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Kael Vapensigsson is one of the elite Chosen—a Warlord whose strength comes from the gods themselves. But despite all his power and prestige, he is plagued by a prophecy that threatens to destroy everything he loves.

When Kael summons Ishtaer to his room and discovers the marks of the Chosen on her body, including the revered mark of the Warrior, both Warlord and slave seem to have met their match.

But as their lives become increasingly entangled and endangered, Ishtaer is forced to test whether the Chosen ever have the ability to choose their own fate.

Kate's UK debut, *The UnTied Kingdom*, was short listed for the RNA's 2012 Romantic Contemporary Novel of the Year award.

Impossible Things Details

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Author : Kate Johnson

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From Reader Review Impossible Things for online ebook

Mandi Schreiner says

My friend Pamela rec'd this is to me and I really enjoyed this one. The hero is a warlord - feared by many - but is really a good guy. He actually falls in love first in this book and I liked that.

The heroine is a blind slave, rescued by the hero - she is also a healer, a seer and a warrior. She's pretty awesome. She was abused so much as a slave, she has A LOT to overcome. And she does and I loved her journey.

In terms of physical romance, there isn't much in this book. The heroine takes a long time to even broach that subject due to her abuse. But the romance is there and well done.

My one complaint is I wanted to see them together - and happy - more at the end. I felt the end was rushed...and maybe the heroine could have had a few more kinder moments at the end.

Overall good story.

E_bookpushers says

Review originally posted here: <http://thebookpushers.com/2014/02/18/...>

Where did you get the book: Bought/ARC offered by the publisher

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Kael Vapensigsson is one of the elite Chosen—a Warlord whose strength comes from the gods themselves. But despite all his power and prestige, he is plagued by a prophecy that threatens to destroy everything he loves.

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But as their lives become increasingly entangled and endangered, Ishtaer is forced to test whether the Chosen ever have the ability to choose their own fate.

Lou: When Has first told me about this book, I wasn't quite sure if I should read it. The last book, or should I say series, I read featuring a Warlord hero was Warprize by Elizabeth Vaughan. And nobody—and I mean nobody—has come close to that masterpiece featuring Keir and Lara. But Has kept pushing me and so I finally caved in. And I'm glad I caved in despite some of the issues I had with the book because it was an enjoyable read with a great cast of characters. Kael is a Warlord and whilst he's done Warlord stuff like killing and sword-fighting, and Warlord stuff, he was quite humorous. He almost wore a facade of what a Warlord should be like. I liked him. I also liked the heroine, Ishtaer. Up until Kael came across her in an almost slave encampment, Ishtaer had a terrible and horrifying existence. She was beaten and starved by her captive, and she was also raped by the engineering of her captive.

While I liked Ishtaer, I didn't like how the author made her into this almost mary sue character where she was the best of all of the gifts that the God granted her. I wished she had fewer gifts. It felt as if the author

had to compensate Ishtaer for her what she had to go through but instead of it being believable, it came across as Mary Sueish, especially when Ishtaer had to go through another terrible experience towards the end of the book. But despite my issues, I really did enjoy the worldbuilding and the author's voice. The romance wasn't instant, and Kael had to do some grovelling for behaving like an idiot. I loved at times that Ishtaer was stubborn, and there's an empowering scene where Kael experiences a horror of Ishtaer's past. Ishtaer was a wonderful character, despite her perfections, and she was by no means perfect when it came to her personality. Ishtaer does a lot of growing up in this book, and she is separated from Kael whilst she learns her Gifts.

I'd love to see more books set in this world and more of Kael and Ishtaer. All in all, I give Impossible Things a B-

Has: When I got offered the book, my book spidey senses were tingling and I definitely agree so many books are hard to live up to the Warprize trilogy by Elizabeth Vaughan. However, there was something compelling and enjoyable about IMPOSSIBLE THINGS but I agree about the heroine being too powerful, although I think the book and romance wouldn't be as good if she didn't go through a tortuous and dark past. And while I liked how the world-building was set up with people from certain blood-lines who were marked with gifts that were energized by crystals, I did find Ishtaer being thrice-marked as a Seer, a healer and a warrior made her almost too perfect especially when she in fact blind and was still able to fight defensively well with a sword. But I agree—I think it would have actually strengthened the book more if she was just double-marked as well. And I there were a couple of scenes that I had to suspend my belief. I would have also loved to see more of Ishtaer's training in her skills which I felt was glossed over and that would have helped to illustrate her breaking out of shell and building up her confidence. But I have to say the world that Kate Johnson created was a fantastic amalgamation of different cultures and time-periods, and that produced a colourful and vivid backdrop to the romance.

