



## The Bloodprint

*Ausma Zehanat Khan*

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## **The Bloodprint** Ausma Zehanat Khan

A dark power called the Talisman has risen in the land, born of ignorance and persecution. Led by a man known only known as the One-eyed Preacher, it is a cruel and terrifying movement bent on world domination—a superstitious patriarchy that suppresses knowledge and subjugates women. And it is growing.

But there are those who fight the Talisman's spread, including the Companions of Hira, a diverse group of influential women whose power derives from the Claim—the magic inherent in the words of a sacred scripture. Foremost among them is Arian and her apprentice, Sinnia, skilled warriors who are knowledgeable in the Claim. This daring pair have long stalked Talisman slave-chains, searching for clues and weapons to help them battle their enemy's oppressive ways. Now, they may have discovered a miraculous symbol of hope that can destroy the One-eyed Preacher and his fervid followers: The Bloodprint, a dangerous text the Talisman has tried to erase from the world.

Finding a copy of The Bloodprint promises to be their most dangerous undertaking yet, an arduous journey that will lead them deep into Talisman territory. Though they will be helped by allies—a loyal ex-slave and Arian's former confidante and sword master—both Arian and Sinnia know that this mission may well be their last.

## **The Bloodprint Details**

Date : Published October 3rd 2017 by Harper Voyager

ISBN : 9780062459190

Author : Ausma Zehanat Khan

Format : Paperback 448 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Adult

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## From Reader Review The Bloodprint for online ebook

### Nafiza says

Before I begin what essentially will be a panegyric, please go and read the interview Ausma did with us.

Welcome back. Now, I could tell you what the book is about or I could give you the official synopsis. I will opt for the latter because it does a far better job than I ever will be able to. So here it is:

A dark power called the Talisman has risen in the land, born of ignorance and persecution. Led by a man known only known as the One-eyed Preacher, it is a cruel and terrifying movement bent on world domination—a superstitious patriarchy that suppresses knowledge and subjugates women. And it is growing.

But there are those who fight the Talisman's spread, including the Companions of Hira, a diverse group of influential women whose power derives from the Claim—the magic inherent in the words of a sacred scripture. Foremost among them is Arian and her apprentice, Sinnia, skilled warriors who are knowledgeable in the Claim. This daring pair have long stalked Talisman slave-chains, searching for clues and weapons to help them battle their enemy's oppressive ways. Now, they may have discovered a miraculous symbol of hope that can destroy the One-eyed Preacher and his fervid followers: The Bloodprint, a dangerous text the Talisman has tried to erase from the world.

Finding a copy of The Bloodprint promises to be their most dangerous undertaking yet, an arduous journey that will lead them deep into Talisman territory. Though they will be helped by allies—a loyal ex-slave and Arian's former confidante and sword master—both Arian and Sinnia know that this mission may well be their last.

Though *The Bloodprint* is essentially fantasy and happening in a fantastic world, the parallels are obvious and the concerns and themes it works with contemporary and relevant. But let's begin at the beginning and work our way from there.

The prose is masterful; the writing seeks out the details and finagles out the emotion in them. Observe, for instance:

A startled cry rose from the long line of women, robed in the sorrowful blue of dusk, their pale eyes tasting light for the first time that day.

Arian and Sinnia are two women against the world but what I most loved about their companionship and the world in which they exist is that their gender does not automatically make them weak no matter how much the enemy wants it to. This particular brand of feminism is different from the kind the West is used and has a lot more layers and is much complex containing as it does both the feminine mystique and, the more expected, strength both mental and physical.

Arian's strength comes from her position as the first Oralist of the group she belongs to and her ability to recite the Claim. Which brings me to the next thing I loved about this book.

Islam is very much pilloried on a global stage and often by people who know little to nothing about the religion and allow their own prejudices to form uninformed opinions about it. That said, this book presents facets of the religion in interesting ways that you may have not considered. It explores how people can take the same text and form two different and often diverging conclusions based off it. It shows how people can take a religion hostage and exploit it to fulfill their own greedy agenda and much more sinister ambitions.

I also loved how the Claim, the sacred language in *The Bloodprint* is actual translated verses from the Quran. This gives a story an additional depth and a deeper flavour.

