



By the Mountain Bound

Elizabeth Bear

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For five hundred years the immortal Children of the Light, einherjar and valkyrie, have lived together in the North of Valdyrgard. They were born out of the Sea, each with a shining crystal sword in his or her hand; they are Angels of Light created in the formation of a new world. But three have come before them, from the death-throes of the old world, Midgard: the world-girdling Serpent, Bearer of Burdens; the Wolf Fenris, eater of the Sun, who now takes the form of an einherjar; and his demon sister, stealer of souls.

The Children spend their days feasting, fighting, hunting, and guarding their human charges. But one dreadful day a woman is washed up from the sea, a Lady who is no mortal, though she is not valkyrie either. Thus begins the breaking of the Children of the Light, the tarnishing of their power, and the death of Valdyrgard.

By the Mountain Bound is a prequel to Elizabeth Bear's highly acclaimed *All the Windracked Stars*, and tells the painful tale of love and betrayal, sorcery and battle, that led up to the day when Muire was left alone in the snow at the end of the world.

By the Mountain Bound Details

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From Reader Review By the Mountain Bound for online ebook

Lauryn says

While this book is listed as second in the Edda of Burdens series, it's actually a prequel to the first novel in the series. I found this book to be much more concrete than the first book in the series. I'm not sure if that's because I had a concept of the characters/world or if the story is easier to follow. I would be curious to reread the first book with the knowledge gained from this second book. That being said, I would definitely read this book second in the series. I think the first book is so beautiful and interesting is because of it's mystery. I think this book is so successful because it takes all of those questions and half-illustrated images from the first book and fills in the blanks. Muire before she was the last one of the Valkerie. The Wolf before he was the betrayer. And the true villan of the tale and the sacrificed gods in her wake. This continues to be my favorite series by Elizabeth Bear to date.

Kate O'Hanlon says

There's of course a sense of inevitability that hangs over prequels. If you've read All the Windwrecked Stars* then you know from the get go that this is story will be a tragedy. The book moves inevitably towards the Ragnarok, almost everyone will die. Muire will flee. Mingan will betray Strifbjorn.

I found this almost too painful to read.

The characters are wonderfully realized with the possible exception of Strifbjorn, who is thinly sketched, warrior, leader, clandestine lover, rebel but I never really felt I got a real sense of. It's significant that Muire and Mingan's pov sections are in the first person, while Strifbjorn's in the third person. I wonder if this is purely a stylistic choice or if Bear herself was unable to get inside his head.

*And as with Bear's other series, The Promethean Age, I might come down on the side of recommending you read in story order rather than publication order,

Liz says

By the Mountain Bound - Elizabeth Bear

As a gamer I was intrigued by the cover art. The beautiful armor and magnificent sword grabbed my attention and I HAD to start reading it.

A few pages in, I grew very unsure about the book however. The character's were not described and I barely knew who was

narrating the chapters. I feel like the characters did not have personality as I'm used to by many authors and it struck me

so strangely it became a chore to read. When it's so tough to try and figure out who is talking to who.. well, it is not as

enjoyable as you hope, and the way it should be.

I stuck with with to read the whole book, with bitter disappointment. Nothing got terribly interesting, no

moment of pleasure
in reading it, nothing.

This is only one book of three novels in this series, but it's quite unlikely I'll read the others.

I have done research about the author and have found she is quite beloved by fantasy novel fans. I shall look into her other

books with no expectations in either way.

Rick Smith says

I didn't like this one very much. Too hard to figure out who was who at first.

Anna Stephens says

I've read a few Elizabeth Bear books before and, I'll be honest, I've always struggled with them, finding them dense, complex and occasionally surreal.

This is all those things, and I loved it. I don't think it's because the book is different, but because I'm a different reader compared with some years ago.

While I didn't know all of the myths and Eddas alluded to in this book, there was enough cleverly-inserted exposition for me to understand all the but most obscure Norse references.

The language is lyrical and spare and achingly beautiful in places, and the story drips with myth and the sense of another world, another time.

Though this is billed as book 2 of the Edda of Burdens, it's actually a prequel, and so I've read it before All the Windracked Stars, which is definitely next on my list.

Susan says

I still don't know what I think of this series!

On one hand, this book and its sequel are just gorgeous. The setting is fascinating, this mix of Norse mythology in a fantasy world, gorgeously sad in the inevitable tragedy and yet hopeful in all the characters' loss, sacrifices and will to survive. I became truly invested in Strifbjorn, Muire and Mingan, in all their incarnations. I find tragedy is an inevitable result of a character's habits, upbringing or personality to be really affecting, so reading Strifbjorn and Mingan's doomed romance was really lovely, in an odd way.

But it just wasn't done well enough, I think. Poetic, evocative prose, consciously beautiful or not, can only carry it so far. The plots in both were interesting and exciting but delivered oddly, lacking a sense of building urgency for the climax, and absolutely lacked context or meaning in half of the events. I didn't really have a solid grasp on what was happening sometimes. I think maybe a few hundred more pages in this book to really dwell on events would have helped - all I can think is that I wanted more of Muire's life before Heythe, to really hammer home the tragedy.

