



Dark Moon Defender

Sharon Shinn

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In this story of hidden magic and forbidden love, the King's Rider Justin befriends Ellynor, a young novice at a convent-only to discover that she is a mystic being manipulated by the fanatical Daughters of the Pale Moon into hunting down and killing other mystics.

Dark Moon Defender Details

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From Reader Review Dark Moon Defender for online ebook

Latharia says

Some have said that of the Twelve Houses books thus far, this is Sharon Shinn's weakest effort ... well, I beg to differ. I loved it. I think I liked it better than the first two, probably because I had a chance to see such a tremendous change in Justin's character. Wow! I knew I always liked him for a reason. *grin*

Lorena says

Probably the weakest of the series so far - a 2.5. I don't feel like enough was done with Justin, either in terms of his character or his actions in the book. There really didn't seem to be much of an internally-logical reason (as far as the plots taking place WITHIN the book) to keep him alone in Neft for so long, other than to spin out the plot OF the book (basically, to pair him up with Ellynor). It's not like he really learned anything during this extended spying expedition that wasn't already old news. His romance was also the least interesting of the ones we've seen so far...pretty much a formulaic "big man feels protective of delicate woman" story. Ellynor had some charm, but was nowhere near the fully-developed and compelling character that Senneth and Kirra are.

Melissa says

I love this series! This is my third time reading it and I just sigh with happiness every-time I finish. This is the third book and Justin's story. Justin becomes more his own character as he is sent out on a lone mission. This is one of my favorite love stories it has so many great elements and everything comes together so well. This one is also a great one for the other characters who are growing and going through their own changes. This book brings the band of 6 even closer together and sets up more of the war between Coralanda and the Mystics! I can't wait till she gets it. This book has some violence but it is not too detailed and some premarital sex that is fade to black. This whole series is a PG 13 if it was a movie.

Phoebe says

Starting off a little slow...

Didn't get much better. A slow middle-of-the-series book. The love story was particularly unattractive and the end a little too easy.

K. O'Bibliophile says

Dark Moon Defender, or, A Story in which More Members of that Odd Group Enter Inappropriate and/or Odd Relationships and Snark at Each Other.

Justin was never my favorite character from this series. Sunny Kirra, kickbutt Senneth, and adorkable Cammon are tops. But I have a soft spot for Justin, in part because his name is *Justin*. Aerith and Bob, anyone? Justin is not a fantasy name. Justin is not a warrior's name. Justin is the guy who shares his notes when you miss class.

The basic plot continues the two previous books: in order to find out if the growing anti-magic cult has anything to do increased attacks on mystics (and also to see if there's any connection between the cult mother Coralinda and her treasonous wants-to-depose-the-king brother Halchon), Justin is sent undercover to a nearby city to spy.

At first, this is disappointing if you are not wholeheartedly a Justin fan: by himself, there's fewer opportunities for the other characters to pop up (as in the two previous books, where they traveled mainly as a group). But Justin quickly grew on me. He's like a puppy that's less annoying the more time you spend with him.

I wasn't a big fan of the growing romance, because it basically started like **THIS** , and Ellynor (a novice at the convent) is such a quiet, almost passive character compared to the others. To the book's credit, it doesn't pretend otherwise--several times the writing speaks to how Ellynor is so different from the other women, and what kind they probably would've expected Justin to fall in love with. Mismatched pairings are quite the theme of this series.

Ellynor does have her strengths; in fact, her most powerful ability is related to being quiet and unnoticed. She's shy, but she's not a pushover, and her differences from the more outgoing Senneth and Kirra aren't portrayed as weaknesses, just differences.

I'll be interested to see how Ellynor is integrated into this already-strong group of friends in the next books. They have such a great tone--see my status updates below for some great exchanges--and I particularly enjoyed a moment near the end where Kirra and Justin admit they basically think of each other as siblings, amidst a ton of teasing.

Eliza Baum says

This one is more like 4.5 stars instead of a solid 5, but I'm rounding up out of general love for the series and the characters. My biggest quasi-complaint is that out of the core 6 characters, only Justin gets any solid screen time. It was nice that Senneth and Tayse had some scenes of their own, but I would have liked to have the others around for a larger chunk of the book. I liked Ellynor well enough, but her POV was not nearly as enthralling as the rest of the gang, and that's my reason for deducting that whopping half of a star.

