



In Sunlight and In Shadow

Mark Helprin

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Enrancing in its lyricism, *In Sunlight and in Shadow* so powerfully draws you into New York at the dawn of the modern age that, as in a vivid dream, you will not want to leave. In 1946, Harry Copeland has returned after fighting in the 82nd Airborne from North Africa all the way to the Elbe. Reluctantly assuming the direction of the family fine leather goods manufacture, he finds his life unsatisfactory and on hold – until he is “accidentally” united with Catherine Thomas Hale, the woman for whom he has been waiting all his life, although the forces behind his patience have never been revealed to him. A young actress, singer, and heiress, she has been waiting for him, even if she has known this only in flashes that do not come clear to her until the end of the narrative, and that have not prevented her engagement to a much older man who has been taking advantage of her since childhood.

The meeting of Catherine and Harry, their courtship, and their intense love, play out on the stage of New York awakening at mid-century – in the deep worlds of the theater, industry, and high finance, and during the collision of aristocratic New York society with the formidable wave of second-generation, fully assimilated Jews. Though after being broken in the war Harry wants nothing but peace, family, and love, organized crime carries on its extortions as always, even in a city now full of the kind of men who stormed the Point du Hoc and the Siegfried Line. This becomes his moral and physical struggle. While Catherine’s is of a different nature, it is just as consequential, and the courage required of her is perhaps even greater.

Of the widest scope – from the air over Sicily to the heat-and-color-saturated Sacramento Valley; the Bay of Biscay to the sea off Maine; the steel mills of Gary, Indiana to the beaches of Amagansett; London in the blitz; the invasion of Normandy; and a single shell gliding across an American lake in August; from the luminous houses of the wealthy to the pounding of the boards beneath a Broadway chorus line – this is yet, first, and foremost a love story, but also a hymn to New York of the period when one great age elided into the other that we call our own. Rich in language and classical allusion, it is true to the mottoes at its outset: the Dantean “Amor mi mosse, che me fa parlare,” “Love moved me, and made me speak,” and to the lines of Lucretius that describe Catherine’s extraordinary representation of the powers, beauties, and graces of womanhood – “Nothing comes forth into the shores of light, or is glad or lovely without you.”

In Sunlight and In Shadow Details

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From Reader Review In Sunlight and In Shadow for online ebook

Matthew Roche says

This book made me angry.

There, I said it.

I loved Helprin, especially *A Soldier of the Great War*. I tolerated two-dimensional female characters and wandering plots just for the opportunity to feed on his magnificent prose. There was no modern peer for his descriptions of the Alps or gilded age New York City.

But then came Freddy and Fredericka, which I barely tolerated, and then this cumbersome lump of dross.

I cannot begin to express what an astonishingly bad book this is. Characters so wooden I wanted to carve them into bat and knock myself out just for the sense of relief. A plot that would have been hackneyed in 1946. And sheer, unadulterated boringness.

But the most offensive part is that his great lyrical gift has turned into absurdity. His characters are incapable of expressing emotion, or even making us give a s**t whether they exist or die in a hail of gunfire. This is a fatal flaw in a love story, where at the very minimum we should expect characters capable of evoking and expressing emotion through their own thoughts, speech and deeds. As a result, Helprin vainly tries to make their preposterous love believable by ceaseless over-narration.

Here's a tip: If you have to write the phrase "They loved as no others had loved before", you have lost. If you write it every 2-3 pages, you make us want to commit some sort of ceremonial act of self-violence simply for the escape.

Show us, don't tell us.

I am done with Helprin.

Keith says

It is no secret to my friends that Mark Helprin is among my favorite authors. I realize my admiration for his work makes me suspect, less than objective. Nevertheless I must share my initial reflections regarding his new novel. How can I put this? When I finished *In Sunlight and in Shadow* I was overwhelmed with the sheer power of the novel. I had the story in my head for several days, I actually couldn't get it out of my head. I have not been moved by any novel in such a manner for many, many years. I was reminded of Benjamin De Mott's extraordinary review of Helprin's *Winter's Tale* in the New York Times Book Review back in 1982: "I find myself nervous, to a degree I don't recall in my past as a reviewer, about failing the work, inadequately displaying its brilliance." My less articulate comment to two of my colleagues at work was "I may never read another novel." Clearly an overstatement, although it has been a week and I haven't started a new novel, a small record for me. In my estimation *A Soldier of the Great War* is Helprin's masterpiece with *Winter's Tale* a close second. Now, in the first flush, I am considering the new book to be the equal of those two. I plan to test that judgement with re-reads of both *Soldier* and the new one sometime soon.

