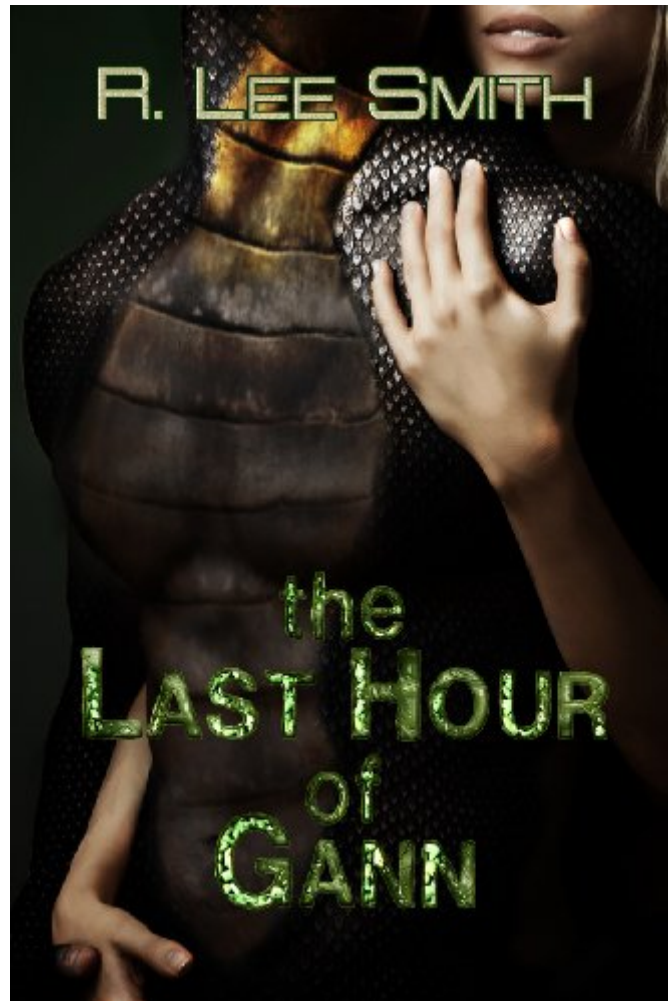




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The Last Hour Of Gann



Synopsis

It was her last chance: Amber Bierce had nothing left except her sister and two tickets on Earth's first colony-ship. She entered her Sleeper with a five-year contract and the promise of a better life, but awakened in wreckage on an unknown world. For the survivors, there is no rescue, no way home and no hope until they are found by Meoraq—a holy warrior more deadly than any hungry beast on this hostile new world—but whose eyes show a different sort of hunger when he looks at her. It was his last year of freedom: Uyane Meoraq is a Sword of Sheul, God's own instrument of judgment, victor of hundreds of trials, with a conqueror's rights over all men. Or at least he was until his father's death. Now, without divine intervention, he will be forced to assume stewardship over House Uyane and lose the life he has always known. At the legendary temple of XiMatezh, Meoraq hopes to find the deliverance he seeks, but the humans he encounters on his pilgrimage may prove too great a test even for him—especially the one called Amber, behind whose monstrous appearance burns a woman's heart unlike any he has ever known. From R. Lee Smith, author of *Heat* and *Cottonwood*, comes an epic new story of desire, darkness and the dawn that comes after *The Last Hour of Gann*. **WARNING:** This book contains graphic violence, strong sexual content and explicit language. It is intended for mature readers only.