*The Bloodprint* is not an easy book to read. It has pain and shows the brutality human beings are capable of. At the same time, it has pockets of uncomplicated happiness that is flavoured by sadness for the brevity of their duration.

Arian, Sinnia, Daniyar and Wafa are all such complex characters who, no matter their power, still seem helpless against the world they are rebelling against. *The Bloodprint* is an excellent introduction to a complex world that, for all its fantasy, is an echo of ours. You should read it.

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### **Zoe Stewart (yerabooknerdzoe) says**

I didn't have high hopes for this after the first 50 pages or so. It's wasn't quite info dumpy, but so many new terms were introduced without much explanation that I wasn't feeling it. I'm so glad I kept going though! I saw some of the twists at the end coming a mile away, but some of them I wasn't quite expecting. I'm really looking forward to the next one!

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### **lady victoriana says**

Ugh. That was painful. Actually, physically painful, and I am so disappointed. This book was one of my most anticipated releases of the entire year. I actually pre-ordered this book! I purchased it! Paid money for it because I was sure I would want to have it on my shelf forever to read and reread! Instead, from the very first chapter I found myself struggling to get through it. This is a novel with great potential that was executed terribly. Let's go through the problems one by one:

→ It is undeniable that Khan has created an intriguing world, though much of it is based on ours. The parallels between the antagonists, The Talisman, and ISIS/Taliban, are painfully obvious and heavy-handed. The Claim, ancient religious words inscribed with power, is clearly meant to be the Quran. Now, there is nothing wrong with any of this - in any other book I might have relished it - but here everything is so confusing and mashed up together that I had a difficult time following along. The main character, Arian, is a First Oralist trained in the power of The Claim - and yet it is never exactly clear what precisely the Claim is or how its magic works or how Arian uses it against her enemies. Given that Arian's powers make up the crux of the plot, leaving it unexplained greatly hindered my understanding of the overall plot. This is not the only bit of worldbuilding that was left unexplained, or touched on only vaguely. Khan throws a lot into this book and very little of it makes sense until the very end.

→ Despite the aforementioned, this book also somehow constantly delivers plodding exposition to explain worldbuilding rather than revealing it organically. The narrative comes to a shuddering halt to explain

something (and not very well, either). It's very jarring and is the mark of an inexperienced writer. There is just so, so much telling rather than showing, and it's not even a little bit subtle.

→ I suspect it is the lack of skill in writing that makes the whole book so very, very bland. From the first chapter, which should have been a harrowing, nail-biting scene as our protagonists endeavor to save a group of women from slavery, is dull. From the get-go I just Did Not Care. And I tried, oh did I try. I wanted to care, I wanted to like this book. But there were no characters I cared about (Arian, the lead, is painfully, painfully bland) and the stakes were established properly to get me to give a damn about anything that was happening. The writing isn't technically bad, but there's just no spark to it. This book is lifeless.

→ The author uses omniscient narration, but she does it very, very badly. First of all, it took me a while to figure out it was omniscient narration, because the book at first gives the impression that it's in third person limited, with most of the POV given to the protagonist, Arian. But there are throwaway chunks and sentences that are in other characters' perspectives, even very minor characters, that just shove their way into Arian's thoughts. And then the narrative will flit back to Arian's POV. It's clumsy, messy, and confusing.

→ The overall plot was terrible. First off, I'm beginning to think that ~journey~ stories take a supremely talented author to pull off, and the ~journey~ in this book was very badly paced. It's taken me over a month to finish this book because it was just so damn boring. I literally had to force myself to finish it. And not only was the overall plot uninteresting, but even the few scenes that should have been exciting felt empty because they were written so badly! Big, action moments that should have been exciting were barely given a sentence (sometimes I barely even noticed that something huge had happened). What should have been big reveals were not revealed properly, and so they didn't deliver any punches.

→ This is clearly being marketed as a ~feminist~ story, but unfortunately even that falls flat. Our two heroines spend the whole book ogling handsome men and having their fates controlled by them. Daniyar is introduced as Arian's love interest and an extremely handsome man, and the author won't let you forget it. His beauty is constantly referenced, Arian's companion Sinnia is constantly talking about how desirable he is, and Arian herself is in love with him for reasons that baffle me, since he's very much an asshole. This obsession with handsome men and the women in love with them doesn't just feature with our protagonists, but with various minor characters as well, making the book not only borderline misogynistic but also shockingly heteronormative (there are NO queer characters here).

