing style and plot structure would have made a great difference.

PS: My negative opnion is like a grain of salt in the sea of positive reviews so it shouldn't matter what i think about this book. You are allowed to love this book just as I am allowed not to. Take a chill pill and move on. No need to send hateful comments and death threats.

Things I liked about this book:

1. Plot.

So the plot was alot like NoTW and GoT, and it was the main reason I kept pushing myself to read it but the structure and writing was way too complex for me to fully immerse into it. I think a TV or movie adaptation would be a better way to consume this story.

2. African myths.

Lets be honest the only reason I picked this book was the fact that it was based around African myths and mythical creatures. I was super excited and went into it with high expectations, which also played a role in intensifying my disappointment for the book. But I really enjoyed the mythical aspect of the book and I really want to learn more about these myths and creatures.

3. Concept.

OK so the concept, as explained by the Marlon James himself, seemed pretty unique and intriguing. The whole idea of telling the same story from three different perspectives is bloody genius, in my opnion. However, the execution was bad or you can say it wasn't for me.

FAQs

Am I curious to know the ending?

- Yes, I am.

Will continue reading?

- No, I'll watch the movie instead.

Will I recommend this book?

- I won't. But if you are into dark, gritty, complex books then you can give it a shot. I recommend you to read a few pages (if possible) before purchasing the book to familiarize yourself with the writing style, 'cos this shit ain't for everyone.

????? ? says

book: *is an epic fantasy*

me: hm. ok

book: *is set in a fantasy version of Africa and is deeply rooted in African mythology, complete with vampires, witches, necromancers, shape-shifters and double-crossing ex-boyfriends while on a mercenary job*

me: oh shit. ohgh fuck!!!!

Tatiana says

I surrender.

I can handle many things as a reader:

The highly stylized, dense prose, when you don't really understand what's going on but just have to immerse yourself in a narrative until it starts making sense.

All the raping and gore and general fixation on penis as THE center of everyone's world.

Messiness of time lines.

James uses every tool in his toolbox of pretentious literary devices. If he wants to dedicate half a page to explaining that Leopard smells like ass, ok, fine, go for it. I can deal with these things, and I am willing to work hard while reading.

But this story needed at least a little bit of grounding in something real, something relatable and human.

The last straw for me was the realization that James would never allow his characters to talk to each other in any other way but riddles, faux-deep statements and stories about killings and rapes of children, women and men.

What's left to relate to then? How to connect with a story that doesn't give you anything to tether you to it?

I can't do it.

Spencer Orey says

Imagine the X-Men in a fantastical ancient Africa, on a wild roadtrip through nonstop magical terrors.

It started a bit slow for me, but by 200 pages in, I was hooked. I'll be thinking about this one for a long time. Can't wait for the sequels and the movie.

The violence in this book (especially the ceaseless sexual violence) can be very challenging and disturbing, but I think it makes a strong point that written violence should feel disturbing. It shouldn't be easy to gloss over the battles. Violence shouldn't ever feel anodyne. But it can make for very tough reading at parts.

There's a lot to think about here with the ways that histories of Africa and African peoples, tropes, and cultures from different parts of the continent are freely mixed. It's worth talking about when and how that might be problematic, but I'm going to stay away from all that here because the end result was such an incredible world. I hope this book inspires people to read more pre-colonial African history and learn about the diversity in the continent today, especially how different the regions are.

The book is amazing overall. Go read it.

jessica says

NOPE NOPE NOPE NOPE NOPE NOPE NO THANK YOU NOPE.

to say this isn't for me is an understatement, but to claim this is a book for the masses is just a straight up lie. this has been pitched as one of the most buzz-worthy books of 2019 and i had really high hopes for this. but it takes a very particular kind of person to enjoy this story, and that person is definitely not me. i have a lot of thoughts about this, so bear with me.

honestly, this is the most pretentious book i have ever read. it's so far beyond high-brow, it's in an obnoxious league all on its own. james employs every literary device possible to transform his words into riddles, half-truths, and vague mysteries. as a reader, i don't mind having to sometimes work for a story. some of the best stories take patience to dissect deeper meanings. but what is really happening here is marlon james hiding behind his fancy words and complicated sentences to distract the reader from the lack of substance and development. the rhetoric in this story is dense, convoluted, and bogged down with false promises of something worth reading. the prose is evasive and meandering, dragging the reader around and around in circles without an end in sight. it's honestly a disorganised and conceited mess.

also, the amount of lewdness in the book is obscene. i'm not easily deterred by things sexual in nature, but this is too extreme for me. a big neon flashing trigger warning is necessary for the following: rape, gang rape, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, mutilation of bodies, graphic murder, physical and emotional abuse, repetitious orgies, torture, misogyny, etc. and none of it has any relevance to the plot or progression of the storyline. i understand that mythology doesn't shy away from such brutality, but there is a difference between being aware and just being down right offensive. and this book is the latter.

such a lack of humanity ensures there is nothing redeemable or relatable about this book. had this been a simple story about a tracker and a shapeshifter in search of a missing boy, deeply rooted in african mythology and cultural folklore fantasy, i would have loved this to bits. the concept is phenomenally creative. but this book is nothing that it claims to be.

so if you want to read a book that deceptively promises a story lush with cultural richness and imaginative fantasy, but is polluted with haughty notions of grandeur and overwhelmingly unnecessary vulgarity, then look no further because this is the book for you.

okay. rant over.

? 1.5 stars

Roxane says

This book is a lot--a labyrinth within a maze, an enigma within a conundrum. Beautifully intense prose that doesn't allow for lazy reading. Immense physicality--a very embodied narrative. The length is... a lot. I don't mind a long book but if you're expecting this to be a traditional fantasy novel you're going to get smacked in the face. The plot is meandering and elusive. There are a hundred characters and settings. Epic is truly the word for this book in terms of scope, narrative, ambition, execution. Also, it is nothing like Game of Thrones. They should stop saying that shit immediately.
