



Bright Ruin

Vic James

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Magically gifted aristocrats rule--and commoners are doomed to serve. But a rebellion threatens the old order. The dystopian trilogy that began with *Gilded Cage* and *Tarnished City* concludes.

In a world where the lower classes must endure ten years of forced service to unfairly advantaged, magically powered rulers, a teenage boy dreams of rebellion, his older sister yearns for love and knowledge, and a dangerous young aristocrat seeks to remake the world with his dark gifts. In *Bright Ruin*, the final book in the trilogy set in modern-day England, our heroes will lead a revolution that will transform--or destroy--the world.

Bright Ruin Details

Date : Published October 9th 2018 by Del Rey (first published July 26th 2018)

ISBN :

Author : Vic James

Format : ebook 397 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Fiction, Magic, Urban Fantasy, Alternate History, European Literature, British Literature, Young Adult Fantasy, Audiobook

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From Reader Review Bright Ruin for online ebook

Char says

BRIGHT RUIN brings to an end the DARK GIFTS trilogy which began with GILDED CAGE back in 2017. This series delivered on nearly every promise it made back then, resulting in an extremely satisfying experience for this reader.

We're back with all the same characters, (well, the ones that are still alive), and resuming their individual dramas in an unsettled London, dominated by Equals. In this series, Equals are born with special powers, magical powers even, which allow them to control all sorts of materials and energies. As such, this world Vic James has created allows those rich in these powers to control and enslave those who are not. (Absolute power corrupts absolutely, and all that.)

But what James has so Skillfully done, (Skill being the name given to these "powers"), is that she's woven in political commentary that is eerily on point with today's events all over the real world. Ruling classes and/or class warfare? Check. Political parties scheming and planning to keep the unSkilled quiet and working- with their noses to the grind? Check. Those rich in Skill, (or in our world, dollar bills), easily gain more wealth, while holding their feet to the throats of the those not so blessed? Check. Using fear to keep the masses afraid and not too interested in what's REALLY going on? Check.

"Fear was the superpower they all possessed. And unlike Midsummer's monsters, there was no limit to the number of people they could control with it."

What Vic James has done here and done in a timely manner, (I'm looking at you, famous fantasy writers whose series' remain unfinished-you know who you are), is deliver a trilogy that has something for everyone. Even though it's categorized as YA, I would be wary of recommending this to the super young YA crowd, as many of the political points would go over their heads, (and possibly bore them), but also because there are extremely dark themes and violent scenes. That aside, I would recommend this trilogy to everyone else-fans of dark fantasy and horror most especially.

My only issue with this final book is that everything seemed to wrap up rather quickly-the denouement came fast and furious, and it seemed like one big blow or discovery after another-rapid-fire style. Not that I'm complaining, but I think I wanted to savor events just a wee bit more.

Vic James has proven herself to be an author to watch and I know that I will be watching closely for anything she puts out. If she can make me,(a die hard YA avoider), read and enjoy an entire YA trilogy, than who knows what else she may be capable of? I can hardly wait to find out!

In the meantime, I highly recommend this book and the entire trilogy.

Thank you to the publisher and NetGalley for the e-ARC of this book in exchange for my honest feedback. This is it.

Justine says

A bit of a mind bending finish to an interesting trilogy. Things did not go where I thought they would in this story when I started the first book, but that is part of what made this series such a good read.

One of the things I liked most was how very ambiguous some of the characters were and remained through the series. There were a few obviously bad or good people, but mostly they were all just people - with flaws, tempers, and making choices that were often selfish and morally ambiguous. I did have a sense that a couple of characters shifted from where they started in Gilded Cage to where they ended up in Bright Ruin, and that some of those shifts were more plot directed than organic, but it wasn't so obvious that I can't forgive it.

Not all my Goodreads friends cared for Gilded Cage and so didn't read the two books that followed, but I think the series as a whole was worth the time.

Steven says

Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for providing me with an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review.

