



Night's Master

Tanith Lee

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NIGHT'S MASTER is the first book of the stunning arabesque high fantasy series *Tales from the Flat Earth*, which, in the manner of *The One Thousand and One Nights*, portrays an ancient world in mythic grandeur via connected tales.

Long time ago when the Earth was Flat, beautiful indifferent Gods lived in the airy Upperearth realm above, curious passionate demons lived in the exotic Underearth realm below, and mortals were relegated to exist in the middle. Azhrarn, Lord of the Demons and the Darkness, was the one who ruled the Night, and many mortal lives were changed because of his cruel whimsy. And yet, Azhrarn held inside his demon heart a profound mystery which would change the very fabric of the Flat Earth forever...

Come within this ancient world of brilliant darkness and beauty, of glittering palaces and wondrous elegant beings, of cruel passions and undying love.

Discover the exotic wonder that is the Flat Earth.

Night's Master Details

Date : Published November 1st 1978 by DAW (first published January 1st 1978)

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Author : Tanith Lee

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From Reader Review Night's Master for online ebook

Mimi says

4.5 star

Magnificently strange and otherworldly. Feels like a weird dream from which I don't want to wake.

?Luna? says

At first this book seemed very strange to me. At the end I was hooked ! What a great book, the author has a beautiful imagination and is great at telling stories, this isn't a lengthy very descriptive novel but it is fantastic the way the author writes is like a poem. Loved it will keep reading these strange books and will be reading the authors other works :)

Malum says

Maybe closer to 3.5 stars, but what the heck.

Did you ever read Vance's *Dying Earth* stories and think "you know what this needs? More penetration!"

Seriously, though, this book was kind of hard for me to rate. First of all, it is basically a bunch of short stories, and I am rarely impressed with short story collections. To each his own and all, but I am more of a novel kind of guy. I will say, however, that if you like fairy tales (especially darker ones) then you will probably find yourself right at home here.

On the other hand, the imagery that Lee presents us with is absolutely stunning. Gods clothed in butterflies, beautiful demons, magic trees, flying ships made of dragon bone, other realms above the clouds, and the mouth of hate itself all populate Lee's strange, almost surreal world. Many times during this book I cared less about the story and more about just wanting to walk around and experience this incredible place that her intense imagination dreamed up for us.

Besides that, Lee's trademark touches are here (or at least what little I know about her). Gender and sexuality are fluid, most beings are either breathtakingly beautiful or horrible monsters, and the world is dark dark dark.

Derek says

Readers insisting upon a strong central plot and defined set of characters will find little to enjoy here. Lee draws from fairy tale and mythology for a drifting, dreamlike experience where each "book" (Light Underground, Tricksters, and The World's Lure) is independent aside from theme, and each of which is subdivided further, into "parts" and chapters. The time table is that of demons, especially the demon lord Azhrarn, and an ephemeral mortal existence can easily fit into a single chapter. So, the character set will change drastically even within a "part", especially in cases where Azhrarn takes a brief, intense, and

ultimately destructive interest in the wee humans grubbing about their surface world.

Don't get attached to the characters, in other words, especially when Azhrarn is in the neighborhood. What he cannot have, he destroys, and what he becomes bored with, he destroys, and what he enjoys greatly, he destroys. It is the way of demons.

The language is beautiful, with a Dunsany-ish cadence and delicately crafted metaphors ("The year was woven on the loom, finished and folded away upon the pile of other years in the tall chests of Time.", p. 64) This language occasionally works against itself: when speaking of physical love, it uses over-the-top metaphor, and reads like the very worst of gushy, flowery romance novels. I can only surmise that Lee's intent was to produce laughter or a wince.

But this is a dark fairy tale. Here the scarred, crippled girl does not earn the love of the young king. Instead she has his mockery and contempt, and her heart fills with vengeance. She becomes as corrupt and vicious as the king she replaces. There is no simple moralizing offered or necessary.

Rob says

I really didn't like this much (1.5 stars rounded down), so I'm going to forgo my usual format and just say give a few sentences so I can move on.

In general I don't much care for short stories, and this book is essentially a collection of loosely related short stories. That might have been OK, but there is a lot of awful (or sometimes just weird) sex stuff.

