



Heart of the Kraken

A.W. Exley

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Legend says if you consume the heart of a mermaid, you will know all the secrets of men

Ailin doesn't care if the legend is true or not - she's stuck in a crate on her way to feature as the main course at a lavish banquet. Her heart to be served while still beating for a cruel noble while the rest of her is sliced into sashimi. Unless she can escape.

Across the ocean, Fenton longs for a different release. Sold as a child by men who labelled him a mistake, a failed experiment. Except he has one valuable skill, he can summon the dreaded kraken. Bought by a pirate, he has only known life at sea, wielded as a tool by the captain.

Two lives collide when the pirates capture the vessel holding Ailin. The kraken holds the key to Ailin's freedom but in summoning the beast one last time, Fenton must choose between losing his life or his heart...

Heart of the Kraken Details

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From Reader Review Heart of the Kraken for online ebook

A.W. Exley says

This is a brand new series and a new world that is darker, more fantastical. Also contains more pirates... ;)

The plan is that each book will be standalone and they won't have to be read in any order. You can pick and chose which ones grab your interest.

Olivia Munrow says

TLDR: A sweet, if simplistic, mermaid love story.

After I'd read the first three *Artifact Hunters* books, starting with Nefertiti's Heart, I was stoked to see that A.W. Exley seemed to have written a fantasy romance featuring mermaids. (The sea is kinda my thing.)

Unfortunately, after the tightly woven and relatively complicated plots of *Artifact Hunters*, I found *Heart of the Kraken* a little too simple. Captive pirate and Kraken-summoner Fenton and his equally captive fishy lady love Ailin are just too bland. The raucous pirate Captain Reis and playfully manic steampunk-y wizard Nancy are considerably more interesting to spend time with, but the novel is focused on our sea-crossed lovers instead, to the story's detriment. The only impediment to their feelings is that Fenton half-heartedly wonders if he's succumbed to a siren's song rather than really feeling love. For her part, and this is only barely a spoiler, (view spoiler).

There are, of course, greater impediments to their situation: Captain Reis and his crew plan to turn Ailin over to an impetuous queen who wants to eat Ailin's heart to gain magic powers, and while Fenton theoretically has an interest in sacrificing himself to save Ailin, he isn't quite able to fight through an entire ship full of pirates to get her from the ship's hold back to the sea. The whole scenario gets considerably more complex in the last third of the novel, and the resolution is a convenient Nancy ex Machina.

Honestly disappointed given Exley's other work, and because there are some interesting world elements here. Exley clearly set this up to be the first in a series and there's a pitch for the next story that has potential, but since there's been no follow-up since 2015 (and numerous other works released in the meantime), I'm inclined to guess that the Tales from Darjee have been set aside for now.

Gigi says

This book is beautifully written, starring compelling characters and the promise of a high seas adventure.

A thought provoking tale about a mermaid and a sailor with a secret. From the ship's deck to the depths of the ocean, the vivid prose is engaging and brings the story to life. I feel that the progression of the love story between the protagonists happened fairly quickly but, it was delightful nonetheless to see what happened

between them.

Overall I give this book four stars and recommend this to anyone who loves adventure!

?????????

Charles Ray says

Ailin, on her way to have her heart eaten as part of a lavish banquet, is saved by Fenton, who is held captive by the pirates transporting her because he can speak to and control the dreaded kraken.

When their two lives collide, Fenton has to make a decision, summon the beast to free Ailin, or free himself. Heart of the Kraken by A. W. Exley is a chilling story of Fenton's search for his soul, full of action and excitement, and deep emotions as well. Fantasy fiction for the connoisseur of fine story telling..

Pat Raab says

A touching love story in an unusual setting, with very unusual characters.

Lauren says

really do enjoy Exley's work (obviously...considering I just put down Ella the Slayer and picked this one up). This one wasn't a total 'love' for me, but it wasn't bad, either. I'd consider it a vanilla middle-of-the-road-needed-something-easy-to-read-while-life-shakes-me-around-like-a-ragdoll kind of read.

