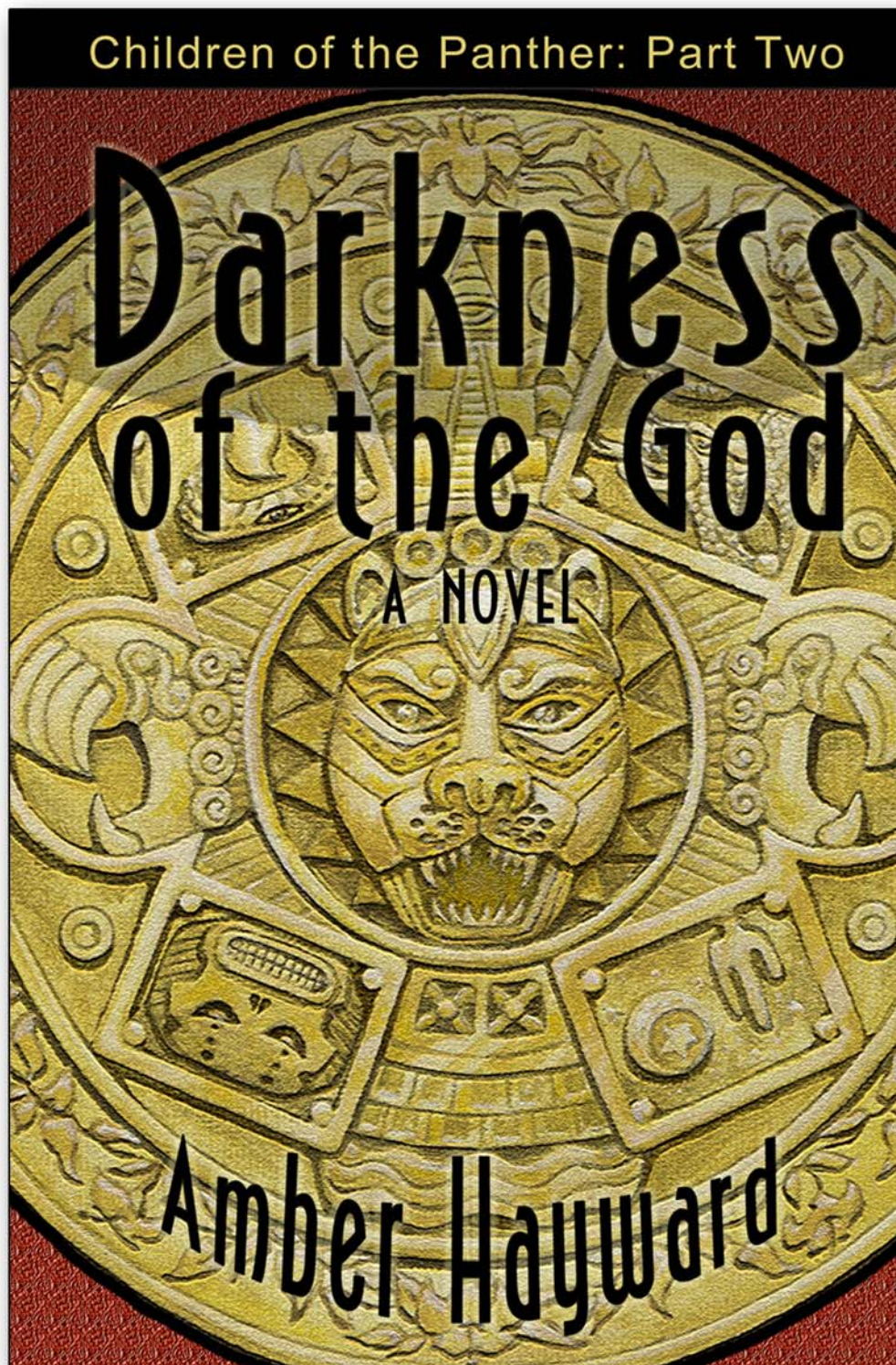


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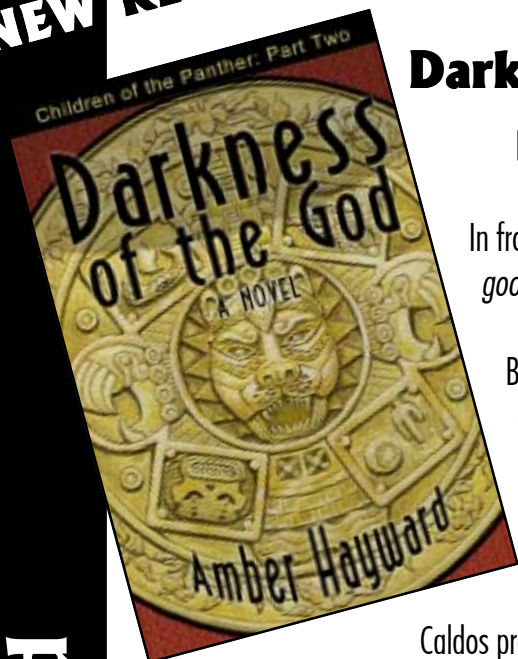


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Fantasy

**NEW RELEASE**

Darkness of the  
God  
**ABOUT THE  
BOOK**



# Darkness of the God

## **Darkness of the God by Amber Hayward**

**He had the jungle, now he wants the world.**

In front of the television cameras, international cult leader Caldos Moriera is all *goodness and light* – a man in white who heals the people of the world.

But behind the scenes he is a dark and despicable man who will do anything to anyone to get what he wants.

All it takes is his *touch*.

Arrogantly secure in his ability to control the people around him, Caldos prevents them from saying what they saw, or realizing what he did. But Ana and her handicapped uncle know the *truth*.

To them, Caldos Moriera is a murderer: the one who killed Ana's father, a healer in a Brazilian favela; and the one responsible for brutally butchering Ana's mother!

In fear for their lives, Ana and her uncle flee their Brazilian home to hide in the safety of the vast Sonoran Desert.

But Caldos is a greater threat than they first imagined. He's learned of Ana's own psychic healing abilities, and realizes that she may be the path to his *ultimate power*.

Can Caldos hunt her down and control the pair's phenomenal telepathic and healing powers for *himself*?

Will their combined powers be enough for Caldos to ultimately rule the world?

Ana, realizing that she is the only one strong enough to confront his dark force, vows to do whatever it takes to stop him; and begins to prepare for the spectacular and deadly psychic battle that's about to take place.

