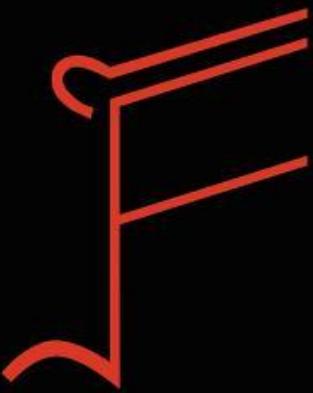


SIMON WILLIAMS



OBLIVION'S FORGE

BOOK ONE OF THE AONIA SERIES

## Oblivion's Forge

*Simon Williams*

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# Oblivion's Forge

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## **Oblivion's Forge** Simon Williams

For thousands of years they have sought the world from which they were cast out. Now, at last, Aona has been found. The younger races of this world will all be swept up in a struggle for survival, as their ancient, malevolent masters, guardians of all Aona's secrets, rise to do battle with their foes, remorseless destroyers of world after world throughout the known Existence.

## **Oblivion's Forge Details**

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Author : Simon Williams

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Genre : Fantasy, Did Not Finish

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## From Reader Review Oblivion's Forge for online ebook

### **Yvonne says**

This is a wonderfully written first book in a series of five. The detail contained is huge and is a book you will want to savour and not race through. There is a vast array of well described and developed characters , with the setting as engrossing as the characters themselves and their stories. As I was reading this I felt myself thinking that there was a strain of Tolkien in the background.

It has an amazingly intricate and complex Good 'v' Evil storyline to it. To give a full review without giving away some of the plot is very difficult as it is so tightly entwined. There are some great characters, I really liked the diversity and memorable nature of those such as Vornen, Jaana, Iyoth, Lyya and Amethyst to name a few.

If in a story you love and relish grim, gripping, addictive sorcery, portals, assassins, mysterious foul and unwholesome beings, shadows and this is only scratching the surface, then you will really want to read this. I would highly recommend this book to readers of Dark Fantasy. I look forward to reading the rest of this series in the future. I would like to say a big "Thank You" to Simon for bringing this book to my attention, for my honest and unbiased review.

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### **Natasja Hellenthal says**

'Oblivion's Forge (Aona series Book 1)' by Simon Williams is the first in a promising dark fantasy series. It's the story of several believable characters in dangerous insecure times. Some people have visions and dreams called Gatefever, whilst others are dying from a terrible sickness. Some are even controlled by a powerful curse, such as Vornen who is basically a human lodestone and has Gatesight; he is helplessly drawn from time to time to a Gate or a portal to other worlds, or Amethyst who is a human compass and plagued with crippling pains if she doesn't go in the direction her inner compass tells her to go.

They are all played out by mysterious forces. A new dawn is at hand, but who is behind all this and why? Can any lightness come out of this darkness?

This is a well-written traditional fantasy with great vivid description and visions so that one can easily step into the worlds the author has created. The characters are well-fleshed out with their own predicaments and thus very realistic, not just black and white. I liked Jaana best, a healer who feels powerless because she can't heal the sickness that has taken over their world.

I thoroughly enjoyed this novel and look forward in reading the next installment!

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### **Pauline Ross says**

Fantasy Review Barn

The word that springs to mind while reading this is portentous. The opening chapters are stuffed with mysterious happenings, deeply meaningful but unexplained dreams and visions, characters who are compelled to do certain things and who are assisted at life-threatening moments by shadowy mystics.

Something Very Bad is about to happen, and it's so bad that it can only be spoken of in cryptic utterances that the reader will come to understand by the end of the book (or possibly the end of the trilogy, who knows). And all this in a deeply hostile wintry landscape.

So clearly this is dark fantasy, which means the characters will suffer many unpleasant experiences on their journey through the plot. And I'll be honest, I just wasn't in the mood for it. Sometimes I just want entertainment rather than gruesomeness. Sometimes I just want to know what the hell's going on. Sometimes I get tired of these fantasy worlds where everything is gloom and misery, and there isn't even a decent tavern brawl. So mea culpa, this is just a mismatch between the book and me.

And I'm a bit cross, because beneath the mysticism, this is a wonderfully literate and thoughtful piece of work, which normally I would be lapping up. The author has an almost lyrical style which is a pleasure to read, although he's a bit inclined to toss in a lot of backstory (all of it portentous, naturally, and not at all explanatory). The world itself is very well thought out and there's plenty of magic of various sorts going on.