→ Arian's companion, Sinnia, is black. The author doesn't let you forget this either. References are constantly being made about the strangeness of her dark skin, how ~exotic~ she is, how pale Arian is in comparison, how jealous Sinnia is of Arian, etc, etc. And she is the only black character. It was extremely fetishistic and made me very uncomfortable, especially given that Sinnia's entire existence seemed to be rooted in being Arian's loyal companion. We are given little to nothing of her backstory, her wants or desires, despite the omniscient narration.

→ I want to touch again on how utterly boring and lifeless this book was. The author just couldn't make me care about anything in this book. The plot was a fairly straightforward journey, with little to no intrigue or suspense. For me, this book only got mildly interesting in the very last ten pages, when there were two big reveals and twists, one of which I'd been expecting since the last third of the book. And then the book ended on a cliffhanger that I don't particularly care about because I don't care about anything in this book.

I don't have much else to say. I really disliked this book, I nearly DNF'ed it multiple times, I had to drag myself back into reading it, and I'm just so relieved to be done with it.

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## **Melanie says**

*ARC provided by the publisher via Harper Voyager in exchange for an honest review.*

### ***“Did the Bloodprint represent deliverance or deception?”***

*The Bloodprint* is the first in a series and a debut adult fantasy novel that is very diverse and truly celebrates the importance of words, and what happens when we take away basic human rights to people that are deemed lesser. This book is a good blend of magic and religion and everything in-between. And ultimately this story is about breaking slave chains, which is something that I will always support and get behind.

### ***“We do what we always do with slave-chains—we break them.”***

Plus, not only is this a diverse read, the author is a Muslim woman who drew a lot of inspiration and influences from her own religion into this story. I loved every aspect of this, and I can't stress enough how important it is to have more things like this published, especially in fantasy.

The Bloodprint itself is a dangerous text that the Talisman has tried to rid the world of. Many people even believe it to be just a myth. The Companions of Hira is a group of women, who have developed magical powers from reading sacred scripture known as the Claim, and they fight against the Talisman every day.

The Talisman is led by a man that is known as the One-eyed Preacher, who is also leading and is responsible for a lot of the slave trafficking in this world, along with many other horrible things. Arian, who is a very beloved and well-respected member of the Companions of Hira, has been trying to rescue as many humans as possible from the slave trades over the years. Yet, her new mission is to locate the Bloodprint, which can destroy the One-eyed Preacher, and the Talisman people who follow him, once and forever. But Arian is still struggling and suffering from many events that took place in her past.

### ***“A man, a child, and two women braving a Talisman redoubt. To capture the stone of heaven. Symbol of the Eternal Blue Sky.”***

This book heavily talks about sex trade and promises of rape, and even though it never gets too graphic, it is still a prevalent theme throughout the novel. Like, from the very start to the very end. So please go into this book using caution if that is something that bothers you while reading.

I feel like this book was sold to me as a diverse feminist fantasy novel, but I never truly felt the feminist elements, sadly. Yes, this world is very patriarchal and gross things are done to woman throughout, but I was really struggling to find the feminist undertones, especially since there are so many male characters that further the story along constantly.

Also, there is a bit of an annoying romance that never had me truly swooning. From the very start you learn about Arian's love interest, even though so many things have kept them apart. But ultimately, she kept relying on him over and over again, when all I wanted was for her to rely on herself. And, in my opinion, the

love story just wasn't that great. I think this story would have benefited without a tragic love story past, while being forced to watch an inevitable rekindling of that love.

The other thing that I really didn't enjoy is that the one of the main side characters, Sinnia, is said to have darker skin than the main protagonist, Arian, and it is constantly being told by every group they encounter how much more desirable Arian is than Sinnia. I'm sure the author didn't mean any malice by this, but it still rubbed me the wrong way with the constant reminders. I also don't feel like Arian treats Sinnia that amazing, and it just feels bad because this could have been a super strong WoC duo that fought evil men, but instead I feel like these two are constantly being pitted, or at least compared, against each other.