Helprin takes the reader back to New York City in 1947 in the first flush of the great post-World War Two Boom. The protagonists are Harry Copeland, a returned veteran, Jewish, and now the owner of his late father's leather goods factory and Catherine Everett Hale, aspiring actress and singer and the daughter of immense Wall Street wealth. Their romance and the kindling of their love forms part of the story but as in any other novel by Helprin there are many more back stories all of which are strands in the magical web of the book. As remarkable as the people is Helprin's loving and detailed evocation of the New York City. Here he becomes the undisputed bard of the city. I know of no one who so lovingly details all the streets and parks, buildings and rivers than Helprin. He clearly loves this city and that great affection shines through on every page.

For a taste of this novel go to the author's web site and read the excerpt from the Prologue that's available there. <http://markhelprin.com/novels/sunligh...>

No? It begins like this:

If you were a spirit, and could fly and alight as you wished, and time did not bind you, and patience and love were all you knew, then you might rise to enter an open window high above the park, in the New York of almost a lifetime ago, early in November of 1947.

Jessica says

I love Mark Helprin. "Winter's Tale" is probably my favorite book of all time - at least in the top 5 - and I love "Memoirs of an Ant Proof Case." If you haven't read Mark Helprin, please pick up one of those books. Do not pick up this one as your first experience with him, since it may be your last.

It was not a terrible book, but I was very disappointed. It was a love story, but my main problem with it was that he told us about how much these two were in love, rather than show us. There was a lot of explanatory text - a lot - talking about how he loved her because of the way she buttoned her shirt or because of the curl of hair on her neck or because the world made him love her so, but I didn't really feel their love, didn't see it.

Unfortunately, I wouldn't really recommend this book. There were some good scenes, and I thought the ending was handled well, which is why I gave it 3 stars, but I wouldn't read it again.

If you like WW2 fiction (there's just a little of that in this book and they are the best scenes), I would recommend Helprin's other book "Soldier in the Great War." That was a great novel.

Boris Feldman says

The editor should be shot.

Oh, wait -- maybe there was no editor.

Helprin has long been one of my favorite authors. I read this book in an Advance Review Copy. All 700 pages.

I hated it. The language, which the cover describes as "lyrical," is pretentious and overblown. I get the title. Do you have to include the words "sun," "light," or "shadow" on every page? Almost every paragraph?

The kernel of the story is engaging. This would have been a pretty good 250 page book. At 700 pages, with diversions that should have been left on the cutting-room floor, it was torture.

I'm sure the hype surrounding this book will be intense. Just read the Prologue. If you like the language, you may like the book. If you think it reads like a freshman Creative Writing paper, you might want to skip it. So long a wait for such a disappointment....

Lori says

Helprin has written some of my favorite books, and nobody can write as beautifully, as lyrically as he can. I form more images in my mind from him than most others. And this is a book about falling in love, it's been a long time since I fell in love and reading this I am transported back.

BUT so far I'm annoyed by all the speechifying in what's supposed to be dialog. We'll see what happens.

11/3 - god I can't believe I'm giving a Helprin 3 stars. But 3 stars means I LIKED IT! I've been pondering the rating for a few weeks now. I mean, the writing is so spectacular, and in this case the flashbacks to WW2 are spectacular. The descriptions are crystalline. Helprin has returned to this, as in SOAGW. It's like he's combined the WW2 aspect of that book with the 2 main characters of Winter's Tale but here ISAIS they never really breathe and live for me. They are Ideal so I couldn't get wrapped up in the love story and that's a shame because the love is the heartbeat of the book.

Still Helprin always reminds me of my own ideals, which is to live in the present moment, participate in the beauty of life and the universe, and bring that beauty to others.

Trish says

The first time I sunk into one of Mark Helprin's huge, atmospheric novels I wondered how it was this man was not better known. But he *is* well known as a maker of epics, I just didn't know it then. That first brush with Helprin was *A Soldier of the Great War* which so enraptured me I thought I'd never read another that was as good. Later, a professor friend of mine told me he "couldn't get through it." Older now, I wonder if it isn't the fantastical quality of the romance, or the steel thread of Ayn Rand-like self-reliance that runs through his work that put my friend off.

