



The Flame Priest

Karen Azinger

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Heralded by a red comet, the Mordant is Reborn. A thousand years of evil hidden beneath a young man's face, the Mordant returns in the guise of his oldest enemy. Keen to regain his full powers, he weaves his way north, sowing a trail of death and deceit. Kath and her companions leave the monastery, chasing an elusive shadow across the kingdoms of Erdhe, but the dark divide has already begun. Allies are set against allies, tearing the kingdoms asunder. A rebellion rises in Lanverness, threatening the queen's life as well as her crown. Trapped within her own castle, the Spider Queen must out-wit the traitors led by her own blood, or surrender her kingdom to Darkness. Across the border, the Lord Raven builds a religion into a fanatical bonfire. A fiery frenzy grips Coronth, fanning the powers of the Flame Priest into a raging threat. The eternal battle of Light and Dark is joined, but few mortals understand the rules.

The Flame Priest Details

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Author : Karen Azinger

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From Reader Review The Flame Priest for online ebook

David says

Very impressive read. I really enjoyed this. A clear conflict between good and evil with baddies aplenty. The Mordent is a great creation, a being born with the memory of other souls gone before him; evil personified. To liven things up, he has competition from other souls, equally prepared to be reborn and in the favour of the Dark Lord.

There's also good folk as well, but the Mordent manages to be one step ahead, turning brother against brother as he seeks his minions in the North. Kath is a great creation and has to balance between being a princess and a sword maiden. Nothing is ever simple and her father, the King, pulls some of her strings whilst the Light pulls on others. Overall, very good read. I felt it was better than book 1, The Steel Queen.

Julie Bird says

Great story. ...loving it

Avidreader100 says

Another fabulous offering from Azinger. Couldn't put it down. I love Justin. He is a fantastic character who must try to survive in a setting of evil and danger. And what a clever weapon he uses! Also, the role given to women in the book is so compelling (and, sad to say, rare). This plot shows the underlying potential women have, even when considered irrelevant and overlooked, to shape the destiny of an entire people. Well done. Love this series and really looking forward to the next books.

Charles says

Wow, where do I start? First off, I read a lot of fantasy and science fiction. With so many self-published and indie authors out there, it can be a chore to find those diamonds in the rough. Karen Azinger is that rare diamond find. These first two books are fantastic - there's none of the pitfalls that I find in many other books' plots, characters, story line cliches, or prose. This series is so good, I'd like to see Ms. Azinger getting the accolades just like Martin and Rowling do - she's at their level of storytelling. The descriptions of the Mordant and that of true evil in this world have been the best I've had the pleasure to read. You cheer for the heroes who face impossible odds, shudder at the sheer treachery and intelligence of the bad guys, yell at the book when there's a twist in the plot, and yes, there's a bit of spice when it comes to relationships and sex (with both good & evil characters). A true treasure - I'm looking forward to reading the rest in the series.

Cindy says

This book was just as amazing as the first, and it takes off where we left off at the end of *The Steel Queen*. Kath, Duncan and their group are off to stop the Mordant. I was so shocked that he is who he is, I couldn't believe it. Liander and her kingdom is in conflict with its own military. The infiltrated Red Horns are trying to dethrone her. Liandra is a force all her own, and if you are going to play her you better know your game. She is awesome, one of my all time favorites in this story. Mean while Justin, Samson and Grandma Magdna are all trying to survive in Coronth, and take down the Potifax and his Flame God. That is quite an undertaking. This story is really well done the writing is good the characters are breathtaking whether for good or for evil they are so well fleshed out. The characters really make the story, as well as the plot, so many twist and turns and oh my heck that did not just happen, and then I was jumping up and down yes, yes yes, that was so awesome. The romance comes full circle for some of our favorite characters and there is even a surprise romance as well woo, woo. Mrs. Azinger had me in awe, in tears, and hurrying. She kept me a very captive audience who is overly anxious for book 3...well all the rest:) Great Story!

Comment section is full of spoilers you may not wish to read:)

clean language

romance pg-13 pushes the limits

Seregil of Rhiminee says

The Flame Priest continues the entertaining epic fantasy story that started in *The Steel Queen*. Karen Azinger doesn't disappoint her fans, because she handles several subplots fluently and the story becomes more interesting and entertaining as the story goes on.