Vic James has created a fantastic world, well plotted and filled with deep, complicated, flawed characters. It's hard to believe that this trilogy is her debut into the realm of published novels, because she's excelled from start to finish. This is by far one of the best YA series I've read, and I read a lot!

I don't want to give away too much, but the fallout of the end of the last book has left our set of main characters reeling and split, and this book picks up right away, finding loose ends and tying them together like Silyen and his Skill-weaving at the walls of Far Carr.

Honestly, she's left enough open for an amazing adventure to follow, and I sincerely hope we get to read more, because I will be truly sad for this world to be over and done -- but I will also be rereading these in the future, absolutely!

Review to come on release date.

Cindy ☆? Savage Queen ? says

Rating ~3.5

History only appeared inevitable because it was written in a world where it had already happened.

A rather stunning conclusion to an overall fantastic series. Filled with politics, intrigue, family and morally gray characters, this book manages to keep us guessing from start to finish. I don't say this often, but I honestly wish it was longer.

Character Rankings

Abi ~ Gavar > Silyen ~ Luke >>> Bouda

The Relationships

Silyen & Luke

"You're really going to set them free?"

"Well, you asked nicely."

"You know," Luke said, "I think world peace, women's equality, and an end to global hunger would also be great."

Silyen smirked, "Don't push it, Hadley."

These two were the most unexpected development. I certainly knew Silyen had some interest in Luke and they had some sort of connection, but I truly did not realize Silyen's interest in Luke was a romantic one. But it is a rather fun and entertaining surprise.

Gavar & Abi

"You didn't just rescue me. You saved all of us by putting a stop to the Blood Fair."

"It was what anyone would have done."

"But no one else did. Only you."

This scene just had me for some reason. It was so simple and lovely, and there truly was not any romantic connotation to it.

You are better than your family. I believe this, and I hope one day you will too.

In this book, we see a major shift in the relationship between Gavar and Abi. Where her little sister Daisy had always believed in Gavar's goodness. Abi never did. She saw only an arrogant, temperamental, intimidating Equal. But after his impulsive act of heroism Abi begins to see that while Gavar may not necessarily be a good person, there is goodness in him. If this were your typical YA Fantasy I'm pretty sure they would have been canon. But clearly, Ms. James is not for the typical way of doing things. So alas, I will continue to ponder what could have been.

But you know what leaves the most to be desired? The ending! Like, what the heck? (view spoiler) Honestly, this might have been a four star read or more if the ending was better done. It just felt like a lot of questions were left hanging in the air. (view spoiler) And I found the whole storyline with the King, Silyen, and Luke very odd. The air of mystery and magic around him, it was built up so much that the reveal just fell flat with me.

While this certainly was not my favorite book in the series and as mentioned there were certain things that could have improved upon and developed more, I did enjoy the book overall. And if Ms. James ends up writing another fantasy series, I'd certainly give it a try.

I received an ARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Huge thank you to Del Rey Books for providing me with ARCs for this series, it's been a pleasure.

Carrie says

Bright Ruin by Vic James is the third book of the young adult fantasy Dark Gifts series. From the title of the series to the intense book cover one should guess that this series is not all rainbows and sunshine but one that is incredibly dark and sometimes disturbing so while it is young adult I would recommend keeping this series

on the the older crowd side of the genre.

The series takes place in a society in which the world is ruled by Equals who are aristocrats with magical gifts. Everyone else are known as commoners and at some point during their lifetimes they have to serve the Equals for a period of ten years as their slaves. Commoners can choose to serve at any point in their lives from 10 to 80 years old.

In Gilded Cage we met a family that when the youngest child turned ten the parents decided to sign the whole family up for their slave days to be completed together. Luke's older sister Abi has arranged for the family to work together at a plantation owned by England's most powerful family of Equals. But upon arrival the paperwork had been messed up and Luke is shipped off to a slave town separate from the rest of his family.