For anyone who likes their fantasy dark, cryptic and thoroughly mystical, this is an excellent, well-written example. Sadly, it wasn't for me. I got 15% of the way in before giving up. One star for a DNF.

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### **Alexis says**

This was an author forward I ran into either in one of my sci-fi fantasy lover groups, or on fb. (can't remember which) Regardless this novel had me enthralled from as early as the sample pages. Usually when a piece is inexpensive one can expect flawed editing or a lack of real author enthusiasm-but this story was not only well written and pretty much flawless, it was talented and interesting! It's rare to find such treasures and Simon Williams series works will be among those I follow from today forward. It was well paced action with lyrical description and a plot well crafted. If you like sciencefiction/fantasy at all, check this one out.

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### **Nadine Maritz says**

Oblivion's forge is one of those novels that had me all confused as to whether it's categorized as fantasy or Sci Fi.

Make no mistake. My confusion does not at all take away anything from the story, in fact I have a very high regard towards anyone that can create something from nothing which is what fantasy is all about.

In Oblivion's Forge, Simon Williams has managed just that, to create a chain-full story revolving around the embarking of key characters journeys all of which play off in the world of Aona. The dark fantasy starts with the characters individual adventures that flow into a splendid final as the said individual's world's interlock with majestic brilliance.

Surprisingly, the separation of reading the story from different perspective doesn't pull ones concentration away from the story at hand. Instead it creates grounds for a masterfully set adventure which is carefully crafted around their individual personas.

The splendidly put intricate words of Simon salute the resurrection of an ancient force who returns from a void in an effort to restore the old magic within it. The war between the two fractions sets a delightful display as it embarks with no backdrop but flows in such a way that you are fed multiple points of

information throughout the story-line without feeling a loss.

Cunningly set and skilfully displayed.

Splendid craft.

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### **James McCormick says**

Oblivion's Forge, the first instalment of the Aona Trilogy, is a highly original work free of the clichéd characters one expects of a fantasy work. Instead the author populates this cold, bitter, hostile and dilapidated world with deeply flawed, all too human individuals.

The main protagonist, Vornen, is an individual banished and disowned by his own people, someone cursed with Gate sight, the ability to see portals between dimensions, and 'a violent madman ... a lunatic and a wastrel' as his old enemy Rocan sees him. He's also someone who feels an intense emptiness within, something he has tried to fill with drink, violence and the drug kyush. Amethyst meanwhile is a woman fated to forever wander and like Vornen is drawn to the gates whilst Jaana is a healer, one who has lost all faith in herself or her abilities. She is a broken character lost in self-doubt as all around madness and disease flourish.

A sense of latent menace pervades the entire novel and we soon discover something ancient is trying to break through. These are the Marandaal, powerful beings who we suspect (like the Great Old Ones in H. P. Lovecraft) are seeking to return and destroy the petty humans who populate the earth.

Much is made in this first instalment of light and darkness and if I have one criticism of the novel it is that the references become too frequent and repetitive. Yet this is only a small criticism. With these prophecies of the coming of the light, the author manages to capture a sense of religious mania, of awaiting a second coming. Visions abound in the novel as the Maraandal impress their minds on vulnerable mortals.

The narrative remains strong throughout and the pacing is excellent with a number of vividly described and widely different landscapes. I was particularly impressed with the ancient and forgotten citadel Mirkwall surrounded by "a vast swampland, clad in the perpetual grey of mist." It is here the good wizard Fistelkarn's enemy resides, the frail, decrepit and dying wizard Shimlock. The language here reaches dark, poetic heights and reminds me in many ways of another decaying structure, that of Roderick Usher's, although even Poe never dreamt up the bizarre red phantom worms that crawl between the cracks of crumbling brick.

It is here, near the end that the ominous threat, although still un-glimpsed, becomes palpable as Fistelkarn senses the "black shapes" which have risen up from that place and "cast a burning frost upon the ground," that is the madness, visions and disease that have been spreading through the villages. Yet just when we naively begin to assume we understand these beings there is a revelation at the end which comes as a major shock. It is a revelation guaranteed to compel you to want to read the second instalment.

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### **K.J. Simmill says**

I will start by saying, that the author's style, in some respects reminded me of Terry Goodkind, and he was an author whose work I really enjoyed, so needless to say, for me this was a good read.