Kael is definitely not like a typical alpha warrior, and I really loved that his beta qualities were kept hidden, but revealed to only those who knew him well. It helped to define and flesh out his character beautifully. And even though I found Ishtaer's character to be too powerful with her magical abilities, I did think Kate Johnson's depiction of Ishtaer's healing emotionally and psychologically from her past and slowly regaining her agency helped to make Ishtaer more sympathetic and real. Those scenes, especially when she has a trigger moment later in the book, was well written and fleshed out her character for me because it was realistic and emotive. I also loved the scene soon after with Kael and that becomes a turning point in their relationship which is a real highlight of this book. Because their romance develops as a slow burn, the tension builds up subtly which reflects Ishtaer's slowly defeating her own demons and fears, and due to this I fell in love with their romance.

I also loved and enjoyed the touches of humour which gave the book another fun dimension and there was some humorous scenes with the supporting characters which just sparkled with dialogue that was sharp and snappy. Although for a historical fantasy setting, the language was very modern but I didn't mind this as much as it added to the humorous overtones and the mishmash of the world-building.

Overall, Impossible Things has a wonderful and emotional touching romance which I enjoyed immensely but the world-building was also well fleshed out and I would also love to see more of this world because it certainly has a scope for more stories. But even though there were several issues with the book, this was one of the best fantasy romances I've read in awhile and I am so glad I listened to my spidey sense!

I also give Impossible Things a B-

E: I bought this book because a certain Has pushed it on me. It had been a while since I read an epic fantasy/romance so I decided to give it a try. I thought the basic idea of "Chosen" ones with tattoos identifying who has certain abilities and as a result of those powers gained certain privileges and

responsibilities. I was also curious about the implied lack of choice in what those Chosen were allowed to do with their lives. Johnson created a very fascinating world with multiple sub-plots. I was never bored with the complexity but I think the story suffered a bit as a result. Some of the subplot solutions were too coincidental towards the end of the story but overall I enjoyed this story and I hope that Johnson continues writing in this world.

As this story started, I was very unimpressed by Kael because of his behavior towards Ishtaer and the situation she was in. Kael had a lot of work to do to become heroic in my eyes. For a very long time he struck me as being rather self-centered and doing actions for personal gain. Yes, I did discover he had personal responsibilities as well as an obligation to the tradition of the Chosen but I struggled believing he saw Ishtaer as an individual and not just a tool to gain favor/prestige. However, Ishtaer taught him a lot and he was able to redeem himself although I thought he was going to break my heart for a while.

Ishtaer went from being the lowest of the low to extremely high with a combination of abilities no one else possessed. I agree with my fellow Pushers that the leap was perhaps a bit much. I did appreciate how only one of her powers seemed to be innate, the others she had limitations or self-imposed blocks but even those didn't stop her from becoming acclaimed. Her unique childhood did provide Ishtaer a different perspective that served her well as she struggled to find a place that felt like home, not just for herself but for those she encountered who also didn't quite fit. She also knew what the responsibilities of being Chosen really meant and how with the privilege came sacrifice.

Johnson provided me with several aspects that I enjoyed. One was the slow growing romance with its ups and down. Everytime Kael took Ishtaer for granted, I loved how she used her growing confidence to topple his assumptions. I also thought the way Ishtaer could take control during a crisis yet feel much more uncertain during non-crisis or personal situations was very telling. It clarified the difference between confidence that came with a knowledge of your stature from birth versus the confidence in what was innate as being a Chosen.