Helprin, having attended Harvard, Princeton, and Oxford, has had access to the lives of the monied classes and unashamedly uses that access to create lavish sets for his novels. His insights into this exotic world waltz us off into dreaming how it would be if...which might actually be more fun than actually living in that constrained and rule-bound world. To be reassuringly safe from the vicissitudes of having enough to eat or clothes to wear, this is the stuff of romance. I am less susceptible to those fictions now, but I can see its attraction for many.

This is another impossibly romantic tale centered on a great love between a New York Brahmin and a New York Jew. We are treated to the lush scenery of a minutely-observed post-War New York City, and to the

problems encountered by small businessmen trying to keep their businesses viable while paying out protection monies on a weekly basis. The outlines of Helprin's characters are carefully and completely drawn, and are then filled in with great swathes of color and fabric and angled light—that sunshine and shadow comes at us from every direction.

What I noticed and celebrate again is Helprin's unequalled ability to observe and then relate the way the water in the wake of a ship, for instance, curls and moves and vaporizes, indicating current, direction, wind speed, tide levels...so much is caught in his web of words we can taste the salt spray. It leaves me gasping.

Helprin takes his time over this novel, moving back and forth in time, as expansive on the state of play in the garment district of New York as on the honeyed beaches of Long Island. There is a brilliant set-piece in which the aspirant for the hand of the heiress meets her parents for the first time. They eat dinner at the beach house on Long Island and the conversation is so elliptical and constantly shifting that one feels the danger in the meanings behind the words like hidden shoals upon which one might be wrecked.

The cast of characters is large, but completely manageable in Helprin's hands. We get Manhattan: the theatre district, the garment and financial districts, the shops, the bustle, the 1950's coffee shops with menus and waitresses. It is a brilliant reconstruction that must tempt more than one filmmaker to try it on. But it is too large a thing for a film; others have already tried to make films of Helprin's novels (*A Winter's Tale*), and they must realize it is too...hopelessly romantic for our hard-bitten and seen-it-all audiences today.

I listened to the audio of this novel, and it went on for days while I worked on endless tasks. The inflectionless voice of the narrator, Sean Runnette, was not appealing at first, but this is a long story, and perhaps his style is what was needed. It was a little like being read to by one's parent at bedtime instead of by a professional reader. Not what one would have chosen, but it becomes familiar. Helprin is still writing epics and he has a unique viewpoint that gives us romance like no one else.

Chris says

Mark Helprin is a genius with the English language. I also believe Helprin is ambitious with the subject matter he tackles. In his latest novel Helprin really tries (and comes as close as I think you can get) to put on a page what it is like to fall head over heels in love. The emotions, sights, smells, tastes, and over all energy involved with a romantic infatuation danced off the page for me. The journey that followed, of a life filled with courage, honesty, and sacrifice made me want to be a better person. If you want a quick page turner that does not require much attention then this is not the book for you. If you want to read literature, to glimpse into the heart and soul of this brilliant author and be taken on a journey that will be a part of your own heart then you will enjoy every page. I disagree strongly with the negative reviews. Especially the negative mention of *A Soldier of the Great War* (ASOTGW) which (along with *Winter's Tale*) I consider Helprin's masterpiece. ASOTGW changed my life. In fact, when I retired from the US military after serving 20 years I took my family overseas to Italy to see a painting hanging in a Venice museum. It was that kind of book. And Helprin is that kind of author.

Nette says

I see from the other reviews that people either love or hate this book. I bought the stupid thing based on one

rave review, and I hated it. Let me explain why by pretending that I'm the author and I want to get across the simple idea, "She hated it."

Deep from within her soul, somewhere where the light never touched, just as the light never touched the dark roiling depths of the ocean near Normandy, where so many men were lost, lost forever in the dirt and sand, sand like the irritation beneath her eyelids when she first awoke, restless from a dream in which she wasted \$18 on a book based on an A grade in "People," her stomach churning like the water in Battery Park during a storm surge, she hated this book.

