

Trish Chatterley

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Abstract

Epstein, Alex. *The Circle Cast: The Lost Years of Morgan Le Fay*. Vancouver: Tradewind Books, 2010. Print.

This Young Adult historical fantasy novel begins in Britannia around 500AD. Anna's father, a Roman chieftain, is slain by the British war leader Uter Pendragon. To protect her from Uter, her mother sends her to Ireland with a new identity as Morgan. Morgan is a strong female character who will appeal to female readers. She is a survivor who adapts well to new surroundings and situations. Her driving force is her mission to return one day to Britain to avenge her father's death.

The story follows her life in Ireland. She lives first with a great warrior clan that is related to her family by marriage. When a neighbouring clan defeats them, she is captured and lives as the slave of Buanann, the clan's magical wise woman. She escapes and flees to a Christian settlement where she stays until she marries the landowner's son Conall. As his wife, she teaches him and his men British war tactics which help him to become a great warrior with extensive land and large numbers of men. She eventually returns to Britain with a small group of Conall's warriors to seek vengeance on Uter and in the end helps to protect her birthplace from invading Saxons.

The novel is filled with elements of magic and connections to the earth as we learn of Morgan's growing prowess with casting spells. This period of her life has previously not been mentioned in Irish mythology, and provides one interpretation of how and why she became known as 'Le Fay'. The book is an aside to an otherwise familiar story. The Enchanter, whom we know as Merlin, plays a small role. In the epilogue, the character of Arthur is introduced and leaves the story open to a sequel. In mythical legend, Arthur and Morgan are half-siblings.

The short prologue uses a style of writing that is quite poetic and unlike most of the rest of the text. This may not appeal to some readers and may discourage them from continuing with the rest of the book, which is presented in a more easily digestible style. The story includes scenes of sex and violence that may not appeal to all readers.

Recommended: 3 out of 4 stars

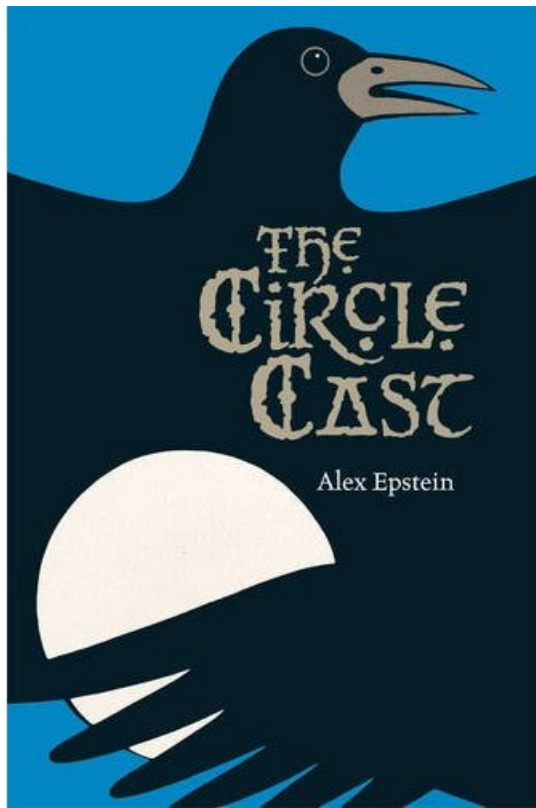
Reviewer: Trish Chatterley

Trish is a Public Services Librarian for the John W. Scott Health Sciences Library at the University of Alberta. In her free time she enjoys dancing, gardening, and reading books of all types.

Author Biography

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Section
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After Morgan le Fay meets the handsome son of an Irish chieftain, she has a stark choice: choose love or return to England to avenge her father's death. From the Inside Flap. Growing up, love, magic, revenge, Arthurian legend. From the Back Cover. Written by veteran screenwriter Alex Epstein, *The Circle Cast* is an intriguing and original take on a character that has appeared in legends and lore for centuries: Morgan le Fay. Although she is traditionally thought of as a seductress and antagonist in Arthurian legend, Epstein goes for another, more uncommon portrayal, turning Morgan into a fierce warrior seeking to avenge her father's death. Almost from the start of the novel, it is clear that Morgan is a very strong character. Morgan le Fay - King Arthur's sister, and his worst enemy - was a teenage girl once. How did she become the most powerful witch in legend? "This has the darkness of Celtic magic and a poetic terseness that suits its stern, passionate hero." *The Toronto Star*. Shortlisted for a Quebec Writers Federation Award. Read on Kindle! Britain, 480 AD. Saxon

barbarians are invading, pushing the civilized British out of their own island. Morgan is the daughter of the governor of Cornwall.