



Tower Lord

Anthony Ryan

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In *Blood Song*, Anthony Ryan introduced readers to “a fascinating world of conflicting religions and the wars fought in the name of those faiths” (*Library Journal*). Now Ryan’s epic tale continues as Vaelin Al Sorna discovers that there is no escape from the call of destiny...

“*The blood-song rose with an unexpected tune, a warm hum mingling recognition with an impression of safety. He had a sense it was welcoming him home.*”

Vaelin Al Sorna, warrior of the Sixth Order, called Darkblade, called Hope Killer. The greatest warrior of his day, and witness to the greatest defeat of his nation: King Janus’s vision of a Greater Unified Realm drowned in the blood of brave men fighting for a cause Vaelin alone knows was forged from a lie. Sick at heart, he comes home, determined to kill no more. Named Tower Lord of the Northern Reaches by King Janus’s grateful heir, he can perhaps find peace in a colder, more remote land far from the intrigues of a troubled Realm.

But those gifted with the blood-song are never destined to live a quiet life. Many died in King Janus’s wars, but many survived, and Vaelin is a target, not just for those seeking revenge but for those who know what he can do. The Faith has been sundered, and many have no doubt who their leader should be. The new King is weak, but his sister is strong. The blood-song is powerful, rich in warning and guidance in times of trouble, but is only a fraction of the power available to others who understand more of its mysteries. Something moves against the Realm, something that commands mighty forces, and Vaelin will find to his great regret that when faced with annihilation, even the most reluctant hand must eventually draw a sword.

Tower Lord Details

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Eon ?Windrunner? says

Was not sure if this was a 4 or a 5, but as I loved it despite.... it gets a 5.

First half of the book felt a bit slow, lots of catching up and setting up, even though it is a necessity. Only other complaint regards the lack of more Vaelin. I did not know that this would be a multiple POV book as opposed to the focus on Vaelin's POV in the 1st book, so that might be the reason this bothered me, as I was not prepared. Enjoyed the other characters and didn't really have any I disliked, but lets face it - The Raven's Shadow series is the Vaelin Al Sorna show. And this fan wanted more. Luckily, the second half really picks up the pace and finishes on a high.

Tower Lord stands on its own as a great book. Yes, it did not have that unputdownable quality that Blood Song had for me, but I would still recommended it in a heartbeat as it is without a doubt a fantastic entry in this series.

Well done Mr. Ryan.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2014/07/16/b...>

There are a number of sequels coming out this year with big shoes to fill, and not the least of them is Tower Lord which is the follow up to the sensation that was Anthony Ryan's Blood Song. While this second installment might not pack the kind of punch its predecessor did, I nonetheless enjoyed the book immensely. It's a very different novel than the first book, with a shift in style, focus, and character perspectives, and yet it still has all the elements that we epic fantasy fans live for.

In book one, we met Vaelin Al Sorna, a brother of the Sixth Order and one of the greatest warriors the world has ever known. Coming home from a bloody war, he has sworn to fight no more, instead focusing his efforts on seeking any of his relatives that still might live. Named Tower Lord of the Northern Reaches by the new monarch, Vaelin has the noble yet perhaps naïve dream of living out his life in peace and quiet, for news of his exploits (and his crimes) have spread far and wide and those who know of his mysterious gift that guides him will not let him rest.

Anthony Ryan also adds several more point-of-view characters to the mix in Tower Lord, which I was glad to have been prepared for, as Vaelin no longer takes center stage. Instead, he shares the book with mainly three others: Reva, a young woman who begins this journey with hate for Vaelin in her heart and an unquenchable thirst for revenge; Princess Lyrna, sister to the new king and who possesses more strength and resolve than her brother ever would; and finally, Frentis, a familiar face from Blood Song, though he has been changed from his years of being held captive by the Untesh and being forced to fight in the slave pits.

Having been aware of this new format, with the chapters cycling through the character viewpoints, I had expected and prepared myself for the slower start. Indeed, with more characters to follow this time around, the author takes much more time to set the stage for the events in this book. And I have to confess it didn't

quite grab my attention right away. It was a pleasant journey through the first half of the novel to meet new faces or to catch up with old friends, but on the whole Tower Lord lacked a certain quality that made Blood Song the dangerously addictive and immersive read it was right off the bat.

However, I don't think this makes Tower Lord a weak sequel. On the contrary, in fact. This second book is stronger than book one in many ways, not only because it expands the scope of the series by giving us multiple character perspectives and opening up the wider world, but it also showcases Ryan's talents as a storyteller. He's proven himself as an author who can write a very diverse and convincing cast of characters while maintaining a steady level of suspense and interest in all spheres of action, building intensity as he moves all the pieces into place for when things really start rolling.

Quite simply, Tower Lord is a totally different beast. And it's just hard not to compare a sequel to what came before. It comes down to personal taste, and admittedly, Blood Song and I hit it off much faster. I had myself this experience with a couple other sequels this year; they were all excellent novels, but thematically they just worked slightly less for me. In this case, it's hardly a surprise. Blood Song began with Vaelin Al Sorna as a young boy, entering the Sixth Order and a huge chunk of the book was dedicated to his training, the relationships he forged with his brothers, and his eventual rise to greatness. It was my favorite part of the novel. And come on, we all know how tough it is beat a good coming-of-age story.

The first book was absolutely a tough act to follow, I know. But all things considered, Tower Lord is a wonderful follow-up that might even appeal more to other readers, especially those who preferred the parts with "grown-up" Vaelin from the first book. I mentioned one of the things I liked about the "young" Vaelin's chapters was his relationship with his fellow Sixth Order brothers, and it's incredibly fascinating to see how those dynamics have changed over time. Brother Frentis was a huge surprise for me in this one. Thinking about all the terrible things that has been through and how they've affected him, it almost makes his story more interesting to me than Vaelin's. I'm also impressed by Ryan's female characters, and the energy and conviction he was able to put behind Reva and Lyrna, two women who are not afraid of setbacks and will fight for what they believe in.

In the end, it's definitely the characters who made this such a great read. I absolutely adore the new additions. The characters make things happen, set things in motion, and while the first half of this book might have lagged a little, the same cannot be said about the second half, and the final quarter was pure action bliss. Does it take a bit of investment to get to this point? Yes. But totally worth it. Love the intricate magical elements and political entanglements that made the finale such an edge-of-your-seat ride. Anthony Ryan really tied things together and delivered.

