



## **Erich's Plea**

*Tracey Alley*

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The Kingdoms of Kaynos have been at peace for nearly a thousand years. Now the ambitions of a dark sorceress armed with a new, deadly type of magic called witchcraft threaten to tear the Kingdoms to pieces. Meanwhile, locked deep in the bowels of Zeaburg's infamous, horror-filled subterranean prison the young druid Slade is haunted by a strange, recurring dream. A dream in which his beloved father, High King Erich of Vestland, pleads for Slade's help. Convinced of the dreams truth Slade must somehow attempt the impossible and escape the inescapable Zeaburg prison in order to find and save his father. Gathering an unlikely assortment of allies along the way Slade must not only find a way out of Zeaburg prison but must also find a way to prevent what threatens to be the bloodiest, most brutal war in the history of all the Kingdoms of Kaynos. Will an unimaginable alliance, an unlikely friendship and a forbidden love be enough to save the Kingdoms of Kaynos?

## **Erich's Plea Details**

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Author : Tracey Alley

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## From Reader Review Erich's Plea for online ebook

### Krista says

Erich's Plea was a very different read for me. Even though I am a huge Harry Potter fan and really enjoyed the Hunger Games, Fantasy/Science Fiction is generally not my gig. But I saw this new series called the Witchcraft Wars and thought I would give it a try. For the most part, I did enjoy this book, although I think it does not stand on its own too well. I think that one would definitely need to read the whole series in order to feel really satisfied because it just kind of leaves you hanging wondering what is going to happen next. I would have liked for there to have been a more complete ending for this book, and then with a thread to keep me wanting more from the next. The crux of the plot is really based around one thing and that is getting the main characters busted out of a jail in an evil kingdom. The characters were interesting and I did find myself caring about their outcome but some need to be developed a lot more and I anticipate that they will further along in the series. I would recommend this to folks who like fantasy series.

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### Jaidis Shaw says

Erich's Plea is book one of The Witchcraft Wars by Tracey Alley. This fantasy novel introduces us to Slade, who has given up his right as the prince of Vestland to become a Druid. After learning of Slade, we realize that he is in prison and endures hours of torture on a daily basis. With all hope of escaping quickly slipping from Slade's grasp, he is startled when he starts receiving a plea for help by his father, Erich. Knowing that he must somehow help his father, Slade finds himself blindly following strangers and not knowing who he can trust. In a few spots throughout the book, the details seemed to get a little thick at times which caused the pace of the story to slow down a bit. However, I really enjoyed how the characters were built and the overall storyline of this story makes for a good read. Each chapter opens up with a small picture and I found this to be wonderful. You get to see the faces of characters who are in the story and even though some looked differently than I imagined when they were described, it was nice to be able to put a face with a name. All in all this was a good read that went quickly and is suitable for most age groups. The main thing that I didn't really like in this story was the ending. I felt as though it was suddenly cut short and I think it would have been beneficial to have a big ending rather than be cut off before the main event. The story builds and leads the reader up to this big life changing ordeal...only that event does not occur in book one. However, I suppose that is a good selling point as I will be getting book two just so I can see what happens next with Slade and the other characters involved.

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### AH says

I won this book on Goodreads FirstReads giveaway.

Erich's Plea is the first book of Tracey Alley's The Witchcraft Wars series. It was a fun book to read and reminded me of a cross between a Dungeons and Dragons game and a fantasy world like that of Lord of the Rings. There is a large cast of characters and creatures in this book. There are humans, Halflings, orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, ogres, trolls, necromancers, even a minotaur. I liked that each chapter had a small hand drawn picture of a character or item in the story.

I enjoyed reading the book and I am looking forward to the second book in the series.

## Tracy Riva says

Erich's Plea

by Tracey Alley, copyright 2010 by Tracey Alley

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*Erich's Plea* by Tracey Alley is a trip into a meticulously designed fantasy world teetering on the brink of worldwide war. "Erich" is High King Erich and his plea is directed, by way of a dream to his imprisoned son, Prince Einreich, better known as Slade. Slade is being held captive in the worst prison in the known lands, one where escape is impossible, but escape is what he must do if he is to assist his father, the king.

