



## The Lions of al-Rassan

By Guy Gavriel Kay

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### The Lions of al-Rassan By Guy Gavriel Kay

The ruling Asharites of Al-Rassan have come from the desert sands, but over centuries, seduced by the sensuous pleasures of their new land, their stern piety has eroded. The Asharite empire has splintered into decadent city-states led by warring petty kings. King Almalik of Cartada is on the ascendancy, aided always by his friend and advisor, the notorious Ammar ibn Khairan -- poet, diplomat, soldier -- until a summer afternoon of savage brutality changes their relationship forever.

Meanwhile, in the north, the conquered Jaddites' most celebrated -- and feared -- military leader, Rodrigo Belmonte, driven into exile, leads his mercenary company south.

In the dangerous lands of Al-Rassan, these two men from different worlds meet and serve -- for a time -- the same master. Sharing their interwoven fate -- and increasingly torn by her feelings -- is Jehane, the accomplished court physician, whose own skills play an increasing role as Al-Rassan is swept to the brink of holy war, and beyond.

Hauntingly evocative of medieval Spain, **The Lions of Al-Rassan** is both a brilliant adventure and a deeply compelling story of love, divided loyalties, and what happens to men and women when hardening beliefs begin to remake -- or destroy -- a world.

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## The Lions of al-Rassan By Guy Gavriel Kay Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #68948 in Books
- Brand: Kay, Guy Gavriel
- Published on: 2005-06
- Released on: 2005-06-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.19" w x 5.31" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 528 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Canadian attorney Kay has eschewed the courtroom thriller for fantasy (A Song for Arbonne, etc.). Here he draws on the crumbling empire of medieval Spain to inspire this tale of brutality and romance. Though the setting is the fictitious Al-Rassan, and there are passing references to the "Star-born," any ancillary connection with science fiction is almost irrelevant to the story. Kay provides insightful glimpses into the goals and motives of his many characters, including King Almalik of Cartada, his advisor Ammar ibn Khairan, a young soldier, Alvar de Pellino, and the compelling female physician Jehane. Mindful of the confusion that alternate universes can create for readers, Kay is careful to periodically summarize the current positions of the various factions in the struggles between the many kingdoms in the empire. Studded with poetry that is evocative of Spain (some selections are reminiscent of El Cid), the story is buttressed with convincing cultural and social details and descriptions of medicine as it was practiced in the 12th century. Genre fans looking for more romance and strong female character development will find this an engrossing tale.

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From [Booklist](#)

Kay's thoroughly excellent new novel resembles his *Song for Arbonne* (1992) in that there is no magic in it. Instead, Kay deftly and intelligently bends history at a slightly different angle. The setting is a variant early medieval Spain whose Muslims, Christians, and Jews are also suitably modified. The story turns on the rivalries between the Kingdom of Al-Rassan, once mighty but now split into quarreling principalities, and the kings of the Jaddites. Far to the north, the Jaddites hope to reclaim Al-Rassan, which was once theirs. Into this skillfully imagined, eloquently described stew of war, intrigue, and magnificence happen a warrior from each side and a female physician. The threesome's adventures constitute the bulk of a long but never padded, demanding but enormously rewarding novel. *Roland Green*

Review

"An engrossing tale. . . . Kay provides insightful glimpses into goals and motives of his many characters."--" Publishers Weekly" "A beautifully wrought, elegantly written adventure...as fast-paced as it is thoughtful."--" San Francisco Chronicle

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