Despite my lesser love for Ellynor, my absolute favorite scene of the whole book is the one near the end where (view spoiler). Though, to be fair, that might largely be because of how much I love Justin.

I like how we got to see the carry-through from book 2, with Kirra proclaiming (view spoiler). I also liked that Kirra got to talk to Senneth a bit about how things were going with (view spoiler)

And? Tayse is THE MAN. I loved (view spoiler). Oh! And how about the sneaky revelation about (view spoiler).

I still LOVE LOVE LOVE these books. I'm taking a short break before I read book 4, partially to let a friend who's on book 1 catch up, and partially because I don't want them to end!

A side note: I listened to about 80% of this book on audio, like I did entirely with the first 2 books, and I was not impressed. It switched to a male narrator, since Justin is the main POV character in this book, and he was *not* good at doing the female voices. Or keeping the accents straight. Donnal had an Irish accent, even though he didn't have one in the first 2 books. (Different narrator, yeah, but I would have liked some consistency.) I got used to that eventually, but then Cammon's accent started fluctuating toward Irish, too, despite not being at all Irish at the beginning of the book. So yeah. While I *highly* recommend the audio for books 1 and 2, I think I'm going to stick with the kindle version for book 4.

Melindam says

Well, Sharon Shinn is the effing uncrowned Queen of Political Intrigue in the romantic fantasy genre, and no mistake.

I am reading the paperback format & kind of missing Jennifer van Dyck's excellent reading it aloud to me – but the audiobook series switched to a male narrator whom I did not particularly like after having been offered a sample.

I did not like the book as much as the first 2 installments of the series, but it was a very enjoyable read anyway & earns a solid four stars from me.

It is Justin's story, and as he is on a „lonely” assignment to spy on Coralinda Gisseltess & her Lumanen Convent, we do not get as many circle-of-friends-moments as I would have liked. Whenever all the 6 friends (Senneth, Tayse, Justin, Cammon, Kirra & Donnal) are together, those are always the most powerful-joyful parts of all the books of the Twelve Houses series for me. However scarce, when we they occur in Dark Moon Defender, they are always full of excitement & moving moments.

As other reviewers pointed out, the story in general does not move forward a great deal. The Twelve Houses are still plotting for or against King Baryn or try to stay neutral. Everybody is still assessing the odds of war or peace though it is becoming more pronounced who allies with whom. Yet, you can feel a kind of eye of the storm calmness that will most probably culimnate in the fourth book, Reader & Raelynx.

Nevertheless, the individual storylines picked up from Books 1 & 2 are developing absolutely to my liking and also enough happens with the friends and Justin & Ellynor that I never found the overall pacing dragging.

We are shown life - seemingly pious and innocent- in the Lumanen Convent & but at the same time we get the overall workings of dangerous and alluring fundamentalism through the worshiping of the moon goddess, the Pale Mother. This goddess is used by a blindly fanatic, ambitious Coralinda & her followers to further their own vicious causes in killing others who are mostly harmless, only different than they are. We are shown that not all followers are that devoted or vicious, yet how much harm they cause by standing by mutely or unaware of what is committed on behalf of deity.

What I liked:

- Senneth & Tayse's overall storyline. I was so happy for them.
- Cammon being able to „feel” Justin's distress & need for help over hundreds of miles
- Finally we are introduced to House Brassenthwaite & Senneth's brothers in person. I love what happened there. :)

- The pairing of Casserah Danalastrous & Will Brassenthwaite
- Sabina's storyline, how she ends up being helped both by Ellynor, Justin and the Senneth.
- The Friendship Bond (view spoiler)
- The way Ellynor heals Justin
- Senneth's gift to Justin. That had me almost in tears.
- The rescue scene at the end is spectacular & one in the eye for sanctimonious, revolting Coralinda
- More intrigue around Queen Valri – I hope we get to know about her in the next book, why she left her homeland and married the King.

What I didn't like:

- Ellynor's character was quite ambiguous for me. I started out liking her, but as the story developed her willful obtuseness (view spoiler) even though clearly a plot device, started grating on my nerves, because she kept endangering herself and thus Justin and his friends.
-

Mookie says

Well, it might be because I've been reading all the Twelve Houses books in a row, but I think I finally hit on one that's a wee bit too saccharine for my liking. Still, I loved it. I love the characters, and I love the progression of Senneth & Tayse's relationship (and I totally went all girly at the public proposal scene and the wedding). Ellynor was obviously the 'weak' link, but Shinn displays a self awareness of Ellynor's character. Not every woman can be as perfect as Senneth and Kirra. And Ellynor isn't exactly weak, but gentle. And gentle is a perfect fit for Justin. Although I don't really understand how someone who is so prone to irritability can be so patient with a girl who cries all the time. But Senneth made a good point: he needs to take care of people. And holy biatch was Rosaurie a wench. And Kirra, I love me my funny Kirra, "you all look like rat-catcher's cousins!"

