



The Sacrifice

Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Dawn Wilson (Cover Artist)

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The Fey have swept across three continents and never faced defeat. But now they have reached Blue Isle, where there dwells a people of simplicity and faith, untainted by war. Yet as they face invasion, the Islanders discover a deadly undreamed-of power of their own. So begins a conflict that must destroy one race or the other--or maybe both.

The Sacrifice Details

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From Reader Review The Sacrifice for online ebook

Roberta says

The first in a series. I bought 4 of the 5 books back when I was pregnant with my daughter and found out that the fourth book was out of print, so I didn't read them. 6 years later I found the 4th book on ebay, but I still didn't read it. Now 8 years later, I've started the series.

We have in this book a world not our own with a race called the Fey who are exceedingly war-like and magical. They want to conquer their entire world, and they've already taken over 2/3's of the world when the king's son against his father's wishes decides to try and conquer Blue Isle, a peaceful place. Turns out that the Blue Islanders have holy water that thinks the Fey are demons and the easily thought to conquer people are beating them.

The prince's daughter, Jewel, wants to try different tactics, but her father ignores her. The prince of the Blue Islanders, Nicholas, wants his father to be more decisive.

What happens is a very interesting tale about two very different cultures. Rusch pulls in ideas of faeries from our own mythology and gives it a unique spin of her own. Redcaps are the scavengers of the dead and have no magic, and Doppelgangers are brought in as well but those are the only names from western mythology she uses other than fey. The magic system is interesting not quite like any I've seen. The Blue Islanders have a religion with a sacrificial man similar to Christ; very fascinating.

Overall, a very good story. Not the best I've ever read, but certain very good and I'm already starting the second book.

Diane says

Maybe 3 1/2 stars. I really like her Retrieval Artist series much more than this book. It just seemed to drag on until the ending which seemed rushed.

The narrator's use of differing accents for the people of Blue Isle were too different between them; as if they came from completely different countries.

Betsy says

Hard to rate. 4 for creativity, interesting world/societies and some of the characters. 3 for writing, which was a little drawn out with the occasional cliche, some characters not really developed, and ending out of the blue. I was tempted to give it a 3, but I like to give authors the benefit of the doubt when I'm on the fence about ratings.

When I got to the resolution (well, sort of resolution - it obviously leads to the next book in the series), I was pretty much "Huh?? Where did that come from?" Besides an occasional flirtation look and a couple of visions, there was nothing to lead up to a lovey-dovey wedding at the end. It made no sense.

Jewel's motivations for marrying Nicholas were very unclear, as well. It sounded as though she was marrying him as an entry to take over the Blue Isle. But then it ended on an upbeat note, that they were truly in love and Jewel was interested in creating a new society blended of the two. Was she giving up her warrior status which she loved? How did they fall in love if they spent so little time together? Were they creating a new society or was the Fey going to turn on the Islanders now? Very unclear.

I may read the next in the series if I happen upon it on the library shelf, but I spend a credit to buy it from Audible. But to be fair, I'm not a big fantasy reader, either.

Good narration by David DeSantos.

Peter Smith says

I really enjoyed Rusch's rendition of the Fey as a conquering race with a complex culture based on what is essentially a caste system. Where you wind up in the Fey hierarchy depends on how your magick manifests.

I've seen complaints that the book is too long and that not enough happens in it. It's hard to debate the second point, but the author uses the technique of devoting each chapter to the viewpoint of a specific character, and her chapters are very short (I lost track somewhere past chapter 80) and she has a lot of diverse characters. For me at least, this style kept me turning pages even if, from a "big picture" point of view there wasn't a huge amount of action. I never felt that "Sheesh will this book ever end?" feeling so to me it wasn't too long.

Rusch creates interesting characters with often subtle flaws (if they are even flaws) and no one in the book really felt like a cardboard cutout. The Fey are 'the bad guys' but sometimes seem to be victims of their own culture/biology as much as anything. From the outside looking in they may seem to be evil incarnate but when you're seeing the world from the point of view of a Fey character things can seem very different.