I don't have a problem with sex in books, but it's not something I actively seek out either. Nothing in this book is very graphically depicted which would be fine except the kinds of sex that's depicted had me consider dropping the book all together (something I pretty much never do).

I'm stubborn though so I kept on. There was one part I actually enjoyed that centered around a pair of brothers who lived in a palace full of diamonds. I think that was maybe 2 or 3 chapters out of the whole book though so that leaves me very little enjoyment.

I'm not sure if there are other books by Tanith Lee I'd enjoy but this book pretty much put me off the rest of her work completely.

Violetta Vane says

This is one of the best fantasy books ever, and a book I've reread countless times. The amazing thing about Tanith Lee's language is how rich it is, and paradoxically, how spare. There's not a single wasted word. The sexuality in this book is groundbreaking, especially in the way it's integrated within the story and the mythos. This is a profoundly *queer* story in which sexuality and gender cannot be taken for granted (although gender really gets messed with more in the later Flat Earth books). I'm going to write a humongous essay one day on why I worship Tanith Lee, but I'll just close this review off by saying... nobody does it better. NOBODY.

Randy says

Fantasy author Tanith Lee takes inspiration from The Arabian Nights and Tales of the Dying Earth to tell a series of interconnected tales of the demon Azhrarn and the mortals with whose lives he toys. Lee uses a storytelling-style similar to that used by Ursula K. Le Guin in A Wizard of Earthsea to give the collection a mythical flavor. Unfortunately none of the story content is more than mildly interesting and much of it, including some truly bizarre sexual content, will be seen by many modern readers as revolting.

ka?yap says

I loved it. A beautiful narrative.

Karin Gastreich says

Once in a very great while, we encounter a perfect book. Tanith Lee's NIGHT'S MASTER is just such a work. I won't say "I wish I could give it ten stars" because in truth, Lee's collection of interwoven short stories rises well above the conventional star system. Flat Earth is a place where imagination is completely set free. Engaging, passionate, sensual, and cruel; with surprising and fulfilling moments of true heroism. Told with prose that reads like poetry. I could keep raving about it, but really, YOU should be reading the story instead. Get a copy of this book. You won't regret it.

AndrewP says

A book club read of something I read 20+ years ago. I don't often do re-reads but as this one was very short at less than 250 pages I thought I would check it out with adult eyes.

The structure of this book, and the sequels, is just a series of short stories all set in the same world with constant gods and themes. For that reason it reads a lot like The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights, Volume 1. Central to all the stories in this volume is Azhrarn, Lord of the Demons and the Darkness and the various plots, tricks and schemes he uses to make mortals lives miserable.

This time around I think the book left a different impression on me. Most of the writing is excellent. It reads just like a legend or fable should do. But, I am still not a fan of this type of book where there it's just a series of stories with no overall plot. As there are several other volumes in this series, things may change further along but at this point I don't have a lot of interest in continuing. Tanith Lee has written many other books that are better than this.

Kat Hooper says

4.5 stars

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

Long ago, the earth was flat. Humans lived on its surface while the benevolent gods who created them lived in the heavens. Regretting that they had made man, the gods ignored their creation and held themselves aloof while the sorcerous demons that lived in the glowing gem-encrusted city under the earth were permitted to use humans as they wished. Being at the whim of cruel and impulsive demons made these times terrifying for humans. Eventually hate and evil began to prevail, and earth was near death, but the gods showed no inclination to save humanity. Azhrarn, Prince of Demons and Night's Master, was the proudest and most powerful demon of all. When he discovered a beautiful orphaned human child and brought him to live in the underworld, the destiny of the earth was changed forever.

Tanith Lee's *Night's Master*, the first of her FLAT EARTH series, is a collection of connected stories set in Lee's unique world. The first story recounts Azhrarn's discovery and love for the human child he finds. Each of the following tales is related, perhaps by a character, an object, or a theme. Together, the stories weave a vast dark mythology covering thousands of years. With vivid imagery and elegant prose, they show demons meddling in human affairs, humbling men who exalt themselves, and using magic to harness the powers of music, love, and joy as well as grief, hate, and death.