The author creates a multitude of diverse characters, and the story follows three main ones whose journey takes them on very different paths; this of course means we are presented with a rare opportunity to witness different events, and piece together the information each of them know to come to a greater understanding about what exactly is happening on Aona. I particularly enjoyed how real the characters were, each of them, as any one does, has their own vices and flaws, which play a role in shaping them.

Throughout the story we learn much of the world and the conflicts of old, there has clearly been a great deal of thought put into the races, their backgrounds, alliances, and history, not to mention the plot, which ties everything together so well.

I can't really put too much about the story and events, as they will spoil the reading experience for anyone who buys it, but it is certainly well presented and drives the reader forward. Last night I was so close to the end I couldn't bring myself to put it down as I just had to know what happened, this of course meant a very late night for me, but it was worth every minute.

I would recommend this book to adults who enjoy reading fantasy, especially fantasy with a darker twist.

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### **C.L. Schneider says**

I was thoroughly impressed with this book. Oblivion's Forge (Aona Book 1) is dark fantasy at its best. It's the story of a land on the cusp of change, an unknown ancient evil on the verge of awakening, and the many characters—innocent and not so innocent—caught up in its wake. The mystery deepens with each chapter, weaving its way through a vast elaborate world; painted beautifully with passion and a rich prose that lures you in from the first page.

Toggling between a large cast of characters, the author shifts POV often. Normally, I find this jarring. Such constant shifting can throw me out of a story and leave me glossing over the pages, waiting for my favorite characters to come back. This didn't happen once in Oblivion's Forge. I did have my favorites (Vornen, who was tormented by his inexplicable pull toward the gates, the formidable assassin Iyoth, the healer Jaana who felt betrayed by her own gifts), but each and every character was interesting and complex. Many shared a common purpose, yet they were all flawed and tortured in their own ways. They seemed destined to come together and I found myself reading eagerly for that very moment.

The intricate storyline is original and never predictable. The author takes great care to peel it back in layers. He inflicts tragedy and heartbreak on the entwined lives of his characters as he builds the plot to a vivid climax that is satisfying, yet remains open for much more.

Oblivion's Forge is an engrossing read. The only element I could see missing was a map. I would have found it useful to have a visual reference as I journeyed across the diverse landscapes of this suffering world.

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## **James Sinclair says**

An epic tale of dark fantasy.

Author Simon Williams has skilfully created the dark world of Aona in the first of the epic series. It is a bleak medieval “other-world” of dark shadows and mysterious forces, where witches, sorcerers and warlocks abound. Among the many characters, Voren travels in search of The Gates which he is drawn towards; Amethyst is cursed by a witch to seek out a mysterious girl who resides within herself; Jaana laments the loss of her healing skills. Each have their own demons which they struggle to overcome. The story-line is intricate and some of the threads are woven together in a complex pattern. I had to step out of my genre to enter this mysterious world of dark fantasy, but I’m glad I did and found myself gradually but surely drawn into this epic tale. It has an apocalyptic theme with dark forces that emerge in shadowy forms, as the people of this world await madness and death. Oblivion’s Forge is only the first book of the Aona Series, and I look forward to reading the sequels and the final conclusion. A very absorbing read from a skilful author!

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## **Catherine Putsche says**

Absolutely excellent. My review will follow shortly.

Oblivion's Forge  
By Simon Williams

This is a dark, mysterious and gripping first instalment of the Aona Trilogy. The story begins when Vornen Starbrook, the main protagonist who is wounded and found by a mysterious lady named Ona and is slowly nursed back to health by the Chulan people. Vornen tries his best to remember what he saw when Ona questions him, as he recalls a number of ambiguous flashbacks, however all he can recollect is the opening and closing of gates and stars that were not of their world, he also heard voices that didn't belong to any creature or any life-form that he could understand and then suddenly he remembers a name “Marandaal” to which the voices belong, “They are coming here, they want the world for their own!”

Meanwhile there is madness, terrifying visions and unexplainable disease spreading throughout the villages and an overall sense of hopelessness and doom threatening to destroy the villager's existence.

S.Williams introduces the reader to a number of memorable characters all of which are conflicted with their own issues to a certain degree. The narrative is well written and captures the characters hope, fear and anticipation all at the same time, while provoking the reader to finish the first instalment and start the next one immediately.

S.Williams is a genius story teller and a master of depicting things of an un-natural nature. Oblivion's Forge is unforgettable speculative/fantasy fiction at its very best and deserves to be ranked at the top.