My main complaint is what exactly made Ellynor the 'one' that stops Justin in his tracks and makes him pay attention? They were pushing this so hard in the last books how Justin is totally impervious to the wiles of the female gender, and frankly he's rescued tons of girls and been flirted with by many a tavern maid etc, what made Ellynor so special? I understand their love deepening as their friendship progressed, but I don't get where the spark happened.

My other complaints were that there was such fear build-up with her Lirren family, that the actual events waned in comparison. Also, again, not much of a plot. This was an inserter book to give Justin a romance. Senneth is apparently *not* a gossip, but really every scene she's in they're all gossiping (albeit lovingly) about some relationship someone is having. I also NEED clarification on Kirra and Donnelly's relationship!! gah!

Overall, really enjoyable. I'll def. reread if ever I'm in the mood for saccharine, predictable romance, and also just to see Senneth and Tayse get hitched again.

Jeffe Kennedy says

Loved this one, too! Really an excellent series that's gaining depth as events progress. Loved every bit of this book.

Aerin Proffitt says

This is the third book and I love this one because its about Justin. HE IS SO CUTE. AND HIS GIRLFRIEND IS SO CUTE TOO. Also, this one has a soft sex scene (just a heads up) Which I really liked actually.

The funnest part of The Twelve Houses series, is that it manages to explore a different magic in each book. This one is of the lesser known goddesses and I think she is super duper cool.

(spoilers?)

Justin is lowkey brilliant in this one, he was really well chosen for this mission. I like the part where he hides the woman in his bed WITH HIS OWN BODY. That was so cool.

Lizzy says

Justin is the shiznit.

jD says

Reading this book during Hurricane Sandy yesterday was the perfect distraction. I didn't have any idea what Ms. Shinn would do with Justin's story so I let her lead while I followed.

This one is more of a love story and didn't really move the series forward for me so I took a star off for that and the ending. I don't like the fill-in the details endings even if I can see it clearly.

This series has characters that hold me in a sweet thrall. Justin, like Tayse, is a man of honor and purpose. I wondered what the woman would be like to capture his heart. As it turns out, she was everything he needed and many things he didn't. They both started out hiding secrets. I believe the mysteries they held allowed them to fall in love. Neither understood what was truly at stake.

The heroine, Ellynor, is from the mysterious Lirrenlands on the other side of the mountain from Gillengaria. Ellynor is a novice in the convent run by the wholly evil zealot Corlinda Gisseltess. The story gave a comprehensive view of life inside the convent. As expected, the Daughters of the Pale Mother are doing very bad things to Mystics. Ellynor came to the convent to support her cousin who was basically weak minded moving towards crazy. While on an outing, Ellynor is attacked and needed a hero. In came Justin. The two began to bond almost immediately. I felt they were an excellent fit and I like the fact that Ms. Shinn doesn't rush through the process of falling in love.

Justin is working alone on his assignment to spy on the convent so he doesn't have his friends by his side at first. Of course, they are there when he needs them. Senneth and Tayse move their relationship to the next level in this one and made me nearly cry. I love Kirra and Donnal but their relationship is strange and doesn't work for me beyond friendship. I would like more to come of it but they would need their own book. Cammon is his usual sweet self. Although the story did not move enough of the conflict forward, there was still movement of major threads. I liked everything that came to light and the new bonds that were formed in support of the main characters.

My libray didn't have book 4 on the shelves so I am gonna have to wait on that one. Whoa is me.

Kathy * Bookworm Nation says

I enjoyed this third book quite a bit. It was very interesting to see things from Justin and Ellynor's perspective. The majority of the story takes place in Neft, where Justin is working undercover trying to determine what exactly Coralinda is up to. He comes to the rescue of young Ellynor on the streets of Neft and the two quickly become captivated with one another. Up until now, I had a certain image of Justin in my mind, so it was somewhat odd to see things from his perspective, because he now comes across totally different than the character I had pictured. This is the first time he is completely on his own and he doesn't like it much. That is one reason why he bonds so quickly with Ellynor. It also gives him a chance to really become independent from Tayse and build his confidence and make his own decisions. I thought Ellynor was a welcome character to the story, she is a bit naive and inexperienced, but has a strength, savvy and kindness about her that makes her very likable. I was happiest when all six characters were together again, the story is at its best when we can see them all interact and it's nice to see how much they have come to love and respect one another. I can't wait to read book four.