I hope when we next meet Vaelin and whoever Ryan decides to let us be acquainted with next time (assuming he once again chooses this multiple POV character format) in the third book Queen of Fire, we'll be able to jump right into the action. The slower build-up at the beginning held this book back a little, in my opinion, so I can't say I enjoyed this book more or even as much as Blood Song, but the difference is very close. And I'm not disappointed at all. If you enjoyed the first book, there's absolutely no reason at all not to pick this up and continue the epic journey.

Armina says

10 July, 2015

Re-read time!

First attempt for review, 25 September, 2014

Easy 5 stars! I finished the book several days ago but I'm still thinking about the ending and the wait for book #3 is gonna be a torture. I think I enjoyed this second installment in the series even more! Full review later.

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Reread before the final book release

Possible Minor Spoilers for BloodSong

While Bloodsong is completely Vaelin's journey The Tower Lord opens up more of this world by showing the story from multiple PoVs. This was good and bad for me as I am so attached to Vaelin that having to share this book with other characters meant I missed him for a lot of it. The other PoVs are good and some I liked more than others but with most books that have shifting PoV chapters it takes a while for all the stories to build and really pick up momentum. But when things get rolling they really get rolling.

Books with multiple PoVs storylines are the hardest books for me to write reviews for. Things shift so much in the story with some people intersecting and others not but still holding relevance to some of the other people and places and how do you convey that in a review but not give importance things away....AHHHHH.

? The Story ?

Again at the beginning of each Part of The Tower Lord the reader is in the present with the historian Vernier. He is in a somewhat different position than in the first book now a slave for the enemy and at their disposal to record the upcoming victory of a city under siege. Even though we all know where the story will eventually lead it isn't clear until the very end again how it will all play out. It is a great way to create tension for the characters in the story from the very beginning.

Remember this, Queen, when you watch the flames rise high, remember this and ask yourself: would I do this again?"

The Volarian's with help from The Ally have come to the Unified Realm to conquer and enslave its people. It is a plan that has been in the works for longer than most have been alive and so many pieces must fall into place. Unlike the Unified Realm the Volarians have no fear of using the dark to obtain their goals. If Vaelin is to help a new friend Reva, Lyrna or the Realm that he has already given up so much for he will need the help of some old friends and unite a few new ones along the way. **It is time for Vaelin to be not only the Darkblade and Beral Shar Ur but also earn some new names including The Lord of Blades.**

? The Characters ?

Vaelin - While this is still a lot of his story because he had to share time with other PoVs I really missed him. He is still a compelling character. His time spent alone in prison was well spent learning his song. It was as much a character in this book as he was. Vaelin always has many parts to his section of the story. He is a warrior true, but he is a man who doesn't want to war again if possible. He doesn't long for battle in fact most of the time he is really doing everything he can to avoid it. His true wants are simple, the family he was denied in the form of a sister, peace if possible and to find his lost brother Frentis.

"Justice?" he said as the mirth faded. "I looked for justice once, from a scheming old man. He gave it to me, and all I had to give him was my soul."

Destiny seems to always get in his way though and the bloodsong plays on helping to lead the way. He will earn even more names and fulfill even more prophecies.

Reva - Her chapters were some of the most interesting to me. Bastard daughter of the Trueblade she has been shaped to a fanatical devotion of the World Father and what some believe he would want. She has one of the most interesting journeys as she is taken in and trained by the Darkblade himself then set back out into the world a little broken and looking for answers.

"Pardon me," Reva said, pausing.

He was a tall man and she was obliged to look up at him, though not tall enough to be out of reach. "Your nose appears to be bleeding."

He frowned, fingers coming up to touch his nose, coming away clean. "I don't . . ."

His head snapped back from the force of the blow, nose breaking, though not with enough force to kill him. He stumbled backwards to collide with the wall, sinking to the floor, blood streaming down his face.

"My mistake," Reva said, moving on. "Now it's bleeding."

Her journey to find the truth of her past and carve her future was almost as good as Vaelin's journey in Bloodsong. She is a force to be reckoned with and a powerful surprise in a small package.

Frentis - Oh poor Frentis. His fate at the end of Bloodsong was unknown and the last five years have not been kind to him. I loved and hated his chapters all at the same time. He has been with the enemy for these last five years in the fighting pits. It seems that One Eye left him with a gift that just keeps on giving and the Volarians know how to use it against him. He is forced to travel with 'the woman' who has a story probably darker than most and she is bat-shit-crazy. She is the reason the chapters are difficult to read but at the same time you can't get enough. She is the deadliest woman in the realm, possibly any realm and Frentis is forced to help her in her dastardly deeds. He both sympathizes with her and hates her at the same time.

He looked away and she moved closer, her arms slipping around his waist as her head rested on his shoulder.

"I'm going to kill you," he said. "You must know that."

She kissed his neck and for once he didn't flinch, though he had the freedom to do so.

"Then, beloved," she said in a whisper, breath hot on his neck, "you would doom yourself and every soul in this world."

She is monstrous and crazy and probably the lesser or all the evils presented but it is still an evil more terrible than most can imagine.

Lyrna - spends most of her time traveling, that usually isn't my favorite fantasy trope which is probably why I liked her sections the least. She was so smart and slightly cold in the last book that I wasn't sure what to make of her. She has changed a bit from Bloodsong. Lyrna is still the exceptionally smart Keschet player looking at the long game she isn't as ruthless as she once was, it seems a decision she made in Bloodsong might have changed her more than she realized.

"It must have been hard," he said, reclining on his stool, his smile now genuine.

"Hard, my lord Shield? Keschet is very simple in essence . . ."

"Not the game. Pretending all those years. Not being you. After all, who wants the keenest mind in the room to be the princess in the corner?"

I really enjoy roles with strong women in them and Anthony Ryan has created quite a few between Lyrna, Reva, Davoka, Veliss and Dahrena. Each plays a pretty strong part in the story. Lyrna's story is only a less interesting due to the fact the other story lines are stronger. She is traveling searching out answers about 'The Dark' and negotiating peace with the Lornak. Later she is traveling on a ship, I lose interest sometimes when plot lines go that direction. The best part of her story line was the introduction of Davoka, a Lornak 'guide'. She was the source of much of the comic relief in this dark tale. The Lornak ways are interesting and different and she was a fantastic character addition to the story.