I don't think I'll read the sequel, despite how invested I became in Cathoair and Mingan. Apparently Bear paints the events of this book as 'Mingan always wanted Muire instead actually the whole time' when all I got out of these 200+ pages was that he was absolutely consumed by his love for Strifbjorn. And also that

Muire and Cathair had an epic love story when I never read such thing. like lol, nice try straights, I'm not falling for it!!!

Megan Baxter says

When I first read *All the Windwracked Stars*, I liked it quite a lot, but I never felt quite like I entirely understood the world or what was going on. In that book, Elizabeth Bear throws you in at the deep end, and I was always working to try to put together how the world had gotten to the place it was, and what the intense backstory of the characters was.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Rosu Aquabutts says

"I really liked it."

Wow, this was brutal.

By the Mountain Bound is a sequel/prequel to *All the Wind-Wracked Stars*. Prequel in that it all happens chronologically earlier, prequel in that it was published second and assumes knowledge of the first. It assumes a *lot* of knowledge of the first. See, this book is a tragedy. In fact, calling it a tragedy seems too light. This book is a car crash in slow motion, where we know exactly what position the cars all end up in and who was ruled culpable and how much the insurance paid out. The very first chapter of *All the Wind-Wracked Stars* tell us that the Children of Light were sundered by the machinations of the goddess Heythe into the Bright and the Tarnished, who clashed in a great war that Heythe had engineered and killed each other en masse, leaving only Muire the Historian and Mingan the Grey Wolf, both who survived because they didn't have the courage to stand by their choices. The second chapter gives us all the dirty details about how Strifbjorn, the leader of the Children of Light, had been loved by Muire but lover of Mingan and ultimately had been betrayed by both of them to die alone on the battlefield. When you're reading *By the Mountain Bound*, you know from the first word on the first page that this is going to end just about as horribly as it possibly can ...

And it *still* managed to shatter my heart into pieces.

It was Mingan. It was all Mingan. He deserved everything that he got ... or did he? Heythe engineered his downfall and broke him over her knee intentionally, over and over. But Mingan still made the decisions that lead to him becoming Tarnished. Or did he? He's as much Fenris as he is Mingan or the Grey Wolf and how responsible does that make him for his actions? How much cavernous unhappiness does he deserve? Well, a lot, especially for what he did to Runnveig. But did he deserve what he *got*? Seeing Mingan lose everything, and then lose everything again, and then lose even more, and then lose even the ability to mourn for all that he'd lost -- god. And how close he came to taking back all of his pain and love and living with it, and then the opportunity just slipping through his fingers ...

But let me back up.

This is a very good book. It splits its POV between Muire and Mingan, who were both main characters in the first book, and Strifbjorn, who was both a huge part of the first book and barely present for it. Bear uses three different POV types for each of the main characters -- first person present tense for Mingan, first person past tense for Muire, and third person past tense for Strifbjorn. It suits each of them tremendously, with Muire's reading like a history, Mingan's reading like a train of thought and Strifbjorn as someone more distant from the reader. As a result each of the characters provide a really different view into what's going on apart from just their characters.

By the Mountain Bound is a much more traditional sort of fantasy novel than its predecessor. I can actually explain it in less than a paragraph. Valkyries go to war with each other in the supposedly peaceful aftermath of the Norse Ragnarok and everyone dies, bam. It is also much more clear and much less challenging and ambitious than the first book and clarifies a lot of the dizzying whirl of worldbuilding from the first. But it should absolutely be read second, despite this. Its main flaw is that the pacing is very fast and things happen much too quickly for if this book was supposed to stand on its own. But thanks to the first book already laying out an outline for us, Bear could safely skip a lot of the more boring sections without them feeling like holes that we need filled in. It let her focus a lot more on the relationships between the characters and the demons they're all struggling with ...

Especially Mingan.

I could go on about him for ages but I'm tired and it's late and that was extremely emotionally draining. I *deeply* hope that the third book in this series has a very satisfying payoff for Mingan's suffering because good god.

This was brutal.

kvon says

Not the book I expected from when I leafed through it in the bookstore. I have a habit of avoiding the book back synopses in favor of opening to a random page 50-60 pages in, and from that deciding if I want to see how the author gets there and if I like her style. But I happened into one of Muire's chapters, and she seems like a kickass arbiter of justice, and she turns out to be one of the minor characters (although she's probably the main character in the sequel). The first half of the book is around the forbidden homosexual love and how being in the closet sucks, then everything goes to Hel and there's some interesting stuff about predestination and grace and self-sacrifice and self-loathing and standing up for what's right. It all moves at an odd pace. It's a post-Ragnarok world that I'm not familiar with and strange side creatures. I've already got the sequel (written first) so maybe I'll get to see some more good Muire action.

Alytha says

By *The Mountain Bound* is the second volume of Elizabeth Bear's *Edda of Burdens* series.