Circumstances make for strange alliances and Slade finds himself being told in the dream to "follow the Trunk," a strange half-ogre, half-troll. Imagine his surprise when the very creature foreseen in his dream materializes as a prisoner in the courtyard one day. A daring jailbreak ensues, bringing together followers of the different gods, as well as some non-magical people. The followers of any one sect almost all automatically distrust the followers of another sect and those who practice no magic have no fondness for those who do. It is a situation ripe with tension, both within the little group and outside of them as they hope to free themselves and take on the elven witch Shallendara, the Dark One and their group of cohorts. But worse yet is the fact a traitor is among them and no one can know for certain who should be trusted.

Alley does an admirable job of telling a story that is fraught with tension while laying the groundwork for future installments of the Witchcraft Wars. The tale kept me interested throughout its entirety and turning pages eagerly clear till the end. The story rarely lagged; I felt that each piece of information contained in the pages of the book was integral to the developing story. Finally, I enjoyed the book enough that I have the next installment sitting on my computer waiting for me to review in about a month or so.

What follows is an excerpt from the book, the necromancer Nickolai is speaking:

*"I was captured in the north, in the Freeholds to be precise. I was traveling there, under orders, with Lord Michael Strong," Nickolai said slowly.*

*"You lie necromancer," Tares began.*

*"It's true, Tares," surprisingly the interruption came from Lara. "I was there," she looked at Nickolai suspiciously, "but that was months ago."*

*"True," Nickolai continued smoothly even though he was quite taken aback. He had been unaware of this little halfling and wondered just how much she knew.*

*"But what I learned in the freeholds then remains relevant now. Lord Michael and I discovered evidence that suggests a secret army is being formed. Who is behind this or why we were unable to discover. However, I did find out two interesting pieces of information, both of which involved what I believe to be assassination plots. The first," he paused and looked at Slade, "involved your father, High King Erich. Unfortunately I was unable to find out much more than the fact someone had ordered Erich killed."*

*Slade could feel the blood drain from his face, his heart was pounding and a cold sweat broke out on his brow. This then was what the dream had been about, his father, his king and liege lord was being stalked by*

*an unknown assassin. Slowly Slade turned to face Wulfstan. For the first time since Slade recognized the warrior it occurred to him to wonder exactly what one of his father's royal bodyguards was doing behind bars in Ostland's most vicious prison.*

*"You," Slade spoke slowly, his fear for his father pounding heavily through his blood, "You should have been with him. You're his bodyguard, one of them anyway," Slade's innate sense of fairness forced him to make that qualification. His love of his father however, drove him to his feet without his even being aware of it. Like a man in a dream or a nightmare, Slade walked over to the big warrior. Grabbing hold of the front of Wulfstan's shirt in his fist he pulled his one time friend to his feet."*

*"What happened Wulfstan?" Slade was shouting into Wulfstan's face, all thoughts of where he was or the need for silence completely forgotten in his fear and anger. "Where's my father?"*

I recommend Tracey Alley's *Erich's Plea*. It was interesting and enjoyable reading, and is set in a world so intricately developed that it is guaranteed to hold you enthralled till the final pages.

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## Sam says

Won this through the Goodreads Giveaways.

The first book in the Witchcraft Wars Trilogy, this is a fantastic fantasy novel that combines the mythology of different cultures (including Ancient Egypt, my favourite) with the fantasy world of the Kingdoms of Kaynos. This book follows the story of Slade, a young druid prisoner and prince of Vestland, as he escapes the infamous Zeaburg prison with the help of an unlikely band of allies, including a necromancer, a wizard and a half-ling. During this epic journey through the corridors and tunnels of the prison, the reader learns not only of Slade's past and his family but also of the rising shadow of war that is looming over the Kingdoms of Kaynos, as the Dark One gains power and control and amasses an army of outcasts and witches, setting the scene for the greatest bloodshed the Kingdoms have ever known.

Alley has created a world similar enough to our own for it to be believable and familiar while providing enough myth and magic to transport the reader to another world. The author's love of mythology comes through in the names and stories of the gods adding to the feel of the book and allowing the reader to be more familiar with the history of Kaynos. Alley portrays the world of Kaynos and its individual Kingdoms brilliantly, providing enough detail for the reader to picture the world easily without overburdening the story with too much detail and allowing the reader's imagination to take flight. The characters are believable with realistic and familiar fears, worries and beliefs that the reader can sympathise with.