**Darkness of the God** is the second book in the *Children of the Panther* series.

**Darkness of the God** by Amber Hayward

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**Darkness of  
the God  
ABOUT THE  
AUTHOR**

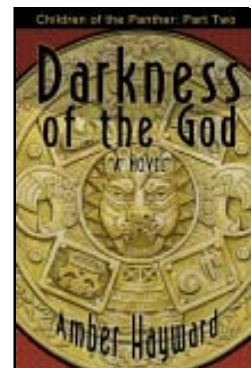
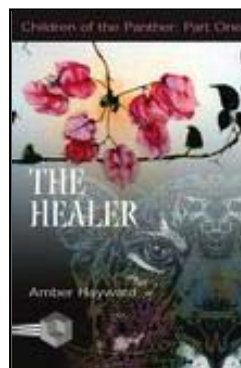
"Even before I started school, I knew I would be a writer. Reading was a great part of my life and I knew that writers were needed to create those intriguing books. I wrote stories, poems, plays, and achieved publication in student newspapers and yearbooks. My first big success was an essay read on a Canadian National radio show, Peter Gzowski's *Morningside*, followed by a story published in one of his anthologies. Publication of many of my poems and some short stories gave me the impetus to attempt a novel." – Amber Hayward.

Amber Hayward is an internationally published author and poet. Somehow she finds time to write despite the demands of managing the Black Cat Guest Ranch in the beautiful foothills of the Canadian Rockies, where she hosts and presents murder mystery weekends.

"Darkness of the God" is the second novel in the "Children of the Panther" trilogy. The first in the series, "The Healer", was published in 2002.

Amber is now hard at work on "Stolen Children", the third and final novel.

**Amber Hayward**



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# CHAPTER ONE

## Darkness of the God by Amber Hayward

Darkness of the  
God  
SAMPLE  
CHAPTER

# chapter one

The drought had lasted two years and so the campsite, called Hermosa Playa or Beautiful Lakeside, looked out over a parched chalky depression that once, according to the motel and campsite manager, had been Lago Verde. But it didn't matter, they weren't there for the scenery.

