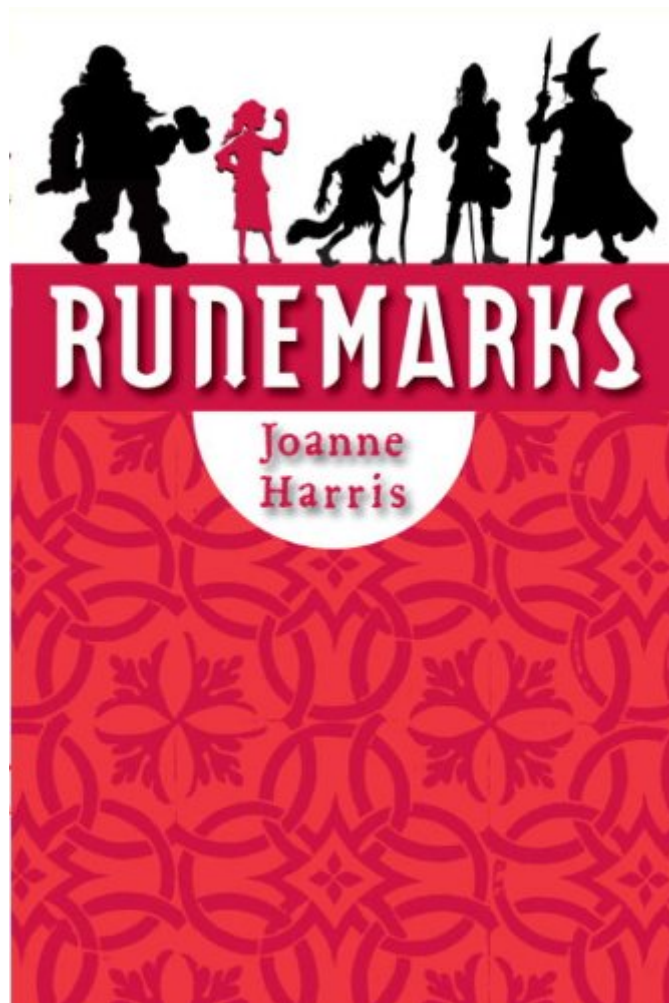


The book was found

Runemarks



Synopsis

Seven o'clock on a Monday morning, five hundred years after the end of the world, and goblins had been at the cellar again. . . . Not that anyone would admit it was goblins. In Maddy Smith's world, order rules. Chaos, old gods, fairies, goblins, magic, glamours—all of these were supposedly vanquished centuries ago. But Maddy knows that a small bit of magic has survived. The "ruinmark" she was born with on her palm proves it—and makes the other villagers fearful that she is a witch (though helpful in dealing with the goblins-in-the-cellar problem). But the mysterious traveler One-Eye sees Maddy's mark not as a defect, but as a destiny. And Maddy will need every scrap of forbidden magic One-Eye can teach her if she is to survive that destiny. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What an original read this was! Harris combined Norse mythology with the dangers of blindly following religious structures, and the result was fascinating. Things that worked for me: The world building gets an A, and not just for effort. This story takes place in a simple, pioneerish

post-Ragnarok setting, with people living above ground and mysterious little creatures living below. Meanwhile, the gods of old Norse legends are coming back with a twist that involves a struggle for power with the obstinately religious humans as the end of the world nears once again. Harris uses the old Norse runes as a magic system, giving each one a different power. Also, I like the gods. Well, some of them, anyway. Most of them are not very well-developed, but Loki and Odin really are. Odin is very political, right in some ways, wrong in others, but trying to find a compromise for the common good. He is a wise and sort of cranky grandfatherly figure to the main character. Loki is crush-worthy. Maybe I'm just biased because of my crush on Tom Hiddleston's Loki. But really, Loki is great. He teeters on the brink of good and evil, much as Odin does, but he much more actively tries to change the world, and he is ever-so-clever. Plus, Thor is funny. Maddy, the main character is likable because, despite having so much power and being looked down on her whole life (a recipe for a maniacal villain), she wants to use her powers to do good and stay true to herself. She is not an annoying heroine in the least. She is mature and down-to-Earth. In addition, there is a ton of adventure in this book, with eerie settings and characters pitted on all different sides -- there is no spectrum. And the showdown is unlike anything I've ever read or seen before. I don't want to give away too much. It's best to just experience it. Things that didn't work for me: Maddy is a bit too powerful. I would have liked to see her struggle just a bit more, even though she already faces a lot of ethical dilemmas and brain-power challenges. Not a big deal, though. Also, there is a bit too much inner monologue from characters that we don't end up caring about as much. There are entire chapters of this, and they are not completely essential to the story. They could have been cut down, at the very least. This is probably why a lot of reviews of this book state it as being "boring." Finally, the book came across as being a bit preachy, not in a religious way, but in an opposite way. That wouldn't be so bad if Harris's other stories didn't have that underlying tone. For example, I hear Harris' *Chocolat* deals with challenging the rigidity of the Catholic Church during Lent. It's just a bit of a turn-off when the author starts sneaking their agenda in there. Overall, though, I'd say read this. It is so, so unique. It's a breath of fresh air for YA literature.

For most readers Harris should be familiar because of her novel *Chocolat*, made into a movie starring the yummy Johnny Depp. I admit that part of the reason I picked up *Runemarks* was half because it was an interesting sounding fantasy based around Norse Mythology and half because it

was written by the author of a movie I love. I'm a little shallow at times, I admit this. In the end however the fact that this is an enchanting and enthralling fantasy is what kept me glued to the pages. Before you even begin the story itself there are half a dozen pages to give you a detail accounting of the world, the people and the geography. It helps if you are versed in Norse mythology as well, this is a story about what happens after Ragnarok (ie: the end of the world and the rebirth of that world). The world that is born is one afraid of magic and imagination, deeply religious and prejudiced against anyone who has a 'Ruin-mark'. Our heroine, Maddy, has one such 'ruin-mark' and its brought her nothing but grief and trouble for as long as she can remember. Through Maddy and her journey Below we see the folly of humans and Gods alike, how both can be blind to the bigger picture, but can still redeem themselves in the end. From different perspectives we hear how the world ended and how it was reborn and what truly caused the calamity. We meet with well known Norse deities--Odin, Freyja, Loki--and magical beings such as trolls and goblins. The novel itself is splintered into several 'parts' as Maddy's journey goes along. This novel reminded me very much of the old time 'epic' stories such as The Odyssey and The Neverending Story. Maddy fought monsters and Gods and humans and magical beings--all for the importance of a greater quest then she herself understood at first. Fate is at stake in this book and the question becomes who's Fate exactly? I recommend this book to anyone who has even a passing interest in Norse mythology or wants to read a tale full of spirit, adventure and a little bit of a morality tale sprinkled throughout.

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