This is book has set the scene for an epic fantasy trilogy and I can't wait to get my hands on the next one.

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## Celia says

Storyline:

It seems that Ms. Tracey Alley has written a fantasy series that is right up my Alley, so to speak!

*Erich's Plea* is the first in a fantasy series that takes place in a whole new realm of Ms. Alley's imaginings with all manner of creatures and is the first (that I've read) that has a Minotaur as one of the main characters.

I'm so excited by this character alone that I could sit and read the remaining books just based solely on this character's existence.

Ms. Alley introduces an interesting concept with a main element of her story being the differentiation between "magic" and "witchcraft". With the former a skill that is taught, trained and used with the blessing of a particular deity and the latter being something that is more innate and can work independently of the gods (be they "good" or bad" gods). I am definitely interested to see how these differences will be used in the future novels.

Grammar/Spelling:

I'm definitely a comma kind of gal and I might even go so far as to say that I LOVE commas. One thing that I noticed was a distinct shortage of commas throughout the story and this was somewhat distracting to me. At several points, I needed to read back over the sentence more than once to figure out what the character was actually saying.

Character Development:

Ms. Alley does a great job in developing the characters and showing the prejudices between those who practice magic and those who do not. I liked that this is not just a human trait, but that everyone and everything seemed to have this sort of distrust of one another. (Well, I don't like it when people don't trust one another because they're different, but I could relate to the distrust based on nothing more than fear of the unknown.)

Slade, the main character, is very believable as a former prince turned Druid. He has his doubts and his moments of weakness, but he is a strong leader and should prove to be a formidable foe to The Dark One and all who would wish to do his father's kingdom ill will.

Though, he is not the main character, the Minotaur named Tares, is the most intriguing. As I stated before, I have not read any other book, other than a certain story by a certain author who is the certainly one of the most well-known horror authors who lives in Maine and who shall remain nameless, that has ever featured a Minotaur. That alone is unique and wonderful. Tares is also a warrior priest, a healer and honorable even to the point of fault.

Writing Style:

The story itself is very easy to follow and read. I felt that there could be some more in-depth descriptions regarding the various areas of The Kingdoms, but I assume that with time, the rest of the series will give us more detail regarding those areas. Ms. Alley easily incorporates multiple pantheons of gods that the reader will have no trouble keeping straight.

Continuance:

The story seems to have conflicting timelines. The main group of characters' adventures and movements seem to encompass a single day; while a secondary set of characters' (seemingly) concurrent adventures occur over a much longer period of time. It doesn't muddle the story; but, rather, it's more like an odd quirk. But, given the quick pace of the main character's escape and exploits, the story definitely moved along rather quickly and the timeline differences are barely noticeable.

Overall Rating: 4

Overall, the story is wonderful and the reader can easily and quickly become quite involved with the characters. It is evident that Ms. Alley put a lot of thought into the story, the realm and the characters. One of the aspects I really liked the apparent ease of the story; it does have a strong plot line and many different characters, but I feel like this will be easy to follow through to the end of the series.

I would recommend Erich's Plea to anyone who enjoys fantasy, though if your preferences lie in the darker realms, this may not be the book for you. I'd also suggest this to anyone as a "beginner" fantasy novel as the different creatures are mainly ones that are commonly recognized from mythology.

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**Robert Duperre says**

Rating: 2.2 out of 5

Reviewing can be a frustrating game.

You dive into a book. You want to love it. You get to know the author, and they're a super-nice person. And yet sometimes the reading experience lags behind your expectations. You don't want to be mean, but you owe it to everyone – yourself, your readers, hell even the writer themselves – to be honest.

That's where I found myself with Erich's Plea by Tracey Alley.

In its premise, the book is hopeful. Slade, the son of a king, has abdicated his rights to the throne in order to become a druid. He is eventually thrown in prison for nefarious reasons. He dreams of his father, who's been captured (or killed), and is left instructions on how he should go about plotting his escape. He eventually does, with the help of the typical rogue's galley of fantasy characters. And in the background of all this, there is the intrigue of a plot to take over the world by a singular dark entity with seemingly unlimited power.