Has anyone else noticed that Justin kind of got ripped off in the name department? Everyone else has these really cool unique names: Senneth, Tayse, Donnal, Cammon, Kirra and then Justin. I like the name Justin but it seems so plain compared to everyone else's.

Kelcey says

[even better that he ends up married to a mystic. *snickers* (hide spoiler)]

Meredith Galman says

Beautifully written though it is, this entry in Shinn's Twelve Houses series is the least satisfying of all her novels. The romance between King's Rider Justin and the Lirren mystic Ellynor is touching and well-drawn, but it is not enough to sustain the whole book. In a faster-paced, more action-packed book, I might have overlooked the tedious repetitiveness and numerous minor inconsistencies, but Dark Moon's sheer lack of drama and suspense made those small crimes more visible. But the biggest problem is that the book does nothing at all to advance the larger plot: we learn nothing we didn't already know about the Gisseltess plot to overthrow the king, the nature of the mystics, or anything else to do with the coming war. The one thing we do learn is that it will probably involve more Lirren participation than might have been anticipated -- and that the next installment is likely (speculation, not spoiler) to bring together Cammon and a rescued mage named Lara. I am still enjoying the series, but I hope it will pay off in a big climax soon.

Michelle says

Book three in the Twelve Houses series turns its focus to Justin, the street urchin turned Kings Rider. He's stationed near the convent of the Pale Mother with orders to watch out for signs of rebellion under the power hungry Halchon and Coralinda Gisseltess. After saving a young novice from the convent, Ellynor, he begins to learn more about her while experiencing the true evil of Coralinda and her hatred of mystics firsthand.

To be honest this book fell a little flat for me. Let's first say I love the political conflict and dynamics between the various houses. And I LOVED the progression of Senneth and Tayse's relationship. So wonderful!! But. The relationship between Justin and Ellynor just wasn't much to write home about. Perhaps I was expecting too much since I loved the first two - turmoil and very developed conflict that continually kept me on my toes. Here, the whole big, strong man who falls for the small, dainty female that needs to be protected just seemed a little too blah for me.

And the whole thing with Kirra and Donnal! AHHH! When did that get resolved?! I feel like I need an additional book to further discuss their relationship and for me to just to get to know Donnal - I feel like I know him the least of the six.

So, I'd probably give it a 3.5, but I'll just do a 3. But I'll for sure keep reading the series because the first two were just so good, I'm hoping this one was a fluke.

Chachic says

Originally posted here.

Dark Moon Defender is the third book in the Twelve Houses series by Sharon Shinn. Reading order: *Mystic and Rider*, *The Thirteenth House*, *Dark Moon Defender*, *Reader and Raelynx*, *Fortune and Fate*. Should the books be read in order? Yes. Also, don't read any of the synopses of the latter books if you haven't read the earlier ones. They contain spoilery bits. Even the summary for this book has some spoilers. *Dark Moon Defender* is all about Justin, Tayse's fellow Rider. He's present in the two other novels and finally gets his own story (and romance!) in this one. Justin has been assigned on a spy mission. The king wants concrete proof that Coralinda Gisseltess, head of the convent of devotees of the Pale Mother, is committing violent acts against mystics. Mystics are individuals with magical abilities and Coralinda firmly believes that the Pale Mother, the moon goddess, hates magic. Justin settles down in the town of Neft as a stable-hand. He tries to keep a low profile so as not to attract attention. Without meaning to, he befriends Ellynor, a young novice at the convent. The companions from the earlier books - Cammon, Senneth, Tayse, Kirra and Donnal - drop by to visit Justin from time to time.

