



Draven's Light

Anne Elisabeth Stengl

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In the darkness of the pit

The light shines brightest

Drums summon the chieftain's powerful son to slay a man in cold blood and thereby earn his place among the warriors. But instead of glory, he earns the name Draven, "Coward." When the men of his tribe march off to war, Draven remains behind with the women and his shame. Only fearless but crippled Ita values her brother's honor.

The warriors return from battle victorious yet trailing a curse in their wake. One by one the strong and the weak of the tribe fall prey to an illness of supernatural power. The secret source of this evil can be found and destroyed by only the bravest heart.

But when the curse attacks the one Draven loves most, can this coward find the courage he needs to face the darkness?

Draven's Light Details

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From Reader Review Draven's Light for online ebook

Sarah says

This is a beautiful book.

I got *Draven's Light* today for Christmas. Started reading it not five minutes after I opened it, snatching chapters here and there when I got the chance between present-opening. By the time all the gifts were unwrapped, I was a third of the way through and entirely enchanted. Enchanted by Draven and Ita and their plights, their brokenness. Enchanted by Anne Elisabeth Stengl's ability to make a story and a world come to life. And enchanted most of all by the frame of Draven's story- by the framing story of Akilun Ashuin telling Draven's story to a young girl, and that girl's growth because of Akilun's words.

(I have a new appreciation for the brothers Ashuin, by the way; Akilun especially. Both of them seem more real- before this book, though we'd seen them on-stage a few times, they were to me still characters of lore and legend, not characters we could really know. Now they feel as real as the rest of the Goldstone Wood cast.)

This is not a book to be devoured, despite its small size. It's a book to be savored, read slowly and perhaps even set down every few chapters so everything can sink in. It *can* be read quickly- it's only about a hundred and fifty pages- but to gulp it down so fast, I think, would cause some of the impact to be lost.

All in all, this is, as I said before, a beautiful story. A dark story, to be sure. But beautiful all the same.

Sierra Faith says

Draven's Light by Anne Elisabeth Stengl.

*In the Darkness of the Pit.
The Light Shines Brightest*

Drums summon the chieftain's powerful son to slay a man in cold blood and thereby earn his place among the warriors. But instead of glory, he earns the name Draven, "Coward." When the men of his tribe march off to war, Draven remains behind with the women and his shame. Only fearless but crippled Ita values her brother's honor.

Ms. Stengl's writing pulls you into the story and doesn't let you go. This novella captured me so. I fell in love with the main character Gaho/Draven and his sister, Ita. These will definitely will be some of my favorite characters forever.

Ita cared for her brother through everything. She stuck with him even though their father had disowned him. She was a strong character and wanted to prove that she could do everything , even with a club foot.

Even though Gaho had been branded with the name Draven the Coward that didn't stop him from being courageous. His love for his sister was evident.

****I received a copy of this book from the publisher (Rooglewood Press) in exchange for my honest review****

Nicole Marie says

4.5 stars

Grace Mullins says

4.5- That was beautiful!

Alyssa says

It has a cover finally!!! Ahhhh....I'm so excited!!!

But, May!!!???

Athelas Hale says

Wow. I just...wow.

Soon, I will come back and fully review it, tell you of my one and only problem with it... But it doesn't matter right now. Later I'll think through this, but for now, it's just beautiful.

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June 22, 2015

In the Darkness of the Pit The Light Shines Brightest

Drums summon the chieftain's powerful son to slay a man in cold blood and thereby earn his place among the warriors. But instead of glory, he earns the name Draven, "Coward." When the men of his tribe march off to war, Draven remains behind with the women and his shame. Only fearless but crippled Ita values her brother's honor.

The warriors return from battle victorious yet trailing a curse in their wake. One by one the strong and the

weak of the tribe fall prey to an illness of supernatural power. The secret source of this evil can be found and destroyed by only the bravest heart.

But when the curse attacks the one Draven loves most, can this coward find the courage he needs to face the darkness?

One could say that Draven's Light, by Anne Elisabeth Stengl, is a small book. And perhaps it is: clocking out at 190 pages, it certainly isn't large, as far as page-count goes. You could probably fit it in your purse or bag easily, and not feel the extra weight. It's only around 50k words; not very large by author standards.

And yet the effects this book will have are bigger than the book itself. The weight it carries is heavier; you will remember it for a longer time than it took you to read it.

You see, dear reader, this book may be small in size, but in reality, it is as big as The Lord of the Rings, as emotionally stirring as A Tale of Two Cities.