As I stated earlier, I found Impossible Things an enjoyable read with some niggles. I thought the world-building was extremely vivid and full of possibility for future stories. The characters and their messy lives were also captivating but what I think really solidified my enjoyment of this story was Kael's path to redemption. As much as Ishtaer's life changed over the course of the story, she seemed more to grow into who she could have been while Kael had to change who he had become. I am looking forward to seeing what Johnson does with this world next.

I give Impossible Things a B

Mara says

A very shaky three stars. Very good beginning, dragging second part where characters became difficult to relate to, heroine with weird PTSD symptoms, like lack of any logic thoughts even in unrelated areas, hero as a doormat.

Lack of world building, as a school of magic where to graduate you don't have to learn, just be, or shortcuts to it, like a world-wide common language in a world with no means of transportation except horses and boats, made the book shakier.

The book is cheap enough to warrant the old college try.

Callie says

This was such an amazing story of healing, and in my fave genre of fantasy romance! I'm especially giddy when discovering hidden gems. At first, I was enjoying this just enough, thought it was yet another typical romance between warlord and slave (who coincidentally is the chosen one), whose hurts will be magically healed through love and all that.

But no, Kate Johnson took us through all of heroine Ishtaer's journey, there were no shortcuts, and it was so satisfying. Though what Ishtaer went through was dark (mostly through memories), the book is a fun read throughout with an adopted wolf-dog, and a great well-rounded supporting cast. It did take a few chapters for the world-building setup, but the story hit its stride as Ishtaer took the reins to find herself again from the shadows trying to overwhelm her. And when she finally slayed demons both for her and victims like her, you can't help but be proud.

This was slow romance done right. There was not much sexual tension, but the gradual growth of Kael's relationship to Ishtaer from savior to friend to lover was so well-done. His confession to her...aww my heart. And Kael was so good to her. I initially thought the ending "battle" was anti-climatic, but was pleasantly surprised that there was more to it. The focus came back to the heroine and the hero, with a conflict that doesn't feel forced.

This story definitely has Maria Snyder's Poison Study vibes to it, injected with a good dose of Julie Garwood medieval romance, and how I wished there were more of the same!

Patricia says

Awesome book can't believe I waited so long to read it. Would have loved if this was a series

Pamela / SpazP says

ADORED this book. It contained everything I love in a story, and I devoured this right up. I look forward to seeing more by this author, would LOVE another book set in this world!!! Gah, I don't want this to be over.

Lucina says

[rape, gang rape, mistreatment, starvation, violence, slavery (hide spoiler)]

Gavin says

This was a decent enough fantasy/romance but not one that will live long in the memory.

Notorious warlord and pirate Kael Vapensigsson rescues the blind slave Ishtaer from her cruel and abusive mistress after spotting she has the marks of the Chosen upon her skin. He is sceptical of the validity of the magical marks as Ishtaer not only has a previously unheard of three Chosen marks, but also bears the mark of the Warrior, something no female has done before. He takes her back to the Empire where she begins her training in magic.

The story was OK. It was a little slow paced at times, but that was because the story spanned a few years. It was a ploy that was fairly successful as it gave both Kael and Ishtaer time to grow and develop as characters. Both showed significant growth over the story. Ishtaer needed time to slowly recover from her time in slavery and Kael needed to learn to be more understanding and compassionate. The romance was an understandably slow burning one which I liked. The world building was nothing special, but it was adequate.

Rating:3.5 stars.

Audio Note: Penelope Rawlins gave an OK performance. Her female voices and general narration were good, but she struggled a bit with the male voices.

Nicole says

Impossible Things is one of those stories that stick to you, I'm sure I'll be thinking about it for several days and will be eager to re-read it soon. There are so many things I liked about the story, one of them being a very strong heroine, believe me, that woman went through a lot, and I mean A LOT, so it was beautiful to see her evolve and gather the strength to conquer her fears and give herself an opportunity to live, to trust, to love and to believe she could have a happy life in spite of all the bad things that happened to her. It was heartbreaking to read about them, I guess it was because of how invested I was in the story. I really felt for her, it's impossible not to.

