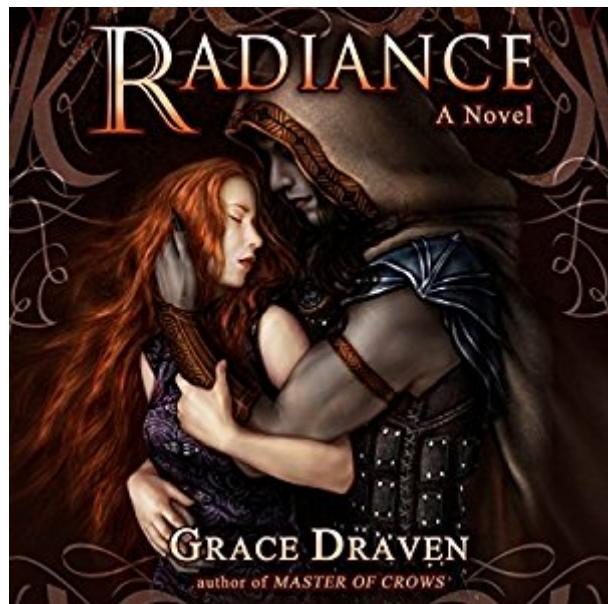


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# Radiance: Wraith Kings, Volume 1



## Synopsis

The prince of no value Brishen Khaskem, prince of the Kai, has lived content as the nonessential spare heir to a throne secured many times over. A trade and political alliance between the human kingdom of Gaur and the Kai kingdom of Bast-Haradis requires that he marry a Gauri woman to seal the treaty. Always a dutiful son, Brishen agrees to the marriage and discovers his bride is as ugly as he expected and more beautiful than he could have imagined. The noblewoman of no importance Ildiko, niece of the Gauri king, has always known her only worth to the royal family lay in a strategic marriage. Resigned to her fate, she is horrified to learn that her intended groom isn't just a foreign aristocrat but the younger prince of a people neither familiar nor human. Bound to her new husband, Ildiko will leave behind all she's known to embrace a man shrouded in darkness but with a soul forged by light. Two people brought together by the trappings of duty and politics will discover they are destined for each other, even as the powers of a hostile kingdom scheme to tear them apart.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Instead of the typical beauty and the beast re-telling, this might be called: beast and the beast or maybe beauty and the beauty. It is not often that I believe characters can sustain their happily ever after but this is an exception to the rule. This book is for readers like me who are usually annoyed and oftentimes bored with the standard paranormal romance storyline clichés. I thought I knew how this story would go: beautiful human forced to marry hideous beast, he treats her poorly because he was also forced into marriage. She doesn't want to find him attractive but somehow they have amazing sexual chemistry. In the last chapter they realize they love each other. The

end. Nope. If that is what you want, don't buy this book. If you are looking for a humorous and heartwarming tale of two individuals who learn to first like, then respect, then love, then desire each other, then this is what you are looking for. Draven puts equal efforts into world building and character building with the result that I found myself invested in both. I enjoyed this tale tremendously and know that it will be read again and again by me. Radiance is the tale of two "spare" nobles that are forced to marry each other to seal an alliance between their kingdoms. Their physical appearances are very dissimilar and even disgust each other because of the pronounced differences. Their respective peoples pity them for having made such unfortunate matches. Oddly enough the characters themselves never indulge in bigotry or pity, either for themselves or their spouse, they accept each other and adapt. The new couple must deal with issues of cultural disparity, political machinations and the prospect of war with a kingdom unhappy with their alliance. Through it all these characters shine.

Once again Grace Draven proves herself to be a master of fantasy romance with this tale of two people of different species and culture used as pawns and forced into a marriage for political gain of their respective empires. The story of Ildiko and Brishen has everything an epic romance of this type requires. The slow building of trust and affection between two people who are aware of why they were wed to begin with but slowly begin to see each other with new eyes. The book has laugh out loud humor and tear jerking emotion, add that to the action sequences and it is near perfect. While it does have a small bit of Beauty & the Beast vibe it is totally unlike that story in pretty much everything other than the obvious situation. There is the evil mother-in-law (is that being redundant?) and also another kingdom that would like to see the groom and his bride dead. It all adds up to a perfect combination of fantasy and romance I have not seen since her masterpiece Master of Crows. This is actually the opening novel for at least one more book (maybe more?) and manages to not leave you totally in a cliffhanger but does finish this romance and teases you with the start of what will be the next novel. I love a book that can make you wish for the next book without leaving you with a horrible cliffhanger. 5 Stars with little or any complaints, nitpicks or reservations.

My book radar picked up Radiance at the end of last year when I saw it pop up on many "Best of 2015" lists. I was looking for an interesting fantasy romance so I decided to give it a try. And I am so glad I did because this was a wonderful story full of vibrant characters and a perfectly-developed love story. This romance takes place in an alternate universe, specifically in two neighboring kingdoms, Gaur and Bast-Haradis. Gaur is run by humans while Bast-Haradis is run by the

night-dwelling Kai. These two species have had a tenuous relationship for many years that is finally becoming an alliance with the arranged marriage between Brishen, a younger son of the Kai king, and Ildiko, the orphaned niece of the Gauri king. What I adored about the two protagonists was their determination to make the best of their situation and work together to insure the marriage worked. Brishen is stubborn, protective, and genuinely cares about the people around him including Ildiko. For her part, Ildiko is intelligent, self-confident, and hard-working. They both have great sense of humor which is shown in the banter that starts from their first meeting. I love arranged marriage stories and the fact that the union is between two different humanoid species was fascinating to me. The Kai and the Gauri find each others' looks to be unappealing and this is true for Brishen and Ildiko at first. But, because of their personalities, these two are able to look past the physical and see the great people inside. Their relationship develops naturally from strangers to friends and eventually lovers. I loved all the little moments that showcased their growing affection for one another. The world building of Radiance was intriguing though I felt like it took a back seat to the romance. I have a feeling that readers will learn more about this fantasy world later in the series so I wasn't too upset by that part. I also liked the way the author developed the background characters with my favorite being Anhuset, a strong-willed female warrior who also is Brishen's cousin. I am definitely looking forward to seeing what happens to Brishen and Ildiko especially with the cliffhanger scene at the end.

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