The series is one that definitely needs to be read as a whole with starting from the beginning with Gilded Cage then continuing with Tarnished City and Bright Ruin as the plot carries over and picks up where it left off from book to book. While I have rated in the middle with each of this books the series has definitely still held my attention all throughout. The world is incredibly dark and one that more angers me than falling in love with as do some of the characters but it's thought provoking and creative so it kept me coming back from book to book. And now at the end I'm again rating at 3.5 stars but I would recommend checking this out if up for a darker society and content.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

Yoda says

I love plot twists I can't see coming almost as much as I love ending without cliffhangers.

I felt this book/series was something different from anything I've read. The revolution part of any series is always my favorite, I like that the author wasn't afraid to kill off characters. Too often all characters survive to live happily ever after, it makes it feel as if they are invincible.

?LEAH? says

? Highlights ?

Alternate/Dystopian-ish Society

Magic

Fantastical Elements

Intrigue

Good Triumphant Over Evil

A Small Splish of Romance

Audiobook Narrated by Evita Jay

? My Thoughts ?

What can I say...that was a satisfying ending to an intriguing series. While I found the first book in this series hard to decipher with all the ginormous words that I never heard before being thrown around like everyday language, I honestly didn't know if I would continue the series. That is until I tried the Audio version with book #2. With the easy to understand narration from Evita Jay, I found a way to like this sesquipedalian*writing style of Vic James.

The unique alternative slash dystopian-ish modern day British setting and the captivating characters...from the good to the bad and the completely unusual made this possible for me to really get into the story, despite being confused at times. The ending was unexpected, but it completely worked.

*I totally looked that word up...and I think I used it correctly.

??? MY RATING ???

?4.3?STARS - GRADE=A-

? Breakdown of Ratings ?

Plot? 4.2/5

Narration Performance? 4.3/5

Main Characters? 4/5

Secondary Characters? 4/5

The Feels? 4/5

Pacing? 4/5

Addictiveness? 3.8/5

Theme or Tone? 4/5

Flow (Writing Style)? 3.8/5

Backdrop (World Building)? 3.8/5

Originality? 5/5

Ending? 4.7/5 Cliffhanger? Nah...

???

Book Cover? It's amazing...

Setting? An Alternate Britain

Source? Audiobook (Library)

???

Nikki says

Oh my gosh!!!! How could his end like that?!

I mean it's both perfect and so frustrating to be left with questions.

Okay. I loved this series, and I utterly adored the ending to it. I love that Luke and Abi are regular commoners, and not really leaders as such, but it's still their story. And I definitely still love Gavar and Silyen, even though I still have ALL the question about Sil. And him and Luke are awesome, plus Dog, dog rocks. And Daisy, she's so awesome and sensible. Basically I love them all. I even grew to like Bouda ?

The story really was fab too - i love how it played out even if I'm dying to know more about what it means and what happens next.

Cora Tea Party Princess says

WELL. WELL.

Before reading: I have actual heartburn at the thought of this book.

After reading: I have actual heartburn at the thought of this book.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Fear was the superpower they all possessed. And unlike Midsummer's monsters, there was no limit to the number of people they could control with it.

On sale now! Final review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Vic James wraps up her hard-hitting DARK GIFTS fantasy trilogy with *Bright Ruin*, which picks up right where the second book, *Tarnished City*, left off. This series is set in an alternative version of our world where a minority, called the "Equals," has powerful magical gifts. What they are supposed to be "equal" to is a good question, since ? in England and several other countries ? they have used their powers to cruelly oppress the non-magical majority. Among other abuses, all "Skillless" are forced to spend ten years of their lives as slaves. Initially, the Skillless Hadley family, including older teens Abigail (Abi) and Luke, were planning to spend their slavedays in what they hoped would be relative ease, serving the powerful Jardine family. Their plans, predictably, fell into ruins, and the Hadleys have been scattered about Great Britain.

