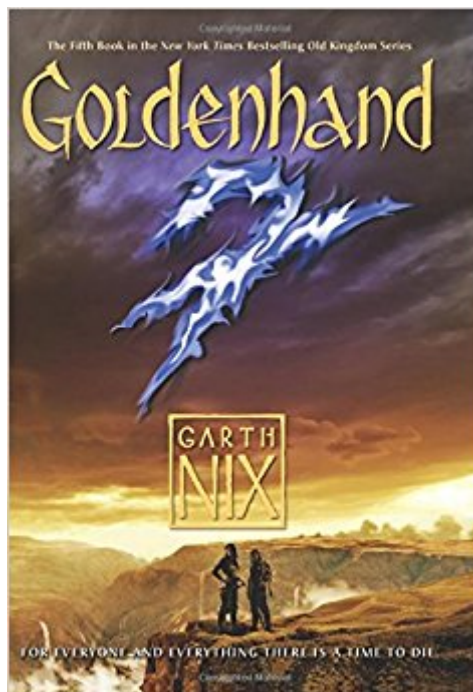


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Goldenhand (Old Kingdom)



Synopsis

The long-awaited fifth installment in Garth Nix's New York Times bestselling Old Kingdom series, for readers who enjoy series by Rae Carson, Kristin Cashore, Scott Westerfeld, and Cassandra Clare. *Goldenhand* takes place six months after the events of *Abhorsen* and follows the novella *Nicholas Sayre and the Creature in the Case*, which is featured in *Across the Wall*. Lirael lost one of her hands in the binding of Orannis, but now she has a new hand, one of gilded steel and Charter Magic. On a dangerous journey, Lirael returns to her childhood home, the Clayr Glacier, where she was once a Second Assistant Librarian. There, a young woman from the distant North brings her a message from her long-dead mother, Arielle. It is a warning about the Witch with No Face. But who is the Witch, and what is she planning? Lirael must use her new powers to save the Old Kingdom from this great danger—and it must be forestalled not only in the living world but also in the cold, remorseless river of Death.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up • In this brilliant installment of the series, the once shy Lirael steps boldly into her duties as Abhorsen-in-Waiting. While Nix brings back many other familiar characters, he begins on the far side of the Greenwash River Bridge with a young woman of the clans who roam north of the kingdom. Ferin bears a vital message for Lirael and the Clayr from one of their own who traveled north long ago. She is pursued by shamans who can summon Free Magic creatures as well as a necromancer who can call the Dead. Meanwhile, Lirael is called south, beyond the Wall to the

Ancestier, where she must rescue Nicholas Sayre from a Hrute, a fell creature of Free Magic. Nicholas is sorely wounded, so Lirael must transport him via paperwing to the glacier of the Clayr, the only place in the Old Kingdom where they possess the knowledge and the skill to treat him. Ferin and Lirael will meet in the Clayr's glacier to discuss with Sabriel, Touchstone, and other formidable figures the great threat that looms. Nix's terrific characters enliven the story, while moments of peril provide the rhythm. He even includes some cameos from characters who readers might not expect. His wonderfully imagined world is full of rich details and where Charter Magic flows through and protects humanity. VERDICT For fantasy lovers, teens and adults alike. —Eric Norton, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

Praise for Goldenhand: —“A masterfully spun tale well worth the years long wait.” (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) —“For fantasy lovers, teens and adults alike.” (School Library Journal) —“Fans will cheer this latest volume- tightly paced with a satisfying resolution, capable and relatable female characters, plenty of action, and reappearances by beloved characters-and fervently hope for more to come.” (Horn Book Magazine) —“Goldenhand delivers the bleak, beautiful magic only Garth Nix can create-impeccable in its details, harrowing in its action.” (Leigh Bardugo, New York Times bestselling author of Six of Crows and The Grisha Trilogy) —“Goldenhand reaffirms why Nix is a master of the genre: his exquisitely detailed world-building is unparalleled, and his characters are so tremendously alive and compelling that I am convinced there's Charter Magic in every word.” (Sarah J. Maas, New York Times bestselling author of A Court of Thorns and Roses and Throne of Glass series) —“Garth Nix is one of the best worldbuilders in fantasy, and this book is merely further proof. I love the Old Kingdom series, and Goldenhand is an excellent continuation, packed with the excitement and passion of a storytelling virtuoso at the height of his abilities.” (Brandon Sanderson, New York Times bestselling author of the Mistborn trilogy, Warbreaker, The Alloy of Law, The Way of Kings, Rithmatist, and Steelheart.) Praise for the Old Kingdom series: Praise for Clariel: —“Between striking characters-from the heroic if not entirely competent young Abhorsen-in-Waiting, Belatiel, to the enigmatic, catlike Mogget-and Nix's brilliantly complex magic system, this superb tale is exactly the book fans of the series have been awaiting.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) —“Themes of freedom and destiny underpin Clariel's harrowing, bittersweet story, and readers will delight in the telling (and in fan favorite Mogget's return).” (Booklist (starred review)) —“Clariel is a deeply sympathetic character faced with complicated choices, the