My Rank

5 Stars

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## **Franz McLaren says**

For those seeking comfort fantasy, Simon Williams' "Oblivion's Forge" is probably not what you are looking for. For lovers of Dark Fantasy this book is a rare and delightful find. On a grand scale, Aona is a world caught in a war between two evil factions. Regardless of which faction wins, it is unlikely the plight of the races populating this world will improve. Mr. Williams has chosen to present this world and its strife through the eyes of several characters, each caught in the conflict, unable to escape. Through their stories, the tale unfolds with mounting and unrelenting tension.

"Oblivion's Forge" explores new areas of Fantasy in an edgy and engaging manner that makes this a book hard to put down. There are no shining heroes or beautiful trembling maidens. But there are several very real characters, manipulated by powers beyond their control, striving to find ways to cope. Through his words, Mr. Williams forces the reader to contemplate how they would react in these circumstances and to wonder if they could survive.

I can't wait to dive into "Secret Roads", the sequel to this great book.

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## **Michael Fedison says**

"Oblivion's Forge" by Simon Williams is a gripping, multi-layered, and complex dark fantasy. The author draws the reader in from the first page, holds on tight, and never lets go. The world of Aona is presented in rich and engrossing detail, making you invested in the place and the events that transpire there. This is world-building at its best. Williams does not rush. He does not race along from plot point A to plot point B. Rather, he weaves a moving and many-threaded tapestry, daring the reader to become more invested with the turning of every page. Perhaps best of all, "Oblivion's Forge" is peopled with flawed and very real characters. Sometimes, fantasy literature is thick on plot, but short on character. "Oblivion's Forge" shines on both fronts. The characters in this book jump off the page--they are complex, tortured, and refreshingly original.

In short, if you're looking for a light, fun read to while away an afternoon, "Oblivion's Forge" is probably not for you. But if you want to become enmeshed in a dark world, inhabited by scarred, three-dimensional characters, if you want to read first-rate prose that is often lyrical in nature, and walk with the author down a shadowy path full of surprises, then I highly recommend this magnificent book.

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## **M.L. Falconer says**

When I review a book I seldom paraphrase the plot as others do, I don't wish to give anything away or to sway the reader to experience the context of the story in any particular direction. That is an intimate experience reserved for reader and author alone. What my reviews will impress upon you is what makes or breaks the book underneath the plot.

Aside from the amazing and complex plot, Simon writes with a passion for the craft, and his world creation is rich and unique. Though I believe that Simon's writing rivals that of Goodkind and Jordan, Oblivion's Forge is not the same old story redone in slight ways like Terry Goodkind's Sword of Truth series v.s. Robert

Jordan's Wheel of Time series. The similarities in those two plots are eerily similar. Oblivion's Forge, however, is a compelling, original read. Unique plot lines, characters and races drive the novel.

From the first chapter the author's writing made me envious, and the story, as the images that Simon's words paint took life inside my mind, grasped me with both hands and pulled me into his world. The author has an uncanny way of making the reader become part of his imagination, a character struggling for survival in the chaos that consumes Aona.

Simon's writing is highlighted by vivid description, brilliant word choices, and amazing moments of awe inspiring prose. The characters are three dimensional and come to life on the page. Their plights are powerful, page turning entities.

Some books and characters, the very well written ones, have the power to resonate with me long after the reading is done. That's how you know the work is of quality. Several nights, between chapters of Oblivion's Forge as I was drifting to sleep, my dreams would take me to Aona and I would become a character in this world seeking understanding and salvation.

Consider letting go of old notions and experience a new way of perceiving the fantasy genre with Oblivion's Forge. This is an epic adventure. I have said it before and I'll say it again, this is one of those works that I wish I'd written.

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### **A.L. Butcher says**

4 stars.

Let me start out by saying I enjoyed this book

**World:** The world of Aona is very intriguing, with a rich and long history, of which the reader gets enough of a peek at to draw one in. It's a complex world – with various races and factions, magic users, peasants, tyrants and heroes. Most of whom don't like one another much. Aona is a world of half-forgotten myth and ill-remembered gods. And it seems such mystical beings are set to return.

**Oblivion's Forge** is dark, with a world on the edge of apocalypse, many people in thrall and prepared to do whatever it takes to please whichever religion/faction they serve. I'd say good and evil aren't clear cut. Certainly a surprise twist where a villain becomes an unwitting hero shakes the reader's ideas of good and evil, and who serves whom.