I also feel like this book has a very unforgiving learning curve. Many times, I felt a tiny bit confused about what was going on. You have a lot of information thrown at you, and the information quickly builds upon itself. This book does a lot of telling, and not enough showing, in my opinion.

But overall, if you're looking for a book filled with political intrigue, magic from words, good religious representation, and a full PoC cast, I would totally recommend *The Bloodprint*! This is the start of a four book series, and I am very curious to see what Ausma Zehanat Khan does next, because I do believe there is a lot of potential here. But be warned, the ending does leave on quite the cliffhanger.

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Buddy Read with Elise ❤

*The quotes above were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.*

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## **Beth says**

Tome Tender

1 Trade Back Copy of  
*Bloodprint*  
by Ausma Zehanat Khan  
(USA Mailing address Only)  
Oct 3 - 13, 2017

*The Bloodprint* is the first book in this high fantasy series called Khorasan Archives.

With two strong female characters, battling to free woman slaves in a world filled with mysticism and tyrannical religious beliefs.

There is strong political messages tied into the plot with detailed world building and character depth that rival the best epic fantasies out there.

With its unusual feminine leads, *The Bloodprint* is an epic fantasy that should not be missed.

I received this ARC copy of *The Bloodprint* from William Morrow & Dey Street Books/HarperCollinsPublishers. This is my honest and voluntary review. *The Bloodprint* is set for publication October 3, 2017.

*My rating: 4 stars*

*Written by: Ausa Zehanat Khan*

*Series: The Khorasan Archives (Book 1)*

*Paperback: 448 pages*

*Publisher: Harper Voyager*

*Publication Date: October 3, 2017*

*ISBN-10: 0062459198*

*ISBN-13: 978-0062459190*

*Genre: Epic Dark Fantasy*

*Itunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-...>*

*Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Bloodprint-Kho...>*

*Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-...>*

*Reviewed for: [Http://tometender.blogspot.com](http://tometender.blogspot.com)*

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## **Sicily says**

3.5/5 i think. I have to process this one before I give it a full review. Intial thoughts

Love: The political message. I loved the breaking of slave chains

Liked: Arian, Sinnia, Wafa. The writing style but there were repetitive thoughts from characters that was unnecessary. Like i get you love each other already.

Meh: The men. I was indifference about the love story. The story lagged for me but I have a short attention span for epics.

Didn't like : Where the story line seems to be going with Sinnia. She is perceived as less desirable and her sexuality is juxtaposition ro Arian chastity. Which bugged me as Sinnia is Black compared to the Lighter Arian. Is this a commentary on colorism or a trope. Hopefully it will be discuss more in the next book. I want a Sinnia backstory.

I will read the future books cause I mad at that cliffhanger and I want to know everything.

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## **Marlene says**

Originally published at Reading Reality

If the Taliban and The Handmaid's Tale had a hate child, it would be *The Bloodprint*. Yes, I mixed my metaphors, but it feels correct. And if after reading *The Bloodprint* there is anyone who does not mentally

link the Talisman of the book with the Taliban of real life, I'll eat my virtual hat.

The Bloodprint is an epic fantasy that feels very definitely part of the grimdark movement. It's a very grim story, and the world that it portrays is in that terrible place where things are always darkest just before they turn completely black.

And although our protagonists are pursuing that one last ray of hope and light before all is extinguished, by the end it just feels as if all is lost.

The interesting thing about The Bloodprint is that it is, for the most part, a heroine's story. The characters with agency are all female, and the defenders of the light are a female order of wise women and warriors. The story passes the Bechdel-Wallace test within the first page.

And that seems fitting, because so many of the victims of the darkness that has taken over this world are also female. Women without husbands or children are automatically sold into slavery. And the slave trade is so lucrative (or something even more nefarious) that the men of entire villages are wiped out just so that their surviving wives and daughters can be sold into slavery.

That's not all that's wrong. The Talisman, the villainous empire of our story, are systematically wiping out all books, all writing, and anyone who has the ability to write. Our heroes refer to the time that they live in as the "Age of Ignorance" because of this systematic erasure. And the parallels to the real-world Taliban, both in their treatment of the historical record and their treatment of women, feels screamingly obvious.