Night's Master is dark, yet richly luxuriant and full of passion. The writing is gorgeous. There's not much more that a lover of excellent fantasy could ask for, though some readers may wish for a more obvious hero to love. You won't find one here. Instead, you'll feel the decline of civilization and the degeneration into hopelessness as a capricious demon wields magic against powerless men. But because the demons admire beauty, there's also a gothic splendor that permeates the novel. In many ways the setting and characters of FLAT EARTH are reminiscent of Jack Vance's DYING EARTH stories, which isn't surprising considering that Vance was one of Tanith Lee's major influences.

Night's Master has just been produced in audio by Audible Frontiers. The narrator, Susan Duerden, did a great job with the dialogue — she has a lovely resonant voice which is a good fit for this dark fairytale. Unfortunately, her reading occasionally takes on a noticeable sing-song quality during the narrative. I hope this will not be as conspicuous in the second FLAT EARTH novel, *Death's Master*.

More reviews of Tanith Lee's books at [Fantasy Literature](#).

1-Click Addict Support Group says

I have always been a huge fan of fantasy, and this author has been on my to-be-read list for ages. I've seen her name enough to realize her books should be a staple for fantasy lovers, and now I understand why. I was swept away while reading, into a land of mythical proportions. Each tale is its own separate entity, but they are woven together with fine threads interconnecting them in slight but important ways.

The language used was masterful, descriptions written in almost over-the-top, fanciful ways that never felt pretentious or overblown. A love making scene written in a classy way, a rape written in a realistic yet never gratuitously graphic way. A death taking place so matter of factly. An underlying moral theme slipped in unobtrusively, leading the reader to make their own decisions and pass their own judgment on exactly what it means.

Since it is written in short tales, *Night's Master* was never overwhelming, or pushy in its way. It allowed you to pause, let it all sink in before moving forward. Part of its beauty was that despite drawing you in and then punishing you with unhappy endings and short snippets, it never left you dissatisfied. It had that overlying feel of a myth, or a history. A terrible thing happened because it just did. Someone did a horrible thing and that was that. A beautiful love existed and that was enough.

I could feel the magic flowing through the pages, could see the world as it existed on Flat Earth. I felt the beauty of the sun at the same moment my heart filled with fear at its rising. How can you love and abhor a character so fiercely at the same time? How can you possibly want two very different outcomes for a single plot?

Still, it was—despite its intricacies—a strikingly easy book to read. Easy to lose yourself, in a way that makes you unsure when it is finished if you ever really knew yourself to begin with. While reading it, I knew it was going to be a treasure on my shelf, a book I would re-read again and again. Upon finishing it, I realized it hands-down held the place of my favorite book of all time. ~ George, ALL THE STARS

Joseph says

One night, Azhrarn Prince of Demons, one of the Lords of Darkness, took on him, for amusement, the shape of a great black eagle. East and west he flew, beating with his vast wings, north and south, to the four edges of the world, for in those days the earth was flat and floated on the ocean of chaos.

Another one of those I'm not even going to pretend to be objective about. This has been one of my favorite books (and favorite series) ever since I first read them in the distant days of 1990 (when the earth may, in fact, have been flat) and was utterly transfixed by Tanith Lee's luxuriant prose and exotic settings.

Not really a novel *per se*; more a series of loosely-linked myths or fables in which Azhrarn Prince of Demons typically plays an instigating role, but spends most of his time in the background as humans then pick up the threads.

Beautifully (if obliquely) erotic and ever so delicately perverse.

Barbora says

I've re-read this book several times and I feel so few people know about it - so why not recommend it. Warning: this will be a very subjective review, because it's one of my favorite books - if not THE favorite book.

I happened to come across it only a year or two ago, as I heard of Tanith Lee and wanted to try her writing. I was not disappointed.

The book is made of stories, which are interconnected. The prose is the first thing you will fall in love with - it's rich, fluent, so very vibrant that you will re-read sentences just for the pleasure of it.

The plot - well, if you are searching for another Tolkien, you will be perhaps disappointed. It's not that there's no plot, but the usual good vs. bad fight is missing, and good riddance. Yet the stories are charming and each is bitterly sweet and perfect in its own way.

The characters - you can but fall in love with Azhrarn. There is nothing more to say about him.