Before I write more about this book, here's a short synopsis of the previous book (if you haven't read *The Steel Queen* yet, you may want to skip the next paragraph):

In the previous book Kath saw visions of ancient times and found a mysterious crystal dagger. She traveled to the Kiralynn monks with Jordan, Duncan and Blaine. Liandra fought against the threat of the Red Horns. Steffan enjoyed the gifts of the Dark Lord and helped the Pontifax to get more support for the brutal and violent religion of the Flame God. Samson fled from Coronth, but was sent back. Jordan's brother, Justin, decided to help Samson. Danly dreamed of being a king. And the Mordant was reborn.

Here's a bit of information about The Flame Priest:

In *The Flame Priest* Katherine (Kath) is worried about the fate of her sword-sister, Jordan. She prepares to fight against the darkness and learns how to use magic. Liandra is getting ready to face the Red Horns. She also learns how she was betrayed. Justin is in Coronth and is hoping to change the city and its people with his music and songs. Danly is anxious to become a king, because he wants it badly and wants to see her mother pay for her actions. Steffan (the Lord Raven) invents new and devious ways to make the religion of the Flame God more brutal and popular than ever before in order to please the Dark Lord. And the Mordant has his own evil plans...

Karen Azinger has developed nicely as an author, because now she writes more fluently. She clearly has a talent for epic storytelling and she's not afraid to use it. Her writing is at its best surprisingly lush and almost shamelessly entertaining (and also extremely addictive, because it's difficult to stop reading the book). The

descriptions of different places and persons are now more nuanced than in the previous book and the plot has become more complex.

The character development is wonderful, because the characters are believable and they develop in exciting and interesting ways. Especially the strong female characters are worth praising, because female characters tend to be a bit weaker characters in several traditional fantasy series, but not in this series. Kath and Liandra are strong and fascinating characters (the Priestess of the Oracle is also a great character).

Reading about the evil characters is also fascinating, because they're charmingly wicked. The chapters about Steffan and the Mordant are engrossing and well written and they offer lots of entertainment to fantasy fans. I'm sure that several readers will be thrilled to read about these characters.

Character interaction also works better in *The Flame Priest*. For example, the scene where Danly talks to his mother about how he managed to take the throne from her and gloats about his accomplishment, is a fantastic scene. The author describes perfectly how both characters feel and act in this scene: Danly is extremely happy and isn't afraid to show it to Liandra, but Liandra refuses to show his son how shocked she is. There are also several other excellent scenes, but I don't want to reveal everything in this review.

The religion of the Flame God is one of the best and most amazing things about this book, because the author describes all the violent and nasty happenings (especially the Test of Flame) dramatically. It's easy to imagine how ecstatically the religiously fanatic people want to burn the sinners in order to prove that they're true believers. The author shows how dangerous and explosive religious zealotry can be when people surrender themselves to fanaticism and forget everything else.

Another excellent thing is that there are lots of surprises in this book. The plot is delightfully unpredictable at certain points and the author manages to avoid typical fantasy clichés, which is admirable. There are kings, queens, princesses and princes etc in this book, but the way that the author writes about these things feels fresh. (It's great that there are authors who are capable of writing this kind of traditional epic fantasy, because traditional epic fantasy is at its best very enjoyable and offers wonderful escapism for fantasy readers.)

I must also mention that it's fascinating to see how the evil characters try to please the Dark Lord. It's nice to read what they do and what consequences their actions have on other people.

The Flame Priest is a fascinating vision of an epic battle between the forces of the light and the brutal forces of the darkness. It differs nicely from several other similar books, because the author has spent time to create a complex and vast fantasy world (there are lots of small details in this book). That's why there's a lot of depth in this book.

The Flame Priest is a highly entertaining fantasy book. It's a traditional, but also modern epic fantasy book with occasional references to sex and violence. It will appeal to readers who like traditional epic fantasy series. I think that this book can also be recommended to newcomers who haven't read fantasy before, because the plot is captivating and there's plenty of adventure and plot twists.

