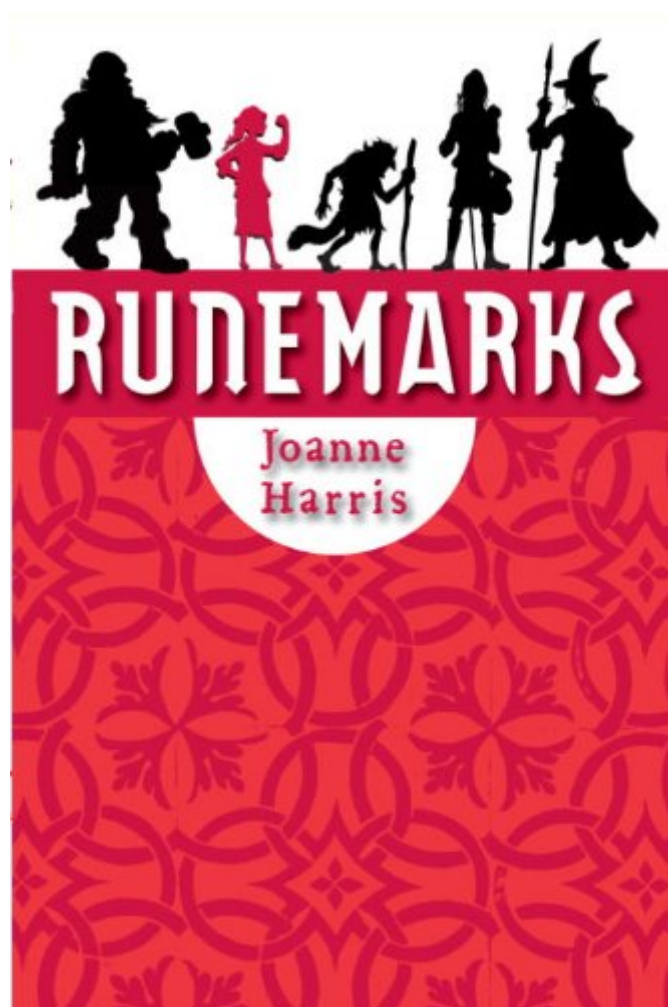


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# Runemarks



## Synopsis

Seven o'clock on a Monday morning, five hundred years after the end of the world, and goblins had been at the cellar again. . . . Not that anyone would admit it was goblins. In Maddy Smith's world, order rules. Chaos, old gods, fairies, goblins, magic, glamours—all of these were supposedly vanquished centuries ago. But Maddy knows that a small bit of magic has survived. The she was born with on her palm proves it—and makes the other villagers fearful that she is a witch (though helpful in dealing with the goblins-in-the-cellar problem). But the mysterious traveler One-Eye sees Maddy's mark not as a defect, but as a destiny. And Maddy will need every scrap of forbidden magic One-Eye can teach her if she is to survive that destiny. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Maddy is as outcast as they come. In a Norse culture that views magic as evil and labels darkskinned folks as Outlanders, being born an orphan girl with a ruin-mark on your palm is just about the worst way to start things off. Infants and animals are often killed for such offenses, and even far from the reach of the Universal City in the village of Malbry, people still hide such signs. It

doesn't help that strange events follow Maddy everywhere she goes. Goblins from the mysterious Red Horse Hill on the outskirts of town are drawn to her and have been seen staring at her from windowsills before taking off with stolen food. Belongings are damaged or disappear entirely. People die. No one quite knows what to do with her. Enter the one-eyed scallyman, with a bent toward secrecy, prophecy, and the unexplained. During a "chance" meeting up near the Hill, One-Eye agrees to mentor Maddy. For seven years, he tells her the stories of the Elder Age, teaches her cantrips and runecharms, and more than anything, helps her feel normal. She has more natural power than One-Eye has seen in a youth in a long time, and it is because of this power that her training continues. Each year when their lessons are finished, One-Eye leaves for World's End with the promise that he will return, and each year he returns. Only this year, he's late. Trouble is brewing up on Red Horse Hill when One-Eye finally returns. Rumors are spreading of the Nameless, a powerful new god controlled by the Order, and its terrible new power called the Word. Laws for proper use of the Word are laid out in the Good Book and can only be utilized by certain people. These same people communicate with each other and the Nameless via Communion and punish heretics, magicians, and FaÃfÃ«ries with Cleansings.

Oh my! This book is epic enough to please a Tolkien fan, but has moments of humor, as in the wonderful first sentence: "Seven o'clock on a Monday morning, five hundred years after the End of the World, and goblins had been at the cellar again." Maddy Smith, the fourteen-year-old witch-in-training who is at the center of this tale, has a "ruinmark" or runemark on her hand, a symbol, not only of her power, but of the role she is meant to play as events accumulate like clouds bundling on the horizon. Old One-Eye, the peddler/tramp who has been coming around once a year to teach Maddy magic; the goblins who swarm beneath Red Horse Hill; and people like Nat Parson, who is eager to please the priests of the powerful Order--all have a part to play in the twisting and turning pieces of plot that make up Joanne Harris's Runemarks. Even Fat Lizzy, a pot-bellied sow, features in this adventure--reminding me happily of the magical pig in Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain. But the most important thread binding this book together is Norse mythology. In fact, you might want to brush up on those stories before you start reading Runemarks. Aside from Maddy, the star of the book is obviously trickster Loki, the most exasperating and intriguing of the Norse pantheon. In fact, a running joke beginning as early as the list of characters is that Loki has managed to make enemies out of absolutely EVERYONE over the centuries. The author goes on to make good use of the Trickster's dual nature throughout the book. Can he be relied on? No. Is he sometimes helpful, just the same? Of course!

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