

Book review

## Arrows of the Queen

**Y**OUNG Talia went about the family homestead, taking care of the little ones, dodging her stern mother-in-law, daydreaming about Herald-Mage Vanyel of Valdemar, about whom she read when she could find some time. Things changed when she defied her family by deciding not to marry, and rode off on a white horse that mysteriously appeared on the scene. This curious animal took her to the very Valdemar of her dreams, where she discovered she had been Chosen as a Herald.

Thus begins the first book of the Arrows trilogy in Mercedes Lackey's Valdemar series. Although this story is set in a time period a few centuries after Vanyel and the Herald Mages, readers should have no trouble fitting into the Valdemar storyline, because this story takes some time off the action of the clash of the Kingdoms to focus on the history of Valdemar. We learn about how Baron Valdemar broke away from a tyrannical overlord, and with a large group of fellow rebels, founded an independent state named Valdemar, which became a safe haven from anyone seeking refuge from oppression. With so many people of different faiths flooding in, the state adopted the policy "There is no one true way", thereby respecting everyone's beliefs. Even with this policy in place, Valdemar began to have problems where being fair became very difficult. He went to a private grove where he prayed to every deity he knew of, begging for an answer, and from that very place, the Companions, intelligent horse-like creatures, with telepathic powers sprang forth, to guide their Chosen keepers, the Heralds. Valdemar himself became the first Herald, and thus the whole system of Heralds began.

Arrows of the Queen talks about Talia's own initiation into the Heraldic Collegium, her clash with bullies and conspirators, and her discovery of her true home, her place in the scheme of things. As is Lackey's specialty, she allows her writing to grow with her principal character, so we get this feeling of a camera slowly expanding its focus even as Talia's world opens up. It is the perfect opening to a moving trilogy, and the perfect holiday read.

By Sabrina Fahmad  
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## Exam Crams

**T**HE exam time is upon the O and A level candidates. December is what most parents will tell you a time when "Exam is knocking on your doors". This is also the time to cram; that is come to senses about the fact that finally it is exam time and you have to prepare intensively for that exam. While cramming is considered bad by teachers and parents, the fact is, most of the students (other than the super intelligent nerds that is) choose the last month, or even the last week to study the entire syllabus. So if you think that you haven't touched the book at all in an eternity, it is time to brush the dust from your text books and sit down for a late night cram.

Now RS doesn't advocate that you cram just before your exam, but if you have to, then do it right so that it brings benefits rather than put you in a hectic schedule so that you end up revising nothing. So here is a bunch of tips that might help you to cope up with late studies better.

**Plan ahead.** It is important to understand the situation before sitting for all-nighters in that last week before exam. Find out if you have all the notes in handy or not. It is no use studying hours just to find out that you haven't collected that all important chapter from economics. Bring out your syllabus and see if you have everything you have before sitting for a study. Also find out how many subjects you have to cover and how much time you have. Give more time to more important or lengthy questions or chapters.

**Checklist everything.** Make a list of the things you have to study. Since you don't have a choice of revision or re-revision, make sure that you have everything completed before moving onto the next chapter. Mark that out in your checklist and stop worrying about it. This will help you to make most of your limited time.

**Take breaks.** Take breaks between long hours of study. Your brain needs time to negotiate what you have studied so far so you must take those breaks and keep your mind off from study. This will also prevent you from feeling bored or sleepy. But don't take too long a break.

**Concentrate and be serious.** You have been too lazy so far, don't be lazy now. Give your full concentration and at least this will help you to raise your grades from what



would have been a total fail. Normally students who need to cram are the ones who have too much distraction from other things to devote time for studying. Just remember that your next exam is the most important exam for the rest of your life. O Level or A level exam results can be the thing between you and your dream of making it big or earning a scholarship or admission in a reputed university abroad. Although you can re-write exams that you haven't done well, but it is considered meritorious and acceptable if you are

able to do that in your first one or two sittings. So unlike the popular conception, these exams are also one opportunity, so if you miss it, it will be too late to catch the train again.

So there you have it. Take from a guy who has crammed quite a bit in his life, that it doesn't pay (sounds like saying "crime doesn't pay"). So study throughout your term to avoid the last minute preparations. Have a great exam!

By Monty Python

## Orphans of the Sun

"From his innocent eyes,  
He watched a family go by.  
His vision clouded as he pondered why,  
His parents were still lost in the sky."

