



## Morningstar

*David Gemmell*

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## **Morningstar** David Gemmell

From the internationally bestselling author of *Lion of Macedon* and *The Dark Prince* comes an action-filled new epic fantasy based on the classic Robin Hood legend. Jarek Mace, a thief who preys upon wealthy nobles, is hailed as a hero. But is he a soldier of honor, or just a mercenary? Original.

## **Morningstar Details**

Date : Published September 1st 1993 by Del Rey (first published 1992)

ISBN : 9780345379092

Author : David Gemmell

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Heroic Fantasy, Epic Fantasy

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of Ziraccu and to even put himself in great adventures.

The city of Ziraccu, however, is the last one that the war hasn't come and now, with the Ikenas King and his army approaching, the people will begin to search for a saviour to bring back the hope that they so desperately seek. But, through all this though, Owen will discover that such a saviour is much closer than anyone would have expected; seeing something deeply hidden inside him as no one else sees.

A saviour who, despite his peculiar ways, could bring the people of Ziraccu in a rebellion against the Ikenas King, and to bring back again, as it had been prophesied, a hero from the mists of the past.

But, behind this war, Count Azrek and his sorcerer plot their own schemes for the rule of the world, searching for the power of the, eons forgotten, Vampire Kings. A power that can unleash an ancient evil, and together, Owen and Jarek, will have to find a way to stop them and face also the coming war before it is too late. Because, if they don't, it could bring the destruction to themselves, as also to the entire world.

I have to admit that, although the first person narrative is not my favourite one, this book really took me by surprise as no other of Gemmell's books, showing a completely different view of his skills than usual. A book that manages to combine his incredible talent into making heroes from where you would least expect it, as well as showing his wonderful humour in a story that manages also, through his amazing writing, to enchant you and bring you in a great adventure of bravery and heroism, of war and sacrifice.

Another thing that surprised me also is the magic system that, although it is simple enough, Gemmell manages to handle it very well in the story; as well as combining together and his ideas for the multiverse, as he had previously showed in *The Hawk Eternal* too.

Gemmell's writing, of course, has its flaws but, nevertheless, it is so enjoyable and entertaining that you cannot help but admire him as he manages to bring not only a powerful story, but also to make you love the characters from the bottom of your heart.

Lastly, I will only add that this is a powerful, and a particularly unique book that certainly, those who have read Gemmell's other books, and want to see something different, I believe should definitely not miss it.

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(view spoiler)

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## Negar says

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### Scott Kaelen says

A riveting first-person heroic adventure narrated from the viewpoint of a non-hero. Full of Gemmell's staples: love, loss, ego, religion, battles, death, friendship, et al, and resplendent with deep dialogue that confronts and challenges all of these issues.

A thoroughly engrossing page-turner, and a change from Gemmell's usual 3rd-person perspective.

Morningstar is a memorable novel.

My only gripe is with the epilogue, which changes the POV from 1st to 3rd. I'm sure a better thought-out ending could have been achieved by staying in first-person. You'll see what I mean when you get there. ;)

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### Ed C says

Future Gemmell fans, start here. I read this book to give myself a good idea of what I might expect from David Gemmell as an author, and I was not disappointed. It is great heroic fantasy without delving into the realms of high fantasy. It is dark and grimy, like a historical piece, tinged with elements of magic and myth, set in fictional world. This is Gemmell's style, and he stays true to it for this one-off tale in a one-off world. If you like something a little rougher from your fantasy, and something a little more grounded in our own world, without great dragons and monsters and elves at every turning of the page, Gemmell is possibly the fantasy author for you. If you're interested in what he can do for you, I'd highly recommend this book to start with, if you don't fancy committing to one of his more lengthy series. I tried it, liked it a lot, read a four-book series straight after and loved it.

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### proxyfish says

#### Reviewed on my blog - Books by Proxy

4.5 Stars

David Gemmell is one of those authors that every fan of fantasy fiction should have read; unbelievably this was my first. Needless to say, I need more Gemmell in my life! Morningstar was a fantastic introduction into his writing; exciting, fast paced, and overflowing with ne'er-do-wells and reluctant heroes. If, like me, you need a starting point for the Gemmell catalogue, Morningstar will not disappoint.

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The Angostin forces are storming the Highlands; murdering, pillaging and laying waste to everything that lies in their path. The people are deserting their towns and villages, fleeing into the bandit infested forests beyond; they have but one hope – the Morningstar.

Owen Odell is a storyteller, a worker of magic who spins his power into the tales he tells. A chance encounter in a darkened alley changes his life forever when he meets Jarek Mace – liar, thief and outlaw. With war threatening the Highlands, Odell finds himself attached to Mace and his merry band of misfits who turn their acts of banditry against the invading Angostin force – a mutually beneficial arrangement which both rallies the people and makes Mace a hell of a lot richer.

Rumour is rife, could Mace be the legendary Morningstar come to save the oppressed masses? Through skirmishes and battles, and facing darker forces than just an invading army, the ultimate question remains – will Mace run (presumably with all your gold and quite possibly with your wife) or will he stand and fight?