This is the prequel to *All the Windwrecked Stars*, and explains how the terrible battle in which the children

of the light and the tainted destroyed each other. In the beginning, the waelcyrge and their chosen einherjar live in barbarian happiness in their halls with lots of mead, and keep justice in the mortal towns around. One day, they find an almost-drowned young woman on the beach. She turns out to be a formidable warrior who can even best the Wolf, Mingan. She claims to be the Lady, the prophesied warleader that the waelcyrge have been waiting for, and also that the frostgiants are coming to attack them. In order to be able to vanquish them, she proposes that the waelcyrge, who can take the energy of a dying person's last breath in order to avenge them, should take the energy of healthy people, killing them. This leads to a rift between her loyal followers, and those who consider this abomination...

Really loved this one, it is just as good as the first volume. The story is much more straightforward and easy to follow, even if you know where it's going, and it is everything but cheerful, inexorably steering towards disaster.

This series is set in Valdyrgard, a world created after Ragnarok on Midgard (which is our world if I got my Norse mythology straight), and some characters have been reincarnated: Mingan is Fenris, the wolf who swallowed the sun. There is a creature he calls his sister, called the Imogen, a black, winged creature eternally hungry. It is unclear who she was, possibly Hel.

The antagonist Heythe was known as Gullveig, a witch who caused the first war by creating lust and jealousy between the Vanir and the Aesir.

I liked the imaginative use of the tropes of Norse mythology. (it's a bit of Edda fanfic, to be honest. Every history-geek's dream ;))

(She's a bit anvilicious though, as her real intentions become clear to the reader quite quickly)

The book is told from three points of view, Mingan, the Wolf; Muire, the Historian, and Strifbjorn, the Warrior. The first two are in first person, the latter in third person. Thus, we see how Muire and Strifbjorn fight to save their world and the souls of their brethren, while Mingan finds himself overwhelmed by the base instincts of his lupine past, and drawn towards Heythe.

The world is described vividly, although there's not much of it, but especially the cold winter which seems to mirror the evolution of the plot is so impressive that you'll find yourself shivering.

Lianne Burwell says

This is apparently the middle book of a trilogy, but it stands on its own.

After the Norse Ragnarok, the world is recovering. Mortals live in towns on the coast, while immortals fight mock battles. One of them is Mingan, the Wolf, who was once Fenris, the sun-eater.

Then a goddess, Heythe, arrives, and ends up dividing up the immortals and creating a war intended to wipe them all out. Maybe I would understand better if I'd read the first book.

It took a while to get used to the way Ms Bear uses language in the book, and while the plot is pretty minimal, by the end I was completely immersed.

I plan to read the other two books in the series, and I would recommend this one to anyone who is a fan of Norse mythology.

Derek says

Enjoyable prequel to All the Windwracked Stars. The novel deals with the events leading up to the confrontation between the Children of the Light and the Tainted Ones. By the Mountain Bound is a more straightforward read than All the Windwracked Stars, perhaps an easier read as well, but I believe this is a product of the reader understanding the elements at play. Things that were hinted at, or however briefly explained in All the Windwracked Stars are better showcased in this book, and this provides a richer reading experience overall. Looking forward to reading the final volume in this series.

Maggie K says

This book is 2nd in a series....so those of you who read it first, well, you aren't supposed to get it, it is 2nd in a series! What part of that is so hard to understand?? The world-building already happened! If you decided to skip it, that is on you, not the book! (One of my rants is people who rate books they don't get, when there is a clear reason they don't get it)

Anyway, to my review.... I really enjoyed this! Having read (and loved) All the Windwracked Stars, I had to read this one, and was so immersed I couldn't put it down.

A big premise from the first book is how the Children of Light were betrayed and killed in a huge battle, leaving one one surviving Valykyrie. Here, we go in depth into the actual betrayal, which of course is a lot more complicated than you (or the actual characters) would think! The heartbreaking truth plays out well, and Bear's gorgeous writing style does it justice.

This take solidifies the events of the first book, making them even more poignant. A great addition to the series.

sage says

Make it 2.5 stars, maybe? I liked some of this quite a bit and was very eh on other things - especially the batshit decisions to DIE HORRIBLY everyone kept making, rather than using a modicum of sense and thinking of a solution. Like invoking some help from a being who could give it before it was all too late!

Granted, this was a prequel to a book I haven't read yet, and I think she wrote that one before this one, so it makes sense that it would feel like a prequel, but on the last page I'm still left with the feeling of, "Okay...and?" which is a TERRIBLE thing to feel at the end of a book. *sigh*

Again, not awful. Just disappointing because her Elizabethan stuff is so much better - I hope she'll do more in that era soon.

Ms_prue says

Like, not so much drowning in feelings, more like losing a pitched battle with feelings by the edge of an ocean in winter, and the battered corpse of my feelings being gently covered in silent, smothering snow*. Either way my feelings are disappearing under a lot of water but there's an important technical and visual difference. Probably. I'm going to have a little afternoon tea break now and then get on to book 3.

* Not a spoiler because it's literally the start of book 1.