As *Bright Ruin* begins, Abi has barely escaped death in the Blood Fair, an old public execution tradition that has been unearthed by the Jardines. Luke, for his part, barely escaped death in the isolated Scottish castle of Lord Crovan, perhaps the most sadistic of the Equals, who delights in mental torture. Abi and Luke are now racing around England in different directions, each pursuing their own part of the uprising against the tyranny of the Equals. Abi is supporting the main rebel group, which has support from a few Equals who have a conscience. Gavar, the oldest Jardine brother, has rather surprisingly thrown his support behind the rebellion, along with Midsummer, a young Equal woman with a pregnant unSkilled girlfriend, who has the power to bring stone statues to life. Abi's goals begin to diverge from those of the rebellion leadership, as she concludes that a particular violent act may be the only way to effectively disrupt the rule of the Equals.

Meanwhile, Luke has fallen in with the enigmatic Equal Silyen, the youngest Jardine brother, whose main

value in life is gaining knowledge, at almost any cost. Silyen is also interested in Luke on a personal, romantic level, but right now Luke is preoccupied with trying to rescue a friend from a Crovan's castle of torture. To gain Silyen's help with his quest, Luke promises to help Silyen find out more about the ancient, mythical Wonder King, a mysterious, near-forgotten figure who inexplicably still seems to be influencing Great Britain.

Vic James constantly surprises in the DARK GIFTS trilogy. The death toll is high, and nobody – even main characters – is safe. People develop and change, disclosing previously unsuspected facets of their personalities, or hidden agendas. Is Gavar trustworthy? Is the Speaker's son, Jon, nurturing a relationship with Bouda Jardine to help the rebellion, or is he a hidden traitor? Is Silyen's thirst for knowledge leading him to work for good or evil? There are nuances to the characters of people that make them multi-layered and unpredictable, and deceptions abound. Power corrupts, but sometimes the desire for power is just as soul-crushing.

The mystical *Wundorcyning* (Wonder King) provides a kind of Beowulf-flavored interlude that tickled my fancy. His scenes felt somewhat random at the time, but provide a key to the ultimate resolution of the story. There's an odd element to it, though, involving death and its relationship to power, that challenged my ability to suspend disbelief. The ending of *Bright Ruin*, though exciting, leaves many loose ends and questions about the future of some key characters, not to mention Britain itself and even the world. While on the one hand that treatment is realistic, at the same time I was yearning for more explication, perhaps another scene or two to give a better sense of closure. Perhaps there might be future novels from James set in this world. One can hope!

I recommend the DARK GIFTS trilogy for fans of contemporary fantasy with a darker, dystopian edge to it, and who appreciate political machinations, social commentary, and unpredictable, well-drawn characters.

I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley and the publisher and this is my voluntary review. Thank you!!

Annemieke / A Dance with Books says

Thank you to netgalley and the publisher for the review copy in exchange for an honest review!

Well oh my gosh, that was the conclusion to The Dark Gifts trilogy and what a wild ride it was. This trilogy is not without its faults, and I do have my pickings with this book too, but that didn't stop me from loving it all the same. The whole trilogy for me is a solid 4 stars.

This book continues shortly after the ending of Tarnished City. Abby has headed out of London with Gavar, her sister and his daughter while Luke is in the clutches of the enigmatic youngest heir Silyen with his new, not so trustworthy, companion Dog. I say clutches but Luke isn't complaining. It is interesting to see how the roles of the siblings have changed. Where first Luke was the revolutionary rebel and Abby the one with sentiments towards one of the Jardines, this has completely turned. Abby is now part of the movement against the government, trying to bring them down. Luke on the other hand is with Silyen, discovering things about the Skill, all thoughts about bringing down a government gone and only cares about protecting his loved ones.

It is a bit of a wild ride, this book. I wasn't quite sure how things were going to end. Who was going to die?

How would they bring down the government? What would be everyone's role? Would Jenner turn back to the good side? (I'm still bitter about that from Tarnished city, just so you know, forever bitter.) It doesn't perhaps have the most surprising twist in imagination but I think it was built up to rather well. I don't feel this book was quite so dark as Tarnished City felt. There was still plenty of death but Tarnished City had a more depressing mood to it.

