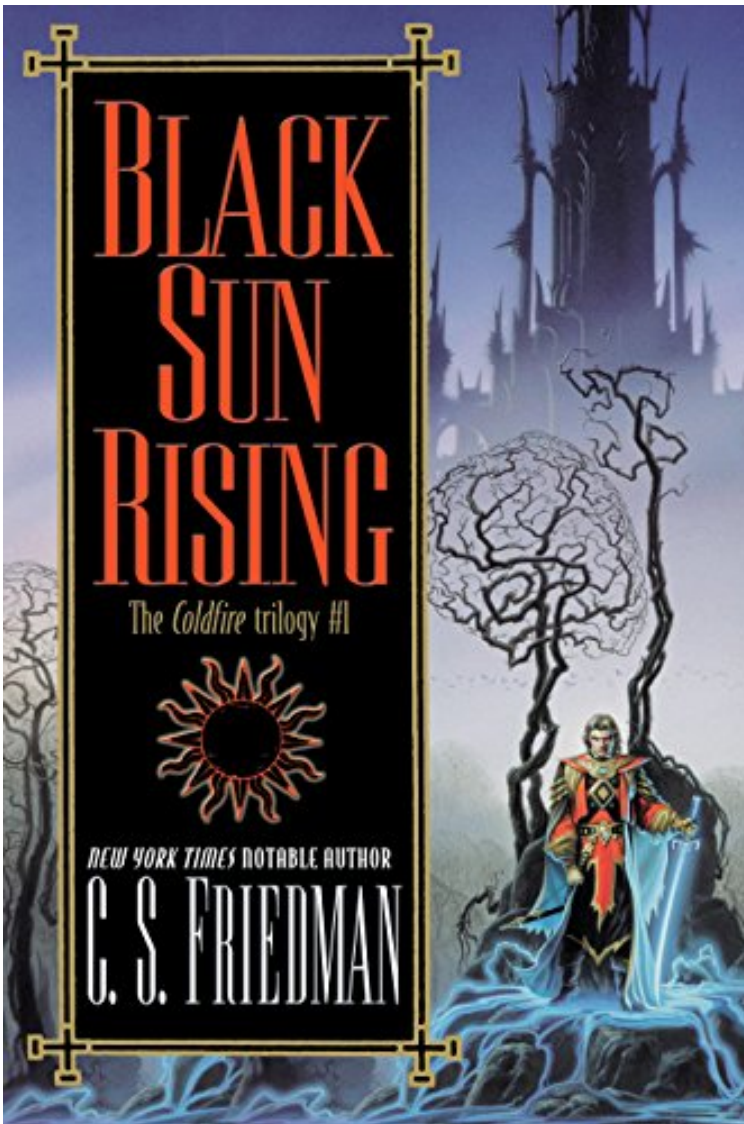


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Black Sun Rising



Par C.S. Friedman
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Description : Description du produitThe Coldfire trilogy tells a story of discovery and battle against evil on a planet where a force of nature exists that is capable of reshaping the world in response to psychic stimulus. This terrifying force, much like magic, has the power to prey upon the human mind, drawing forth a person's worst nightmare images or most treasured dreams and indiscriminately giving them life. This is the story of two men: one, a warrior priest ready to sacrifice anything and everything for the cause of humanity's progress; the other, a sorcerer who has survived for countless centuries by a total submission to evil. They are absolute enemies who must unite to conquer an evil greater than anything their world has ever known.

Prsentation de l'diteurOver a millennium ago, Erna, a seismically active yet beautiful world was settled by colonists from far-distant Earth. But the seemingly habitable planet was fraught with perils no one could have foretold. The colonists found themselves caught in a desperate battle for survival against thefae, a

terrifying natural force with the power to prey upon the human mind itself, drawing forth a person's worst nightmare images or most treasured dreams and indiscriminately giving them life. Twelve centuries after fate

first stranded the colonists on Erna, mankind has achieved an uneasy stalemate, and human sorcerers manipulate the fae for their own profit, little realizing that demonic forces which feed upon such efforts are rapidly gaining in strength. Now, as the hordes of the dark fae multiply, four people—Priest, Adept, Apprentice, and Sorcerer—are about to be drawn inexorably together for a mission which will force them to confront an