Two flaws kept this from being a 5 star book for me. The biggest was a pivotal scene at the end of the book that didn't make sense. Trying to stay vague here but a character moves through a group of enemies almost as if he was invisible, but he's not, so why was no one alarmed by his actions?

Second is the geography of Blue Island where the story takes place. This is me being an ass to some point, but Blue Island has never been invaded because there's only one navigable harbor and the channel in to it is so treacherous that without a guide no ship can make it through. That would be plausible if Blue Island were a small place, but it is large enough that the King talks about having to ship food to areas suffering from drought, and things like that, which imply that it's a very large island. In my head it's the size of England perhaps? And imagining something that large having only one harbor stretches my suspension of disbelief. Like I said, me being an ass and this probably won't bother most people.

If you enjoy character-driven fantasy, check this one out. I liked it enough that I immediately bought book 2 and will dive into it tonight.

Miki says

A really gripping story of warring, magic Fey besieging an apparently non-magic, peaceful island... But the

islanders find a powerful and mysterious (even for them) weapon that brings the war to a stall. Some kind of compromise and sacrifice will possibly be necessary to move on. The characters are all interesting, each of them with their own secrets and special abilities. The Feys are of many different types and kinds of powers, or lack of power, and are everything but the dreamy sparkling species other stories describe, everything but banal. Not all of their world and abilities are explained, the reader often finds out about them as the Islanders find them out, and some of them remain a mystery. But so do some religious practices of the Blue Isle and their faith and its origins. It's hard to take a side, as the story gives us such rounded characters on both groups. The suspense is constantly on the surface as so many details are unclear and you do not always know what a character is going to do or say. Of course this is just the first novel of a series and although it gives partial closure at the end, it also leaves quite a few open threads. I'm curious to see how the story goes on and to learn more about this fascinating world and characters.

Esther says

Jewel is the grand-daughter of the Black King, the ruler of the Fey. The Fey have conquered half the world and have set their sights on the other half. The only thing standing in their way is Blue Isle - an island known for trade and not warfare. Jewel and her father travel to Blue Isle for what they expect will be a swift victory. But they - and the Islanders - are about to discover a tide-changing secret.

I read this series for the first time more than a decade ago. I remembered enjoying the balance of war and romance very much the first time around and I hoped I would enjoy it a second time. And I did. As an older reader, I do notice holes in it that I didn't when I was younger, but for all that, it is a compelling story that kept me turning pages, even though I know what happens.

Jewel is only one of an array of interesting characters. Kristine Kathryn Rusch takes the opportunity to examine Fey and Islander societies from multiple vantage points - from those their people judge important to those they consider negligible. My favourite characters were Scavenger - a member of the least important Fey known as Red Caps who have no magic and are consequently considered without value - and Matthias - an Elder in a religion which he's not sure he accepts. Though the story switches characters throughout, the pace never flags and each chapter carries the story forward. Definitely worth a read.

Mathew Walls says

I haven't enjoyed a fantasy series this much in a long while. There's nothing groundbreaking about this one, but it is well-written and is refreshingly free of Chosen Ones and great evils. Reminds me of Magician in that way, and also in that it focuses on an ensemble cast rather than a central protagonist.

I also liked the way it showed both sides from their own perspective, not making one side the good guys and the others the bad guys (although it does seem a little stacked against the Fey in that regard).

Had I remembered that Kristine Kathryn Rusch was the author of The Disappeared I might have skipped this one, so I guess I've now seen her best and worst. Hopefully the rest of this series continues as it began.

It did annoy me a little bit that neither side seemed to take advantage of some very important information they received, specifically the Islanders discovering the Shadowlands entrance and the Fey finding out that

only two people knew how to make the holy water. The Islanders should have made a big tub, sat it under the Shadowlands entrance, and filled it with holy water. Any Fey who steps out dies. The Fey should simply have killed the Rocaan and Matthias. But other than that it was good.

Denise says

The people of the bountiful Blue Isle are inexperienced in the ways of war, living lived in peace for centuries. To the Fey, bent on conquest, they seem like an easy target - but the Fey invasion meets unexpected resistance, resulting in a bloody stalemate that lasts for months. To break it, both Fey and Islanders will have to see beyond their traditions to find a way out that won't lead to either faction's complete annihilation.