"I'm sorry I hit you," Lyrna said.

Davoka turned to her with a puzzled frown. "Sorree?"

Lyrna searched for the Lonak equivalent, finding there wasn't one. "Illeha," she said. Regret or guilt, depending on the inflection.

"Lonakhim hit each other all the time," Davoka replied with a shrug. "If you'd tried to knife me, things would be different.

The friendship that built between Lyrna and Davoka was really a great bond and I'm hoping to see more of them in the next book.

? Overall ?

Honestly this book is full of information, great characters, wonderful cultures, dark deeds and a plethora of adventures. This is actually my second time through the book and I picked up even more details. When a book holds my attention wrapped even on a reread I know that it is good. I'm rooting so much for Vaelin and at the end he was amazing although I'm not sure how he will do what needs to be done in the next book. The ending for this was so intense and I was really happy with so much of it. Don't be confused though this is a dark fantasy. There were deaths of characters I hated and some I loved. It is an emotional journey as well as an exciting one and I'm not sure all my favorite characters will make it through to the very end but I still hold out all hope.

On to Queen of Fire.

Original Read September 2014:

Buddy read with Athena, Armina, Gavin and Desisnka

Well it has been months since I finished this and I still can't seem to find the words I want to use to describe how I feel about this series. It is so strong and while I missed being with Vaelin all the time the introduction of multiple PoVs made the story grow by leaps and bounds.

I loved most of it.

I will attempt a real review when I re-read it (because we all know I will) right before the release of the 3rd book in the series. All I can say for now is I like this series a lot and want to read it all over again.

Monica says

Though this book was structured very different than Blood Song, with several POV characters, I enjoyed it just as much. I liked that the reader got a larger sense of the world and the events that were taking place in this book, and the stakes for the characters were also considerably raised. I will definitely be reading the rest of the books in the series as soon as they become available. I would recommend this novel to anyone that likes epic fantasy.

H P says

I was really excited for this book and have been waiting with anticipation for this to come out. Tower Lord however is but a shadow of Blood Song. While Blood Song had a tight plot and pacing with an interesting narrative, the Tower Lord is filled with pacing issues and rather uninteresting POVs. Much of the book was about traveling around, and the action when it happened was rather boring. In the first one we had a band of brothers with each being good in a specific skill. The sequel however has the two new POVs being almost godlike with a sword, hell I doubt even Vaelin could do most of the feats the others did without his magic.

I couldn't help but dread every time Frentis's turn comes up and Reva while slightly better I feel her character somewhat hard to believe. She only learned the sword in a few months and by the near end of the book her skill and feats with it is probably equal or even better than Vaelin's. And her relationship with another character came out of nowhere and felt rather tacky. Honestly it feels like the author or editor wanted a female equivalent of Vaelin for a wider demographics purpose.

The ending was anticlimactic and rather leaving me wanting to read the next one it left me feeling disappointed. I will probably read the last installment when it comes out, but there's no anticipation now.

Conor says

4.5 Stars

Tower Lord is the highly anticipated follow-up to Anthony Ryan's brilliant debut: Blood Song. Ryan was undoubtedly under a lot of pressure to produce a worthy sequel to his massively successful self-published debut and in my opinion he's delivered in a big way. Ryan manages to retain what made Blood Song great (brilliant characters, gripping plot, an intriguing sense of mystery) while also expanding this series with some

interesting new ideas (different plot structure with more POV's, darker tone). While the greater amount of interweaving storylines made the story more complex and sometimes slowed it down it was still just as compelling as the first book.

One of the first thing readers of the first book will notice about this one is the new POV structure. I really liked this new structure. The different POV's allowed us to gain a broader view of events that there's no way any one POV would have been able to cover. The change in narrative structure halfway through the series evinces Ryan hadn't really planned this series out very well but I still think he's handled the change brilliantly. I especially liked the way he used the 'Vernier's account' sections to keep some continuity and make the transition run more smoothly. I also think Ryan did a great job of creating a balance between the 4 POV characters. Unlike almost every other book I've read with this structure (ASOIAF, The First Law) I never found myself skipping one character's sections to read ahead with a more interesting character.

Where Blood Song featured a more focused, fast paced story here we have many more different plot-lines and important events happening at the same time. While this book in many ways has a stronger plot than it's predecessor I was disappointed by the simplistic good vs. evil nature of it's central conflict. The Volarian empire was written as a 2-D, almost cartoonishly evil 'invading empire', complete with all the tropes that are usually found with this clichéd plot point such as an alliance with a mysterious force of pure evil, an army of brainwashed slave-soldiers, supposedly deadly elite warriors who are constantly getting ponied by the protagonists (including an 18 year old girl with a few weeks of training with a sword). While the central conflict is nowhere near as complex or intriguing as Blood Song the characters in this book more than make up for it. The additional POV's allow for the introduction of a larger cast of characters and for those characters, especially the main characters, to be explored in greater detail.

Vaelin Al Sorna has survived the bloodshed of the mad king's war and the horrors of an Alpiran prison and now returns to the realm seeking peace. His blood song however has other ideas. Vaelin's storyline in this book, much like in Blood Song was enjoyable and well-written. Unlike in 'Blood Song' however, Vaelin was rarely involved in action in this book. While some readers were disappointed by this I thought it was handled really well, with the presence of action in the other storylines (especially Reva and Frentis) preventing the book from becoming boring. This storyline reminded me of an old western with Vaelin's careful restraint from violence building the tension leading up to the inevitable final showdown. Unfortunately the showdown itself was a disappointment. (view spoiler) Vaelin's camaraderie with his 'brothers' played a smaller role in this book but his interactions with Nortah were still cool and the tension in his relationship with Caenis made for some interesting scenes. Vaelin's sister Alornis finally got more screen time in this book, something I had hoped to see throughout Blood Song and her interactions with Vaelin were really enjoyable.