One of the foundations of the side of the light are its scriptoriums. And its relentless need to pass on any and all knowledge by oral as well as written tradition. Because there's a reason for all of this erasure of history.

Writing, or at least a particular piece of writing called the "Claim", is magic. And those who can wield the magic of the claim are extremely powerful. And rare.

Arian is our heroine, and one of the women who can wield the magic of the Claim for both offense and defense. She is a leading member of a legendary sisterhood, and she is tasked with the duty of retrieving a mythical original manuscript of the Claim, in order to bring about the end of the Talisman.

No such quest is ever conducted alone. Arian has companions on her journey, a guardian from her sisterhood, the man who loves her but whom she of course cannot have, and a child she rescues who will probably turn out to be the key to the whole thing at some future point. (I do not know this at all, I merely speculate.)

But equally, no such quest is ever undertaken without grave risk. Arian's problems begin within the walls of her own sanctuary, as the leader of her order seems to be pursuing a separate, and possibly inimical, political end of her own.

Arian is uncertain whether or not she has been betrayed before she even begins. But as her journey continues through the devastated lands, she discovers that there are more forces arrayed against her than even she imagined in her darkest hours.

And that things are indeed always darkest just before they turn completely black.

Escape Rating B-: I have some mixed feelings about this book. There are some parts of the story that I really

liked, and some that left me completely puzzled.

I love the idea of this in a whole bunch of ways. I really liked that the story begins as a buddy-story, with both of those buddies being women. And that our initial antagonist is a woman as well. There is absolutely no reason that any story can't have women taking on a whole bunch of the roles that men regularly do. Hero, savior, villain, companion.

I also found it interesting that the male character in the story, while he is powerful in his own right, also takes on some of the roles that usually fall to women. This is Arian's story and Arian's quest and Daniyar is the one following her while she leads both the party and the story.

I was also fascinated by the way that this story is rooted in an entirely different mythical background than the Norse and/or Celtic mythologies that so often dominate epic fantasy.

But it was difficult to get into the story. At the beginning, it felt like a lot had already happened, and that somehow I'd missed. In the end, the impression I'm left with is that *The Bloodprint* felt like the middle book of a trilogy, even though it isn't. When the story begins, we're in the middle of action that has been going on for years. The situation is already desperate. And there's positively oodles of backstory between not just Arian and her companion Sinnia, but between Arian and Daniyar, and especially between Arian and Ilea, the leader of her order. Backstory and context which readers scramble to assemble from the clues left by the characters' thoughts and actions.

And the world has already gone completely to hell in that handbasket and it doesn't look salvageable. Arian's quest has the feel of a "Hail, Mary" pass, one of those million-to-one shots that only succeed in epic fantasy and the Discworld.

But it also feels like a middle book because the narrative trajectory heads downward. Things start out bad, get steadily worse, and we end on a horrible cliffhanger with the fingers being stomped on. Things began grim and ended grimmer.

On my other hand, the final 25% is absolutely compelling page-turning reading. I could see the end coming, I knew it was probably going to be horrifying, and I could not stop myself from racing to get there as fast as I could.

In the end, *The Bloodprint* is compelling but very, very dark epic fantasy. I'm very curious to see how our heroines get out of the very hot frying pan they've landed in, and how much hotter the fire underneath will turn out to be.

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**Lisarenee says**

>>>> **My Synopsis (Review follows): <<<<**

**'There is no one but the One. And so the One commands...'**

The land of Khorasan is slowly being overtaken piece by piece by a powerful and volatile group known as the Talisman. They are led by a man known as the One-Eyed Preacher.

**'We live in the age of secrets and fear.**

**We live in the age of Ignorance.'**

They began their campaign by taking control of the country's food supply by pillaging and razing villages, fields, libraries, etc. Then they started creating shortages. Finally, they determined who would live and who would die by controlling who would eat and who would starve.