This story takes place in two sections and in two separate times: in the first, we see a little girl who carries water up to the two Brothers who labor on their Great House near her village. In the second, we follow the story that is told to the girl; the story of Draven, the Coward—or is he Draven, the Hero?

The characters within will call to you, beckoning to your heart. Gaho—Draven, was admirable, brave, loyal, and very much alive. Ita was little, but fierce, a little broken, but made stronger in spirit and in pride for it. Though perhaps, just perhaps, her desire to be strong isn't all that is within her; perhaps there is much more than pride. At times, Ita was the person I related to the most in the novel. Callix, though I liked him at first, didn't really grow on me as much as I thought he would.

In the girl's side of the story, we find the girl, her grandmother, and the Brothers. I loved seeing Etanun and Akilun during a normal time in their lives—not fighting dragons, not saving the day... but being heroes all the more for it. The girl was, well, us. She was all of us fan-girls, deciding what must come next in the story. She thought about the story all day when she couldn't hear the next part, and then was sure of how it must go next. The girl definitely ranked up there in my top favorite characters from the book.

Now, though I dislike to mention it, I must speak of the only part of the book I disliked: the girl's mother. The lady is always busy, always doing something, and never seems to have time for any of her children. To quote from the book:

"She was always in a hurry about something. Twelve children have a way of keeping a woman on her feet."

A little bit of history for those of you who are unaware... My family has eleven children. While that's not quite as much as the girl's family, I can't imagine that one child makes that much of a difference. My mother is quite possibly one of the calmest people I've ever met, always with time to talk or help her children with something; nothing like the lady in the book. While, of course, there are different types of people, I feel as though the portrayal of a woman with so many children is... well, less favorable than it could be. While this doesn't thrill me, by the time I got to the end of the novel, it didn't matter as much, and I did love the book; out of 190 pages, I had only this one complaint.

Objectionable Content: The setting was dark, it's true; Draven's tribe is a twisted group of people. Yet—and this is one of the reasons Anne Elisabeth Stengl is one of my favorite authors—she never showed anything, never even stated would have gone on behind the scenes had events transpired differently. There is

some violence, yes, but nothing described in detail. The Tales of Goldstone Wood are intended to build up, and as such, the author writes them in a clean and encouraging ways.

Technicalities: There was nary a typo or awkwardly phrased sentence that I noticed. The plot and pacing was well done, the novella balanced between the two time periods. It didn't seem to drag in any place (though my sister Caiti tends to notice the pacing and technical things better than I), and though I guessed the reveal at the end before-hand, I loved it all the more for it.

I fear this is the least in-depth book review I've ever written. However, I'm happy because now I know you'll be done reading the book review faster, and you can go more quickly to read the book.

(Disclaimer: I received this book from the publisher in return for an honest review.)

Allison Ruvidich says

In the darkness of the pit, the light shines brightest.

In the depths of fear, true heroes are born.

And in a quiet village, a young girl listens to a story told by immortals.

Each day, a girl must bring water to the two brothers who labor to build a strange house on the hill. No one can remember when they came, and no one knows when they will finish their work and leave. Although they frighten the girl, the Kind One tells wonderful tales of adventure and courage-- such as the Coward and the Pit.

Draven was meant to be the next chieftain. But he loses it all when he finds himself unable to comply with his village's barbaric practices. But when their reckless behavior leaves them vulnerable to a mysterious curse, only Draven the Faintheart can defend them... if he can find the courage.

This is Stengl. To say it is beautiful is absolutely redundant. You can go into any Stengl novel or novella assuming the writing, imagery, and execution will be gorgeous, and you won't be disappointed. It is equally redundant to say that I enjoyed it immensely! That being said, Draven's Light reads slightly different from the past novels-- in a good way. Of the novels, it is most reminiscent of Golden Daughter, which makes sense considering they're consecutively published. It feels more mature than her writing ever has before. There are some reflections on youth and aging that add a greater level of philosophy (although all the novels are quite thoughtful).

I was very pleased to see how much Stengl experimented with the structure of this novella. It really isn't a long tale, and the double storyline gave it a pleasing depth. We not only follow the story of Draven; we see it being told to a young girl years later. It was completely unlike anything Stengl has done so far and absolutely lovely.

As for the characterization, I was so, so impressed with the character of Akilun. Stengl managed to write a character who is sweet, wonderful, and so, so kind. He is a noble and great man, but he never becomes

foreign because of this.

That being said, I did not like the character of Ita. She is the strong woman of this tale. My problem is that she kicks her brother, Draven. Repeatedly. And it causes him pain. I expected that this physical aggression would eventually be addressed, and it was-- sort of. But it still made me uncomfortable. I can hear you pointing out already that Stengl writes flawed characters. She does-- absolutely!-- but I still feel that Ita was never put down as thoroughly as Una, who I found more likable than her.