There were a few problems I ran into with the story. First of all, for a main character, Slade is, honestly, not very interesting. He has no charisma, no charm. It's almost as if he's simply there. Secondly, the majority of the plot revolves around the big prison escape, which like Slade isn't very exciting. The reading is quick, but the action scenes are lacking. The head-hopping between characters can be confusing, and the characters themselves are oftentimes clichéd. There reached a point where I wanted to say, "all right, get out of the prison already!" It drags on through the length of the novel, and I begged this particular storyline to end.

This is where I come to the most frustrating aspect of all in this book. Whereas the main story arc, the prison break, is mundane and tiresome, the peripheral occurrences show so much promise, so much thought. The main protagonist in these (too short) sections is Lord Michael Strong. He, along with the grand wizard (or necromancer – I couldn't figure out which exactly) Lord Nexus are having clandestine meetings to figure out ways in which they can reunite the different kingdoms that always seem to be at odds with each other, under the poisonous eyes of The Dark One, the seemingly all-powerful evil presence.

Through their conversations, Lords Michael and Nexus reveal the history of the world author Alley has built, and it is wonderful. It is a mirror to our own, in which the xenophobia and racism that exists between the warring factions brings down what had the potential to be an almost utopian society. I greatly appreciated these aspects of the book, along with the descriptions of the different types of magic. I found these threads to be original and inventive, and well worth expanding upon.

However, the author doesn't, and instead we're thrust back into the boring escape plan.

There's something else amiss with the work, however, and this has everything to do with The Dark One, himself. He's painted as an omnipresent figure, one who knows everything that happens around him, who is tyrannical in his rule. And yet we meet him, face-to-face (first mistake), and he's more like a caricature than a well-fleshed-out villain. Also, for someone so all-powerful, he's surrounded by spies (second mistake). This lessens his effectiveness and turns the character into a joke. How could such a dominant being with the power of mind-reading and witchcraft at his disposal not know all these characters in his tight inner circle are plotting against him? It simply doesn't make sense and, although this is strange to say about a work of fantasy, makes the story much less believable.

The writing style the author uses is brisk, but there is something off about it, as well. The comma usage is all over the place. Many of the sentences are run-ons. There is information that is contradictory or unnecessary to the action. Here are a couple prime examples:

As it always did, on those rare occasions that Luca came to this section of the prison, he found the utter

silence unnerving, although, at least it masked the screams of the prisoners.

They could all do with some better supplies Slade knew, apart from Lara, Tares and Darzan, who appeared fully equipped, the rest of them carried only arms and equipment purloined from the dead guards.

Not only this, but the author has a tendency to repeat names over and over and over again when a simple "he" or "she" would suffice. This is distracting and more than a little bit maddening, as well.

And yet, all this aside, I would probably read another of Alley's work if given the opportunity. She does have a playfulness to her tone that I find intriguing. Some of her characters are inventive and break their tropes. She has a good head for societal themes and world-building. It's simply not present in this book as much as it should be.

I know there are more novels the series. Perhaps she has matured as a writer since this one was written, perhaps not. But if it doesn't improve, that would be it for me.

As for Erich's Plea...I found it middling, at best.

Plot - 3

Characters - 5

Voice - 5

Execution - 4

Personal Enjoyment - 5

Overall - 22/50 (2.2/5)

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### **Maggie says**

I won this book on a giveaway from Goodreads and I really enjoyed it. I had never read Tracey Alley's work before, but I very much enjoyed her writing style. The character development along with the story were both great. I believe that Erich's Plea is the first of a trilogy and I think that Alley did a fantastic job of writing a story that stands alone while still enticing readers to seek out the second story. Too often series of books do not offer enough of an individual story line to be entertaining on their own; I found Erich's Plea to be a book with a great story line while still building towards the "larger picture."

The one aspect of the book that I did not love were the drawings of characters placed at the beginning of each chapter. Alley did a great job describing the physical attributes of each of her characters and I felt that if anything these drawings contradicted the images that the text created for the reader.

I am eager to find out when the second book in the series is coming out and I would very much recommend this story to anyone who enjoys historical fantasy pieces.