**'These were the days of the Talisman fist.**

**The fist that crushed everything to dust.'**

Rumor has it that verses from the Bloodprint, the oldest written compilation of the Claim, is being sold letter by letter. The Claim is a magical text written in an ancient language whose verses, when spoken, have the power to make things happen. It's from the Claim that the Companions of Hira, a diverse group of talented and respected women, gain their power. Arian, the First Oralist, knows more verses than anyone else as the verses of the ancient text have been passed down through the generations in her family. The actual text, however, hasn't been seen by human eyes for centuries leading some to believe it doesn't exist.

While the Talisman have left the Companions of Hira alone so far, it is only a matter of time before they will focus their attention on them. Women have been the victims of horrendous injustices at the hands of the Talisman. Any found to be unchaperoned are being sold into slavery.

Each of the Companions will be given a task/Audacy to perform. Arian has just been given hers...

**"You will seek out the Bloodprint, where it may lead you. You alone have knowledge of its language, You alone can confirm its identity. And you will bring it to Hira."**

This is the story of her Audacy.

**>>>> My Review: <<<<**

I absolutely adored this story, but at the end, I was left with more questions than answers, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Ms. Khan has created a complex and intricate world that I have no doubt was fully conceived and formed in her mind, but is not so easy for us, the readers, to comprehend at first. I highly recommend reading the synopsis before starting in on this one. Coming into the story I felt a little lost and wondered if this could possibly be the second book of the series. Alas, it is not there is just a lot to take in and the author doesn't rely on info dumps to get us up to speed. We need to patiently wait for the bits and pieces of information to be dispensed as the story and world slowly unfolds before our very eyes.

From what I can gather, the Claim is a little like the Force in Star Wars, but also very different. It appears to interact with Arian which makes me want to equate her to a Jedi. Yet, I'm unsure if that's because she can read and speak its language or if there is another reason. As not everyone knows the language of the Bloodprint, it's unclear if only a select few can wield its power or if anyone who can speak its verses can invoke its power. At one point someone declares, "The Claim is powerful within her." Whether this is because she knows so many of its verses or because she's sort of bonded with the Claim is unclear. Then there's the little matter of what happens towards the end. I don't want to give too much away, but it made me wonder if I needed to rethink all I thought I knew. Most likely I do.

What draws the reader into this book is the journey, or rather the Audacy (I assume the author made this word sound like odyssey on purpose), are all the trials and tribulations Arian and her fellow Companion, Sinnia, must face. Their mission is secret, and they must rely on their knowledge of ancient legends to get

them to where they need to go and to carry out their mission. Hidden cities and pathways must be found, and puzzles and riddles must be solved before the Bloodprint can ultimately be found and retrieved.

There is a lot going on to capture one's interest and imagination in this one. At one point the High Companion announced, "A task will be assigned to each of you [Companions], and you will each fulfill your duty." It's unclear if the series will take up exactly where this one left off--with Arian as the main protagonist--or if in the next book a different Companion of Hira will take on another Audacy and be its focus. Either way, I'm hopefully we'll learn more of the inner workings of the Companions and the Claim.

To add a little intrigue into the mix, there is some question as to whether Ilea, the High Companion who heads the Council of Companions, can be trusted. She confides in no one and sends each of the Companions on secret missions for which they are sworn not to talk to any of the others about. Perhaps like the Jedi Masters who had good reasons to keep things from Anakin Skywalker, Ilea, herself, has a good reason to keep things from her fellow Companions. There is a chapter break from the rest and focuses primarily on Ilea. In it she states, "**She [Arian] thinks she's been fighting a war, but she doesn't know the war has yet to begin,**" and "**She knows nothing of the deeper forces at play.**" We'll have to wait and see whether Ilea is trustworthy or not, but she definitely has an agenda, the question what exactly is it?

Overall, I gave this one **4 1/2 out of 5** roses. It captured my attention and kept me on my toes all while maintaining a fast pace. With secrets and hidden danger lurking around every corner, this one was an action-packed magical thrill ride of a read full of twists and turns. While it does throw a lot at you before you fully know what's going on, this is one instance where patience totally pays off. I recommend you read the synopsis, make note of the glossary (in case you need some help), and hold on tight. You're in for a real treat. I look forward to reading the next book in the series and seeing where this story takes us. On the Lisarenee Romance Rating Scale, this one earned a **SMILE** rating--a lady always tries to be polite so a smile should suffice (ie no heat whatsoever) While there is definitely something brewing between Arian and the Silver Mage, Arian refuses to act upon it.