Needless to say, the other awesome quality was the hero, this guy is a kaleidoscope, if the heroine was a mystery because of all the unknown things about her, he was the complete opposite, we get to see so many different sides of him, that he becomes an enigma because of them. From page one, you know that this man is tough, and that he can be cruel, and is hard with those he loves but you also get from the very start that he is compassionate and altruistic, he's a mercenary and a pirate, but he is just, caring and protective of the people he's responsible for, in sum, he's a contradiction, a walking oxymoron. But he's really a good guy, a sweet one. A tender but still alpha pirate? I know what you're thinking, but he really pulls it off, I'm telling you, this man is special. Yes, I do realize I'm fangirling all over the place by now, so let's move on to the story.

As a person who mostly reads series, I'm always surprised to see how much a talented writer can get into just one book, and not a long one, this is a regular length one, but the romance, evolution of the characters and development of the plot in general was brilliantly done, there's no insta-love here, you can clearly see the H&H falling for each other, the heroine's struggle to get over her issues and give the hero a chance, her courage to come face to face with the source of her fear and the obstacle between her and the possibility of a future, it's all there.

My only complaint about the story is that the end felt a bit rushed, but that's it. Maybe I just didn't want it to end I guess *winks*. I highly recommend this one.

◆◆ Naomi says

So, I wrote this long, thoughtful review for this great book and I saved it and for some reason Goodreads decided not to save it after all so my long, thoughtful review was deleted and I'm very angry and frustrated at the moment. I need to take a deep breath. Calm down. Naomi, you cannot physically harm a website. Just breathe.

Kathleen says

Solid 4 stars, with kudos to Cristina for the rec! By turns grim, pathetic, heartwarming, smexy, and witty, this is fantasy romance, or maybe a romantic fantasy, since the love story -- while beautiful -- doesn't permeate the narrative or drive the plot completely. The love built very slowly, beginning in fear and distrust, then growing to friendship, and finally to physical desire. The romance, the plot, the characters, and the secondary relationships held my attention from page 1. Nice wolf pup and cute boys, too!

The plot isn't always stellar, but my main quibble is that I couldn't come to grips with the setting. Was this Earth? Another planet? The references to Latin smack of Ancient Rome, as does the concept of an Empire, complete with far-flung barbaric islands. However, the references to the Legend of The Wild Hunt indicate Old Norse/English myth, and some words smack of Appalachia: *ain't*, *feller*, *reckon*. Also some modern slang. So when and where are we? Chunks of the story occur at The Academy, a school where magical Chosen Ones -- and the pedantic but rich -- study, much like college. As they mature, the Chosen develop inborn marks resembling tattoos, manifestations of a specific magical skill. Depending on their mark, they become seers, healers, warriors, messengers, spies, etc. The Academy brought to mind J.K. Rowling's school, Hogwarts. Also, Johnson created a vast empire -- one that spans oceans -- with no modern communications tech, but somehow having a common global language. Huh? Well, maybe. Anyway, the setting was unclear. I like to know the setting.

The story is told through the alternating POV of the hero and heroine. My heart went out to the severely misused, emaciated, crippled slave, Ishtaer, or Ish. She's 21 going on 90. Not young at heart nor strong in body. Will she ever stop cowering in fear and learn to trust again? Why is she blind? Will she recover her sight? Yet she can see better than most, via her inner eye. For Ishtaer is a Seer, evidenced by the manifestation under her eye (see cover art). However, all she has seen is a recurring nightmare. She is a Warrior, evidenced by the special marks on her sword arm, yet she's afraid of her own shadow. She is a Healer, marked on her hand, yet with no idea of the power of crystals. (Sedona again, and the magical properties of crystals. Hello, Jayne Castle.)

Then there is Krull the Warlord (Kael to his friends). A pirate in service to the Emperor. So it's -- like -- legal piracy. A warrior who graduated from the Academy about seven years ago, his militia "militis" mark doesn't cover only his sword-arm, it runs up his entire arm and across his chest. Plus, he has another mark, evidence of another inherent magic (I'll keep that special skill a secret, just as the author did). I loved Krull once I understood what he was thinking the first time he met Ish -- why he behaved like such an ass. At first -- no, no, no. Here's an imperfect hero who grows on you. A kind of Robin Hood, Kael has a white-knight complex and a fierce love for children. Great lovemaking scene between Ish and Kael. Sweet and yet sizzling. The break-up scene made me mad, but I got where he was coming from.

