



Escape from Bythos

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How did Asho end up as Lord Kyferin's squire?

Escape from Bythos leads seamlessly into the novel **The Path of Flames** (sample chapters included at back of this novella), detailing how Asho acquired his freedom against all odds and escaped the slave city of Bythos.

All Ennoian knights must sacrifice a single year of their lives to garrison the subterranean city of Bythos. Known as their Black Year, it is a time both loathed and dreaded. Lord Kyferin, the infamous leader of the Black Wolves, is down in the depths with six of his knights. Biding his time. Whoring. Dreaming of bloody invasions he'll launch when he is free to return to Ennoia.

Then a Bythian slave brings word of dangerous prey. A legendary monster. A cavekiller. Kyferin chooses to mount a hunt, taking a fraction of the men needed so as to increase his glory. This cavekiller, however, is different. More lethal. Ferocious. And the Bythian slave that Kyferin brings as a guide is none other than Asho's father...

Escape from Bythos Details

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Author : Phil Tucker

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Vera says

Although this prequel does not add much to the protagonists of the series - Asho and Shaya - it does add depth and dimension to Lord Enderl Kyferin and we get to learn more about their father, Zekko. Well worth dipping into while waiting for Book 4 of the Chronicles of the Dark Gate.

Mia says

This was so good I proceeded to read the first book in the series.

I won't lie. I checked out this series before but hesitated to start it after learning it'll be a 5-book series with the first book close to 700pp. I started the short story hoping to be justified in stopping or at least not be spurred to start the series.

But this short story piques curiosity such that to not proceed to THE PATH OF FLAMES requires more fortitude than I apparently possess.

Well play, Mr. Tucker. Well played.

Michael T Bradley says

I THINK I came across this through Instafreebie, though I'm not 100% certain. In any case, the cover art caught my eye, and I figured, why not. The description was pretty sparse - 'how X became Y's squire' - and having not read any of the Black Gate novels, this meant nothing to me, but I figured the point was to get a reader excited about the series, so what the hell.

I really dug this. Essentially this novella is a build to a fight scene with a lot of good character buildup before and after. The "after" part feels a LITTLE forced (it felt like this could have been developed a bit more, probably about 1.5x worth what was here), but still, it works to get us propelled to (I assume) where Book 1 begins.

The two things I liked the most were 1) that the father in this (Zekko?) was really well-developed, as was his crisis of faith. Considering he's NOT X or Y in the summary above, I was pleasantly surprised that Tucker was able to delve deeply into this character who, I have to assume, is not even in the main series. And, 2) the world feels very alive in an inviting way. This reminded me a lot of the short stories that used to be included with the AD&D Dark Sun supplements - not only was it a fun, intriguing story, but it made the reader want to learn more about the world. I really want to know, what's up w/these gates? How exactly does their religion work? So many things where I got enough info to intrigue me, but no real answers.

Aidan Hennessy says

A short but engaging read, with deft world building and engaging characters. Recommended.

Ross Thompson says

Excellent short story (read in under an hour) telling some of the background to the full Chronicles of the Black Gate series.

While the short story doesn't go into much detail on the world, races, geography etc this doesn't hinder enjoyment as a standalone work, as well as being a nice opener for the series as a whole.

Andrea says

Short and bloody. I liked Zekko, I appreciate his struggle with the fate of the Bythians and I now know that Enderl Kyferin was self aware and knew he was a butcher.

The Grim Reader says

I will be reading a lot more fantasy fiction in 2017 as I seem to be rediscovering my love for it. I've heard people talking about this series and I thought I'd give this prequel book a whirl. 'Escape from Bythos' follows the story of Zekko, a Bythian man who saves the life of Enderl (Lord and Ennoian Knight) whilst on a hunt for a cavedweller (a monster that lives deep inside the mines). Enderl takes Zekko's children under his wing and into his house as a way of repaying the debt he owes Zekko for saving his life. And so begins the story of Asho (Zekko's son) in the first book 'The Path of Flames'.

'Escape from Bythos' is a very solid start to a new series featuring interesting characters, great action and some fine fantastical settings. The writing is very good, nice and easy to read and it doesn't get bogged down with being too descriptive whilst still being clear rich enough to create those epic images inside your mind. Tucker paints a colorful picture of the realm and its inhabitants leaving you on a knife edge as to where the story will go to next.