Reva was the only character not introduced in Blood Song to get a POV and as a result I didn't expect to like her much. However she confounded my expectations and turned out to be a really cool, interesting character. Her POV provided an interesting and well thought out insight into religion and sexuality in the world Ryan has created. Her inner turmoil as she comes to realise that everything she has been taught to believe is a lie was also really gripping. I lost interest with her POV whenever she wound up in action scenes however. Having only spent a few weeks receiving half-hearted training from Vaelin in archery and swordsmanship, and after having only been taught basic knife-fighting previously, her incredible fighting abilities seemed forced, bordering on ridiculous. This manifestation of incredible fighting skill after only a short period of training is something that happens often in fantasy (Rand's 'blademastery' in WoT) and usually frustrates me. Part of the reason why I loved the training section in Blood Song so much was because of how it drove home how hard-earned and deserving the heroes fighting skills were. Outside of action scenes Reva's parts were really enjoyable and her interactions with Veliss (a really cool character in her own right) were

especially awesome, in turns funny, intense and touching.

I was really psyched when I saw that Princess Lyrna was a POV character in this book. She was one of my favourite characters in book 1 and I had been hoping to see more of her throughout the series. However I was ultimately disappointed with Lyrna's sections and found her to be, albeit only by a small margin, the weakest POV character. I loved Lyrna in Blood Song when she was manipulative, ruthless and ambitious. In this one she's a generic fantasy princess having adventures, going on arduous journeys and making unlikely friends (her friendship with Davoka is pretty much exactly Elayne-Aviendha in WoT... except they've not both slept with Vaelin. Yet). That being said as much as I was disappointed by the direction her arc went in it was still a really strong example of the adventure storyline that is so popular in fantasy. Lyrna was a funny and interesting character throughout and her recollections on her last meeting with her father were intriguing and emotionally charged.

After the bloody conclusion to the Alpiran war Frentis was sold into the brutal slave-pits of the Volarian Empire. At the start of this book a mysterious woman takes him from the pits and sends him on a bloody campaign of assassination all across the world. In the first half of this book Frentis' sections were probably my least favourite. Due to a magic spell compelling him to do whatever his master commands (a plot-point that shows up a lot in fantasy and to me always seems an example of lazy writing) Frentis does virtually nothing on his own initiative. While we received some interesting information about some of the mysteries in this series and the enigmatic 'woman' was a really cool character I was still frustrated by Frentis' lack of agency. However in the second half Frentis came into his own and really stole the show. These sections were dark, intense and extremely compelling. He is also the only one of the three warrior POV characters who isn't ridiculously OP. This adds a sense of realism that makes his fight scenes all the more brutal and engaging.

Overall this was a really enjoyable sequel to a great debut. Ryan has succeeded in writing a worthy follow-up to Blood Song while also advancing the series as a whole. I'm definitely psyched for the release of Queen of Fire.

David Sven says

The Tower Lord continues where Blood Song finished off. Anthony Ryan switches from the single third person POV of Vaelin Al Sorna, to add another three POVs to the story ie Princess Lyrna, Frentis, and Reva join Vaelin's POV with their own Game of Thrones style character chapters. He also abandons the framing device he employed in the last book though he still has "Vernier's account" interludes.

Like Blood Song I really enjoyed this book. I didn't know how I would take to the format with the additional POV's but they were all interesting in their own right and served to expand the scope of the story. I didn't think the pacing was as perfect as the first book with a goodly section of the later parts of the book involving all the characters journeying from A to B. I also think this feels very much like a middle book setting up for the finale with minimal resolution in itself.

Still, I enjoyed the prose, I enjoyed Steven Brand's audio narration, and I enjoyed the story. My only disappointment being I now have to wait for the next book in the series.

I'm giving this one....

5 stars

Review of Blood Song

Edit:

I'm rerating this down a star because when I considered rereading books one and two in preparation for book 3, I found myself thinking book one would be great to revisit - but reading all the parts where people were travelling from A to B in this book was asking too much.

4 stars

Faye, la Patata says

Let me tell you a story.

Around December 2012, a good friend of mine, Kureha, approached me to say that there was this book on Amazon that was getting huge attention. She told me I should check it out especially since I was starting to read more epic fantasy. Yup, you guessed it: that book was *Blood Song* by Anthony Ryan. I got myself a copy and read it in two sittings, and was in a huge hangover for days after that. It was one of the best epic fantasies I've ever read, and very few have come close to it. That's why I was ecstatic when he finally found publishers willing to print his book and spread it far and wide. I've never been so happy for an author before. Anthony is very talented; I love his storytelling skills, and I love the characters he creates. It's only fitting for him to be given the chance to share his story with more people from other countries and cultures, who, I hope, will also relate to Vaelin al Sorna.

After that, all I had left was the waiting game. I waited **TWO YEARS** to read the second installment.

Alas, the wait is over...

...FOR I NOW HAVE THE ARC IN MY HANDS!!!

I'm sorry, I couldn't help it. I just *HAD* to brag.

Look! I even got a sweet message!

"Propaganda"?! Man, I'm so touched. That's legit one of the best names to call my fangirling. Mehehehe.

The author has been such a cool guy. He sent me this ARC even though he didn't have to (I... I may have nudged him a little~), but in any case, I read it as soon as I got it and you wanna know what I think?

IT WAS AWESOME!!!

One thing to look forward to here in *Tower Lord* is the introduction of POVs of new (and old!) characters, something that I welcomed warmly. *Blood Song* could be likened to a chronicle of Vaelin al Sorna, depicting events at different intervals of his life when he was in the Sixth Order, serving as more of a laying of the foundation and backstory of what will happen in the second installment. If you're expecting *Tower Lord* to be the same way, you'll be disappointed, as it's more fast-paced (with a slow beginning), especially with a lot of POVs showing different angles of the story, but somehow I thought they were all fitting. I loved the new perspectives. I mean, yes, I missed Vaelin, but it was awesome getting to know other vital characters intimately too, and not just from a distance.

Obviously, we get Vaelin's POV. I missed him a lot and it was so nice getting reacquainted with him again. It was like meeting an old friend for the first time in a long while and seeing how much he has changed. And Vaelin did change. The events at the end of *Blood Song* has made him think and see things differently, and we see a different side of him here. Nevertheless, I still loved him, and I thought he was easier to relate to in this installment. He struggles with a lot of things, one of them being his reputation as a Darkblade and how it molded other people's expectations of him. **It was also really nice seeing him ponder about the boundaries of morality, about what must be done and what could have been done, while also maintaining this aura of leadership that attracts people to him.** Suffice to say, he remains as my favorite character.