Hayley says

I'm unsure of how to write a review for *In Sunlight and in Shadow* since it is, for lack of a better testimony, the book I've been searching for. Without question, it is now my favorite book and I have no doubt it will continue to be no matter how many more novels I read in my lifetime. It is more beautifully written than I could have imagined and I'm in true mourning for the characters of which I can no longer spend my days with. Even though I'm positive the pages will crease and fade over time due to my countless re-reads I'll never be able to experience this flawless story for the first time ever again and because I recognized that early on (around page 20) I read as slowly as possible, for the first time in my life, because I couldn't bear for it to end. I could go on and on about the qualities that should be appreciated and recognized by everyone (exquisite imagery, soul wrenching prose and countless lessons of life that you can't help but draw from, hours and even days after you've finished the final word), but I won't because I can't do them justice and mostly, while incredible, those aren't the reasons why I will follow every word of Helprin's forever. *In Sunlight* is the best book I've ever read because I understood every rhythm, felt every word, laughed at every joke, marveled at all its genius and cried for every heart-breakingly beautiful moment, of which there are too many to count. Helprin's story and its vivid characters spoke to me as no other novel, and honestly most of my real-life events ever have. To put it simply Helprin is a master, I will always be a follower and as anyone's favorite book should achieve, *In Sunlight and in Shadow* awakened my soul and changed me entirely.

Chrissie says

In conclusion: Unfortunately, I cannot whole-heartedly recommend this book to everyone, even though I loved parts. Some of the writing is beautiful and thought provoking, but there are verbose, sentimental, overly dramatic and sophomoric passages too. Whole chapters could/should have been completely eliminated. This book needs editing. The dialog IS often funny, but neither these clever lines nor the wonderful depiction of NYC save the book.

Every single woman mentioned is idealized. The two primary characters are beautiful, diligent, hard-working, moral, humblein other words simply too good to be true! The plot-line is sometimes long and drawn out, e.g. the war chapters, while the end is abrupt, unsatisfying and sappy. So much more could have been done with the ending.

I personally have no complaints with the narration of the audiobook by Sean Runnette, although my guess is

that others will find it extremely slow. I thought the dialogs were in fact improved by the narrator's ability to catch the personality and class of the character speaking. It is the author's theorizing that is slow and ponderous, and this is not the narrator's fault.

So, how many stars? Parts I loved! I really did.....but then other parts were so overblown and never-ending. I am giving it three stars and recommending it to those readers who love NYC and philosophical tracts.

Through chapter 37:

I am not thrilled by the chapters and chapters and chapters depicting warfare in Europe. They go on and on and on. Boring and terrible, dreary rather than exciting or interesting! Another minus - women are ridiculously idealized. So the book is not perfect. Maybe if I complain it will change? I hope so.

and.....

Even the lines have lost their beauty and become, in my ears, pretentious:

She was no different from Harry, when before the jump, hands in the same position, head bent or upraised, he leaned into his reserve shoot, as the plane rose and fell in the wind, and he too not quite prayed, asking for nothing. From Catherine and from Harry came absolute surrender, and to Catherine and Harry came the deepest strength. The current was strong and magnetic, the exchange electric and warm as everything came alight from what the blind of spirit took for darkness. Catherine felt her heart swell with strength and love....

Both Harry, in his parachuting from airplanes and fighting in battles, and Catherine fighting her own battles against injustice, are being compared and united in a common struggle. Both pray. For me the tone has become sophistic. The philosophical reasoning has gone over-the-top. This is rapidly going downhill. The magical prose has become soppy gibberish. Disappointing....but if I praise the start of a book and it then goes down-hill, I must report that too. Maybe I simply lack the religious faith necessary to appreciate these lines? However it is not just these religious lines that are sophomoric. Some of the prose glorifying music, beauty, love, goodness, honor are quite simply over-blown.

Then I listened some more and the scene shifts back to NYC....the description of NYC is wonderful and then humor is thrown in. Catherine asks Harry for a definition of a nudnick! Harry's definition will surely make you laugh. Very funny! And she, Catherine of course, reads a digit wrong in her cookbook. With little cooking experience, given all the servants in her very wealthy family, she hasn't a clue how to cook a chicken. She puts it in the oven for 6 hours. You've got to laugh!

So I guess my views are mixed on this book. Parts I absolutely love; other parts make me moan with frustration and yawn with boredom. I would have appreciated better editing.

Through Chapter 23:

I haven't quite made up my mind about the quality of the audiobook's narration. I love the tone of Catherine when she is REALLY mad. This lady, when truly annoyed, spits out lines that are scathing! The narrator's

tone is spot-on! I like the s-l-o-w-n-e-s-s of the narration, but will others? I need it to give me time to think about what is being said. However there is often a peculiar upward lilt that is strange.