I feel like Justin's novel is different from the rest of the companions' because he's a King's Rider with no magical powers unlike the other mystics in the group. Justin and Tayse are two of the best Riders in the realm. Riders are skilled fighters, devoted to the king. For some reason, I wasn't as convinced of their incredible fighting skills as I'd like. I realized that it's mostly because the author tells the reader that they're excellent fighters instead of showing their prowess through the Riders' actions. It's different with the mystics because there are several instances for them to demonstrate their power. Maybe that's one of the reasons why I didn't like this book as much as I wanted. Also, it's the first book in the series where the companions spend time apart. Justin is all by himself so the story jumps from his point of view to one of the other characters. The scenes that I liked the most were the ones where they're all together. This storytelling format reminded me of Sharon Shinn's Samaria series and Justin's book, in particular, is similar to *Angel-Seeker*. Why? There's forbidden romance in both books and the characters need to sneak around in order to be together.

I did enjoy reading the book as a whole because we get to learn more about other aspects of the world - Ellynor's heritage and details about the convent when the story shifts to her point of view. It's funny because even though I had problems with each book in the series so far, the author has managed to make me care enough about the characters to continue reading about them. As such, I feel like this is a series that I can recommend to anyone who's looking to sink his or her teeth into a fantasy series that's easy to follow. I'm going to stick with the series until the end. I'm already in the middle of the next book, *Reader and Raelynx*,

and I think it's more exciting than the other books because it's marked with climactic events that the previous books have been leading up to.

✧Crittterbee says

Third in Sharon Shinn's Twelve Houses series, centering this time on Justin. So far, this was my favorite installment of a series which I have really enjoyed. Justin is one of the original six main characters, a surly and cynical Kings Rider with a harsh past. Asked to reconnoiter the city of Neft, nearby the convent of mystic hating, Pale Mother fanatics. He meets Ellynor, a novice sent to the convent by her family to watch her unruly, impulsive cousin.

Justin's protective instincts are activated after he rescues Ellynor on the streets of Neft, and they form a fast friendship. Their relationship has many obstacles, and both have secrets that they attempt to keep hidden. This becomes more difficult as Ellynor's safety is increasingly threatened.

I liked the exciting story, and Ellynor was distinct, consistent, and easy to love. I also liked that the other 5 main characters made appearances, and seemed essential to the story.

No complaints, and I am already on to book 4.

Tina says

Dark Moon Defender is the third of the Twelve Houses series by SHaron Shinn.

In the earlier two books we meet and get really involved with the adventures of Senneth, Tayse, Justin, Kirra, Donnal and Cammon as they traveled around the land of Gillengaria at the behest of their King. There is much unrest in the Kingdom. One powerful Lord is trying to foment rebellion and usurp the throne. The minor vassals of the Twelve ruling houses of the land are trying to use the unrest as a way to gain their own prominence. And the Leader of a Convent dedicated to the Goddess of the Moon is hunting and killing Mystics.

Needing proof that Coralinda, the Lestra of the Luminen convent is really killing mystics, the King sends Justin on an undercover mission to the small town of Neft near the convent to gather information.

While there, Justin meets and falls in love one of the novices of the convent, Ellynor. Unbeknownst to him, Ellynor is a girl from beyond the Lireth Mountains, a Lirren. Lirrens have a very close knit and complexly intertwined social structure that discourages outsiders from marrying into the clans. If an outsider wants to marry a Lirren girl they must meet in combat a close male member, a father or brother, to the death. But this is the least of their problems. Ellynor is a mystic and doesn't realize it. Things become increasingly dangerous as she realizes her "gift" of healing is really a mystic art and the Lestra has taken notice of Ellynor.

Just as the first book of the series was centered on Senneth (and Tayse), and the second book was Kirra's (and to a lesser extent Donnal's), this book centers on Justin. While most of the narrative is on his undercover activities, we still get a good dose of the other five members we've come to know and enjoy in the previous books. In fact, there are some really great scenes of Senneth and Tayes at her family's home. Cammon's skill as a reader comes in mighty handy when Justin gets into trouble and the rest of them come to his rescue. And

Kirra's skill as shapeshifter becomes critical at a very crucial moment. And there is a very wonderful scene when the six of them gather together at the very humble home of the town's magistrate to celebrate a very special occasion.

I just love this series and this is certainly a wonderful addition to it. I can't wait to read the next one.

Serene says

Sharon Shinn is an indulgence. Her stories aren't particularly complex and to be honest, perhaps slightly misogynistic. But I guess she writes smoothly and the stories are always easy to read.

I had to read Dark Moon Defender coz I read the earlier ones. Heh. But it's not a very tight narrative I think. The whole thing about Justin getting married at the end... it just felt a teeny bit trite.