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### **Megnjane says**

I won this book as a first read, so I was quite excited to read a new fantasy author. Overall I really enjoyed the story. It reads very well, the story flowed, characters are interesting, it contains betrayal ambition and magic. It did leave the ending open for the next book, however it was stated that this is the first in the trilogy. What I did not like was the actual layout of the story, it jumped from different characters points of view, I

also did not like the maps and pictures throughout the story, they did not to my point of view benefit the story it just made the text layout look worse.

I will however look for the sequel, as I would like to know what happens.

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## Ben Babcock says

Disclaimer: I won this in a Goodreads First Reads Giveaway. Loves me the free books.

In her biography, Tracey Alley confesses her love of Dungeons & Dragons—and it shows. From beginning to end, *Erich's Plea* reads like a D&D adventure. And that's not a good thing.

I'm going to start by nitpicking the editing here. This book could have benefited from an editor (or if it had one, a better editor), both a copy-editor and a story editor. I am sure there is an adequate story somewhere inside this book, but it is buried beneath awkward, ungrammatical constructions and exposition-heavy dialogue.

Alley has trouble with both commas and semi-colons: not enough of the former, and oddly enough, she seems to use the latter correctly sometimes and randomly at other times. There are plenty of comma splices; then suddenly I will rejoice to see a semi-colon correctly joining together two independent clauses. It's like the clouds have parted and a beam of light is shining down from the heavens! Nevertheless, it's that first issue, the dearth of commas, that really hurts *Erich's Plea*. In fact, as someone who has historically tended to go the other way and overuse our tiny curly friends, reading this book has reminded me of their importance in joining phrases and subordinate clauses.

I don't talk about it very much in reviews, because it kind of goes without saying: punctuation is serious business. If I have to translate a book from English to *English* in order to read it, that will definitely detract from my enjoyment, even if the story beyond that grammatical obstacle is brilliant. Unfortunately, this is where *Erich's Plea* needs that second type of editor. As much as it needs a good line-by-line dissection by a trained wielder of the red pen, this book also needs a serious big-picture editor who knows how to tweak for success.

For example, at one point the main characters are trapped in a series of tunnels, and one of them unleashes a fireball that causes everything to catch on fire. Including several of his party trapped at ground zero. After they have been pulled from the flames, the narrator describes the situation thusly: "Despite the fact that the flames had lasted merely minutes Wulfstan, Trunk and Nikolai had all been severely burned." There's some questionable physics going on here. I myself have never been set on fire, but I have a feeling that if I were on fire for "merely *minutes*," there would be no "despite" about it.

And I don't want to be pedantic about this. It is obvious what Alley meant with that passage, but it just takes some editing to realize that the line should be changed to make more sense. These things tend to get away from a writer during the actual writing, and even during subsequent drafts. That is understandable, and that's what editors are for.

I get the feeling that Alley has the general narrative worked out, but she gets lost in conveying the mechanics and details of that narrative (don't we all?). This results in some sloppy and otherwise unappealing habits. Earlier in the book, as the characters are skulking around a level of the terrifying Zeaburg Prison, they encounter some orcs. Alley feels the need to describe, in detail, the glacial thought processes of these thick prison guards, and throughout the battle, remind us that the orcs are slow-witted indeed. The icing on this cake of repetition occurs when the annoying halfling Lara decides to take on the guards single-handedly:

Thinking far more quickly than the slow-witted orc guards, Lara knew that the doorway would admit only one of them at a time. Orcs were not known for their slender physiques, that fact and the corridor itself presented her with plenty of opportunities to take out the guards.

I will acknowledge the welcome and proper use of a comma to offset that initial subordinate clause. This does not happen often enough. Note, however, the unfortunate comma splice in the second sentence. So on net balance, grammar points here are zero. But I digress. What I want to point out is the way in which this passage is written from Lara's perspective. Lara is "thinking," Lara "knows" that orcs are slow-witted. This is a classic case of *telling* when one should be showing—wait, on the next page, Alley *does*:

Two guards reached the doorway at the same time, their broad shoulders connecting as they each tried to get through the door first. The two orcs pushed and shoved at each other trying to get through the door, while grunting at each other in their native tongue.