evil beyond their imagining, in a conflict which will put not only their own lives but the very fate of humankind in jeopardy. From the Trade Paperback edition. Excerpt One Damien Kilcannon Vryce looked like he was fully capable of handling trouble, for which reason trouble generally gave him a wide berth. His thick-set body was hard with muscle, his hands textured with calluses that spoke of fighting often, and well. His shoulders bore the weight of a sizable sword in a thick leather harness with no sign of strain, despite the fact that the dust stains on his woolen shirt and the mud which caked his riding boots said that he had been traveling long and hard, and ought to be tired. His skin had tanned and scarred and peeled and tanned again,

over and over again with such constancy that it now gave the impression of roughly tanned leather. His hands, curled lightly about the thick leather reins, were still reddened from exposure to the dry, cold wind of the Divider Mountains. All in all a man to be reckoned with . . . and since the thieves and bravos of

Jaggonath's outskirts preferred less challenging prey, he passed unmolested through the crowded western districts, and entered the heart of the city. Jaggonath. He breathed in its dusty air, the sound of its name, the fact of its existence. He was here. At last. After so many days on the road that he had almost forgotten he had a goal at all, that there was anything else but traveling . . . and then the city had appeared about him, first the timber houses of the outer districts, and then the brick structures and narrow cobbled streets of the inner city, rising up like stone crops to greet the dusty sunlight. It was almost enough to make him forget what it

took to get here, or why they had chosen him and no one else to make this particular crossing. Hell, he thought dryly, no one else was fool enough to try. He tried to picture one of the Ganji elders making the long trek from west-lands to east, crossing the most treacherous of all mountain ranges, fighting off the nightmare beasts that made those cold peaks their home, braving the wild fae and all that it chose to manifest, their own souls' nightmares given substance but the diverse parts of such a picture, like the facets of a badly-worked Healing, wouldn't come together. Oh, they might have agreed to come, provided they could use the sea for transport . . . but that had its own special risks, and Damien preferred the lesser terrors of things he could do battle with to the unalterable destructive power of Erna's frequent tsunami. He prodded his horse through the city streets with an easy touch, content to take his time, eager to see what manner of place he had come to.

Though night was already falling, the city was as crowded as a Ganji marketplace at high noon. Strange habits indeed, he mused, for people who lived so near a focal point of malevolence. Back in Ganji, shopkeepers would already be shuttering their windows against the fall of night, and making ward-signs against the merest thought of Coreset. Already the season had hosted nights when no more light than that of a single moon shone down to the needy earth, and the first true night was soon to come; all the creatures that thrived on darkness would be most active in this season, seeking blood or sin or semen or despair or

whatever special substance they required to sustain themselves, and seeking it with vigor. Only a fool would walk the night unarmed at such a time or perhaps, Damien reflected, one who lived so close to the heart of that darkness that constant exposure had dulled all sense of danger. Or was it that there was simply safety in

numbers, in a city so large that no matter how many were taken in the night, the odds were good that it wouldn't be you? Then something caught his eye; he reined up suddenly, and his three-toed mount snorted with concern. Laughing softly, he patted it on the neck. No danger here, old friend. Then he considered, and added, Not yet, anyway. He dismounted and led the dappled creature across the street, to the place that had

caught his eye. It was a small shop, with a warded canopy set to guard the walkway just outside, and a marquee that caught the dying sunlight like drops of fire. Fae Shoppe it said, in gleaming gold letters. Resident loremaster. All hours. He looked back over his shoulder, to the gradually darkening street. Night was coming on with vigor, and God alone knew what that would mean. The sensible thing to do would be to find an inn and drop off his things, get his mount under guard, and affix a few wards to his luggage . . . but when had he

ever done the sensible thing, when curiosity was driving him? He took a moment to remove his most valuable bag from the horse's back—his only valuable bag, in fact—locked the beast's lead chain to a hitching rack, and went inside. Into another world. The dying sunlight gave way to orange and amber, the flickering light of tinted lamps. Warm-toned wood added to the sense of harmony, possibly aided by a ward or two; he could feel his travel-weary muscles relax as he entered, but the Working that made them do so was too