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Customer Reviews

I bow to the book Gods and the real One(s) for this amazing story. But first I must say to the author that you are an evil woman for creating something that tore me away from my family, friends and (I hate to admit) my job. I missed much needed sleep and lost time I will never get back. If you are reading this (which I doubt as this review will be at the bottom) I picture you with an evil smirk on your face while you are tapping your fingers together like an evil villain. But I don't hate you. This is the third book of yours I have read. Scholomance will always be my favorite. Heat and The Last Hour of Gann are in second. But only by a smidgen and I could not put one below the other. This book was just as riveting. I was riveted. I won't give a synopsis because I really don't think any one will read this. And there are a hundred more on here. I will just say this. This books changed me. Not in a holy way (well not really) but in a standards type of way. Not sure I can just read any old romance indie book again. I am ruined for all other books and I suspected this may happen if I read another one of your books. I waited months to read this one. I knew what I would be giving up if I started. I finally accepted the consequences and forged into this amazing world you created. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay, just like Amber, and live in the dirt for as long as I could as long as I could if I got to do it with my Lizardman. You gave me the best villains yet. All of them were wonderfully horrible. And Amber, with all of her faults, was utterly perfect. If not too perfect in her unending ability to forgive. That must have been genetically ingrained in her because I could not understand it. But I still loved her for it. I would, however, really like to talk with someone about the end though. How? Why? I admit I ran through the last pages desperate to finish. I plan to go back but I just can't yet. I just want to understand the ending. I feel like it must be obvious. But I missed it. I know what happened. I just don't understand how or why it happened. Ok ok. I know.. "It was God". But I need just a little bit more. I think Amber and I have that in common. As for the religious tone in this book, I loved it. I was worried it would become boring and repetitious. I admit to skimming a small amount. But I enjoyed it as a whole. And that surprised me, pleasantly. I love how Meoraq's faith was so strong and unbreakable. I loved how he reasoned out every obstacle and every hardship and actually drew strength. I find myself thinking like him when something goes wrong. I actually counted to six the other day after a nasty phone call. It was beautiful. I have no good words other than this was beautiful. Thank you. I will say this to those who may come upon this review. The main characters do not meet until about 20% and they don't do anything fun together until about

50%. This is a slow build. But worth it. I just went on an amazing adventure. Even when I say I lost time, I didn't really mean it. I gained a story that I know will be with me for some time. I get to take Amber and Meoraq with me everywhere I go. And that, as they say, is the gift that keeps on giving.

Blurb: This book is two parallel stories that cross and become entwined. The first section is Amber Bierce's story: In a dystopian near future, tough chick Amber, trapped in a situation with few options, joins 50,000 humans on the first-ever attempt to settle an alien world. When things go terribly wrong and the ship and its few survivors crash-lands on the wrong alien world, Amber must find a way to survive the harsh environment and the instant Lord of the Flies-style infighting among the survivors, while keeping her much-weaker (emotionally, physically, everything) little sister alive. In the second section, we meet a man of the alien world, Meoraq, who is a kind of traveling warrior/monk/judge. Through Meoraq, we see the world he lives in, a harsh pre-industrial world where the skies are always cloudy, and - as you soon come to suspect - the culture may be the tattered remnants of one that suffered a great catastrophe. When Meoraq, who is very devout, sees what he believes is a sign from God, telling him to go on a pilgrimage, he soon stumbles on the shambling human survivors, and becomes their unwilling and super-grumpy protector. He and Amber slowly learn to communicate, and Meoraq can't help but become involved in her life, and vice-versa, as they continue on his pilgrimage together. (If you are imagining this as full of cute moments and him magically producing hot baths for her in the wilderness: NO. This is gritty and real, survival by the skin of their teeth.) Pros: First of all, this book made me totally, 100% believe that Amber fell in love with a dude who looks like a lizard, and vice versa. I mean, I BELIEVED it. And this is not the kind of book where the alien is slightly alien but mostly really hunky, either. Meoraq has a snout and scales. Amber initially looks, to him, like she has multiple deformities. They are not especially physically attractive to each other - even by the end, they can still see the ways in which their species have very different bodies - so the author is selling you on a meeting of souls. And the souls are meeting in an unimaginably harsh setting, and having to learn to communicate across a language barrier, a species barrier, a barrier of religion - everything. So this is no mean feat, that by the end I understand that they have found and forged a great love between them. I'd go so far as to say that this is one of the only books I've read in recent memory where the author is able to authentically show two people falling in love - not tell me, show me. By the end, Amber and Meoraq were completely real people to me. Second, the characters and world-building are incredible. Spending as much time with Meoraq as you do before he meets Amber lets you understand the shape of his moral universe in a way that drives the emotional and theological climax of the story hundreds of

