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J.F. Rivkin , Luis Royo (Cover Artist)

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The life of a sword-for-hire was often uncertain, but brazen and beautiful Corson brenn Torisk would have no other.

When Corson's services as a guard were engaged by the Lady Nyctasia, it seemed that fortune was finally smiling upon her. The Lady had a ready wit, an open purse and a reputation for sorcery which she assured Corson was quite undeserved.

While Corson had little liking for magic and still less for magicians, it seemed too good an opportunity to refuse. But when her employer's enemies proved to be as numerous as her coins, Corson decided that any aid was welcome--even the Lady's sorcery.

Silverglass Details

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Author : J.F. Rivkin , Luis Royo (Cover Artist)

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From Reader Review Silverglass for online ebook

Algernon says

One of the advantages of ebooks over print books is that it brings back to readers almost forgotten books and authors. Rivkin is a mystery dating back to the 80's : a mysterious author who is probably hiding under a pseudonym who penned a series of unusual sword & sorcery novels, contributed to a few anthologies and then disappeared. I would have passed the author and the books by if it weren't for the heavy-metal, 80's glam covers of Louis Royo.

I know I'm shallow this way and I like to ogle at heavy chested heroines in impractical fighting costumes that are designed to reveal rather than to protect, but the actual novel is surprisingly progressive and non-conformist when it comes to the portrayal of women. Sword & Sorcery is notorious as a male dominated genre with the iconic Conan as the quintessential hero, surrounded either by females of loose morality, peanut brains and scanty garments or by ambitious, devious, deadly power grabbers of the femme fatale persuasion. Rivkin sets out to demonstrate that women can be as skilled and as adventurous as their male counterparts.

Silverglass starts with a familiar scene : a wandering mercenary walks into a seedy tavern and starts a fight, resulting in a contract to protect and serve a rich patron on a perilous quest to the other end of the map. What's the catch you might ask? The mercenary is Corson Brenn Torisk, tall and curvaceous, with golden toned skin and chestnut hair falling in rich waves to her shoulders - a head turner and a troublemaker, former professional soldier, now striking out on her own. Her patron is Lady Nyctasia, scion of the most powerful family in the city of Rhosthyl, fallen afoul of both her family and of their political opponents for proposing an end to centuries of bloody feuds between these families. Hunted by both hired killers and city guards, Nyctasia needs Corson to make her escape and search for help from a former lover, a powerful magician in his own country. Nyctasia herself is no slouch when it comes to magic spells and keeping secrets.

The actual plot is quite forgettable and standard sword & sorcery fare, with plenty of action scenes and tongue-in-cheek dialogue to satisfy the fans of the genre. A bit more memorable are several steamy sex scenes on girl on girl action as the relationship between mercenary develops and the fortunes of the road brings them closer together. Such explicit scenes may come with a warning to more easily offended readers, but I found them treated in a fun and unemphatic way, as the natural thing to do in the given society - something that was praised at the time of publication by various organizations militating for alternative lifestyles.

For me, the best review comes from Piers Anthony, and it was offered deservedly a prominent place on the cover:

"It's fun to see a tall, handsome, hard-fighting, hard-drinking, barbarian hero - who is female"

I will read the next book in the series, expecting another fun, if forgettable adventure.

Kalem Wright says

"Silverglass" is an easy read in the best sense of the word. It weaves danger into the narrative and a mildly surprising twist at the end seems authentic.

It's not a complex read (I finished in about three hours) but it's a breezy story with some slight character development and world-building. Corson is a fantastic female character, lead by her sense of wanderlust, appetites, and - perhaps - connection. Simply put, it's just a lot of fun.

Derek says

Despite the focus of the cover art, the back cover text, and Piers Anthony's exuberant cover quote, the series looks like it circles the sly, scholarly Nyctasia, while the brash warrior Corson is the steadying influence (contrary to appearances).

Unlike many series with a strong woman as protagonist (cough cough *Demon in the Mirror*), the role of the characters are not a matter of note within the story itself. Nobody ever adds the qualifier "...for a woman!" to their abilities, and I picked out several cases of women in traditionally masculine jobs: mercenaries, guards, merchants, and the smuggler captain, none of which are remarked upon.

Their love interests--their long-term love interests, that is--are also reversed from the traditional sword-and-sorcery viewpoint. Corson's Steifann runs a successful tavern and inn and is not the traveling type. Erystalben awaits Nyctasia in a distant stronghold, where he is lord. The women wander, the men keep house.

Jason says

This novel was a light, easy read and, coming as it did after some enjoyable but heavier fare by way of Karl Edward Wagner, it was a good change of pace and really hit the spot. Like a delicious, but forbidden bag of chips, it was difficult to put down. A combination of short chapters, nice pacing, and mostly enjoyable banter/bickering between the two main characters made this book easy to read and enjoy; the time just flew by.

Saying it was light and easy is by no means meant to disparage the work. I read the work specifically to be entertained, and for me it met that goal in spades. And adding to the ease of accessibility the characters, based around existing genre tropes, were familiar enough that they quickly became comfortable, allowing me to slip into the story without effort, while still managing to maintain enough distinction to be their own people, as it were.