But I have to say that what made the book for me was FINALLY having Silyen and Luke in multiple scenes together. Their banter, Silyen's flirting, Luke's exasperation, Dog's amusement at the two of them. It made this book for me. I loved every minute, and my gosh, could this book not just have been the two of them? And you know what, the thing happens people. The thing happened that I was hoping for since the first time Silyen showed any interest in Luke way back in Gilded Cage. And you all know what the thing is, right?

But my pickings with this book. One of them is that I feel like not everyone gets what is coming to them. Some people don't take responsibility for their actions at the end there. There is a lot one can say about Gavar, but at least he did that. As a result some do NOT get the consequences that are coming to them and remain in a position I'd rather not see them.

My second picking is that I feel like what happened at the ending regarding skill was left too much in the middle. Like I know what happened in the main lines, but I want more details. I wanted the point of view of the person that did it. But of course just in this instance we don't get that. It left me feeling a bit dissatisfied with the ending.

And lastly, this is a picking that I had throughout the whole series, I just don't care about Bouda. Nothing motivated me to like her. There was nothing for me there to root for. Well except maybe her death. I think as a mom this might have been a big part because of how she views Gavar's daughter. Like dirt beneath her feet. It was disgusting.

Faith says

This is the final book of a fantasy trilogy about a group of young people fighting for freedom in a reimagined England in which Equals with magical Skills have supplanted royalty and the government. People who are not Equals are required to serve as slaves for a ten year period. It cannot be read as a standalone since there is no recap of the prior books. I have to be more strict with myself with respect to getting involved with trilogies. The later books are almost never as good as the first book, and unfortunately that is the case with this trilogy. While I wanted to find out how everything turned out after reading the first book, it was really a slog through books 2 and 3. Too much of our world was built into the fantasy world in this book in a ham-handed fashion, including child deportation and resentment of the elite. This book had a lot of rescue operations and I got tired of them. Eventually, I think the author got tired of them too because the societal problems got resolved pretty abruptly. In the final chapters, people were killed off, a romance came out of nowhere, two of the protagonists underwent a character change and some convenient magic was newly introduced and unexplained. Ultimately, the series held my interest but it was just ok.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Olivia says

I received a copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. However, I own the two other instalments in this trilogy, and plan to buy this one as soon as it's out.

What a fantastic finale.

I love the Dark Gifts trilogy, to the point where I'd possibly declare this as my favourite YA fantasy.

The premise is very simple, political, and, in our current political climate, just a tiny bit terrifying. This is a world, an alternative modern-day Britain, where commoners are required to serve as slaves for ten years during which they lose all basic human rights. The protagonists set out to serve at the beginning of the first book, and I expected it to be mostly about their struggle for freedom with a healthy dose of rebellion...

Vic James, however, doesn't just write from the point of view of the ones suffering. Instead, we get to see the story from the perspective of the ruling Equals as well, and they're not all bad. Some are in favour of the slavery, some are downright cruel, others are fighting to abolish the slavery. There's lots of politics in these books, and I think that was one of the reasons I enjoyed it so much.

The characters are layered, well developed and the writing is enjoyable. The world building is not just your average dystopia but innovative and captivating.

The plot took a few turns I didn't expect, and I slowly grew to like all characters, even love some of them, and increasingly worried about their safety. What I thought was going to be a mildly annoying romance in the first book, turned out to be an interesting plot point, that I thoroughly enjoyed. In fact, the entire Dark Gifts trilogy is not your average YA fantasy; it's original and surprising. The first book has a hopeful tone, but the second book turns much darker, and the mood is sombre. The third book finds the balance between the two.

All in all, it's a wild ride. I was never quite sure how things were going to turn out. I worried everyone I loved would be dead by the end, and I must admit my heart was a tiny bit broken when I reached the last page of Bright Ruin.

I met Vic James at a convention in London, and she kindly signed my copy of Tarnished City. She asked me which character is my favourite, and I did not know what to answer, and may have flailed a little bit. Hours later, I realised, what I should have said: politics! Because the political aspect is what I enjoy most about these books.