But the main thing that prevents me from giving Draven's Light a perfect ten for ten is this: it hinges on an unexpected emotional choice from a character the audience doesn't know yet. So even though it's unexpected... because I was unfamiliar with the character, it didn't really resonate with me. As the novella continued and I learned more about the character and the culture, his defying of social norms began to feel... strange to me. He has been conditioned for this choice presumably since birth, but we never really learn what causes or allows him to overcome this except that it is in his nature.

That being said, this novella is a worthy addition to the Tales of Goldstone Wood. Although it doesn't feature many of the popular canon of characters, it still draws heavily on established plots-- need I point out the unspoken comparison of Draven the Faintheart and Lionheart? Yes, this novella is different than past Stengl. It is darker, less fairytale and more folklore. It doesn't feature as many familiar characters, and it is significantly shorter than her novels. But it's still Stengl-- and that means it's pretty darn great!

Disclaimer: I received a free ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Tricia Mingerink says

I read this over the weekend. It is a lot quicker and easier to read than a lot of the full length Tales of Goldstone Wood novels. It still have great allegorical light vs. dark elements. I guessed a lot of the plot twists, but the cool thing about the book was that it pointed out that the twists and stuff were inevitable for a good story, and that was half the point.

This novella also has subtle ties to Dragonwitch that had me squealing at the end when I figured it out.

Lucy (That Book Gal) says

DATE I STARTED THIS BOOK: 4/25/15

DATE I FINISHED THIS BOOK: 4/29/15

HOW I RECEIVED THIS BOOK: Through the publisher

FORMAT OF THIS BOOK: PDF

TYPE OF REVIEW: Bite-sized

I eased into this book. I didn't like it at first, but by 50%, I was hooked.

Draven was a complex character. He had simple cares, complicated worries, and perpetual conflict. This book showed so much conflict. So much happened. I loved how it represented Draven's internal conflict. He had decided not to kill, but then his village viewed that as cowardly. He fought with the title of Coward, but still knew he had done the right thing.

This story was brilliantly told, weaving between a storyteller and his listener, and Draven. Anne Elisabeth Stengl handled it all superbly.

I cried, I must confess, when I read this book. I won't tell you why. But I did cry.

Five stars, to another well-written Stengl book! :)

*I received an free e-copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

E.F.B. says

~~Review coming as soon as I have time to get my thoughts together.~~

Edit 04/2016: Obviously, I've let this review sit long enough. Truth is, this story, though short, affected me so deeply, I can't get my thoughts together enough to express my true feelings about it, even four months later. Draven's Light is a story of love and self-sacrifice in their purest and most beautiful forms. I cried so much.

Just read it, ok? And bring tissues.

Bryn says

Some stories last only for a little while and then fade when the pages that hold them turn to dust, but other tales go on until they weave their telling into that of yet another story.

Such is Draven's Light by Anne Elisabeth Stengl. A tale within in a tale, this second novella in the Tales of Goldstone Wood series takes us further back in the Goldstone timeline than we have ever been before.

For some reason, I went into this little novel expecting not to like it. I'm not entirely sure why; Stengl has never disappointed before. Perhaps I wasn't drawn in by the cover. But forget the cover - this was Stengl's most brilliant work thus far!

Told with the feel of an old Saxon or Norse legend, Draven's Light is a breathtaking telling of warring tribes, ancient rites of passage, cowardice and true courage and love.

But the story opens with none of these things. Instead we begin with a nameless child, a story, and the Brothers Ashiun. To avid readers of Goldstone, these two fey brothers are familiar, but Draven's Light is the first time we see both as players in the plot. Their small but vital role in the telling of the story's main body, left me hoping that this is not the last time we will see them.

However I was most intrigued by our main character's sister Ita. She was a fascinating blend of weakness and strength. Draven himself was an enjoyable character who faced many difficult choices, but was guided by goodness, a sense of right and wrong and love. I never felt like I connected with him but his struggles were believable and though the ending was sad, it had a sense of completeness.

On another note, Stengl has a way of toying with her readers when it comes to love stories. We're nearing the eight Goldstone story and we still have little satisfaction to Eanrin and Imraldera's love arc. But the love story told in Draven's Light did not leave the reader hanging. It was sweet, realistic and satisfying.

So if you have been a fan of Goldstone for years or have never picked up one of these amazing books before, Draven's Light will be a brilliant read that you will not want to come to an end.

H.S.J. Williams says

Let me tell you a story...