The author gives many hints of what is to come, who REALLY runs the show and a dark history. It helps to know this is the first book of the series, and so I hope unanswered questions will be addressed in later books.

**Characters:** There are a LOT of characters in this book, and some play a far greater role than others as one would expect. However the point of view jumps around and in places I found it hard to keep up with who was doing what. Vornen – the main male character is most interesting. He has a dark and mysterious past, which we learn a little about. Haunted by the Gates which have appeared he is not his own man, and he is quite fatalist (with good reason). I had a lot of time for this character, he is brave in his own way and decent,

at least in a world which is being torn apart. His befrinding of a lost pilgrim leads to monumental events. He also has his flaws, which makes him both worthy of pity and respect in equal measure.

The shifting point of view was distracting and unless I missed something (which is certainly possible) at least one of the characters seemed to disappear.

**Writing:** There is some wonderful imagery. The world is painted well enough to give the reader a taste but not too much that it detracts from the story telling. There were a few technical issues, but they were a few and overall didn't diminish the reading experience for me. In places the prose is almost poetic.

On the downside I'd say the last couple of chapters were unnecessary – unless as a lead in for the later books. The problem was fixed – sort of – and suddenly a character we meet mid way, and doesn't seem that important suddenly comes to the fore, with her master. It reads as the start of a new book, to me at least.

## OVERALL

A good read with a rich, complex world, intriguing plot and fine characters. A bit hard to keep up with the rapidly shifting point of view (to be fair to the author I was reading this over a relatively long period) but certainly engaging enough to keep me reading. The plot itself pulled the reader in, as one found oneself cheering the heroes along as they struggled in a world of chaos and strife, and curious about what it was making the midden hit the windmill J.

I'd recommend this author for fans of dark fantasy, dystopia and dark fiction. I'll be picking up Mr William's other books for sure and continuing to learn the fate of Aona.

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## C.g. Ayling says

I am not a prolific reviewer for many reasons, one of which is that I really don't like spoilers. How to take a well-worn, tried-and-trusted premise and somehow hide the fact it is just more of the same, has been rehashed a thousand times before verbiage none of us should ever be forced to read? I'm pleased to say none of those things is a problem with "Oblivion's Forge", by Simon Williams, and thus this review.

Oblivion's Forge is interesting, well written, and magnificently original. It is also of sufficient complexity to keep any reader guessing. Simon Williams lays down the threads of his epic Fantasy series masterfully. (This is something readers should bear in mind before beginning the journey – Oblivion's Forge is only the first book in an epic series.) Right from the outset you'll find yourself visualizing the completed picture. You'll also find yourself constantly revising the image as each new thread adds in another layer. Something nasty awaits, you know it, you imagine it, you anticipate it, and Simon Williams gradually reveals it. Each new character is unique, and each new character is conflicted. Who is good, and who is bad remains unclear throughout. Expect redeemable villains, and flawed heroes, furthermore expect to be confused as to which category each new character belongs.

Simon Williams writing is detailed and thought provoking – so expect to be provoked!

Others who have reviewed Oblivion's Forge have described it as "Dark Fantasy". I don't see it that way at all. To me the work is full of hope. Yes, the characters inhabit a grim, corrupted world, but all of them, even the most delusional, are striving to make the best of their situation. Each of them believes they are on the

correct side. Note I did not say the “right side”. Since each strives for success, why does the writing deserve to be labeled “dark”?

If you enjoy complex, deep, and substantive writing, then Oblivion’s Forge deserves a place on your reading list. Oblivion’s Forge deserves to be read with a conscious eye to the finer details.

Are there things about Oblivion’s Forge I didn’t like? Of course, however they are mitigated by the scope of Simon Williams’ vision for his series, of which this is just the first book. I found myself irritated to discover several brand new characters introduced in the closing stages of the work. I feared Simon had run out of original ideas and that these new characters would be used as a *deus ex machina* device to wrap up the story. Thankfully, my fears proved unfounded.

No, I’m not going to tell why it is justifiable for new characters to be introduced in the closing pages of a book – to find that out you’ll have to read Oblivion’s Forge yourself. So put on your thinking cap, along with your clairvoyants cape, and prepare for a particularly interesting journey.

Also remember to pack your hindsight goggles – you’re going to be using them, a lot!

Bottom line? There are more books in the Aona series, and I will be returning to visit Aona as I traverse their pages. And if they’re as good as Oblivion’s Forge I might even review them!

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