So that first passage is completely unnecessary, because Alley conveys the same thing half a page later. And because here she is showing us, not telling us, what is happening, it makes for much better reading.

Incidentally, most of this book is centred around the escape from Zeaburg Prison. Apparently the governor of the prison had set up the escape so these prisoners could be assassinated; their deaths would just look like they had been killed trying to escape. That is actually rather clever. Unfortunately, this literal dungeon part of the Dungeons & Dragons motif is a drag. The characters spend the entire book escaping from the prison, travelling through an escape tunnel, and then they end up in the middle of the city controlled by the Big Bad (more on him in a moment). None of this is very interesting. Beyond the initial escape and that confrontation with the slow-witted orcs, these characters get into very little danger. There are some icky spiders, some ill-advised fire magic, and the problem of what to wear to the dark festival, of course. But these problems are smoke and mirrors that distract from a critical flaw, which is that this main plotline has no real plot.

Most of what happens in *Erich's Plea* is exposition. There are essentially three plots happening here: Slade et al escaping from Zeaburg, Michael's visits with Lord Nexus and Ulrich, and Ursula's escape from Ulrich's clutches. In the first part, as I mentioned, there are no real conflicts relevant to the overarching story and villain. It's all just prison escape and bickering between characters with stock attributes and relationships. Michael's story can be divided into two sets of dialogue: his conversation with Lord Nexus, which is just a history of Kaynos and some explanation of Alley's magical systems; and his confrontation with Ulrich and subsequent exile. Again, not much going on that really changes the status quo. Finally, we briefly meet Ursula. And again, her sole purpose is to *tell* us how Ulrich came to power and became such a naughty king. From golden ages to war and witchcraft, most of *Erich's Plea* is backstory.

Backstory is all well and good, and it is nice to see that Alley has put considerable thought into her fictional universe. The only missing component is that crucial binding element: the story to which the backstory is *backstory*. How can I tell? It is very simple: none of the antagonists actually do anything in this story. We hear about them. We hear what terrible things they *have* done and what terrible things they *intend* to do. Not so much on the doing.

The Big Bad of *Erich's Plea*, by the way, is called the Dark One.

No, I am not making that up. Yes, "the Dark One." At first I thought this was merely laughable. Seriously, what self-respecting storyteller names his or her villain "the Dark One"?

Turns out Robert Jordan does. Not being a *Wheel of Time* reader, this escaped my notice at first (thank you, TVTropes). Smugly, of course, this discovery is a good demonstration of *why* I eschew *Wheel of Time*, but that is neither here nor there. My point is that calling one's villain "the Dark One" does no one favours.

Nor does Alley's portrayal of this Dark One ameliorate his melodramatic title. Instead of remaining an enigma whom the protagonist only confronts during the climax, we meet the Dark One and learn that he is *only human*. To be fair, we learned quite early that the Dark One is a human, or rumoured to be human. But when we meet him, it seems like he is *just* human. He's not even that smart; at least, he doesn't notice that his right-hand man has betrayed him. And he has allied himself with a witch who seeks to rival the gods in her powers. I shall take one guess about the fate of *that* alliance....

Unfortunately, we only meet the Dark One once, and not for long. So we know almost nothing about him, and after destroying his precious evil mystique and supervillain street cred, Alley frustratingly keeps him an abstraction as a character. So "the Dark One" is the "bad guy" because he hates non-humans. So it goes.

Speaking of abstractions, I couldn't help but notice that some of the characters aren't ... always ... there. By which I mean, sometimes it seems like Alley has forgotten that certain characters are with Slade's party; they just fade away and then rematerialize when they have a line to contribute. This happens in particular to Darzan and Trunk, who often drop away for tens of pages even when there is some action happening to which both could contribute (why does the halfling have to slay all the orcs?!). Yet another sign here that *Erich's Plea* needs an editor. In the case of someone like Darzan, it makes me wonder if she is all that necessary to the story; her role is mostly extraneous, so she could probably be cut. Considering Trunk's relation to a reveal at the end of the book, not to mention his role in Slade's vision, his lack of participation is a little more problematic but no less noticeable.