This book is very sensual, dark, it works with mythology and fantasy and leaves you wanting more - but that's what the sequel is for.

I will recommend this book to everyone who likes fantasy. Only rarely such gem is written and it would be a pity if the readers didn't give it a try.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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Most of the highly anticipated YA fantasy novels coming out this year have been a bust for me, and I keep getting the occasional rude comment that says something like, "You're too picky/mean/etc." Well, to that, I say, "Maybe *I* actually know what good fantasy novels *look* like because I've actually read some marvels with achingly good prose that has so much pathos it just about makes you cry?" Because if that's what you're looking for, Tanith Lee is that.

I've read this book before - first hint that this book is *good* because I rarely keep or reread books once I've finished with them - and recently decided to read it again in a buddy read with my friend Elena. This is classic fantasy at its best, written in a way that reminds me of the books of fairy tales and mythology I had as a kid, or of the *Oz* and *Narnia* books. The world-building is fresh and inventive and organic; while reading this, you have to continually remind yourself that, no, this isn't a retelling. *She made it all up.*

Each chapter is a standalone story that bleeds seamlessly into the next. One character connects them and that is a demon named Azhrarn who reminds me a lot of Jareth in *Labyrinth* in terms of his personality and abilities. Azhrarn is a demon lord who resides in the "Underearth." Periodically, he surfaces to sow mischief or have sex with humans or both (both is preferred). It's easy to see him as an evil villain in the beginning, but each chapter peels another layer from this character, and by the time you get to the end of the book, you see that he is much more complicated than you anticipated.

I love Tanith Lee so much. She is literally one of my favorite authors and I could sit here and fangirl over her for hours. Her writing is gorgeous, and complex, and ornate without being flowery. She writes the way I wish that *I* could write and I'm constantly blown away by her original turns of phrases and the way she can set a mood with just a few carefully curated words. All of her stories are very dark - I love dark - but thought-provoking and interesting and original. I don't think I've ever read something by her that I didn't love. It is so sad that she passed, because she was so gifted and more than that, just such an interesting individual. This book, and her others, are proof of that.

4.5 stars

TheBookSmugglers says

What in the actual fuck did I just read?

Queer characters who are grooming pedophiles, women who get raped and become villains themselves only to be further punished by the narrative. I just... what
no

Dave Packard says

Pretty disappointed in this one. Very depressing short stories all set in the same universe, basically a mythology without a purpose is how it appeared to me. Not going to continue the series, and I probably won't pick up another Tanith Lee book.

Stephen says

4.0 stars. A beautifully written, original fantasy story that reads like mythology. The main character, Azhrarn, is the Prince of Demons. Azhrarn is extremely powerful and spends his time amusing himself, mostly by tormenting humans and creating mischief. As the story progresses through a series of interlinked tales, we see Azhrarn transform from malevolent trickster to Christ-like savior and then back again. A very good book and certainly an excellent choice if you are looking for something a little different. Recommended!!

Nominee: World Fantasy Award for Best Novel.

Beth says

Night's Master's story is told in the form of three sets of interleaved short stories, each of those three mostly unconnected with each other aside from the setting and the titular character, Azhrarn. The writing style is dreamlike, and the stories read like fairy tales.

But don't expect virginal heroines marrying their heroes after defeating the wicked queen, a la Disney. The fairy tales called back to are more like the old oral stories or our own urban legends, full of sex (often coercive or non-consensual, as a warning), bloody violence, and death. Over and above that, Azhrarn punishes all equally: the virtuous and the wicked, those who fall under his spell and those who resist it.

This seemingly bleak fantasia is counterbalanced by lush decadence. Scenery is full of flowers, fruit, gemstones, and precious metals. All the main characters are gorgeous, whether innocent or totally-not-innocent. Another, somewhat unexpected counterbalance is humor. Every now and then there's some absurdity or silliness to leaven the mood.

Much of present-day fantasy feels very pedestrian in comparison to this. It's so prettily written that it's easy to fall into this weird world full of dizzy feeling that follows its own alien rules, where beauty and horror lie side-by-side on earth, with Underearth's wondrous palaces, and the waters of Lethe, beneath it.

Allison Hurd says

[incest, rape (both statutory and graphic), death, torture, war (hide spoiler)]