This book may annoy those readers who just want to follow a plot. This is a book where the author leads you off in all different tangents, taking quick perceptive psychological mini-trips. I just finished chapter 23 - "The Settee". It covers everything from Franklin D. Roosevelt, sensual love, acquiescence versus combat, religious discrimination to pride and the need to be financially independent. That is a wide range of subjects, isn't it? You will either love the writing or you will hate it. I love it. I was going to start copying the lines here, but I would have to copy the entire chapter. It went from one wonderful line to another. From one topic to another. The humor is perfect. Catherine's father knew FDR. There is the funniest story - tickling and being dumped into water.... The story is all imaginary. It is both hilarious and has a great message; one little story rolled into the rest of the chapter's events. Remember this chapter when you read the book and tell me if you too love it. Oh yes, I forgot to mention another funny line, about the color of Roosevelt's advisors. Read the book!

Some people may be annoyed by the philosophical meanderings. I am trying to warn off those readers who KNOW they prefer plot driven books; all the diversions will most probably drive them bonkers!

In Chapter 9:

I am loving this, and I am kind of surprised. It starts with a ridiculous infatuation. But even if it is ridiculous, I like it! It is the writing. I actually believe that Helprin has captured how crazy people act when they fall head over heels in love.

There is humor. And it is my kind of humor.

Everyone knows of the "Roaring Twenties", and why the behavior of this period was a consequence of having survived WW1. Why is there so little literature about how people behaved after WW2.....other than books on the travails of the Jewish emigrates? This book seems to delve into this very topic. Hasn't there occurred a similar change in behavior and view on life after WW2? These people, those who survived the war, are the age of my parents. Fascinating to see why my parents thought as they did, looked on life as they did and made the choices they did.

Read this. Harry is back from the war. He is crazy for Catherine and Catherine for him, but she is about to be engaged to another. That future had been planned ten years ago. Do you simply accept past plans? What was good then is not now:

...sea, air and sun having evaporized everything but memory. He stopped in front of a black shoe missing its laces. It was preserved well enough that with some softening and polish it might have been back in service. The heel was hardly worn. He thought that had things gone differently it might have been his shoe and that someone else might have been standing in front of it as a grave, grasping the lapels of his tuxedo in a tight grip and pressing a bottle of champagne close to his thigh, as if he were the one who was dead, he spoke to himself, the one who was living, urgently charging him with life. He let the breeze force its way into his lungs and looked ahead at his objective..... (chapter 9)

After living through the war, would one just accept that which has been planned? Wouldn't one go after what one really wants? At least you'd give it a hard fight!

Another book that takes place in NYC right after the war. I am loving the feel of the city, since I lived there in the fifties. I am right back there, in a place I recognize. I feel the city, its odors and sights and the whole "NYC atmosphere"!

After only one chapter:

He had long known that to see a woman like this across the floor in receptions or in gatherings is as arresting as a full moon was arising within the walls of the room, but this was more arresting yet. And what was a beautiful woman? For him beauty was something far more powerful than what fashion dictates and consensus decrees. It was both what creates love and what love creates. For Harry, because his sight was clear, the world was filled with beautiful women whether the world called them that or not. (chapter one)

I am already sucked in by the language. Mark Helprin can certainly write! I love lines that make me think. By writing down these lines, listening carefully to the narrator, Sean Runnette, of the audiobook, I realize that reading a paper book gives you more time to ponder, to let your thoughts fly where they will, but Runnette's narration is very slow. With excellent prose that is a plus!

Stephanie says

Profoundly disappointing.

Mark Helprin wrote a novel about New York that actually changed my life: Winter's Tale is such a gorgeous fairy tale, and such a compelling portrait of New York City, that I carried its images and its story with me when I moved to New York a few years after first reading it.

I've read all of Helprin's other novels, and I do love his way with description, but none of the others stuck with me the way Winter's Tale did.