Well-Developed Secondary Characters: Eirenn the peg-legged goatherd, a fellow student (tyro) wearing the warrior's mark on his sword arm. His characterization was credible, textured, and fluid. Brutus, the wolf pup Ishtaer rescued. For two-thirds of the story, he's at her side, a devoted, dangerous, and playful companion. The two little brothers at Skullfell, Garik and Durran. Nicely done! Credible kids, about 8 years old. Varek the warrior and Kronos, the healer, Kael's right hand men.

Weaker Secondary Characters: The villain, Samara, is inexplicable. With all she had to lose, why did she take such poor care of Ishtaer? The blind slave was critical to Samara's business, so you'd expect her to at least feed "it" enough to keep "it" alive. (By the way, I always suspected what Ish had been doing for Samara). Inconsistent is the best term for Mags, the housekeeper at Skullfell. Her characterization fluctuated -- I couldn't get a handle on her. Was she in love with Kael? Then there was Marcus Glorius, a fellow student at the Academy. Marcus was like the reincarnation of Malfoy -- the Malfoy who learned his lesson, as in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince. Blond, bullying, sneeringly handsome, rich, entitled, roaming the campus with his faithful thugs. Then he is (view spoiler)

Bottom line, one of the better books in this genre. Recommended to me by the same friend who recommended Ghost Planet (thank you, Cristina!).

See status updates for more quotes, notes, etc.

Ps. There is already a book titled Impossible Things by famed sci-fi / fantasy author Connie Willis. Why don't authors do a search first, and create a unique title?

Jane Stewart says

3 ½ stars. A pretty good story. Above average.

I liked the character Ishtaer. She did some neat things. She starts off starved, beaten, nearly dead. She is rescued from slavery and turns into a powerful force. I liked the parts where she dealt with a bully and different enemies. I liked the character Kael and his issues. There is a little romance mostly at the end. But romance is not the main focus. It's more about Ishtaer's development, changes, actions, and her friends.

A few times my mind wandered during descriptive parts. But overall I'm glad I read it. The ending romantic part was rushed. I would have liked more on that.

There is rape and torture of adults and children, but it's referred to after the fact - if that matters.

SETTING:

The ideas are not new, but good. A minority of humans are gifted with mystical and magical powers: healers, psychic seers, warriors, and fleet-of-feet messengers. Time and place are not defined, but it makes me think of a European setting in the days of Vikings with swords and chain mail.

EBOOK FORMATTING PROBLEM:

There needs to be a line, symbol, or extra space between scene changes. You think the next sentence is a continuation of the current conversation until a few sentences later you realize it's another scene in another place. It's jarring and takes you out of the story when you realize this.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Kindle count length: 5,842 (304 pages). Swearing language: moderate. Sexual language: none. Number of sex scenes: one pleasant sex scene and a brutal gang rape. Setting: unknown. Copyright: 2014. Genre: fantasy romance.

Blodeuedd Finland says

I really liked this one. I would not call it fantasy romance, because yes there were romance but far at the end. Too many issues before that. So light romantic fantasy, something ;) Cos it sure is not epic fantasy either, not with the whole will they wont they going on.

I liked the world, and the sprinkle of norse words here and there did make it cool. And it does show the difference between places in this world.

First, the Chosen are those with a mark of a Healer, a warrior or a Seer and they learn their trade so to say at a school. Kael is a warrior and now a feared pirate, warlord, but he does it in service of his Emperor. So he is a good guy. Sure he says some wrong things when he first meets poor Ishtear, but he could not even imagine what she has been through.

Ishtaer our heroine, wow, some of the more damaged heroines of late. I did like how it was portrayed, she was broken, she was timid, after years of abuse you do not just snap out of it. Not if you are that broken. So it takes time. Sure she learns the ways fast after it, but hey if you got it you got it. I guess that is how the Chosen work. So I looked through my fingers with that.