I picked this up at a whim at a second hand store a few years ago, despite the questionable 90s cover. Following several characters on both sides of the conflict, the story quickly drew me in and proved a surprisingly quick read for its length by virtue of being extremely hard to put down. Looking forward to the next book.

Vernon Ray says

Long Story Short: Blue Isle has never been conquered and the Fey have rolled over everyone else so far so Rugar the Fey commander/next-in-line-for-the-throne decides it will be a pushover, he's wrong.

This book runs long. I am usually forgiving of that in a fantasy because many fantasies are about spending time in the fantasy world. Unfortunately you reach a point where you have fully explored Blue Isle and the dynamics of the two peoples, and that point is only halfway through the book. From there there is this sort of holding pattern where everyone is pretty much sitting around trying to figure out what to do. Honestly, I think it could shed thirty chapters and come out ahead. Also bad about it being long is that there are a few storylines that didn't tie up, it was worse because many of those characters were the ones I cared most about.

So why four stars? The beginning rocks. The battle scene is excellent and makes you wish for more. The moments of revelation about the reality of the Fey, the lies they tell themselves is of value. The structure of the story is dynamic with tons of short chapters featuring different POV characters. It gave the story a well rounded feel. Part of me wants to sort the chapters by character and read it that way. It was a beautiful attempt even if she didn't stick the landing. I loved the complexity of religion in this. (Except where it treated faith a thing that you have or you don't.)

I'm happy I read it but I don't think I'll be jumping on for the whole series.

Gretchen says

Something very different. Now I've got another Kristine Kathryn Rusch series I can't get enough of.

Jesi says

2.5 stars

As another review on this said: "This is a long book. A VERY long book." And, that's true. And, again, "especially seeing as nothing much happened." While I won't say that *nothing* happened, I will say that the book had a very incomplete feeling to it - a lot of waiting between small amounts of Things Happening. Basically, the book is about drow (not that they're called that) attacking humans and humans realizing "oh my god, we have magic too!" ...and that's about it. Rusch, when she wasn't railroading the plot, made certain that each side was pretty equally balanced, so that the characters only had one resolution. A resolution that we were told from the very beginning of the book they'd have. From being given the end of the book at the very beginning, I suppose it made sense that the rest of the story was as predictable, but that was still disappointing to have happen. The female lead character was disagreeable, but then again, that's what you'd expect from the "drow." Not a series that I feel the need to continue in.

Melissa McShane says

I read this as part of the workshop I'm attending in April, and one of the rules is that we're to read the books for enjoyment--not analyzing or looking at them like a writer. I originally decided that meant I wouldn't review the books at all, but I changed my mind last night. I did my best to follow instructions, but I don't think it means I can't look back on it and think about what I liked, or didn't like.

I have to just give up and admit I don't like epic fantasy anymore. My reaction to this book was not excitement, it wasn't dislike, it was pure impatience. There are about a million POV characters and we don't stay with any of them long enough to build up a rapport. It took me maybe a hundred pages to start caring about any of them. Also, I felt like a thousand-year-old grouch because the two "main" characters are both 18 and stupid and selfish, and while it's clear the story is set up to explore their growth as characters, I didn't **like** either of them well enough to care.

It's not that the story isn't interesting. It's basically about a race of magickal (oh do I hate that spelling) creatures who are bent on conquering the world, and their attempted invasion of a strategically placed island that turns out to have a secret weapon that's the only thing that's ever stopped the invaders anywhere in the world. My biggest problem at the beginning was that I saw no reason to admire the invaders, because their desires are purely selfish, but half the POVs are their people and it's clear we're meant to feel at least a little...sympathy is the wrong word; maybe understanding? And maybe I'm wrong, and this is a brilliant tactic, but it just irritated me.

This is book one of a seven-book series, but I won't be continuing it. Recommended for fans of epic fantasy who have more patience than I do.