We also see things happen in Frentis' POV, and man, his situation really made me sad. **Out of all the characters, you can see that he's the one who changed so much.** In *Blood Song*, I pictured him as this merry guy who's eager to lighten the mood, but because of certain circumstances, he turned quite dark, and I have nothing but sympathy for him. While reading this book, all I ever wanted to do was pat him on the back and whisper things will be okay(although to be honest, with how things went for him for the first half of the book, even I doubted). **Aside from Vaelin, I think Frentis will be a favorite among the readers just from the experiences he went through and the steps he took to overcome them.** By the end of the book, I just wanted him and Vaelin to team up already!

The last two POVs were from two females - Reva and Princess Lyrna. I also loved these two to bits. They were both strong ladies who were able to overcome various trials and tribulations, situations I don't think I would have survived myself. I loved how Anthony Ryan gave them so much personality and how he made them so consistent throughout. Like **Reva** is this person who has been brainwashed and abused as a child, raised to hate Vaelin, and **you can really see the internal conflict happening within her as she experiences kindness from him.** **Princess Lyrna**, on the other hand, finds herself in the hands of her enemy, and she becomes really bad-ass later on, which I appreciated. **I loved seeing her grow out of her shell, to be thrown in a shitty situation and come out of it like a real queen.**

All in all, I loved how polished each of them were. I loved how they never felt like filler, and how they contributed so much to the storyline - not just the different sides of their personalities but also the different angles of their common enemy, as each of them had to fight them in their own ways.

Of course, while there were many awesome stuff, there were also really... sad ones as well, especially when it came to the secondary characters. I mean, we got to meet a lot of the old ones, and many of them

will come to Vaelin's aid especially with the impending war, but just like our own historical wars in the real world, not everyone survives to tell the tale, and this book really devastated me in that aspect. But, at the same time, I welcomed it, too. **I loved how realistic war was portrayed here. It's shitty, it's awful, and not everyone is immortal, despite how much we want them to be.** I applaud Anthony Ryan for recognizing how horrific wars can be, and how everyone is vulnerable and at risk, and getting out there meant putting your life on the line because so much is at stake.

AND THAT ENDING. ARGHHHH. I WANT THE NEXT BOOK NOW.

Overall, this book was awesomesauce. I wish I could say more, but I don't really want to risk spoiling you guys, because books like this are meant to be read, enjoyed, and appreciated to the fullest. But if there's one thing I can assure you, it's that this book was an awesome ride from the start to the very end. You will get to see new and old characters, and you will be able to appreciate them more because of the switching POVS (which were nicely done, I promise). Anthony Ryan really puts the "epic" in "epic fantasy" because this was epic as epic could be.

And now, the wait begins once more for book three...

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(Co-blogger) Not-So-Literary Heiresses

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Plushie says

Rating: 2.5/5

I was lucky to have just finished Blood Song recently, and to my utter delight, its sequel, Tower Lord, was due for release not long after. I was excited! There would be no year long wait to see what happens to Vaelin as he journeys back home after 5 long years of absence. The book description only served to heighten my appetite as it sounded like Vaelin would have to face more hardships, tough decisions and grave responsibilities ahead.

It's unfortunate that after all the excitement, I couldn't but feel a bit cheated with Tower Lord. I feel deceived because the title and the inner jacket synopsis is very misleading. By reading the book description, you'd expect the book to be centered on Vaelin's exploits as the titular "Tower Lord". There isn't an inkling that the so called "Tower Lord" would in fact only be featured in a mere 25% of the book! There are also no indications that the story would turn Vaelin's story as the Tower Lord into more of a sideshow, while dividing the rest of its attention to 3 other character's stories. Nope, there's absolutely no mention of any of the other POV characters in the blurb at all. So to say I was caught off guard is putting it mildly.

Still, after the initial confusion, I continued on, hoping the different POVs would somehow converge and tie in with Vaelin's. I had hoped each story would be an individual thread that would eventually come together, with Vaelin's acting as the center, and weave a brilliant tapestry. Sadly, the flames of hope never became anything but a pitiful smoulder. Rather than using the other POVs to compliment Vaelin's story, or to do some inter-character development along side him, the POVs for the most part were separate and didn't have much to do with each other.

I have nothing against books with multiple POVs, but when the first book is written entirely in one person's point of view, a sudden change in format like this must be dealt deftly, since most people can get really attached to the main voice. Perhaps my opinions would have been different if I didn't just finish reading Blood Song and had time to distant myself from Vaelin's voice, but as it stands, I'm still very much attached to him. I wanted to see more of Vaelin, and not have him only occupy a quarter of the book. That and often doing some pretty mundane things as well. Needless to say, I felt these new POVs took away too much focus from his story. All of Vaelin's efforts and heroism from the last book felt trivialized and pushed aside for these characters I cared less about.

Also, a huge draw of Blood Song for me was the camaraderie between Vaelin and his Sixth Order brothers, but unfortunately that was barely to be found here. Caenis, for instance, was someone I was very interested to see a POV from, but he was not given one and had a relatively minor role. Not to mention, his cold attitude towards Vaelin felt abrupt. Frentis is my second favourite character from Blood Song and I was ecstatic he got his own POV. However, after a few chapters from him, I started to find myself skimming through his story, hoping he would (view spoiler)

While I appreciate Ryan's attempt to diversify his narrative by adding more female characters, and writing in two strong female POVs, they did not evoke enough empathy for me to care about them in a significant way. Princess Lyrna is one of my least favourite character from Blood Song, and her POV did nothing to change those feelings. Her story did not inspire much sympathy or interest from me. I actually like Reva, but as a new character, she had a lot ground to cover in order to catch up to characters I've already spent a lot of time with and developed affections to. Moreover, while her story does diverge later, she interacts a lot with Vaelin, which in all honesty, her POV could probably be taken out and be told from his point of view. As it is, I felt it eroded too much into his POV.