consequences of which are frighteningly uncertain as she is pulled between the wild Free Magic and the disciplined Charter. (School Library Journal (starred review)) "Nix's tale provides a complete experience unto itself. But his focus on this strong character whose overriding passion is to go her own way provides a hugely satisfying background to the other Abhorsen books. A suspenseful prequel to the much-loved Abhorsen books, showcasing the independent Clariel. (Shelf Awareness (starred review)) Praise for SABRIEL: "Sabriel is a winner, a fantasy that reads like realism. Here is a world with the same solidity and four dimensional authority as our own, created with invention, clarity, and intelligence. I congratulate Garth Nix. And I look forward to reading his next piece of work. (Philip Pullman) Praise for LIRAE: "What makes Lirael a delight is the magic that Nix brings to his story and to his characters. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "Riveting. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) Praise for ABHORSEN: "Breathtaking, bittersweet, and utterly unforgettable. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) "At once an allegory regarding war and peace and a testament to friendship, this is thought-provoking fantasy. (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

To give a little context I want to say I am a huge fan of Garth Nix's work and have read almost all of the books he has put out. He is one of my favorite authors of all time and the Old Kingdom Series is hands down my favorite fantasy series. I make a yearly return to the original trilogy, and would put myself in the category of a super fan - hence the wordy nature of this review. When Clariel came out last year, I was on the edge of seat practically salivating over a new Old Kingdom book. Upon turning the last page I felt very let down with what I got. The book felt really rushed towards the end, the character development stilted and a lot of the concepts were not very developed -- overall it seemed like something that could have been great if more time had been invested. But there was a light at the end of the tunnel -- a new book, a TRUE sequel to Abhorsen. I was ready to hope that this would be better. Flash forward to today when I turned the last page of Goldenhand. While I do think this book was better than Clariel, overall it was a bit of a let down too. Mostly what I wanted out of this book was some Lireal/Nick, a resolution to Chlorrs plot line and the beautiful world building and poignant prose that Garth Nix always manages to deliver. And while this book definitely contains all of this, the delivery felt very flawed. For those of you who do not want to be spoiled I will just summarize here and say this is a book for the fans. If you love the Old Kingdom you should definitely read this book. Don't go into it with too many expectations, and I think you should have a good time. Overall it was an enjoyable read and I am happy the book exists and I am hopeful we will

get more Old Kingdom books. That being said it definitely was not without its flaws -- mainly in the delivery of the plot, pacing and romantic elements. While these flaws did not ruin the book for me, they definitely sullied an experience I had been looking forward to for a good decade.*Warning THERE BE SPOILERS BELOW*First and foremost, the book spends about 250 pages in a 350 page book setting up the story. And once you get to this point, the rest of the book feels very rushed. This was much of the same problem I had with Clariel. A lot of sections towards the end of the book start falling prey to a lot of info dumping/ telling rather than showing to quickly get to the conclusion. Honestly when I got 2/3s of the way through I was excited, as I thought he was going to end it with a cliff hanger and the promise of more Old Kingdom books. But alas, with 70 pages or so to go this book started barreling towards the end like frightened horse desperately in need of a stable. A lot of plot points seemed to be rehashes of the earlier books (finding a dead spirits body in life and destroying it, taken to the precipice of the ninth gate and battling a reluctant spirit there etc etc) I wasn't sure if this was meant to be an homage to the original works, but it ended up seeming like an easy and unoriginal solution. I definitely think these points could have been built on to create a twist on things we were familiar with in the series - and I could see that the seeds of that sort of thinking were in place, but with the amount of time left in the book they could not be cultivated. There were definitely some deus ex machina moments that came out of nowhere to resolve things - and two very shoehorned cameos that I wanted to love as they contained my favorite characters but overall left me feeling very jarred. I wasn't expecting some epic on par with the end of Abhorsen (how can you top the Destroyer??) and I think this story really could have been truly fantastic if a little bit more time and page real estate was dedicated to the ending. My other main fault with the book was the romance. In the original trilogy while Sabriel and Touchstones romance does occur rather quickly, it is subtly presented and speaks to two individuals who have been through a lot together and have found common ground. On the other hand the romance between Nick and Lireal felt like it occurred in a straight up whirlwind. It is clear by the end of Abhorsen that they have feelings for each other, so perhaps they had more time to consider their feelings outside the pages of one of the books but everything felt like it happened so quickly in Goldenhand. For a couple I've wanted to be together since I was 14 I was really unsure of how to feel about this. I definitely wanted the two of them to happen, but from page one Lireal felt so obsessed with this relationship/ Nick -- which seemed rather strange, as she is always presented in the original series as a more shy and reserved character. And while being shy does not mean you have no interest in relationships, it seemed very off putting that Lireal desperately wanted something with Nick after the loss of the dog and her hand, the binding of the destroyer and becoming the Abhorsen-in-Waiting. And once these