**I**T is hard to miss out on the real tragedies of life, while sitting in the comfort of your cozy house, knowing that your future has been secured by your parents. However, there are many who do not have the privilege of knowing even how their parents looked, let alone their name or sharing their love. A fortunate few have those and yet they are thankful for it. The real melancholy, if not experienced, is hard to understand but not very hard to contemplate. Yet, hardly do people take the time to do so. Parents are taken for granted; just like all the blessings that life gives you. It is a sad phenomenon but a common one at that. With food on the table, cool air in the room, a soft bed and getting whatever is required, one forgets what life would have

been like, had they been deprived all the mentioned things. Dwell on such a thought and only then will you understand how lucky you are.

"Her search never began,  
But nor could it ever end.  
The sun lit up her path,  
But her broken road would never mend."

How difficult it really is to live a life without the warmth of our mother's hug or the comfort of your father's presence is difficult or rather impossible to fully comprehend. It is worth trying because no matter what your eventual concept of such a scenario is, it would still make you realize what you have and why you should be thankful for it. It's time now to go up to them and thank them from the bottom of your hearts because without them you would never have the opportunity to be what you are today. It's not your talents that helped you through but rather the firm



determination of your parents to cultivate that talent of yours in their own unknowing and instinctive ways.

"The orphans held hands,  
And let their dreams unite as one.  
Keep your dreams alive,  
Dear Orphans of the Sun."

No other vision is more terrifying than that of a life without your parents. There is nothing else to be more thankful for than that. It is high time for you to realize that and stop crying about trivial and materialistic and at times unrealistic things. Think about the unlucky millions and then you will realize just how lucky you are. No matter what your parents do, God as a witness agrees that it is always for your best. Give them a reason so that they too can thank you some day and then when it's your turn to become a parent, pray that you too are thanked for your efforts.

"The true love was never felt,  
Yet their hopes would never be undone.  
Silent tears were shed unnoticed,  
As the few lucky ones, never knew the pain of the Orphans of the Sun."

By Osama Rahman

## Earth Sweet Earth

**E**ARTH is the planet where we live in. But it's not just a planet for us...it's our home, our very own home. It could be very small comparing to the huge universe but it's our only residence in this eternal infinity.

There are nine planets in our solar system but only the Earth has the pulsation of life.

Here lives the most amazing creature of God the "Human". And the most amazing creature is now causing the most amazing problem in the world. Our earth is now facing the threat of existence and that's only because of us...yes by us. You want to know how? Well deforestation, polluting environment, misusing of technology, starting unwanted wars and killing inno-

cent people, producing nuclear weapons to create great impression upon the world etc, etc, etc....the list will go on and on and on....and if somehow it finishes no problem we will invent something new and more effective idea to destroy the Earth...you know we are the genius....OK lets not talk about this matter anymore, it has been over talked in the last few years....let us talk about the solution of the problem....what do you think what that would be....I guess we should pray to God to save us but the question will he help us? He has created the world so beautifully and systematically that there is no intention of any kind of offense....and what are we doing...breaking all

the systems and destroying all the beauties....so we deserve punishment for all this not help....right? And why should he help us is it only Gods responsibility to save the earth? Don't we have any responsibilities for the earth? And God has the whole universe but we have only the earth so we must remain it suitable for living until we find any other place to live in. We should remember that earth is the only place where we can take breath without the help of oxygen cylinder and go anywhere without space suit. So we have to save the earth for our own sake. We should do something for our loving earth and it will not be very difficult for us. We have done much more difficult jobs than that before like making artificial satellites and sending space crafts to the Mars or stepping on the moon and what not. Is the job of saving the earth will harder than that? I don't

think so....trust me we can do it just we have to be a little concerned about that. We know that all this problems are created by us so it is our duty to solve this. Try not to do anything that is harmful for this earth. Start from yourself and then forward the message to the people around you. It is not possible to go each and every person and tell them what they should do and what shouldn't but you can discuss it with your friends they will do the same with there friends and in this way someday we will have all the people of the world united to make the earth a better place. So let us forget for just one day that which country are we from, what religion are we belongs to just think like the inhabitants of the earth and do whatever we can do for its well being cause its our home our, our loving home.

By Sabrina Jahan Brishty