So I conclude by reiterating what is, perhaps, the most serious offense of *Erich's Plea*, which is its frustrating lack of story. The egregious grammar and poor editing wound me to my core, and they certainly do nothing to predispose me to the book. Nevertheless, they are meta-narrative problems, technical problems, and thus all the more easily corrected. Lacking a story is a **huge** problem. I know Alley has a story to tell, because her meticulous explanation of the political climate of Kaynos, the way its kingdoms and states and magic are set up, reveals to me the direction she wants to pursue with this series. I just wish she had gone much further along that path than she does, because as far as I am concerned, *Erich's Plea* is not Book One of the Withcraft Wars; it is Book Zero.

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## Ciaran says

I got an ARC of this book as part of the Goodreads Firstreads program!

Where to start with this book...Overall impressions? I Loved it. Once i started reading it, I was back into the story every chance I got.

Characters?

All the fantasy tropes are here: Necromancer, Mages, Paladins, Druids, Thieves, Warriors, Mysterious Evil, Other Races - elves, trolls, orcs and a mention of dragons! That said, these are not the usual 2D just deep enough to fit the role lot. Yes, actions are for the most part determined by how x or Y should act in a black and white world...but this isnt, and they arent.

I can see the potential this series has, the different directions it could take, and indeed the different paths each

of the main group could take, it will be fun to see which ones Alley takes them down.

### Storyline?

The overall story arc for the whole series is started in this book, which, due to singular trial that our heroes deal with - the escape from the prison - makes it feel like its just an introduction, something that would have taken at most just a third of a similar book in this genre. This is the only thing that felt like a let down to me - although i must point out, by the end, I was glad of this, as i got to know the characters a bit better before they embark on what will most definately be an epic adventure.

Finally, I'm gonna point out that this book has a lot of spelling errors and niggly placings of commas and some odd sentance structure (I couldnt do any better myself - as you can tell from reading this) that the books copy editor should have picked up on, and hopefully these will be fixed in future editions (and I hope it stays in print for many years and gets lots of new editions printed to keep up with demand)

Will I keep reading this series? Yes, it was a fun read, and has a great potential that Alley seems more than capable of fulfilling!

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## Martha Cheves says

Erich's Plea: Book One of the Witchcraft Wars – Review by Martha A. Cheves, Author of Stir, Laugh, Repeat

‘Two months ago he had arrived at Ostland’s Zeaburg prison complex and been taken to this subterranean dungeon with its smooth stone walls, mazes of corridors, little or no lighting and the constant smell of death, blood, waste and decay in his nostrils. He had been alternately beaten and tortured for hours on a daily basis. His own screams blending with the cries, screams and moans of the other, unseen, sufferers in Zeaburg’s nightmarish torture chambers. The horrors here were so great that even the rats eschewed Zeaburg, although the fleas showed no similar scruples and were an additional constant torment. His body was covered head to toe with tiny bites from the multitudes of the awful creatures. Slade would not have believed it was possible for a place like Zeaburg prison to exist if he had not seen it with his own eyes. It well deserved its evil reputation. Zeaburg also had a reputation for being inescapable; no one, in all its long history had ever escaped from its confines, except in death. Slade had never believed half the rumors that had surrounded Zeaburg before, now he saw clearly they were all true and worse. He also knew why so many of those imprisoned here died and, it was said, were glad to, death being preferable to daily life in Zeaburg.’

Einreich Gudmundson is the second son of the High King Erich. Much to the disappointment of his father, he has renounced his life as the Crown Prince of Vestland and now calls himself Slade. He will now be a member of the druids of the Sacred Grove, dedicating his life to serve Freyita. That was all before he was captured and taken to Ostland’s Zeaburg Prison. His committed crimes are still a mystery to Slade but the punishment is completely real. Only when he sleeps is he able to find peace from the pain of the beatings he has endured in his two months of imprisonment but even sleep becomes disturbed by the dreams of his father begging for his help.

How can Slade possibly help his father the king while stuck in this hole of hell? He can only try to keep his mind as clear as possible and practice the training taught to him by the warrior-monks of the Black Lotus and

pray for some form of help along the way. And help does come in the form of a being that calls himself 'Trunk.' In his dreams his father told him to follow the trunk and Slade is sure this is who he was referring to. So with the help of this larger than life 'trunk' as well as help from a few other unlikely allies, Slade finds himself attempting the impossible...an escape from the inescapable prison of Zeaburg.