Note: I received an eARC loan from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All quotes will need to be checked against the final version.

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### **Barbara Senteney says**

Thank you to Ausma Zehanat Khan for making sure I received the book I won here on goodreads. This story is about magic and sacred scriptures. A one eyed preacher is bent on overtaking the world. But warriors Arian and Sinnia are fighting to stop him. Together they are looking for a magical symbol that will destroy the one eyed preacher this may prove a hard task.

This is a world full of slavery, deceit, and treachery.

The preacher is holder of dark power called the Talisman, will he use it and destroy the world as Arian and her friends know it, or will his own dark power consume him?

I love dark stories and the one eyed preacher is a great example of darkness of the soul.

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### **Jaclyn says**

AMAZING!

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## Mogsy (MMOGC) says

2 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum [https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/11/06/...](https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/11/06/)

I've had my fair share of disappointments when it comes to books this fall, but not enjoying *The Bloodprint* as much as I thought I would somehow makes this one feel worse. I wanted to like this one so badly, and not least because of the gorgeous writing or incredible premise inspired by the author's own background and knowledge of Middle Eastern history and mythology. This is also an important book as it also deals with some weighty themes, such as religion, slavery, and women's rights.

So why didn't this book work for me, when it should have been right up my alley? I suppose it might just be the simple matter of being unable to click with the author's style. Despite her clear talent for writing elegant and lovely prose, something still felt missing. The opening sequence, for example, which introduces our protagonist Arian and her apprentice Sinnia as justice seekers who fight against the oppressive rule of the cruel organization known as the Talisman, should have been stirring and heroic as the two women ambushed the enemy and shattered their slave-chains. But instead, all I felt was indifference and boredom. Ausma Zehanat Khan can write beautiful sentences and fill the page with detailed descriptions, but in the end she does a lot more telling than showing and the writing itself lacks heart and soul.

Still, I pressed on because the ideas in the story were promising and I wanted to see where they would lead, plus admittedly I was curious to know more about the characters. Arian and Sinnia are part of a group of women who called themselves the Companions of Hira, their power deriving from a sacred scripture known as the Claim. They have dedicated themselves to fighting the Talisman, whose ideology of spreading hatred and fear goes against everything the Companions of Hira believe in. Attacking their caravans and rescuing their slaves are just a few of the things they do to combat the enemy, but without a miracle, our protagonists have concerns that the Talisman's power will only spread and grow.

But then one day, Arian and Sinnia come upon a piece of knowledge that can help turn the tide. Legend tells of *The Bloodprint*, a dangerous text that the Talisman has tried to erase from the world because they know it would lead to their downfall. Now our heroines must embark on a quest to find *The Bloodprint*, a task that would lead them into many dangers deep in the heart of enemy territory.

Like I said, it's a fascinating premise, which is why it pains me so much to admit that my initial apathy for the characters did not improve, creating a hurdle which prevented me from embracing this tale fully. Others have described the plot as a treasure hunt, which gives the impression that this is an adventurous novel, but I didn't feel that at all either, given the plodding pace. Also, it's hard explaining what exactly didn't appeal to me about the writing, but it had the frustrating quality of being too descriptive and yet not enough at the same time. Khan's writing is rich on details when it comes to the immediate and small things, but when it comes to the big picture, her world-building was lighter than I would have liked. I wish we could have gotten more background information into the Companions of Hera and the Claim, considering the hazy explanations given into the connection between their religion and magic.

The characters also felt lifeless to me. For one, I was surprised at Arian's lack of agency and inability to influence many plot developments, given how she's one of our central figures. Her relationships with others around her also felt muted, and again, I think this might have been a side-effect of the writing, which caused the characters' personalities to feel emotionless and sterile. The result is a distance between Arian and her

friends, making her interactions with Sinnia feel somewhat stilted and her romance with her love interest Daniyar the Silver Mage feel very unconvincing. These problems ended up marring the whole experience, given how so much of Arian's quest was motivated by her personal reasons which were never effectively communicated.