I wished Anthony Ryan kept the same POV format as Blood Song, or at least utilized the multiple POV format from the very beginning, rather than introducing it now. Due to its singular POV focus, Blood Song was able to cover a large amount of plot over a long expanse of time, making the book feel packed and rich. On the other hand, while Tower Lord's splitting of the story into 4 POVs that runs parallel within a much shorter timeline allows readers to see the world with a wider scope, it also makes its plot feel much thinner. It also doesn't help that Tower Lord sometimes feels like an overly long 600 page set up for the next book, especially when seen in the light of its non-conclusion ending. Blood Song, while promises more to come, at least had a satisfying end. Now, I have to probably wait years before any satisfying conclusion would be met.

The new change in format is definitely going to split the opinions of the fans of the first book. Looking at the current reviews on Amazon.com will confirm this. People who want to see the story take a broader, epic scope and through different perspectives are going to love the new change. However, people who fell in love with Vaelin and expected the story to continue to focus on his journey is going to be sorely disappointed. I unfortunately fall in the second category.

Mihir says

Full review over at Fantasy Book Critic

ANALYSIS: Tower Lord is a book that I've been waiting for since 2012. Anthony Ryan really announced himself in spectacular fashion with his self-publication success, which then translated into a traditional

publishing contract. Two years later, a lot of fans are waiting to see if he can repeat and build upon his success with Tower Lord. In my review for Blood Song, at the end I had written "give this book a read if you want to read a story that's closest to those written by David Gemmell." With Tower Lord, he not only proves that in spades by giving the readers a siege situation similar to that in Legend and also many more memorable events and characters. There will be mild spoilers in the review below so be wary before you start.

Let's begin with the story, in Tower Lord, we get three new POV characters besides Vaelin who was the sole narrator in Blood Song. Another funny aspect of the story is that this book also follows the same narrative format as Blood Song wherein the events begin in the near past and interspersed between five current accounts of the royal Alpiran chronicler Verniers Alishe Someren. As to why the story is set in such a format and what is Verniers doing will be up to the fans to RAFO. Safe to say it's quite shocking to meet Verniers who finds himself in quite stunning conditions.

We find Vaelin Al Sorna back to the Unified realm and seeks to find his relatives who might be still surviving. The second POV character is Reva a young woman with tremendous martial skills who seeks revenge on Vaelin for a past crime. She's not an Asraelian and seeks his death single-handedly, who she is and why she hates Vaelin is spoiler material and so I won't comment on it. Safe to say for people wanting to know her identity can take guesses and I might just give you tell if you are correct or not in the comments section below. The other two POV characters are Princess Lyrna & Frentis. I, as a fan was expecting them to be POV characters and enjoyed getting to know their thoughts.

This book also magnifies the world situation by showcasing the continent east of the Alpiran & Unified realms, namely the Volarian Empire. The story begins by detailing an attack on the unified realms from many fronts. Vaelin is faced with a new responsibility when he's made Tower Lord of the Northern Reaches by King Malcius. He has to ride north and take charge which he does but not with some reluctance. Reva's track has us focusing on how she came to hate Vaelin so much and how she tracks him to face him for a duel. Last when we met Frentis, he was aboard a strange ship heading off to lands unknown. We find him now as an Alpiran slave who's fighting to stay alive. Lastly we also get to explore the Northern Reaches as Princess Lyrna tries to find accord with the realm's northern neighbors.

That's all I'm going to say about the plot contents, as what happens in the story is that realm truly faces an invasion that boggles the mind. I can see why the author choose to expand the POV list as this story would have been impossible to cover from just a singular POV. Another highlight of this book is that nearly every character that made a major & minor impression in its predeceasing title is back in this one (except the dead ones). We get to see all of them & experience different shades to them; this was an extremely pleasurable to read. A couple of mysteries from Blood Song, namely who attacked Vaelin in the Test Of the Wild as well as who was behind it get clarified. Many other bigger revelations also abound like what truly happened to Vaelin when he was an Alpiran captive. Who is the Witch's bastard and who are his allies? There's also a fascinating exploration of the Seventh order and the magic system espoused in this trilogy.

Secondly going on to the characterization, Anthony Ryan shines brighter in his sophomore effort by giving us many brilliant characters. Besides Vaelin, Reva, Frentis and Princess Lyrna get the POV turn and I loved how different the characters were from what we read in Vaelin's thoughts. Princess Lyrna was the character that was the most intriguing to me and in this book, she gets to shine truly. There's also the brothers (Caenis, Sollis, the order aspect, etc) who we have met before and now have acquired different roles. You'll be surprised to see many of them and how they feel about Vaelin. There are also some characters who make an appearance under a different name & it will be fun if you can spot them. Many of those who complained about Frentis' cockney accent will be glad to know that it isn't a problem in this sequel. Infact I would say he

becomes a terror worthy of Vaelin's status. The author also expands the readers on to the world by focusing on the realm and giving us fascinating insights into the various types of people and faiths that abound. This light is also shone upon the Alpiran as well as the Volarian culture.

Lastly the pace and action sequences are amplified across all the four POV sections, we get to see our favorite characters face odds that they have never thought of and the fun is reading how it all ends.

Previously I talked about the siege-like conditions similar to Legend. The author displays his skills and gives us a fascinating account in to the siege via Verniers and then through the actual characters. This dual approach creates some confusion but it's done in a way that will leave you with a smile in the end. Coming back to my original statement of this book being similar to Legend, David Gemmell's epic debut. We get a siege wherein legends are forged and this was the highlight of the story. And how does the author manage to top off such an exciting read, he cruelly ends the story with a chapter that hearkens back to the shocker that was the epilogue in A Storm Of Swords. This climatic chapter ends on such a note that you might not want to wait a whole year for Queen Of Fire.

There's so much more I want to gush about this book but I think I've said enough. Regarding the negatives about this title, the only thing I can think is that the story has kind of a slow start with all POV chapters. It takes only a while for the pace to pick up but once it does, the chapters fly by on to a rousing action-packed finale that is memorable. Your mileage may vary but this is the only drawback in an otherwise superb sequel.

CONCLUSION: This book easily is the best heroic epic fantasy of 2014 (bettering the high of City Of Stairs which is yet to be released) and now all other books will have to excel to overcome it. Tower Lord is a loud proclamation that Anthony Ryan is David Gemmell's natural successor and epic fantasy's best British talent.