If you enjoyed reading *The Steel Queen*, you must read *The Flame Priest*, because you won't be disappointed. It's a damn good and enjoyable fantasy book. I have to admit that I can hardly wait to read the third book.

Chary says

If you like fantasy and psychological thrillers, this is a series you will like. I enjoy this books as much as the Game of Thrones series.

Jennie Kemhus says

The Flaming Priest did not let me down. I was very excited to get my hands on this book after the Steel Queen. Karen moved straight into more conspiracies and powerful characters. She has an amazing ability to drag the reader into her world. This book was full of action and movement. Karen has a wonderful fluidity as she transitions between one character to the next. It was very hard to put the book down when I had to. I loved this book and who her characters have turned into or are turning into as you grow to know them even better.

I have enjoyed reading Kath and understanding her as she transitions from young adult to woman. Linadra is a truly amazing character. I have become even more attached to her after this book and am starving to see how her mind and strategies work for the Skeleton King. Duncan has to be one of my favorite male characters in the books. Amazing wit and strength his character is taken to a new level in this book. Karen definitely had me sitting on the edge of my seat with her page turning events. Amazing!

Angel says

Series that is definitely worth reading as it has everything in it good story and plot, good characters good writing, emotive, action, magic, cant wait to see how the saga goes and ends, cant wait for the next book

Lynn says

10/5 stars

Once again, Ms Azinger has produced a masterpiece. The narrative sweeps the reader up in a whirlwind of events catastrophic, treasonous, unexpected and terrifyingly similar to ordinary, everyday life in the 21st century.

I found the chapters dealing with the Mordant and Steffan particularly harrowing, and had to break my reading partway through to settle my mind by reading something innocuous and frivolous. There are spots of familiarity throughout the series (parallels to Fellowship of the Ring, with the number of travelling companions in the original group, the Mordant's stronghold sounds a bit like Mordor, Balor has strong elements of the worst form of dictatorship, to name but a few). Physical relationships are hinted at, rather than sordidly overwritten, and the romantic interludes are as light as soft music.

It's been a long, long time since I've been so utterly caught up by an unfolding story of this magnitude. Needless to say, I have already started The Skeleton King!

Mihir says

Review originally at Fantasy Book Critic

ANALYSIS: Sequels are hard to write and often doubly difficult to appease the readers. Writers always walk a tight rope when releasing their second books. I believe Karen Azinger must have also faced a similar conundrum and I wanted to see how she would fare and so when I got the opportunity to get my hands on the second book. I eagerly went ahead as I had enjoyed *The Steel Queen* and the way the book ended, made me want to read the second at the earliest.

The story begins with our heroes who have all gone through their individual trials by the end of the first book. Kath the imp princess is learning more about magic as she prepares to fight the forces of the dark lord. To add to her worries is the whereabouts of Jordan the princess of Navarre & sword sister to Kath. On the other hand her brother Prince Justin the musician is in Coronth trying to gauge how to appease the flames fanned by the flame priests. The goings are tough as he has no clue to the madness which prevails in the kingdom. His only tools are his music and songs but they hold a crucial power & shall it be enough to stem the tide of the flames? Queen Liandra is facing a red hand orchestrated attack on the reins of her monarchy and it does seem to be slipping from her hands. Her second son Danly is anxiously scheming to replace her as the true king. Steffan the Raven Lord is furthering his own plans by helping the flame priests however the Dark Lord has special plans for him. Lastly is the newest player in this game the reincarnated Mordant who is equally terrifying and plays his cards close to his chest. All these characters create a thick web of action, intrigue & emotions, by which the reader will be completely enamored by.

The author has to be lauded for her plotting skills which were nicely evident in the first book but come to the fore exuberantly in this one. Throughout the story, twists are inserted for the reader to happen upon, some of which are predictable however the majority should definitely take the reader by surprise. The main plot is about transformation and this aspect is seen through all the character arcs. Be it the heroic ones or the villainous ones, they all are striving for reaching their goals and the tribulations they will face will either strengthen or smash them. Its up to the reader to discover who survives and who doesn't.

