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Book-Review

The Last Prince, E.G. Radcliff – Review

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If you've followed me for any great deal of time, you'll likely know that I'm a massive fan of E.G. Radcliff. The Hidden King was a book I read back in February, and it's a book that I absolutely loved. So when the author asked if I'd like an early copy of The Last Prince, I was on it like a seagull on chips.

As ever, while I have been provided with a free copy for review, these are my unbiased and honest thoughts.

The Last Prince



Synopsis

In a hellish city, the fate of a young boy rests on the very thing he fears most...

Robbed of his childhood by tragedy and betrayal and forced onto the streets, only fury makes young Ninian feel whole – and in a world of gangs and fae, Ninian is more than willing to fight for his life.

But it doesn't take much to topple a life which is already balanced on the edge of a knife. And by the time a desperate Ninian realizes he's crossed the wrong person, it is much, much too late.

In his frantic struggle to right his collapsing world, Ninian's furious, bloody efforts are dredging up history he'd rather forget – the past is tired of being held at bay, and even fighting cannot protect Ninian from himself.

So when he meets a crimson-eyed stranger, a boy so broken he refuses even to speak, Ninian does not believe he has the capacity to care.

He is wrong.

And that will change everything...

PAGES 346 // Mythic Prairie Books// RATING – FIVE STARS ★★★★★

E.G. Radcliff (Author)

Micaela Alcaino (Cover Design)

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Review

Firstly, I have to point out that there are two routes into *The Last Prince*, either you've read *The Hidden King*, and it's a sequel, or you haven't, and it would technically feel like the first book of a series.

While there isn't a right or wrong option, I'd probably suggest starting with *The Hidden King*. The reasons being that firstly you'll save yourself no small amount of heartache in regards what happens to certain characters and secondly you'll be better positioned to witness just how much more assured Radcliff is as an author.

As with its predecessor, *The Last Prince* is a YA fantasy shot through with delectable Gaelic influences. The central theme is again love and family, but it feels so much more intimate and real.

The Last Prince is a fantasy novel, but the fantasy is very subtle, almost taking a backseat to what is a beautiful LGBTQ+ romance. Mind you it is definitely fantasy and the world is suffused with deep lore and subtle magics.

Everything that I loved about *The Hidden King* is here but bigger, brighter, and better.

The story, ultimately, is that of how Ninian meets Áed and how that meeting then develops into love. This aspect of the story is just one of the areas in which Radcliff shines, if not bursts with all of the power of a supernova.

Radcliff has such a spectacular gift of being able to capture both humanity and emotion, taking it and sculpting vibrant, living characters. If you've already read *The Hidden King*, I don't doubt that you'll already be deeply invested in both Ninian and Áed. Prepare to be blown away at just how much more developed and nuanced they are here.

Ninian and Áed both start at rock bottom, Ninian is homeless and starving while Áed is broken and half-dead, washed up on the shore. They're underdogs you can't help but root for, but beyond their status, they are characters you will fall in love with as they too fall in love with one another.

Their relationships develop in such a gentle and authentic way, it feels as though you're reading any number of your own early relationships.

Initially, they are two clusters of broken aimless matter, who through chance find themselves in one another's orbit. Slowly and tenderly, they circle and dance around one another, gradually coming together with a powerful purpose. Then they're fused – and a star is born.

There are so many great characters throughout the book and not a weak one amongst them. It's a cliché I know, but they're all multi-faceted and possessing of their own flaws and peculiarities.

The dynamics between them all are again, so authentic and believable that it's super immersive. As mentioned earlier, one of the main themes is family, not just of the biological family but all of the varieties that can exist. As the story progresses, we see all of the characters responding very organically to a variety of complexities and power-struggles, which develop within their particular families.

One of the points I raised in my review of *The Hidden King*, was that I wanted to see more of the world, and more description. In *The Last Prince*, there is so much detail, description, and ephemeral bits and pieces, it felt as though I was watching a movie.

Radcliff's use of language coupled with such intricate detail, create a world that is nothing short of breathtaking.

The language is both lyrical and polished, creating strong emotional and sensory connections to the scene. Descriptively there is a constant 'showing' of details whether they be grand or incidental.

– Unfortunately, as his violet eyes swept the expanse of the seaside, all he found were swells breaking against the rocky beach, sliding down ropes of black algae with a low-tide stench.

As I spent more time in The Maze, I was increasingly reminded of New York from The Gangs of New York – a dangerous and dirty place, possessing its own unique charm. In truth, it's not an unfair comparison to make on several levels with the Gaelic influences, strong characters, vibrant setting, and depth.

It does have to be said that The Last Prince is a slow book, in that it is heavily character-driven. That being said there are a number of action scenes that were very well written, I really enjoyed the one-on-one combat as it felt both meaty and brutal. In my review notes, I even wrote 'Raging Bull vibes'.

– Brígh stumbled, and that was all the invitation Ninian needed to rise and swing his elbow into her nose. Brígh cursed, cupping a hand to her bleeding face, but didn't back off. With the back of her hand, she swatted Ninian across the face.

The Last Prince is such a beautiful, well-written book; it was an absolute delight to read. Having read The Hidden King, I was expecting a good book, but in truth, I was completely blown away with just how much Radcliff's writing has levelled-up.

Who would I recommend this to?

If you want an achingly beautiful and tender study of love, family, acceptance, and redemption The Last Prince is for you.

If you want hearts laid bare, deep, profound, human characters E.G Radcliff is staking a claim to being the best in the business.

That The Maze is one of the best-realised fantasy settings I've read is the icing on the cake.

About the author

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E.G. Radcliff is an incurable writer, lifelong imaginer of worlds, and author of the series The Coming of Áed. An insatiable reader and researcher with a penchant for all things Celtic and a love of the mysterious and magical, she brings a knowing touch to her young adult fantasy fiction.

She enjoys adventure, reading on the train, and dreams about flying.

She is based in Illinois, USA.