The short story only amounts to the first half of the book. The second half is the first few chapters from book 1 'The Path of Flames' and this is where it goes from good to great. These opening chapters are fantastic. Set some time after, we join the story in the middle of a battle and follow as things unfold afterwards. Some new characters are introduced and the scene is set for some fantastic epic fantasy with magic, war, friendship, love and wonder. I have a few books to get through before I embark upon 'The Path of Flames' but I have to say that I'm real excited about reading it.

Lanko says

Enderl Kyferin really needed to have appeared more in the first book, and here this novella shows how

interesting his character was.

The pace of the first book was great possibly because it didn't have flashbacks (characters thought of the past like in ASOIAF) but starting so in the middle of things didn't allow Kyferin, a character who really influenced pretty much everyone in the main cast in major ways, to really shine and he really would have.

Yes, there would be a problem with the timeline and most likely if the book followed Asho's journey from that time most likely Path of Flames would be book 2 or even 3...

Nevertheless, this was a needed story to see Kyrferin and a little of Asho and reasons and motivations.

Jenny Brown says

Bitter sweet

Bitter because the Bythian are the playthings of Ennoian and the entire. Sweet because Asho hopes for a future and Zekko sacrifice of self and all that makes his life tolerable.

Rosemary Standeven says

This short story was my introduction to the Black Gate Chronicles, and has really set me up for, what promises to be, a very interesting and exciting series.

Although the book starts and ends with the children, Asho and Shaya, it is their father Zekko who is the main protagonist and hero of the story.

Zekko is a slave, as will his children, and their children ... always be. Always in servitude and calling other men master. That is the way of things, as decreed by the Ascendant. But now with his children about to be sent away to an indentured life of hell, he starts to have doubts, and to entertain thoughts of revolution against the Ennoian masters. His children discovering a dangerous cavekiller in the mines, provides him with a strategem to test the will of the Ascendant, to see whether revolution is the right thing to do. The Ennoians have a duty to protect their slaves from outside threats. "If they respond, as is their duty, if they fulfil their spiritual contract and kill the monster, then – then it is a sign that Ascendancy is coherent, that it works, that all is as it is meant to be".

Zekko leads the Ennoian Black Wolves, a crack company of soldiers led by Lord Enderl Kyferin, into the mines to slaughter the beast. Kyferin is an arrogant war hero, who fears nothing and treats slaves with the contempt he believes they deserve. Zekko finds him "brutal, cruel, selfish and practically inhuman" and a clear sign that the Ennoians deserve to be overthrown. However, the hunt does not turn out the way either man would have expected, and both Zekko and Kyferin are compelled to revise their opinions of each other, and their places in the world.

This story looks at the true meaning of bravery – in the face of suicidal odds, and in the face of confronting ingrained customs and religious imperatives. It also looks at bigotry – on the sides of both oppressors and the oppressed. Can a slaver ever be a good man?

I am really looking forward now to getting into the series proper.

Kristen says

A quick entertaining read detailing how Asho ended up in the service of Enderl Kyferin. It was a nice bit of info to have. I've been meaning to read this for a long time. Short and not-really-sweet but good all the same. :)

jeliy says

I prefer to read/listen to books in published order. I completed this excellent short story after finishing the series, Chronicles of the Black Gate. However, this book can be completed where ever the listener prefers. There are no spoilers in this book to ruin the other books in the series.

The story is a plus to the series, giving a bit of background to some of the main characters.

Noah Michael Levine does a fine job with the narration.

Bogdan says

Not a bad story from the background of some of the characters from his solid series of fantasy novels, but not what I've really been expecting.

This is a very short text in which we have only a glimpse (I've hoped for more!!!) of an unknown stage from the past of the characters, proving, in my opinion, that the writer needs more space to truly build a complete character.

I wasn't convinced by his effort here, I guess that I was expecting something in the league of a novella, because he is such a good writer of characters, and I'll go with 2 stars and a half for this one.

Ryan Mueller says

I loved learning the backstory of how Asho ended up where he was. It was a lot more interesting than I'd imagined. Another great effort from Tucker, who is rapidly becoming one of my favorite authors.

Rating: 9.5/10

Len Evans Jr says

This prequel to the Chronicles of the Black Gate series fulfills everything one could want from such a story. It is richly suspenseful, hints at lots of interesting possibilities to come while introducing a world and

characters that I look forward to learning more about in the near future. This is my first time reading something by this author and I can't wait to do so again!