So when I picked up In Sunlight and in Shadow, I thought that Helprin was going to give me another dose of what I loved before: a magical story that brings out the magic and beauty of NYC. Instead I plowed through a ponderous tome over-stuffed with his fabulous descriptions, but light on story and character description. Some pet peeves: the main male character, Harry, is a paragon. What in writing classes is sometimes referred to as a "Mary Sue", the character that is perfect in every way and can do no wrong. He runs six miles, sometimes twelve on some days, and swims a mile on others; he loves the city; he is tall and strong; he was a paratrooper; he's determined to save the business he inherited (even though he shows little interest in or aptitude for the business itself, and indeed rarely goes to work); he believes that wrongdoers should be punished. Oh yeah, and he's in love with a beautiful woman. The main proof of his character seems to be that he works out every day. Because being disciplined and athletic means you are also trustworthy and of good moral character, I guess.

Catherine, the female protagonist, is also a paragon, though slightly more interesting than Harry, in that she sometimes blurts something out or makes a foolish choice. But mostly she is beautiful, and the outer beauty of a woman represents the beauty of her inner soul, Helprin tells us again and again. I think one-tenth of this book was comprised of elegies to the things that women represent. Especially beautiful women, who are of course the only ones worth talking about. It got old quickly. I really prefer books in which the female characters **do** things. Catherine does one thing--she's an actress--and she does it quite well, we're told, but Helprin compares her courage in stepping onstage after a bad review to the courage of soldiers going into

battle, which I felt was stretching it to the point of insult. (Oh, she also swims regularly, so clearly has a sterling character. And she's an heiress.)

The story ends abruptly after an interminable march of description and flashback and more description and the clichéd juxtaposition of happy scenes with scary scenes and we learn how things turn out for the two main characters, but never hear a word about all of the rest of the people who have been touched by the story. And in a 700 page novel, there are plenty of people in the story to be concerned about.

Most of them more interesting and more realistic than the protagonists.

Lobstergirl says

Lush, lyrical, verbose, bedazzled, vajazzled, sun-dappled, silken-nippled, polyp-encrusted, mucilaginous, ridiculous, smarmy, cornball, gaseous, putrid, death-inducing.

If this book were a panty-liner, it would be the biggest, softest, whitest, most absorbent panty-liner ever. If it were a leather handbag, it would be the softest, or possibly the hardest, depending on what was intended, most luxurious leather handbag ever stitched. If it were a wall, it would be the highest, thickest, grandest, most expensive, most turgid, most beautiful wall ever built. If this book were a hairstyle, it would be the most stylish, most caramel-colored, waftiest, silkiest, classiest, most breathtaking hairstyle ever coiffed.

If this book were a corpse you would make sure to puncture the gut and chest cavity quickly so it wouldn't explode inside the open casket, killing the priest, deacon, lector, and acolytes and sickening everyone in the first 30 pews of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Holy Apostolic Church.

Cynthia says

Retribution: A Love Story

There are many wonderful things about "In Sunlight and in Shadow". Helprin's writing reminds me of novelists from an earlier age where things were more leisurely and people had time and patience to read longer books. The Victorian Age? Helprin indulges in digressions which might sound potentially boring but almost every time he makes a stunning observation. This isn't a book you'll want to skim. Let yourself ease into its pace and you'll be rewarded in my opinion. The depictions of New York and its inhabitants are especially vivid though it's a city that has been described so times by so many authors. There's a magical quality to Helprin's 'take' that's just shy of fanciful.

Harry Copeland, a returning World War II vet, is seeking retribution for a wrong that has been done to him, though, thankfully, retribution is not the main theme of the book. At heart this is a love story between two people from different walks of New York life, Catherine comes from society's elite, Harry, is middle class from people who fought to attain that status. And he's Jewish which in 1946 still carries a stigma. He's also fought in a war to help annihilate this prejudice and free the people who suffer/suffered because of it. He's not willing to stifle his standards. When he and Catherine get together it's electric and immediate. The rest of the world seems to fall away yet they're eventually forced to deal with things like the fiancé she's jilted and the failing business Harry's inherited from his father.

Overall this is a workmanlike novel. I'm not meaning any disparagement by that. Helprin uses his plot to hang lots of insights and beautiful vignettes upon and there are parts that soar as when he describes Catherine rehearsing for the musical she's going to be in or Harry's experiences as a pathfinder in World War II. Another part that stood out concerned how two out of towners experience New York for the first time. Helprin doesn't neglect any part of the City; he takes you from working class to high class life and everything in between. There are layers to New York that create its lushness just as there are layers to "In Sunlight and in Shadow"; all of them necessary, many of them dazzling.

