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# Outcast

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

?Do you understand what it means? to be outcast??

Confronted by this question early on in Michelle Paver's new novel (the fourth in her 'Chronicles of Ancient Darkness' sequence), its young teenage hero, Torak, is to discover ? not without pain ? some of the implications of the term which gives the book its title. As in her earlier volumes, Paver evokes powerfully her world of some 6,000 years ago, a world dominated by the darkness of its Forest, by its animals and its vegetation, exactly the sort of environment where, as we learn at one point, ?growing up can be a kind of soul-sickness?. It is this ?soul-sickness?, engendered by the boy's rejection by his clan, which becomes the principal manifestation of Torak's ?outcast? status, as we witness him struggle to survive, physically and mentally, in a landscape whose changing temperament and moods are a perfect reflection of those of the humans and animals who inhabit it. Paver's writing, spare yet lyrical, succeeds in capturing the bleakness and the beauty of her meticulously researched setting, but what emerges most clearly from these novels is their concentration on the complexities of bonding between humans and, equally, between humans and the animal world: the interlinking loyalties and deceptions which typify these bonds provide material for extremely engrossing narratives.

Running Order:

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