Besides the politics, there's Silven, and surprisingly enough Gavar. And, of course, Luke and Abi.

The ending does not disappoint. Vic James ties all loose ends together, and, just like in the real world, not everyone gets what they deserve.

I highly recommend the Dark Gifts trilogy to YA fantasy fans, who are looking for a book with lots of politics.

Mel (Epic Reading) says

Rating of 3.5(ish)

I know this is not one of the beloved YA series of the last few years. It lacks certain author names associated with it, crazy romantic love triangles (there's almost one...) and other things that seem to sell YA books these days. All that to say, for a first time out, I think Vic James wrote a solid series. The characters were involved and easily relatable, the politics were elaborate without being difficult to follow, and the overall dystopian set-up was interesting.

Magic and the Setting

It's hard to create new magic. Especially one that people will accept or believe when your setting is a version of Earth. This is the single biggest mistake I think James makes in the whole series is keeping it on Earth and involved in a similar format to our society today. Even location names remain the same in some cases. This bugged me. There was no reason to keep this story on Earth. It wasn't a global reckoning. Perhaps James thought it would be easier to stay inside our society (to a degree). I think it was a huge pitfall and I never really liked it being on Earth. A different fantasy world with it's own rules and society would have worked much better.

Characters

How can you not love a book with multiple POV that include children?! Yeah, the one GRR Martin thing that will likely stick with me my whole life is a love of chapter perspectives from kids. You can tell so much more about a story, and put unique thoughts forward, when you use the mind of a child. James does a decent job of incorporating her five family members, plus a few other perspectives together. Although I think this book focused too much on the POV of the two older children. I'd have liked to see the parents thoughts and we only got (I think) one, maybe two, chapters with our youngest girl Daisy. This disappointed me I think there was a relationship built there with the Equals that would have been interesting to explore. Daisy would not have seen everything so black and white near the end.

The Romance(s)

In an unusual step for a YA romance, James takes our lead gal and breaks her heart (not a spoiler, happens at end of book 2). I gotta say this was really interesting! I kind of liked it. However, there needed to be a lot more interaction and tension between the two in question in order for full impact to have been achieved. Heart break from far away is not near as difficult as heart break that happens and that person remains in your life to a certain degree. Another missed opportunity in my mind.

The other side romances or interests that happen were all fine. None felt as strong. I was really disappointed we didn't get to see more of Silken and his romantic interests. It's clear coming into this book that he is not entirely heterosexual and I would have liked more to have happened for him.

Plot

Yep there's plot. Yep it's good enough.

I liked the plot, there was nothing wrong with it. But it wasn't spectacular either. What really kept me going was James' writing and characters. And that's okay with me. Besides it wasn't because of a lack of plot that is for sure. When you have family members betraying one another and vying for power there is never a lack of complexity. Could it have been better? Sure. But not everyone has to be Brandon Sanderson and I accept that.

Overall

I think I would revisit this trilogy and world again. I liked it enough. Certainly since book one it has stuck

with me better than some of the other YA fantasy I've read in the last two years. That really says something. When you read approx. 100 books a year the characters or books that stand out are really noticeable and certainly that happened for me here. I may not be able to put my finger on exactly what it was that made this stand out but I'll give the credit where it's due that James had me placing a library hold while the book was on pre-order and I read it as soon as my library got it in. I don't do that with too many books and so I'd say there was more than enough here to warrant a possible spot on my print bookshelves. Therefore I have rounded up to 4 stars because there are some special things about this series and final book of the trilogy. Even if it's not all perfect.

Olivia says

Currently Reading and Currently Dying because THIS BOOK IS NOT ALLOWED TO DO THE THINGS
ITS DOING TO MY SOUL

But can I have it now though?

HOW DOES ONE WAIT FOR AN ENDING THAT IS LIKELY TO MAKE ME SO DECEASED THERE
ARE NO WORDS
