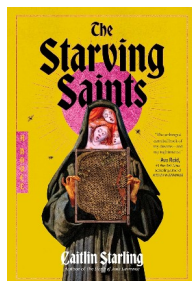




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Starving Saints
By Caitlin Starling
Discussed October 2026

Characters

In Aymar/The Real World

Phosyne/Sefridis – the madwoman/witch
Ser Voyne – the misused knight/hero of Carcabonne
Treila (de Batrolin) – the vengeful survivor of Carcabonne
Cardimir – the King
Ser Leodegardis – ruler/commander of Aymar
Jacynde – the Prioress
Ser Galloren and Denisot – knight and chamberlain
Edouart and Simmonet – common boys
The hungry masses
The Etrebians

Numinous/Supernatural

Ornuo and Pneo – Phosyne's "pets"
The Lady/The Constant Lady/The False Lady
The Warding Saint
The Absolving Saint
The Loving Saint
The hungry core of Aymar
The minions of the Saints

Discussion Questions

1. Did you finish the book? If not where did you stop and why?
2. This book was...a lot.....gruesome acts, dark choices, terrible horrors.....what genre would you consider this? Supernatural horror? Eldritch horror? Psychological horror? Dark fantasy? Something else entirely?
3. Do you find books with a lot of visceral descriptions and horrific content more challenging to read? Why or why not?
4. The opening sentence sets quite a sense of urgency.."In fifteen days, there will be no food in Aymar castle"....was the time constraint/sense of urgency conveyed well in the pacing of the story?
5. Despite clearly being set in a larger world, the story itself takes place in a very isolated way. Did the undercurrent of isolation and claustrophobia come through in the text?
6. Speaking of the wider world....the enemy – the Etrebians – are handled completely "off screen", mentioned frequently, but never seen directly (the closest is an attack by siege engines) yet they drive the first half of the book. Did this way of handling the "enemy" work for you as a reader?

7. Starling uses three POV characters in the book, did you find them distinct? Did you find the different worldviews and perspectives added to (or detracted from) the story?
8. One of the themes that we see often in the story is the theme of duty/obligation versus self-preservation. What does Starling seem to say about this conflict?
9. In both literature and cultural lore there has always been something of a tie between power and obligation in rulership/leadership (the sacred King tied to the land type of thing...even the mythology of Christ's body and blood as the King of Kings) – Starling seems to both go all-in with this idea *and* play with subverting it. What did you think of her handling of this archetypal concept?
10. What does Starling seem to say about leadership in times of crisis? What does she say about the question of whether it is better to survive and rebuild or to flee/run from a crisis?
11. Starling also seems to play with the differences between religion, faith, and mysticism. Do you think she said anything new and different in her handling of these things?
12. The Saints/entities are never fully explained...indeed much of the supernatural of the book is never codified/explained...it just *is*. Did you feel the book needed a more codified definition of who or what the entities were? What more traditionally understood creatures did you think of them as (they have elements of certain types of vampires, but also elementally-oriented fae from darker/less sanitized fairy tales)?
13. For all that this was a story set in a medieval-esque society, with fairly stereotypical societal norms in some ways....there was not really any sexism or homophobia present....did you find the lack of *those* problems stood out or did their non-existence fit well in the story?
14. Bees play a significant role in the visual/background aesthetic of the story? Why do you think they are featured so prominently? How do they relate to the entities and with the conflict between Phosyne and the Lady?
15. Starling is known for her works that focus on isolation, paranoia, and psychologically grim horror. Having read *The Starving Saints* would you read further works by Starling?