There is an over idealization of women with an emphasis, of course, on young women as the ideal. There are characters that show up for what seems like no reason other than they were pretty girls. The love story dips into extremes at times and just misses being caricature. In my opinion what Helprin does well he does so, so well he can't be faulted for the less than perfect parts. I was reading an Advanced Reading Copy so perhaps some of this was edited out by time it went to print.

This review is based on an e-galley provided by the publishers.

3.5/5 stars

Scott Firestone says

Imagine, if you will, a blue whale. But not just any blue whale. This whale lived longer than any blue whale has ever lived. This great beast was swimming the oceans when Teddy Roosevelt was president. It lived through wars and depressions and the explosive growth of technology, and somehow managed to evade whalers and orcas to become the largest animal ever to have been on this great blue ball we call home.

And it died. Not of some tragedy or violence, but of old age; it was time.

And this whale washed up on a remote beach somewhere on the continent of Australia. So remote that no news copters flew overhead. No crowd of people gathered to gawk and cry and mourn.

Even the predators that roam those waters and shallows—the terrifying great whites and the ancient armored crocodiles—did not come to partake in this bounteous feast. Perhaps out of deference, sensing that this creature was no ordinary denizen of the deep, but something much, much more.

But its stature and status could not stop the work of those forces that work on all of us when our time on Earth is done. And as the blistering heat of Australia's summer sun shone down, and the internal gases pushed out, this blue whale expanded, like a magnificent and horrible fleshy hot air balloon, until the skin could scarcely contain it.

That whale was still not as bloated as this book.

Julie Christine says

I spent five weeks with *In Sunlight and In Shadow*. Five monogamous weeks, which is quite a committed literary relationship for this fast-in, fast-out reader. Yes, life circumstances wore me out and distracted me,

so that some days the amount of pages read would be imperceptible as measured on a standard ruler, but never once did I contemplate setting Helprin aside for a less complicated time or supplementing my evening reading with a less demanding literary companion.

I was enthralled by this lush, resplendent novel. Each and every one of its 705 pages.

The story itself is quite simple. In fact, the old-fashioned romance and adventure style makes this a curl-up-on-the-sofa read. But the beauty of Helprin's prose, its rococo grandeur and meandering lyricism, make it worthy of lingering. Take your time to reread certain passages and be astonished anew by Helprin's particular magic.

Harry Copeland is in his early 30s and recently returned to Manhattan from the European Theatre of WWII. Harry is alone in the world, an only child, his parents deceased, and he is taking his time to heal from the emotional wounds and physical trauma sustained as a special ops paratrooper. What can't wait, however, is the luxury leather goods business he inherited from his father.

The business is being newly bilked by the Mafia. Not the perfunctorily threatening Jewish Mafia to which Copeland Leather and every other manufacturing business in the building has been accustomed to paying off. This is the deeply serious and deadly Mob. Which has singled out Copeland Leather for extortion.

One day, while traveling on the Staten Island ferry, Harry spies a beautiful woman in white and falls immediately and hopelessly in love. She is Catherine Thomas Hale, of the Manhattan and Hamptons Hales, an heiress and Broadway ingénue. Catherine is strong, moral and wise. She meets Harry's love and passion measure for measure. They are not really star-crossed lovers: Harry is a Harvard man, after all. But he is a Jew and he is broke - facts he and Catherine cannot long hide from her family.

But this is more than a love story. It is a tale of a city at a golden moment in time, when the memories of two wars and the Depression remain vivid enough to fuse gratitude and caution, yet cannot stop the momentum of power and wealth that rocket New York inexorably forward as the steward of all things modern.

It is a thriller, where thugs with Thompsons are pitted against combat heroes with iron nerves; it is a war set piece, where a band of brothers plummet into the mists and mud of western France; it is a window into a world of grand society, where money can buy everything but peace of mind and integrity.

It is true, Helprin uses six words when two would suffice, but never once does the sprawl, the grandiloquence, feel like an attempt to dazzle or distract. The gorgeous language wraps, not traps, the reader; the descriptions of characters and settings put the reader fully inside a moment, most of which you want never to end.

In Sunlight and In Shadow is romanticism at its soft-focus, golden-hued, unapologetic best. Characters are a little more beautiful, dangerous, erudite and talented than real life could afford; food is more delicious, sunsets more vivid, memories more precise and comforting. It is a novel for pleasure-seekers, for readers ready to sink into a web spun by a story-teller. Logic and relativism need not apply; only good guys, bad guys, truth and beauty allowed.