My biggest pet peeve with the entire book were the editing mistakes. It wasn't just one or two—there were many, and they were noticeable and made the story confusing at times until I sat there and played the Autocorrect game where you try to figure out WTF should have been written. Misspellings, punctuation, grammatical errors, swapped names...things that should have been caught.

The characters were alright. Fenton is the creation of ore-mancers—they experimented on him as a child to make him a useful tool for sailors. And useful he is — he can conjure a kraken on command. He was bought by the pirate captain and commanded on a regular basis to destroy other crews so they could pillage their wares.

Ailin is a mermaid who is captured. See, if you eat a mermaid's heart, you'll learn the secrets of all men. That's a pretty hot commodity.

Fenton meets Ailin and boom, they're in love. And that's literally all they can think about. Love, love, romance, kissing, love...oh wait, I can't be with you, you're a landwalker. You're a mermaid. But I luuuuurve you. Oh. I need to set you free.

In short, I would have liked to know their backgrounds more. The only thing you know about Ailin is that she's single and lives with a group of mermaids. I would have liked to know more about the mermaid's

world. And Fenton's history, too.

In all, it was a quick, easy read. I rated it a 3/5.

manda says

UGH. That cover, though.

Hannah says

really entertaining, if a bit predictable. can't wait to read the next one!

Alexia Purdy says

I don't read much steampunk pirate stories only because they are really hard to find and don't always turn out that great for me, but this was a pleasant surprise to read. Reading the blurb totally convinced me this would be a treat. I absolutely fell in love with this tale and with the characters. Fenton is the kind of guy you'd want on your side in a pickle, which for Ailin who's in a huge dilemma, he's just the man she needs. She's a mermaid and on her way to be served up to a royal for her heart. People believe if you eat the heart of a mermaid, you will know all the secrets of men.

Fenton and Ailin are an amazing pair, both tethered to others in a most interesting way. Neither is free to do what they'd like to do, even love each other. The intricate storytelling, worldbuilding, and characterizations were amazing in this story. Filled with gadgets, magic, pirates and regulators, it was an action filled, intense drama that you must see play out to the very end. I can't wait to read more about the Darjee world and its inhabitants. It'll be a fantastical ride for sure.

Bitsy Vontrapp says

This book started out full of promise, painting a vision of a harsh, cruel steampunk world where those with power take from everyone and those who should be in charge of law and order are, instead, the most fickle and cruel. And then, somehow, halfway through the book it devolved into a sappy, lame love story. Another huge problem I had with the book and a serious pet peeve of mine, the names of some of the characters are completely inappropriate for the tone and subject matter of the book. How are you naming non-human, immensely powerful magical characters, in a fantasy novel clearly not taking place in a "real" Earth world, "Lloyd"?!? And a guy with the last name Nancy who is forever thereafter just referred to as Nancy? I wish she'd stuck with the direction that the book seemed to have headed in.

Nina says

The idea behind this story was intriguing and the writing was mostly done well. There are some editing issues; misspellings, wrong names and a few grammatical errors. Enough to detract, but not enough to stop reading. I may get a sample of one of her other works to try but I wouldn't spend another \$4.00 on one of her books without assurances that it was done a bit better.

Barb VanderWel says

I love this & I can't wait for more.
I will be also leaving a review on Goodreads @ Amazon.
And letting everyone know about it.
So i gave it a 5 Stars.

Kagama-the Literaturevixen says

Fenton is a product of the ore-mancers craft, who with their dark powers can meld flesh and metal. But in his case their experimenting to merge a human with a kraken didn't turn out as planned and he was deemed a failure. As a child he was bought by the vicious pirate captain Reis who captains the Razors Edge.

All sailors feared when the demon would rise from the darkness far below and tear apart friend and foe alike. Fenton feared the void the kraken created inside him. He had to touch its dark mind to control the monster's path and relay the captain's instructions. Only Fenton could control the kraken, and the captain controlled Fenton and he hated them both for it.