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Morningstar weaves history, myth and legend into a fantasy narrative to create a rich and almost believable tale. The overriding conflict of the Angostins and the Highlanders is reminiscent of Edward I's campaigns against Scotland and Wales, creating a vivid backdrop for a story which underlines the struggle between freedom and oppression. The clear influences from history give the story a sense of realism which may have otherwise been lost in a tale of magic and supernatural evil.

The comparisons to Robin Hood are similarly well deserved; outlaws and banditry abound, refuge is sought in the depths of the forests, and rich Angostins are relieved of their gold which, ever reluctantly, is bestowed upon the poor masses. This is a reweaving of the Robin Hood legend – a Robin Hood who despite all intentions to murder and pillage ends up, however unintentionally, helping others and fighting for the common good.

Gemmell's writing is fast paced and fluid, describing the world and its inhabitants in vivid detail. The whole band of characters are given dimensionality; cutthroats, prostitutes and thieves alike. The first person perspective, in which the narrator is describing the life of another character, works incredibly well. Owen Odell plays the part of naïve narrator superbly; he is the moral compass of the tale caught up in a world completely alien to him, and this secondary perspective works to emphasise the complexity and duality of Jarek Mace's character.

Mace is a wonderfully reluctant hero. His motives are always questionable, his true feelings hidden from us. There may have been more fights and battles if the narrative had been told from Mace's perspective but we would have lost the most important and vital part of the story. The true beauty of this tale is that we never know what Mace is really thinking or what his intentions are, and despite any good or bad outcome we can never know if it was done for completely selfless or selfish reasons. Jarek Mace will always remain an enigma.

Morningstar is a short but gripping tale full of intriguing characters. The momentum is carried with excitement and humour and ultimately reaches a satisfying, if somewhat hurried, conclusion. My first foray into the work of Gemmell was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, and one which had me reaching for the next Gemmell book as soon as Morningstar closed.

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## **Graham says**

As a massive fan of David Gemmell, I snapped this book up, hoping as ever that it was an undiscovered gem. Sadly, it wasn't. It's a book that sees the author working on autopilot, taking familiar themes and a familiar, well-worn storyline and crafting a tale that is pacy and exciting but simply lacking that extra spark that made other books from the author shine.

That's not to say it's a bad book; Gemmell at his most average is still miles better than many other fantasy writers, and this book has plenty to recommend it, from the Scottish locales to the various battles between good and evil and the shreds of magic that litter the story.

The biggest disappointment is that there aren't any people to root for; the hero, Jarek, is unlikeable from the beginning and his associates have little to recommend them. I liked the figure of the giant but Gemmell doesn't spend much time with him which is a shame.

Unusually for the author, this is written in the first person, and the narrator is a poet rather than a fighter, so there's a certain quality lacking in the various action scenes, which seem to be over a little too quickly for my liking. Saying that, the battles with zombies and vampires are full of flair and excitement and I didn't find anything specific to dislike. It's just a little too familiar to be a classic.

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### **John says**

This is an excellent book. Definitely the best fantasy I have read in quite a long time. It's got a great story and memorable characters. I expect that if I had as much time to read as I did when I was younger, I would have burned through this relatively short book in just a few days. Highly recommended. I will definitely be reading more of Gemmell's novels.

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Heroism, action, self sacrifice...what's not to like! Gemmell at his best!

Okay so some of you won't like Gemmell, there's no accounting for taste. I rate him very high, one of my favorites....sometimes it's got meaning upon meaning other times it's pure brain candy. But even then it's really great brain candy.

This may have been the first Gemmell novel I ran across and it set me off on a hunt for all the others I could find.

David Gemmell, one of my favorite writers, he'll be missed.

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### **Nikki says**

David Gemmell's fantasy works are all really fun to read, and I'm still at the stage with him where I can run into a book of his I've never read before in every library I sign up to. Morningstar is a stand-alone fantasy work, though it's set in the same world as Knights of Dark Renown (the Knights of the Gabala are mentioned, as a legend, anyway), with a self-contained and pretty satisfying plot.

It's partially based on Robin Hood stories, and I think you could make an argument that it's part Arthurian as well. Gemmell was pretty brave in twisting up apparently conflicting ideologies -- the amoral bandit and the great king, being the same man? -- but it worked, I think. I found it satisfying, anyway. Though the way he constructs his heroes/anti-heroes is very reminiscent of the characters' roles in Knights of Dark Renown. That could get wearing if he does it again...



## Doc says

Good, solid, gifted writing.

Lately, I have been going for the Kindle deals and reading many self-published or near-self-published books--a form of reader's Russian roulette. This book reminded me of what a pleasure it is to read a genuinely good book by an experienced, accomplished author. It reminded me of how good it is to move along that smooth, well-crafted road without the cracks, bumps, and potholes of many of the bargain books.

Maybe I should reexamine the dilemma all of us face: what to read next, where to spend my limited reading time--or maybe I should just go lie down.

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## Giovanna says

3.5

Argh, it's difficult to round 3.5 stars for me lately.

I still have to clear my head a bit, so I'll probably wait a while before rating it. It's close to 4 stars, but I don't want to rush it and give it a rating now.