Mayim de Vries says

*“You know who I am,” he said. “Who are you?”
She gave a mirthless smile. “I am a songbird in a cage. And now so are you.”*

On some level I do envy those who never ventured beyond the Blood Song. In spite of my reservations against this book, **I thought it was in many ways and on many levels an outstanding piece of fantasy. In contrast, Tower Lord is just an average read.** Whatever magic sang on the pages of the previous instalment, it is silent here. For me, the song has definitely ended.

The novel starts with the atmosphere of utter disaster. Nothing is as readers expect it: old glory vanished, old heroes forgotten or discarded, everything upside down and going from bad to worse. Also, nothing makes sense. We are yet again forced to come up with our own theories how come things are as they are and who is behind the scenes. I like being Sherlock Holmes when I read so that is a definite plus. Furthermore, Vaelin gets the promotion to the Tower Lord (no spoilers here, as this is practically heralded in the title) and while he remains sweeter than Jesus and wiser than Buddha, there is finally doubt and internal struggle in him that strengthens the book too. And **by the Departed, this novel needs all the strengths it can get** because the rest is so very lame.

Firstly, in this instalment Mr Ryan **switched into the multiple POV narrative.** I thought that Blood Song was unique in how it told the story exclusively via Vaelin. **The single narrative embedded into Vaelin's personage carried the tale effortlessly. It was seamless, dense and somehow wholesome. The jagged new many-POVs style changed something very distinct into a generic, multi-voiced fantasy.**

What pains me the most is that Tower Lord gives us **the conventional assortment of POVs**: the bloodthirsty waif, the tragic warrior, the princess, and finally the former main protagonist himself. **In this crowd Vaelin is merely one of many, and while all the arcs are interconnected, the tale is no longer his.** It is not even Verniers (actually, when I think of it, Vernier accounts stop making sense).

As to the POVs:

I absolutely hated **Reva's chapters; the unbearable weight of cliches** really brought me down. **Little bloodthirsty girls were never my favourite archetype**; they really need to have something more in them than an insatiable desire for martial prowess and an urge to kill bordering on psychotic to make them interesting. Reva vanishes in a crowd of borderline identical fantasy figures and **things that were, I assume, supposed to make her special are simply ludicrous**. (view spoiler)

Brother **Frentis is young Vaelin's copycat in this instalment**, (view spoiler). It is sad but necessary since Vaelin has grown up and somebody has to fill in his boots.

Simultaneously, **Vaelin lost all his charm** and all of sudden, there is nothing exceptional about him. In a sense, he is a vessel for a very specific gift. Or a foretold (and I have serious reservations against prophecies as vehicles for the narrative). (view spoiler) Mr Ryan kept the characterisation long enough to bring about the Blood Song climax, then dropped it completely in Tower Lord. What remains, is a pale shadow of the former character. Pity, that.

In this collection, princess **Lyrna is a definite winner**. I loved this smart cupcake from the very start so I was happy that she has been given the voice. While I think that Lyrna's POV is overall the most interesting (despite **the lack of depth afforded by the extra layer of personal reflection embedded in the previous way of narrating the story, which in her case is particularly painful, because I adored the way Mr Ryan showed the double meanings and bluffs and feints in every conversation, and those featuring Lyrna especially**) even she is not impervious to the ills that characterise the whole book. (view spoiler)

I really don't know what to call the Tower Lord if not predictable. Especially that the **retrospective design this instalment reveals all in the beginning**, even if initially we are not aware of what is exactly being revealed (view spoiler) This **made me positively yawn my way through the second part of the book** (view spoiler) and finish without any steam left.

I won't deny it, **I feel robbed after reading Tower Lord. I thought the writing style hindered the previous originality of the characters while the structure of the book failed to take advantage of the overall plot. I wish I had not read it; I like my own imagined continuation of the story better.**

Also in the series:

1. Blood Song
3. Queen of Fire

Gavin says

This was even better than Blood Song. Telling the story from the perspective of four POV characters was a masterstroke. It gave the book a more epic feel and added depth to characters like Lyrna and Fretis. It also

introduced a great new character in Reva.

The story was a bit dark since it focused around repelling an invasion by the Valorian Empire, but there was enough humor, mystery, and romance to keep things from getting too bleak.

I really loved this and the series has become a new favorite. I cannot wait for the next installment.

Rating 5 stars!.

Liz* Fashionably Late says

Buddy Read with lazy Tanya <3

I apologize for the long review, it's actually meant for me instead of you, to be honest. I won't remember a thing if I don't write it down and I'm planning on reading book #3 as soon as it comes out.

Long story short? This book is amazing and more complex than I had imagined. It deserves every star.

Long review for future Liz*

"Only three, snared by the depth of their own malice. But from where does malice spring? If not from fear... and pain."

I think it's safe to say Raven's Shadow is one of the most exciting books I've read this year. If Blood Song was good, Tower Lord was great. Unlike Blood Song, this second installment is told from multiple POVs and far from being confusing, it really expanded Vaelin's world exponentially.

Lyrna

"The price of noble blood is that we do not choose our paths in life, just the manner of walking them."

I really enjoyed Lyrna's POV. I was intrigued by her in the first book. I knew she was more than it met the eye. But now? She's everything and more. She's smart, cunning, strong and definitely the Queen the United Realm deserves. She's not afraid of making hard choices. Honestly? I completely adore her.

It was so good to see Sollis and Lyrna working together and Davoka was amazing but the best thing about her POV was the Mahlessa. After so little learnt in book #1 answers about the Ally, the three beings and their origin were much welcomed.

That ending!(view spoiler)

Now, allowed my shipper heart to say: Vaelin/Lyrna is something that we must see done. **Seriously.** Even if I was giggling every time The Shield appeared. **Yyrna FTW.**

*"A queen does not live, she reigns, and my reign has begun. Will you take me to Alltor?"
He moved closer still, looming above her, brows creased and eyes lost to shadow as he stared down at her.
"May the gods save me, but you know I'd take you anywhere."*

Frentis:

"Fear was an old friend, but terror was a stranger"

The woman is the best new character introduced in this series. Amazing, enigmatic, mysterious, incredibly cruel and the reason I ached for Frentis so much. Just the thought of the things she did to him and made him do.