subtle to define. All about him were things marvelous objects, no two of them alike, which filled to overflowing the multitude of shelves, display cases, and braces that lined the interior of the shop. Some were familiar to him, in form if not in detail. Weapons, for instance: his practiced eye took in everything from blades to pistols, from the simple swords of his own martial preference to the more complicated marvels that applied gunpowder in measured doses and just as often misapplied it. Household items, of every kind imaginable. Books and bookmarks and bookstands, pen and paper. And some objects that were clearly Worked: talismans etched with ancient Earth symbols, intricately knotted wards, herbs and spices and perfumes and oils, and all the equipment necessary to maximize their effect. A bizarre sort of gift shop, or general grocery? He read some of the labels, and shook his head in amazement. Was it possible really possible that the objects surrounding him were Worked? All of them? What a fantastic notion! In the center of the room, dividing the public area from that space which clearly served as a reference library, a glass counter served to support several dozen books and the man who was perusing them. He was pale in a way that westerners rarely were, but Damien sensed nothing amiss about the coloring; despite its stark contrast with his dark hair, eyes, and clothing, it probably meant nothing more sinister than that he worked the late shift. In a city that remained active all night, anything was possible. The man lifted up his wire-rimmed spectacles as he noticed his visitor, then removed them; Damien caught a flash of delicately etched sigils centered in the circles of clear glass. Welcome, he said pleasantly. Can I help you with anything? The counter was filled with more whimsical objects, taffeta-quilt hearts and small calico bags with rosette bows, wards made up to look like massive locks and chalices engraved with sexually suggestive motifs. All of them labeled. And if the labels were accurate. . . . Do they really Work? he asked. The pale man nodded pleasantly, as though he heard the question every day. Lady Cees a certified adept. Each object in the shop has been fae-bound to a purpose. Results are guaranteed, in most cases. Can I show you something in particular? He was about to answer when a door in the back of the shop swung open well camouflaged by the mountains of books that flanked it, or perhaps by a Working? and a woman entered, her bright eyes jubilant. Found it! she announced. Her associate sighed melodramatically and shut the thick volume before him. Thank gods. At last. If I hadn't worked that damned Obscuring on it in the first place She stopped as she saw Damien, and a smile lit her face. Hello, Im sorry. I didnt realize we had company. It was impossible not to return that infectious smile. Lady Cee, I presume? If you like. Ciani of Faraday. She came forward and offered her hand, which he grasped with pleasure. Dark hair and soft brown skin served as a backdrop for wide, expressive eyes, and lips that seemed to find their natural placement in a broad grin of pleasure. Fine lines fanned out from the corners of her eyes, hinting at age, but the quality of her skin and the firmness of her figure told another story. It was impossible to read either her true age or her origin, which might have been intentional; whatever the case, he found himself more than marginally attracted to her. Be honest, Damien. Youve always been attracted to things fae-wise, and heres a true adept; would her looks have made much of a difference? My pleasure, he said with gusto. Damien Kilcannon Vryce, lately of Ganji-on-the-Cliffs, at your service. Her eyes crinkled with amusement, which hinted that she knew how many titles he was omitting. She must have worked a Knowing on him as soon as she saw him; that he had never noticed her doing it said much for her skill. But that stands to reason. As an adept she isnt simply more powerful than most, shes immersed in the fae in a way no others can be. Then he remembered where he was, and thought in amazement, What must that mean for her, to have such awareness, living in the shadow of such a great Darkness. . . . And are you the resident loremaster, as well? She bowed her head. I have that honor. Meaning . . . an archivist? Meaning, I research, collect, Know, and disseminate information. As it is said our ancestors once used machines to do, before the Great Sacrifice. For a modest consultation fee, of course. Of course. Meaning also that my position is one of absolute neutrality, regarding the uses to which such data is put. Her eyes sparkled mischievously, and she added, Discretion assured. Thats necessary, I assume. Oh, yes. We learned that the hard way. Too many so-called Datalords were killed in the early days, by sorcerers seeking vengeance for one indiscretion or another. We learned not to take sides. And the populace learned to respect our neutrality, in order to benefit from our continued presence. Is there something I can show you? Or some service we can offer? He wondered just how deep within him her Knowing had searched. And watched her closely as he said, I need a local fae-map. Do you carry them? Her eyes sparkled with amusement, reflecting the amber of the lamplight. I think we may, she answered simply. Not rising to the bait. Current or historical? Current. Then Im sure we do. She stepped back to search through one of the book-strewn shelves, and after a few minutes chose and pulled forth a heavy vellum sheet. She laid it out on the counter before him and pinned its corners down with several unlabeled objects that had been lying about,