The good:

> The idea. If I had to describe Morningstar I'd say it's a loose, parodic retelling of Robin Hood. Our hero is, in fact, an unwilling one. Jarek Mace is everything but heroic: thief (and he doesn't steal for nothing but his own gain), murderer, adulterer, he's happy with the kind of life he leads and doesn't really have morals. They make him a hero and by doing so the Morningstar is born: heroic, cares for the poor, fights for his lady's love and has no problems about risking his own life to help people who need him.

So yeah, not exactly a realistic portrait of Jarek Mace, whose life is viewed under a completely different life because of the Morningstar's fame.

See, the idea itself is indeed brilliant.

> The final plot twist. Holy hell, considering that the last book I rated 5 stars was focused on time being circular I couldn't help but love this plot twist. So, yep, that trick was quite cool and I really appreciated it.

The bad:

> The plot is nothing special until that plot twist. Once the novelty of that idea wears off we're left with a classic fantasy quest. Which is understandable, because this book was published in the '90s, but still, it doesn't improve in any way the fact that plot-wise this was quite average. Which is also the main reason why I don't know if I want to give this a full 4-star rating.

Anyway, if you like classic fantasy books with a twist I'd recommend you check this out.

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## **Gav451 says**

Its David Gemmell so we all know what we are going to get.

Nuanced Characters - Check

Complex but well plotted story - Check

Well realised dialogue - Check

Flawed and human hero - Check.

So far so good. I was thoroughly entertained by this book and as ever liked the way the story was told in the book. On occasion you will get tales that follow the same person for a while but these are not books where the author forces you to follow them over a series of episodes. I do not mind that style but this feels like a more honest and better value approach. Try it, if you like it buy another but you will still get an ending to your story even if it wasn't for you.

David Gemmell was a loss to us all and it makes me kind of sad to think that there are now only a finite number of books for us to read. Its lucky they are all crackers thus far.

I do have the odd quibble about the book. As ever there are all sorts of stories in this one we were not told as we followed the tale. The author could have given us more and there was a time travel element to the book that I though was handled just a little too quickly. In my opinion, unless handled VERY carefully, even the best authors can drop the ball once they introduce time travel. It can be a door to some very lazy plotting and tropes.

These in no way lessen my enjoyment of the book however. I never outstayed its welcome and once again I was fully immersed in the story throughout.

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## **Cindy says**

It has been quite a while since I stumbled upon a book that I loved every single part of. I loved every word in this book. The writing is amazing. All of the characters are lovable in their own way. Such a fascinating take on the story of Robin Hood - there were parts where you knew this story was based on the fairy tale but then things would quickly take a turn and it became its own.

I recommend this one to anyone who enjoys a good heroic fantasy read!

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## **Lyn\* Nomad \*Worlds await\* says**

Well, this was different. This second book in the chronological list of the Drenai series was told from the point of view of a bard, Owen Odell, rather than from the omniscient POV I'd become used to from David Gemmell. I have to admit I was curious what the story would be like.

Owen Odell is a bard who was one of the companions of a legendary hero, the Morningstar. Owen's POV was interesting and witty. Though at times he was a bit naive, he told the true story of the Morningstar, the man behind the legend, without embellishing it.

Jarek Mace was an unlikely hero who despite himself ended up becoming one. What I liked best about him was that he knew he was a scoundrel and he didn't make any apologies for it. He was fine with who he was, and then along came Owen, complicating his life.

One of the heroes Owen talked about, Rabain, intrigued me so much that I searched whether David Gemmell had written a book about him. Alas, there was none.

As I read on, so many things became clear. David Gemmell constructed a plot with fascinating revelations I sure didn't expect and an ending that came full circle. I'd initially expected to give this book a 4-star rating but I was so impressed by the final chapters that only a 5-star rating would do.

Morningstar was a story about unlikely heroes and redemption, sorcery and the ultimate struggle of trying to do the right thing when it contradicted your wants. Highly recommended.

Posted on Blog

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## **Steve says**

At last, time to write a review...

I finished this book days ago, for the fourth or so time.

It's not one of Gemmell's best books, but nor is it one of his worst. It's a gripping fantasy read with a Robin Hood type theme, i.e. unlikely hero and plenty of time in the forest.

Owen Odell is a young bard who, as an elderly man, summons a ghost to tell the true story of The Morningstar, his legend, and the part of Owen himself...

Owen meets Jarek Mace by accident and they form an unlikely, but interesting friendship. Owen has principles, Jarek Mace has none. Jarek is a thief, a womanizer, a killer when he deems necessary, and lives for riches and women. Sounds good to me ;) But I digress...

Owen comes up with the idea of The Morningstar (another name for a mace - spiked ball on a chain), and Jarek ends up using it in a defiant stand against the new lords following an attack on a forest village. Jarek only makes this stand because the attacker's have stolen his hidden horde of wealth, not for the deaths of people he knew. But, The Morningstar is born and the legend, as much as Jarek tries to escape it, grows...

There are Vampyre Kings reborn, magical weapons that work against evil, and a host of good character's in a tale well told.

Worth the 4 stars.

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