Reva:

*"No better than us." He said in thickly accented Realm Tongue.
"No," she replied. "I'm much worse."*

As Tanya said, Reva is a superhero. Her relationship with Veliss was unexpected but it allowed me to see her accepting herself and healing from the lies the "priest" used to say whenever he flogged her. Her Uncle surprised me. I thought him a fool but his devotion to Reva redeemed him.

She's amazing, awaking the loyalty of her people in just a few months. The city, fighting against Free Realms was inspiring. It's hard to believe just a few months with Vaelin made her such a badass, though ^^

Vaelin:

"We will make and ending, you and I."

I really liked Dahrena, she was amazing, respected and loved by her people. Not sure if I want her near Vaelin.

I can't believe he's (view spoiler) It's amazing to think the first time I saw him he was just ten, alone and lost and now he's a strong man, finally accepting his fate. I'm amazed how he wakes the admiration and loyalty of everyone around him.

On a side note, I'd like to say the author has done a magnificent work building perfect, fascinating female characters. Every single one of them, villains and heroines, are complex and utterly inspiring women. Cheers for that.

"You will witness the harvest of death under a blood-read sun. You'll kill for your faith, for your King and for the Queen of Fire when she arises. Your legend will cover the world and it will be a song of blood."

- Blood Song (Raven's Shadow #1)

Choko says

*** 3.75 ***

I am not exactly sure how I feel about this installment in the Raven Shadow Series. It is getting interesting, it is keeping its violent edge, and the story is a bit more spread geographically, since our heroes, Vaelin Al Sorna, warrior of the Sixth Order, Princes Lyrna, young warrior and brother of the Sixth Order Frentis, the newly introduced young bastard daughter of the Trueblade Reva, and the man who brings it all together in his chronicles, the Historian and slave Veniers are scattered to different parts of the Realm and the Empire. Vaelin Al Sorna was the major point of interest in book one and we all got attached to the young man who went through so much and kept his sense of honor and justice. I think I was also one of those, who was looking forward to find out more about his romantic life, his future choices and all that is his life while given to the Volarians. Anthony Ryan had had different ideas, obviously, because he gave POV's to all of the main characters and Vaelin became just one of several, his story line still important, but not as central.

"... "Your realm is an insane place. In Volaria, no-one goes hungry, slaves are no use when they starve. Those freeborn too lazy or lacking in intelligence to turn sufficient profit to feed themselves are made slaves so they can generate wealth for those deserving of freedom, and be fed in return. Here, your people are chained by their freedom, free to starve and beg from the rich. It's disgusting."... "

Yes, the Volarians are coming!!! To arms!!! Que dramatic battle music.

The Realm, where Lorna's brother rules at the moment, has many problems and its Fiefdom Lords do all types of hostile machinations among each-other, but there is no slavery and there is still an expectation of an individual freedom. There have even been new attempts at legalizing religious freedom, although this is not going so well. The Volarian society, on another hand, is build on slavery and despotism, with those at the top having almost no regard for any but those of their own rank, if even that. Since they establish their place in the power scale by how many slaves they own, they have set their eye on taking over and subjugating the Realm, making it a land to supply their always depleting slave pens. The death of the Bright Hope in a duel with Al Sorna has given them a pause, but now the wheels of their maneuvers cannot be stopped. The historian Veniers finds himself once again in the middle of the action, being a slave in the house of the Volarian General who is in charge of the operation.

"... "Beware the seduction of the quick conclusion. Do not indulge in the answer you desire until you know all you need to know."... "

While the enemies are putting their game pieces in place, Al Sorna has returned, a changed and disheartened man, who has no more faith and chooses to leave the Sixth Order, giving the chance of the King to appoint him the Lord of the North Tower, which currently is without a Realm leader. Having returned hope to look for his sister and Frentis, he gathers what he owns and travels to the North, where he is thought of as a bringer of war. However, war is the furthest thing from spilling blood. However, a girl who is bent on vengeance takes the road with him and he decides to teach her as much as he can, knowing that she will need all the help she could get with the coming danger. Reva is the character whom I truly enjoyed, since she is very emotionally manipulated and trained to hate, but finds her better self by the end of the book and still keeps her kick-ass badness:) Another such character was the new traveling companion of Princes Lyrna, Dahrena, a warrior from the Lornak tribe, with whom the Princes went to negotiate a peace treaty. Her people are very direct and physical in the way they express themselves, and I dearly hope we get more of her in the next book!!! But as strong as those women are, they are also true human beings and all the war,

destruction and slaughter takes a toll on their souls...

"... "I have done things here. In defending this city I have done things ... I thought them right and just as I did them, now I don't know. Now I wonder if I mistook rage for right and murder for justice. " ... "

So, if I obviously enjoyed this book, why do I have misgivings? Two things - one, I am not sure that all of the violence had a true purpose. Yes, I know it is a war and trust me, I know how it could be, but it does seem like the author wants the people in his book to suffer, all of them, no matter what they are doing or who they are, and all of them are not always involved with the war or even the action... There is a sense of jaded self-hatred running through the whole book, which I feel has nothing to do with the plot or the given world. Second, I think that there is an unnecessary inflation of named characters who have also very little to do with anything, except to be told eventually that they are dead in some horrific or useless way... I think this becomes confusing for the reader, since we know nothing more about them than their names and that they perish, which only adds to the reader wondering if they missed something and that character was somehow important so we should grieve for them... Once you figure that no, they were just a randomly named person in the crowd, the impact when some of the more important characters meet an unfortunate end is just not there, or is at least very diminished. I think this is the difference when comparisons are made with authors like Cook, Erikson and Jordan - they have all those named characters, but even with minimal words, they all have their personality and real place in the story, often planned chapters or even books ahead, thus the effect is devastating, no matter how many of them we lose and why.

"... "If the stars in the sky are not fixed, then nothing is fixed. Nothing is eternal, all is temporary and ever-changing." She turned away from the stars, meeting his gaze. "Nothing is fixed, my lord. No course is so set it cannot be changed." ... "

Despite the weaknesses, I enjoyed the story, even though it did depress me a bit and I need to watch some of the Winter Olympics to bring my Happy Back! So this is what I am going to do and hope for a good third and last book in the trilogy!!!

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and many more Wonderful Books to come!