pages later. I don't want to give any of that away, but whether you are an atheist or a believer, I think you will be moved. Third, I loved reading something that had a really crisp adventure plot and wasn't "just romance". You could basically take out the romance scenes between Amber and Meoraq and still have an incredible sci-fi novel. That says something, to me, about the quality of the writing. Fourth, the prose is lovely. Fifth: Amber is a Survivor with an uppercase S. Her character is incredible. She gets beaten down (metaphorically and literally) over and over, but her drive to survive is unstoppable. There were so many moments in the story where I thought "Surely now she'll just want to give up", but Amber is driven to go on, to make it, to live another day. She is also initially a kind of unlikeable character, at least in the sense that you totally understand why other people find her abrasive. It was so interesting and refreshing to read about someone who is the opposite of the "I need saving" kind of heroine. I mean, even when Amber does need saving, she is still the captain of her own fate as much as possible. Cons: There are so few! I want to say here that when I read about this book initially on review blogs, I felt kinda worried by all the "Trigger warning for rape!" stuff, and "There is a lot of nonconsensual stuff and it's really brutal!" and so on. Also, from reading about this book in reviews, I got the impression that it was a kind of very dark sci-fi erotica/romance. And I think that is... well, I think that's not right. I think this book is basically right on the cusp of serious literary sci-fi (you can quibble about whether or not it truly falls in that category, or if it, uh, is too well-plotted for that) but either way I think that pitching it as dark sci-fi romance is not the whole story. I'd say that this is more of a space opera (I mean that in the best way) with a strong romance plot, and heavy theological overtones. And I have problems with unresolved non-consensual sex storylines, like many people, and also I am a grumpy feminist, and I can say honestly that this book did not use ethically dubious sex to titillate. Or at least I did not find it to be that way. In fact, I'd say that I did not find the sex especially titillating in general, which is not meant as a criticism. It was more that any sex felt very much like it was integral to the story, and integral to Meoraq's journey from hyper-devout warrior/monk/judge to the person he is at the end of the story. The bottom line: I try not to give five stars freely. For me, five stars is not "This was really good". Five stars is more like "This book moved me deeply and I think about it frequently after finishing it." So for me, giving this book five stars kind of holds some weight. I don't know what other praise I can give it, except to close with saying that one of my all-time favorite authors is the great Ursula Le Guin, writer of literary, character-driven sci-fi, and I would rank "The Last Hour of Gann" with some of her works. If you've ever read *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell, this reminded me a good deal of that, dealing with similar themes of theology, God's love or non-existence, faith in the face of truly immense challenges, and cross-cultural exchange. This book was SO GOOD I feel

confused about how it seems to have gotten grouped with "romance", which naturally can tend to make romance readers feel like - but wait, where is the romance? Why is there so much violence and raping? While meanwhile the more hardcore sci-fi fans aren't finding it, because space romance is not their thing. And I feel like that's a shame, because man, this is a good book. A great book. If you have read and enjoyed literary sci-fi like Le Guin, *The Sparrow*, and James Tiptree, I think you might want to give this a try!

I wasn't sure what to expect with this book, but read a sample and liked Amber from the start. She was straight forward; calls a spade a spade and takes no bulls**t from anyone. Was a bit confusing when the Dumaqs are introduced but only because of the way it's written, as though the reader had met them before. Apart from a few grammatical errors and words either in the wrong place or missing, I could not get the book out of my head. Whenever I was not reading it, I could not wait to get back to it. It is so realistic in its portrayal of survivors from a crash, their way of projecting themselves as victims, turning into sheep following the loudest in the herd. The world building and the religion itself was truly well done. Could have done with a better ending but at least there was a sense of completion

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