Sandi says

This book is long. It's really, really long. It seems even longer than it really is because so much happens so

quickly. It's actually even longer because there are four more books in the series and this first installment doesn't resolve one gosh-darn thing.

I liked the characters and there were some interesting magical aspects to this fantasy. However, it did get pretty repetitious. It was also very predictable because it starts out with a vision that tells you that the Fey warrior princess and the Islander prince are going to be in love. It's not only a self-contained spoiler, but I'm pretty sure the incident in the princess' vision won't even happen until a book or two down the line.

I was really surprised at the imbalance between male and female characters. Only 1 of the 6 or more primary characters was female. There were only two other female point-of-view characters and we don't get very much from one of them. The female characters do seem to be a bit better developed than the males, but not by much. Considering that the Fey treat females as full equals to males, it surprised me that women had such a small part.

The audio production of this book was serviceable. The narrator wasn't terrible and he did a good job of giving each character his/her own voice.

Debbie says

I listened to the audio version of this book, read by David DeSantos. It was part of a marketing campaign where Audible.com offered the first book in a series for free. I was a little reluctant to read this because I thought it would be like the urban fantasy type stories so trendy today. Thank goodness I decided to give it a try. It's sword and sorcery fantasy, and would appeal to readers that like that genre. And Audible did a smart thing, giving away the first book - because they'll definitely get my money for the rest of the series.

The story takes place in an island country that is invaded by "The Fey" - brutal, beautiful, fighting people using sorcery to take over every country they come across. They've been successful, until they reach Blue Isle. The island is home to a people that are peaceful, devoted to their religious beliefs.

The Fey are amazed that these simple people seem to have a magic greater than their own; strong enough to create a poison that will kill the Fey instantly.

The poison is really the holy water used in religious ceremonies by the islanders. Their religious leader is appalled that this symbol of their belief has become a weapon of murder.

One review I read said that the characters in this book were inconsistent and kept changing. I think the author was just very adept at creating a first impression and then exposing the motivations and depth of the characters through the plot.

The audio presentation of this book was very well done. David DeSantos conveyed each character's voice, making it easy to follow who was speaking and who was the focus.

I have four more books to look forward to in this series, and can't wait to get into them.

Harper Valentine says

Blue Isle has been impenetrable to the Black Kings forces the whole time the empire grows around it, now he has decided it's time the mysterious island and its people were brought into the fold.

An invasion force lead by the mountain climbers and sea sprites get a foothold and soon the rest of the Fey land ready to take over the little island nation. (This all happens in the first chapter so I'm not ruining anything I promise).

The Fey use magic, they are faerie people, with shape shifters, Wisps, Gollum, Redcaps, Visionaries and all many of different types of faery and they are unstoppable. That is until they try to defeat the religious sector of Blue Isle.

What follows is an epic battle and game of wits and strategy, as well as the most cunning and dangerous plans, all with strange magics that the islanders denounce and the Empire embrace, but all is not so black and white - it never is! -.

This is the best series of books I have ever read and I've read a fair amount - From Amtrak Wars to Liveship Trilogies - the mind of KK Rusch must be a wonderful place to be able to write such detailed and well rounded characters and to make me spend £30+ on a single paperback copy of book 4 because I just had to know what happened, in the end Kristine sold me a copy from her own collection, (that's how desperate I was!). But now thanks to Kindle it's available and for £0.99 or something ridiculous.

So you have no excuse not to read it.

Amendment 2016: This is a perfect excuse of why you shouldn't re-read a favourite book. I wanted to share this book with a friend, so I gave her a copy, 3 months later she still hadn't mentioned it, so I suggested reading it together.

Whether it's that I have grown as a reader having put pen to paper (that sounds better than 'fingers to keys') and written my own works of fiction, or a case of seeing the book through someone else's eyes, but the book suddenly seemed so slow. A third of the way through I realised this book takes so long for anything to happen. What I once took for beautiful deep details, is more long drawn out chapters where KKR over emphasises the smallest of details time and again.

It was a series that truly inspired me at a younger age, but now it has been surpassed and I am sad about that.