The last straw, I'm afraid, was the cliffhanger. If you weren't excited about the story before, the ending might incentivize you to pick up the next book, but personally, I think my journey with this series ends here. I probably should have listened to my instincts and set this book aside as soon as the first few chapters failed to hook me, but curiosity and hope prompted me to continue, and unfortunately things did not turn around for me in this case. It's a shame, really, because the author is clearly very talented and she has built the story of *The Bloodprint* around a compelling and meaningful premise. If the book's description interests you, I would urge you to try it for yourself, but ultimately I just couldn't connect to the writing style.

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## Nadine says

### **DNF at 284 of 425 pages**

*The Bloodprint* sounds like such an awesome fantasy novel that revolves around kickass female characters and an in-depth use of religion all wrapped up with feminist tones. Unfortunately, *The Bloodprint* is a poorly written novel that is not what it's advertised to be.

Within the first 120 pages the magic system is not properly explained. Their magic is derived from religious texts, but the connect between the two is never explained or how it came to be. The main character often uses and relies upon her magic, so it's a central part of this novel that is left vague and confusing.

Khan has created an interesting world in that the women are forced to become slaves and a group of women who call themselves the Companions of Hira are trying to liberate the women and the world. Unfortunately, the Companions of Hira are also poorly written. Their order, formation, rank, and traditions are hardly touched upon and only explained when they relate directly to the plot. Khan wrote the Companions of Hira to feature a complex hierarchy with politics and infighting, however it all falls flat because of the lack of world building and character development.

Near the beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to a male character that is described as handsome every time he's introduced in a scene. It quickly becomes apparent that this male character and the main character have a complicated romantic history. Khan tried to create sexual and romantic tension between the two, but, unfortunately, it also falls flat. This is due in part to the writing itself. Khan's writing style is pompous and overly poetic making it hard to connect to the characters and story.

Despite the very obvious feminist themes in the synopsis, the book has a hard time actually utilizing those themes and overtones. This is further hindered by the fact that male characters are used to further the plot and save the main character every time she finds herself backed into a corner with no apparent way out.

Overall, *The Bloodprint* is an absolute disappointment. I expected an intricate story about oppression, religion, and feminism, but instead received a poorly written novel with little to feminist tones and a boring main character.

The blurb on the front comparing this to N.K. Jemisin and George R.R. Martin is an insult to those amazing writers.

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### **Cody says**

LOVED THIS BOOK! SO SO GOOD \*Review to come\*

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### **Rachel says**

I truly don't have words eloquent enough to do this book justice. AZK said she loved writing it and the power of that love and care shines through like the power of the Claim. The world building is deftly woven into the story itself without large, clunky info-dumps. The writing is beautiful. The characters are well-developed and nuanced. As it is the first of the series, it doesn't resolve anything, and ends with a gut-wrenching cliff hanger. My heart is a lump in my throat. I cannot wait for the next book. It's official-I will read anything AZK writes. She's incredible. She's gives such depth and strength to her characters and her stories. Read this now. I need others to suffer the wait for book two with me.

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### **Mackey says**

Just wow! If all fantasy was this well written I would be a fan of the fantasy genre! The Bloodprint is the first such novel by Ausma Zehanat Khan and the beginning of the Khorasan Archives series. It is the tale of two marvelously strong women who are tasked with freeing enslaved women who have been captured by The Talisman. It is the classic tale of Good vs Evil but told in a cleverly written, marvelously detailed, surprisingly intriguing manner.

Khan is one of my favorite authors and what I like most about her writing is her attention to detail, research and history. Although all of this is disguised in a fantasy format, it is still present and I appreciate that very much. You see this type of research in writings by GRR Martin and Gilbaldi and that attention to detail makes a book worth reading.

I also love the blending of magic with religion that is created in The Bloodprint. In the past that would have been called mysticism and all religions practiced that at one time. Too bad they still don't.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough and already I'm anxious for the next in the series!! The writing is impeccable, the storyline is fascinating! I received this book as a giveaway from Goodreads but, of course, would have read it regardless as I have read all of her books. Thank you Goodreads, Ausma Zehanat Khan and Harper Voyager for my advanced copy.

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