The pacing is another factor which helps as the book begins on a fast pace and then maintains its zest through out whilst going on to an terrific climax. The entire story almost never slows beginning from the first chapter all the way to the end. There's always something happening in one chapter or the other. I noticed that the author carefully orchestrated this story so that the ebb and flow of action & emotions is constantly alternated and so every character faces danger at some time or the other. I found this aspect to be very similar to the thriller books by Jeffrey Deaver and this was quite an excellent point.

The character list is also expanded from the last book and while most of the previous POV characters make their return, it's the presence of the new POVs which is truly the dark feature of this book. Namely the Mordant who is reborn and features across the breadth of the story, he was frequently mentioned in the first book however remained more like a shadowy presence but in this book manages to gain corporeal presence and makes his presence felt in all fields. His chapters as well as those of Stefan are the major negative POV chapters and are the most exciting ones to read. As the reader can read their thoughts and plans which affect several characters through out the story in major & minor ways. This was something which is usually not present in most fantasy books as we often see the actions of the negative characters but rarely see the thought

process behind it.

I must also point out that one of the short stories in *The Assassin's Tear*, deals with a major plot point in this book and so by reading the short story, the plot acquires depth. The book while having these positive facets still faces some old issues, namely that the predictability factor is never completely toned down and so most older fantasy readers will still be able to get a general idea about how and where the story might be going. The tropes which are utilized are most of the common fantasy ones and the author doesn't really bring anything new to the palate in those terms.

CONCLUSION: A lengthier, twisted & exciting sequel, *The Flame Priest* lives up to its blurb promise. Focusing on a large cast of characters, Karen Azinger masterfully manages the storyline and holds the reader's interest with an engaging plot. *The Flame Priest* is a vastly improved book compared to its predecessor and as a sequel manages to overcome reader expectations convincingly. Give this series a try if you love classic epic fantasy tales with heroes, magic, battles & mayhem.

Sandra Crow says

Great Read

I can not wait to read the next book in this series. This series has grabbed my attention from the very beginning.

Donald H Smith says

Second installment continues to soar above the mundane!

As I read the first book on KU & normally won't write a review of a series until I've read book two! But I bought book 2 & am looking forward to the next one, which I'm starting as the snow falls & my coffee brews!!! Additionally each book is a full length novel 400+ pages which allows depth of development of story. It's been awhile but Ms Azinger is now placed with John Gwynne as new talent worth following! Being a fan of swords & fantasy & wizards & Towers for 45 years I can honestly say well done.

Skip Crust says

Dang. This is a freaking good series. The thing I appreciate about Ms. Azinger' writing, is that she can keep the story moving. I've compared this to GRRM's *GoT* series, and there is definitely a similarity. However, this series doesn't get bogged down with endless pages of drivel. Not a word is wasted.

The Mordant is a formidable enemy. We know enough to understand to be mortally afraid, but much like Harry doesn't understand Voldemort well early on, Kath and her cohort don't understand the Mordant.

In my review of the first book, I noted that I appreciated strong female characters without the stupidity of the YA love triangles. Still true, however the romance element has been added in greater measure here. Small criticism - it is only spoken of, but for rare instances (Duncan, in small doses), from the female perspective.

The male counterparts seem only to be present in the relationship, not alive. Hearing their voice as a part of this would made the relationship seem alive, rather than flat - an add on without adding much depth.

Zak Oglesby says

Another amazing novel from Karen Azinger. To those who have read the Steel Queen (and if you haven't I urge you to stop reading this review now and go pick it up) this series should need no introduction. Ms. Azinger's debut work the series is a giant in fantastic literature, a triumph of characterization and plot. In the Flame Priest Ms. Azinger continues many of the stories which began in the Steel Queen, everything from Liandra's growing fear of rebellion to the terrible theocracy of Coronth. Within this Azinger weaves in new characters and plot points with the grace of a ballerina and the artistry of a painter. From quite but powerful Zith to the increased role of Grandmother Magda, every character is perfectly balanced and amazingly real feeling.

The story clips along at the same pace as the novel which proceeded it but while that book took a couple fifty pages to gain momentum this book begins at a breakneck pace. Stories with hundreds of complex parts whirl together to create this monument to literature

Bravo Ms. Azinger, bravo. May the Skeleton King be just as good and see a speedy publication. The Dark Harper will sing of you, I have no doubt, for all the best heroes are part of his stories!