allowing him to study it. He whistled softly. Currents of fae flowed through the city in half a dozen directions, each carefully labeled as to its tenor and tidal discrepancies. North of the city, beyond the sheltered ports of Kale and Seth and across the twisted straits that separated two continents, a spiral of wild currents swirled to a focal point so thick with notes and measurements that he could hardly make out its position. The Forest? he wondered, seeking out the regions name from among the myriad notes. Yes, the Forest. And smack dab in the middle of it was the wildest fae on any human continent, and by far the most dangerous. So close! Will it do? she asked. In a tone of voice that said plainly that she knew it made the fae-maps of his home look like mere road maps of a few simple country paths. He had never seen, nor even imagined, anything like this. How much? Fifty local, or its western equivalent. Or barter, she added. Intrigued, he looked up at her. We have very few visitors from your region, and fewer still who brave the Dividers. Your news and experience are worth quite a bit to me professionally speaking, of course. I might be willing to trade to you what you want, in return for what you know. Over dinner? he asked smoothly. She looked him over, from his mud-caked boots to his rough woolen shirt; he thought he felt the fae grow warm about him, and realized that she was knowing him as well. Isn't there someplace you're supposed to be? she asked, amused. He shrugged. In a week. They don't know I'm here early and won't unless I tell them. No one's waiting up for me, he assured her. She nodded slightly as she considered it. Then turned to the man beside her who was already waiting with an answer. Go on, Cee. He, too, was smiling. I can hold the shop till midnight. Just get back before the He stopped in mid-sentence, looked uncomfortably at Damien. Before they come, all right? She nodded. Of course. From under a pile of papers she drew out two objects, a ward on a ribbon and a small, clothbound notebook. These she gave to the man, explaining, When Dez comes in, give him these charts. He wanted more . . . but I can do only so much, working with the Core stars. If he wants anything more, try to convince him to trust the earth-fae. I can do a more detailed Divining with that. I will. And Chelli keeps asking for a charm for her son, to ward against the perils of the true night. I've told her I can't do that. No one can. She's best off just keeping him inside . . . she might come in again to ask. I'll tell her. That's it, I think. She lifted a jacket from the coatstand near the door, and smiled at Damien as she donned it. Your treat? My honor, he responded. The New Sun, then. You'll like it. She glanced back, toward her assistant. I'll be there if you need me, Zen; just send. He nodded. Damien offered her his arm. She stared at it for a moment, clearly amused by the custom, then twined her own smaller limb about it. You can stable your horse there, she informed him. And I think you'll find the neighborhood . . . interesting.

From Library Journal

For over a thousand years, the colonists of the planet Erna have struggled to gain control over a land prone to seismic instability and infused with a wild, near-sentient natural force known as "the fae." While sorcerers and adepts manipulate the dark and light sides of this power, the Church maintains its stance in opposition to its use. As the dark side of the fae grows in strength, feeding off the nightmares and greed of the minds that are drawn to it, four individuals form an unwilling alliance to battle the source of evil.

Friedman (In Conquest Born , DAW, dist. by NAL, 1978; The Madness Season , DAW, dist. by NAL, 1990) has produced a splendid hybrid of sf and fantasy in this first volume of a trilogy. Hauntingly memorable protagonists, high drama, and vivid world-building mark the beginning of what promises to be a magnum opus of the imagination. A priority purchase for fantasy or sf collections. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.