The romance comes late. A slow friendship, getting to know each other, living their own lives. The romance is not the focus, no, she needs to find herself. He needs to learn that everyone can't be protected.

My thoughts:

Magic, fighting, a cool world, I do feel that Kate Johnson needs to write about other people in this world. She is on to something here.

Kristina says

I really wanted to like this book, because the premise sounded good and the world introduced in the first couple chapters was interesting (potentially interesting magic system and culture), and I was prepared to cut it a lot of slack, being from an independent publisher and all. The first half of the book was pretty good, all things considered. The writing wasn't great, but still, the story was good. I wasn't even put off by the "modern" style dialogue that I saw complaints of in reviews; not all characters in high fantasy have to talk like Gandalf, after all. But then the story just got stupid, the characters got stupid, and I ended up having to skim the last third of the book because I just couldn't take it anymore.

My biggest complaint through of the book as a whole was that Kael is supposed to be this fierce and feared warlord, yet it boggles the mind how he got this reputation. We're told over and over that everyone's afraid and/or in awe of him, that he has this incredible reputation as a bloodthirsty warrior, etc. But it makes no sense. Yes, his reputation is very exaggerated, and bears little resemblance to the "real" person, but there is nothing to show how he got this reputation (that he apparently really likes). The "real" Kael is gentle, humble, rescues slaves and horses from being beaten and is basically an all-around perfect guy. He explains several times that his public persona is all a show, but we don't ever get to see his public persona or his interactions with people other than those closest to him, except for a few scenes when he's riding through the streets looking stern. There is never any interaction with a character that doesn't know him personally, except for maybe Eirenn, and even then, Kael treats him jokingly, seemingly not even trying to maintain his reputation. There is absolutely nothing in the book that shows how he acquired or maintains his fearsome reputation. Maybe that wouldn't have been so bad if he hadn't been portrayed as such a gentle, humble, even

awkward and bumbling at times, nice guy. He claims he rules his feudal lands fairly but sternly, but again, no evidence of that. He doesn't seem to do any sort of ruling at all, except for one day of assizes-type hearings in midwinter in a town a day's sled ride away, that's almost completely skimmed over except for one case that shows off how much Kael is than every other man in that world for having a decidedly modern and feminist attitude. The disconnect between what we are told and what we are shown is so great as to make it completely unbelievable. In fact, Kael reminded me of nothing so much as Captain Malcolm Reynolds from *Firefly*, and, while Mal may be handy in a fight, I absolutely cannot picture him as a fearsome warlord with a bloodthirsty reputation. Maybe if he hired a good marketing firm and a brilliant PR person, but nothing short of that.

And then there's Kael's and Ishtaer's relationship, which was described in positive reviews as a "slow burn." But there was little romantic about it. Kael is alternately hot and cold towards her, until he finally decides he's in love with her, and then he goes about acting like an awkward, love-sick teenage boy. Ishtaer ... well I couldn't ever really figure out what Ishtaer thought exactly. She can't make up her mind at all, which I suppose isn't surprising given her ridiculously tragic backstory, but she comes across as pathetic more than sympathetic. They both overreact multiple times to things the other does and says, and it just gets annoying after a while.

Overall, there just wasn't any depth to the story. No delving into characters, the world's history, the magic system, nothing. The word that comes to mind thinking back over it is, "superficial." It was quick, but not in a good way. Not in a fast-paced story way. Scenes were short, with just enough dialogue and a bit of narrative to move on to the next scene. Now, I know not all books can be epics like *Lord of the Rings*, or Brandon Sanderson's fantasy tomes that he warns not to drop on small pets, but this story could have been fleshed out far more without coming anywhere near *Wheel of Time* proportions.

Plus (and this isn't really the book's fault) somewhere I read this book's love scenes described as "fade to black." Nope. They're not as nearly as graphic as some, but it's certainly not fade to black.

Long story short – potentially good story idea ruined by bad writing. Not terrible writing, but just not good enough. I feel like this plot in the hands of someone like Brandon Sanderson or Jim Butcher could have been incredible. As it is, I wish I could forget I'd ever read it.

Shadi *save your ratings use disclaimers** says**

[Standalone (hide spoiler)]