Fearful of his powers to call the Kraken the cutthroat crew barely tolerates him except for his fellow victim of the oremancers, Timmy the boy with a spyglass fused into his empty eye socket.

The Razors Edge happens on a small vessel after the carnage is over its revealed to be a research ship sent out on orders of the ruler of Darjee to bring back a precious but unusual cargo...

Pale fingers wrapped around the edge and the body sat upright. Water streamed from long black hair and plastered it around head, shoulders and chest..

A mermaid.

It is said that whoever consumes the still beating heart of a mearmaid will be able to know the mind and

secrets of all men. A power the wicked and cruel Lady Alise would very much like to possess.

Realizing they are sitting on a goldmine if they were to bring her what she covets instead of the scientist crew. They take the caged mermaid and set sail for the Island of Illusion.

Fenton is drawn to the mermaid, who he learns is named Ailin at first from pity for her, then fascination and finally love. Even if Reis ridicules him and says the mermaids sirens ways is rotting his brain.

Ailin has been trapped in the stifling dark coffin for what feels like an eternity but this landwalker opens her cage and treats her with respect. She is unable to read him as she can others and his affinity with the kraken is strange to her as it's a creature to be feared but Fenton is anything but that. Soon her feelings start to mirror his.

He wants to free her as long as Reis is his jailer he can't leave or disobey his commands.

This book did have a twist that I didn't expect but probably should have guessed at by the hints that were dropped but I didn't. So bravo author for throwing in a surprise.

But here is the thing that I have to mention this book feels very derivative of Pirates of the Caribbean movies 3 and 4, and also towards the a scene made me think of Disney's The Little Mermaid. I won't tell you what but it struck me as very similar as something that happens towards the end of that film.

This is very much a dark fantasy

The oremancers what we learn about them is enough to give you the creeps. When someone is disabled in some way damaged they are given over to the oremancers to be "fixed".

We also hear something of the Lady Alise, ruler of Darjee nothing which makes me think good things of her even if she doesn't show up in person.

Even the way the characters are described reminds me of Philip and Syrena from POTC.

The writing and dialogue has a quality that makes you feel a bit detached from the story. There is a formal quality to the dialogue that brings to mind like watching a movie.

But know what? I liked their romance from the movie and so I couldn't help but like Fenton and Ailin's romance too.

I loved the ending...it was very beautiful.

So in the end I feel a bit torn. Should I judge it on the fact that it reminds me too much of another piece of fiction and has its weak bits or should I ignore that and just give it a good rating?

I've decided to go with the latter.

Emily says

So, I went into thinking it was going to be a love story. It really was but, parts of it made me cringe thinking it was about to turn into this huge erotica story and I wasn't ready for that.

The villian in the story and his crew go through torturing a mermaid for their own pleasures and it made me almost cry but, over all it was a really great story.

An adventure of this man who is trapped as being turned into a kraken under the control of his captain. Ends up saving a mermaid from being sold for her heart.

Kara Jorgensen says

When I first saw HotK, I was incredibly excited. Steampunk, mermaids, and a gorgeous cover. I loved the idea of it, but when I started to read it, I was a little disappointed. At times, the prose was overwritten (let a good sentence do the work rather than qualifying it with another) and in other places under-written. The ore-mancers, I thought, were under explored. I understand there is a sequel coming, so I hope there is more of Nancy and Weston there. My biggest issues were in Fenton and Ailin's lack of thoughts apart from love and the grammatical and typo issues. I would have loved to have seen the MCs fleshed out more, their back stories explored in more depth, but it didn't happen. The second issue, the typos, was a bit overwhelming. I can forgive a handful of typos, which can easily be fixed, but there lack of commas, commas used incorrectly, using hyphens or en dashes instead of em dashes, and general word screw-ups (lest instead of least for example), drove me away from the story because I felt as if I was subconsciously editing it. I think the typos can easily be fixed and the book/series has promise, but I'd definitely like to see more depth to the characters in future installments.