two got together, that was the only thing the two of them had on their mind -- get ready for lots and lots of kissing. Very off putting kissing that just feels really mushed in while plot is trying to occur. The relationship overall felt very akin to what we have come to expect in the swill of Young Adult, which in turn made these complex characters who I knew and loved from the original trilogy feel really shallow as well. I would never expect this from Garth Nix, and the whole experience left me feeling a little uncomfortable. That being said I did really enjoy some of the exchanges between Nick/Lireal before they starting kissing in every spare moment of the novel, they were delightfully silly and adorkably awkward. All of that being said - I did enjoy this book as a whole. I really appreciated the expansion on the world on the Old Kingdom and hearing what was beyond the shores of the Greenwash river. I wish we had had more time to appreciate the places beyond the Great Rift as I definitely think there was a great story just waiting to occur there. Sabriel does give us a lot of information on this location, which I feel like could have been shown to the reader when Lireal and Nick arrived if more page real estate had been allowed. While the chapters about Ferrin were not my favorite as I desperately wanted to get back to Lireal and Nick, I did enjoy the unique perspective her character brought to the story. Learning about the nomadic tribes of the North was also a treat. The resolution with Chlorr did feel a little info dumpy (Clariel's spirit spends a good page and a half trying to fill in the gaps that occurred after Clariel that turned her into Chlorr) but It did overall make me like her character a bit more. It was nice to see her and Lireal meet as I always felt like they were almost birds of a lonely feather. Technically speaking, the writing in this book was up to par with what we have come to expect from Garth Nix and did not disappoint. The prose are really well constructed, and his metaphors, allusions and similies (which have always been a favorite of mine) were all in top form. I just think overall the structure of this novel needed to looked at and the story pacing. I know the market has changed some since the first 3 books came out, so perhaps this book had to be adjusted to survive in what is expected from modern YA. As a fan of the Old Kingdom I am happy this book exists, but I hope next time we have a journey into the Old Kingdom it is much closer to the original experience, and the magic that we have come to expect from this world. I am definitely looking forward to whatever the talented Garth Nix has up his sleeve. And hopefully, charter willing, this isn't the last of the Old Kingdom we are ever going to see.

I'm often more disappointed by a book that I know could be excellent and is instead only tepid than any other combination. Although Nix's prose is as strong as ever, the plotting in Goldenhand completely lacks depth -- much unlike the original Abhorsen trilogy. My main impression of this book is that nothing much happens. There are two plot strands. First, Ferin (a character new to this

installment, whom I never grew to care about in the least) is on an urgent errand to bring a message to the Clayr. Second, Lirael is on a considerably less urgent errand to the Clayr. This is the entire plot of the first 250 or so pages. Lirael has no action, Ferin only one interesting sequence. For the last 100 pages, the book coasts for a bit until it reaches a drab climax. Compounding this problem is the way the chapters alternate between the two plot lines, almost invariably breaking off at a melodramatic cliffhanger that will be resolved immediately when next you return to that plot line. Sadly, by that time you'll no longer care, because you'll have been dumped into the other plot line. In this way, Garth Nix successfully saps almost all tension, excitement, and danger from the whole of his book. Which is almost better than his ham-fisted attempts at romance . . . By the way, if you've never read the Abhorsen books, or haven't read them recently, you may find this book fairly incomprehensible. Characters from the previous books show up out of nowhere and with minimal explanation but a great deal of convenience. If you have read and loved the Abhorsen books, you might as well read this one. It doesn't add much and it's not particularly good, but it's not horrible either. It's more on par with Clariel: it shares the problem of lack of depth, increases it by splintering the narrative, but partly makes up with it by the inclusion of some beloved characters.

First of all, this book is not the one to read if you're new to the series. In some series, it doesn't really matter. In this case it really does. While the book was enjoyable and a quick read (for me anyway) I will admit it wasn't entirely satisfying. I was never particularly concerned for the character's safety and parts of the ending felt a bit cheap, or like a rehash. That said; it works excellently if you take it as an epilogue. That's basically what it is. It wraps up the series nicely, though is not as satisfying as the other books. For which Abhorsen shall still be my favorite. It IS nice to see all the characters interacting with one another though! (even if a few fan favorites who returned seemed to have little point other than as fan service, appearing and vanishing without proper weight) Don't come looking for the kind of epic in the previous books, and you won't be too terribly disappointed.

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