This book is full of mystery, suspense, witchcraft, magic, dishonesty, espionage...I could go on and on. The characters are colorful not only in appearance but also in character. Author Tracey Alley has written a very enjoyable book and I really hope that Erich's Plea: Book Two is just around the corner for me to read. I've gotten into the story and characters and can't wait to see what will happen to them next.

315 pages  
2010

Review Stir, Laugh, Repeat at Amazon.com Stir, Laugh, Repeat

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### **Christa says**

Erich's Plea, the first part of Tracey Alley's trilogy of The Witchcraft Wars is a real treat for readers who love fantasy/adventure stories which are not only entertaining but also carry a deeper meaning. I was immediately pulled into the intriguing world and the characters the author created. The story deals with such ancient and archetypical themes as love in its many forms (romantic love, spiritual love, love of one's family and country, love between friends) as well as greed, jealousy, and the temptation of power and its abuse.

Young Slade, the crown prince and heir to the Kingdom of Vestland, gives up his birthright as future king and chooses instead the spiritual life. He becomes a follower of the goddess Freya. He renounces the intrigues and politics of the court, only to become a victim of them. Imprisoned in the most horrible dungeon, ruled by the Dark One, an evil tyrant, he manages to escape with the help of a friend. While in prison, he had a recurring dream, in which his father asked for his help. Together with a motley crew of friends and companions, he sets out on a journey to save his father, his sister, and his country from a terrible calamity.

This is a well-crafted, fascinating story, which has many layers of meaning and is both entertaining and enlightening. The beautiful illustrations add another dimension to it. I can only recommend it! I look forward to reading the second part, Ursula's Quest: Book Two of the Witchcraft Wars.

Christa Polkinhorn  
Love of a Stonemason

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### **Eden says**

Slade, who was once a prince, was captured and sent to prison. He is not exactly sure why, what his crime was. But, he finds out more about the strange situation when there is a prison riot and he meets up with some unusual people. He's unsure whether he can trust these people. But he knows he must follow his dream and help his father, the king.

Won this from a Goodreads giveaway. It kept my interest right from the beginning and right from the start I

was enjoying the story. But, the further it got into the book, the more I got hooked because it just kept getting better and better.

I like the world Tracey Alley created and the characters, I felt they were all so unique and different from each other. Even the characters who annoyed me because of their attitudes, I still liked them. And I'm not sure whether the book could be considered adult fantasy, or young adult fantasy. But, I think it could be read by adults, or young adults.

Overall, I loved it and I thought it was a really great book.

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## **Brenda says**

When we first met Einreich Gudmundson, he was in the infamous Zeaburg prison, where he had been incarcerated for two months. He had renounced his life as Crown Prince of Vestland, much to the disappointment of his father, High King Erich, and changed his name to Slade. During the day, Slade was tortured mercilessly and during the night he was haunted by dreams of his father, asking him to save him, and to 'follow the trunk'. Slade couldn't work out what it all meant, and with his mind becoming foggy with exhaustion and pain, he struggled just to get through each day.

He was determined to escape this dreadful prison which no-one had ever escaped from though, and he kept as vigilant as he could, using the training which had been taught to him by the warrior-monks of the Black Lotus, to keep his mind calm. When suddenly the opportunity arose, he found himself in the company of a being calling himself Trunk...was this what his father's dream had been instructing? He was sure it was, and so determined to remain in the gigantic and strong, but gentle, Trunk's company in their endeavour for freedom. During their escape, through the tunnels below the prison, they were joined by a necromancer, a wizard and a halfling, as well as a pirate and High King Erich's most senior guard, who had also been imprisoned. This unlikely group, normally enemies, found themselves as sudden allies, for the time being at least.

Slade learned about the war that was looming, and how The Dark One was gaining control over the Kingdoms of Kaynos...the peace of centuries was about to be shattered, the results would be bloody. As they moved toward safety, Slade was desperate to find and help his father, but could he trust these sudden 'allies'? Was it a further trap, and who would survive the witchcraft and wizardry?

I really enjoyed the entertainment of this book, and will be picking up book 2 as soon as possible.

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