...of a man deemed a coward for he found the courage not to murder, of a girl with spirit far beyond her crippled body, and of a child who would gain strength from them both.

One of Anne Elisabeth's greatest gifts is to write men and women with equal, if different, strengths. Here we find a brother and sister, who can only find friendship and understanding in each other amongst their brutal tribe. Draven is very humble in his strength and very protective of his sister. Ita is fierce and determined, always ready to prove her mettle, despite her clubfoot.

The relationships are portrayed with such powerful understanding: brother and sister, grandmother and granddaughter, adult and child.

Though only around 50k words, Draven's Light covers an incredible story packed with narrow escapes, daring hunts, sigh-worthy romance, and tear-inspiring sacrifice. In the very story itself, we are reminded why such tales are so important to us--how they can give us strength.

Although this may be considered a dark tale--a savage people who find honor through killing, and a mysterious malady that causes seizure-like death--it is presented as a man telling a story to a child so the darkness is never too gruesome or disturbing.

That this tale is being told to a child is not to say that it is any less powerful and potent--for the girl who listens finds here courage to carry her through life...and so do we all.

Merenwen Inglorion says

Oh. My. Goodness. It was amazing.

The man of three names begins as Gaho the child. He is branded Draven the Coward after his failure to kill a man. As for the third, well, telling that would be giving a bit much away. :)

In order of impact, here are the things that hooked me.

The first hook:

Well, it's Goldstone Wood. It's written by Anne Elisabeth Stengl. Of course it's going to be good! :D (For most of the books in this series, it would be required for you to have read all of the previous installments to both understand and care about the characters. This one is less so, as it doesn't feature major players from the previous books, but it will make more sense if you already know most of the history--or is it future? ;)--of Goldstone Wood.)

Second hook(s):

Cowardice, and the sibling relationship between Draven and Ita. Draven is, he believes, a coward. Ita is the strong one, the "wolf pup." They both help and strengthen each other.

Third hook:

The fact that it features the Brothers Ashiun! It doesn't focus on them, but it does give more detail on their work (which is amazing).

Fourth hook:

The telling. Each chapter switches from the "present", the focus being on a girl (whose name isn't revealed until much later in the book), to Akilun telling the tale of Draven. It was fun to watch both ends of the tale come together.

Fifth hook:

The House of Light. There are so many mentions of them in the other books, now we get to see one!

If I can think of any more hooks that won't give spoilers as to the outcome of the story, I'll update this review and add them. :)

Shantelle says

Anne Elisabeth Stengl's stories are always just so incredible!! *Draven's Light* was no different. Amazing. Tender. Intriguing. True love. Just grand. I just heart it! ^_^

We meet a little girl who brings water to two brothers (they're rather famous in my eyes, if you've read all the other Tales of Goldstone Wood books!) as they're building the House of Lights. The Kind One begins to tell the little girl a story. A story a cowardice. A story of bravery. A story of terror. A story of redemption.

I was enthralled almost from page one. Something about the lovely, mysterious way Anne Elisabeth writes ... it just pulls you in! *Draven's Light* has to be one of the best novellas I have ever read. Let's just say it's the best. I'm longing for *Poison Crown: The Smallman's Heir*! And then of course, *Poison Crown: The House of Lights* right after that! *grins and winks*

Anyway, this was a heart-rending story. And it had a dash of spookiness—but I felt that was very tasteful and never went too far. There were tears, and gasps, and shivers, and sighs. The characters—awesome.

Loved it!!

If you haven't read any of the Tales of Goldstone Wood books, they are an amazing, Christian allegory, fantasy series. As I've been talking a lot about magic lately, I'll touch on that in this review. Anne Elisabeth very much creates a unique fantasy world. I don't feel there's really much "magic", but there is a fae world as well as a mortal world. From what I'm remembering, there may be an instance or two in the series where some happening seems a little bit like sorcery, but its always the dark work of the bad guys exclusively. Evil creatures from the fairy realm that slip into the mortal world and create havoc among misunderstanding mortals. A higher Being (God) known as the King of Farthest Shore, and His son, the Prince of Farthest Shore (Jesus). The creepy Dragon who represents Satan. Lessons and things symbolic to the Christian faith abound in this series, as well as adventure, action, fairy tale-ness, and a touch of romance! *smiles* I find them to be poignant and profound stories.

So yes! Give the Tales of Goldstone Wood a try! (I would recommend reading them in the order published). The superb *Draven's Light* is waiting for you to open it! *grins*

I received an ARC of Draven's Light from the publishers in exchange for my honest review.

Stargazer R. L. says

This is a beautiful story.

I hope you will read it someday. I'm glad I did. :)