Silverglass is a Sword and Sorcery novel more character driven than some; with entertaining characters and enjoyable bickering that sometimes walks the edge of being a little bit too much of a good thing. While the fact of the 'barbarian warrior' being female is touted on the cover (from a Piers Anthony blurb, no less), the book itself doesn't rely on this assumed novelty (if, in fact, it is such) for its appeal, but instead builds on it to create a story that I found pleasant and worth reading. I will definitely be looking into the remaining three works in this collection: *Web of Wind*; *Witch Of Rhostshyl*; and *Mistress of Ambiguities*.

Fi Mcmillan says

A glance at the truly beautiful Luis Royo wraparound cover reveals that Silverglass takes place in a land where hair metal reigns supreme, but the humble bra is yet to make an appearance. Our protagonist is destined to regret this lack of support in years to come, but as the novel opens, sensible undergarments could not be further from Corson's mind. The former soldier turned borderline alcoholic sword-for-hire has recently been employed by two rival factions to eliminate the "dread sorceress", Lady Nyctasia of Edonaris. This happy circumstance allows Corson to pocket twice the reward, and she is celebrating by getting spectacularly drunk and gambling badly. She will remain either drunk or hungover for much of this novel.

In a further twist of fate, the astute and charming Nyctasia is also aware of Corson's lethal reputation and offers an even larger financial reward for her services as bodyguard rather than agent of death. What begins as a business transaction gradually transforms into a mismatched friendship as the two set off to reunite Nyc with her beloved.

This unlikely partnership is the heart of the novel, and the strongest point has to be the interactions between them. They bicker - constantly and hilariously. Early on, Nyctasia has been stabbed and is in pretty shit shape. Aware that she has a payday whatever the outcome, Corson asks if she is fit to stay on the horse, "I'm warning you, if you fall off, I'll leave you behind."

From the cover and the early pages, you would be forgiven for thinking that Corson is the most terrifying warrior to ever pick up a sword and muss her hair. However, this is not the case. She is robbed, poisoned, and is generally quite dim. To refer to the Xena-verse, she is more Meg than Warrior Princess...

Alas, it's not all drinking and LOLs. I have two gripes with Silverglass, and here they be:

1. The treatment of same sex relationships. On the one hand, there is no issue at all, and I feel a bit rubbish for even bringing it up. Homosexuality isn't considered in any way unusual. Silverglass takes place in a sexually fluid world wherein the characters are either bisexual, or don't have an issue with anyone who is. Hoorah! You might think. What a joyous find! Sword and sorcery with an open minded approach to the wonderful panoply of human sexuality! Oh, truly this is a day for celebration!

....But calm yourself, dear reader. Being the analytical and generally miserable old soul that I am, I found it not quite that simple. Corson and Nyc first sleep together after a disagreement, with Nyc seducing Corson largely to shut her up. The next morning, they wake up and begin discussing their male paramours. We end up with a situation in which there is recreational sex and flirting between women, but relationships only exist between men and women. There is also a cruel and rather clumsy double standard at play - Corson flirts with barmaids and buff warriors alike, and thinks nothing of sleeping with Nyctasia, but is constantly anxious about her boyfriend Steifann, imagining him getting up to all manner of infidelities. Not cool, Corson. Not cool at all.

2. It's just not that good. The plot is a bit flimsy and there is surprisingly little action.

That said, the dynamic between our two main dames is an absolute delight. The dialogue between them is excellent, and the book remains fun throughout - I'm entertained enough by the whole thing to be actively pursuing books 2-4.

pulp-pit.blogspot.com

Mj says

This is a great series (four in all). Well worth a read. Characters are fun and the story is entertaining.

Jason Kish says

An easy and entertaining read. Don't expect an epic here its old school so the book is thin and can fit in your back pocket. The story itself is of a female mercenary in a strong female role, but one who felt more of a male than a female as I was reading it.

If your doing a bit of old school fantasy reading and browsing the used book stores pick up a copy if you see it. It may give you a break from the usual male barbarians that filled the shelves of the day.

Leila Anani says

Fun sword and sorcery romp, really nice to see a hard drinking, hard fighting, lusty FEMALE barbarian. The book centres on the friendship between a warrior heroine and the boyish looking sorceress she is paid to protect. All characters seem bisexual, teases the reader on that front, a bit like Xena. Not quite as engaging as Phyllis Ann Karr's Frostflower and Thorn, but certainly in the same vein. This is the first of four volumes. Looking forward to the other three.

Triskeles says

Entertaining series, reads a lot like the Conan books. Pulpy and not greatly written, but fun.

Charles says

First in a series about a female barbarian warrior. Decent Sword & Sorcery. I enjoyed it and I like the main character pretty well, although I prefer the Raven stories of Kirk in some ways. This has more going for it than just action, though. It definitely made me want to read more in the series.

Daniel says

This book is better than its cover, which to me suggested generic fantasy. It is a fast-paced first installment of the story of the sorceress Nyctasia and her bodyguard Corson. In the first novel in the series, Nyctasia has offended the two main noble families in Rhostshyl (one of which, the Edonaris, she happens to be a member of) and flees the city toward an enchanted forest that offers a source of magical power.

Three things made Silverglass a 4.5 star novel for me. First, the world and the magical system are both interesting and complex. Magic in particular is subtle and typically requires the sorceress to pay a price for using it. Second, the characters are well-developed and grow during the story. Nyctasia has trust issues (who wouldn't with their family trying to kill them?) but her friendship with Corson builds over time, after Nyctasia initially treating her as a chess piece. Third, there is a considerable amount of story packed into this book.