Keja, working from a small bucket of water, finished washing her side of the family's re-fitted school bus. Mitch, her big brother, had finished his side nearly half an hour ago but she took longer, being shorter and needing to stand on a ladder to reach all the way up. The water evaporated as soon as she wiped it on, but it did the job. No longer covered with yellow dust, the deep blue paint job looked nearly as beautiful as when it was first done. The airbrushed designs glowed — stars and moons and imaginary planets, some of them with rings, the landscape with pyramids and Jesus, walking across the desert, his light blue robes billowing out behind him, with a magic eye gazing calmly from the cloud-filled sky above. Best of all was the bright golden sphinx which blazed across the front of the bus, with the words "Psychic Advisor," printed in reverse lettering so people driving in front of them could read it clearly in their rearview mirror.

Keja never complained about having to wash the front of the bus, with all the ground-in bugs, while Mitch got off lightly with the back. All the back had on it was a silly-looking hand, the one thing that her father's assistant, Valentin, had allowed Papa to paint. She much preferred the Sphinx.

Keja poured her soapy water out on the dry dirt next to their campsite, hoping Mr. Clean wouldn't prove harmful to the small cacti struggling to grow there.

She'd heard a vehicle pull in next to theirs while she was working on the other side and now, having a chance to check it out, she was pleased to see that — unlike all the other campers at the Hermosa Playa — these people had children.

A ragged little girl, very unhappy looking, jounced a small baby while two older men set up a tent beside the beat-up dust-colored van. It was some kind of military tent, thick canvas painted with camouflage colors.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Darkness of the God by Amber Hayward

Darkness of the  
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CHAPTER

Another man, dark-skinned and oddly passive, stood near the tent while two women and several more children waited inside the van, barely visible through the half-open sliding door.

She could tell it was hot in there, sweat shone on their faces, but perhaps it wasn't as hot as being outside under the Mexican sun nearly at its noonday height. Keja stood in a small patch of shade cast by an awning over the kitchen window of her family's bus and wondered how so many people could travel in one small almost-windowless vehicle.

Everyone in the campsite was watching. The old people in the motor homes on the other side of the lane were peering out their windshields while the manager of the motel stood on his vine-shaded terrace and stared. They'd even attracted the group of Mexican children who'd appeared earlier, as if by magic out of the baking landscape. Her father had chased them away, telling them in his excellent Spanish that they would get no handouts. Normally he'd give them candy or fruit, since he loved children and the good will never hurt their business. But they had nothing to spare.

Hearing the bus door slam, she went around to see who'd come out. It was Papa, dressed in black with a red sash and a big cowboy hat. "Hippies," he sneered, nodding in the direction of their new neighbors.

Her uncle, sitting at a picnic table with his guitar, said, "Yeah." He was dressed much as her father was but he didn't look as good because his stomach hung over his belt and hid the shiny silver buckle. His motor home was parked next to their bus, backed into the site so that their doors faced each other and the awnings touched, providing the two families with a sheltered common space for eating and socializing.

"We should see if they want us to knock those dents out of that van, maybe put on some paint," Uncle Sandor said, but Papa replied, "They can't afford it."

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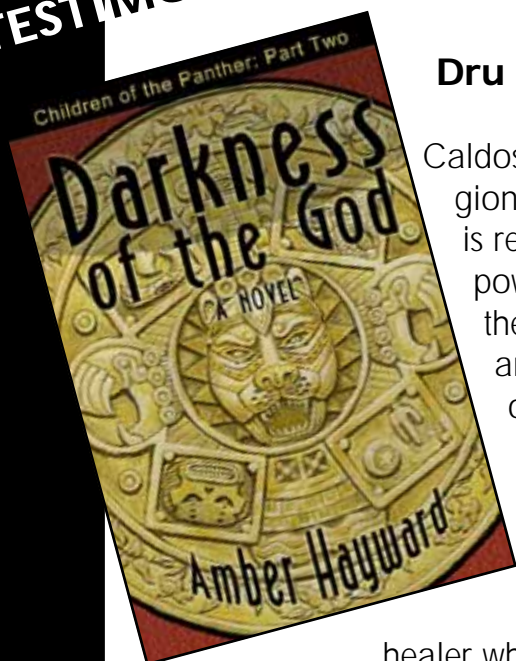
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## TESTIMONIALS

Darkness of the God  
Reviews and  
Testimonials



### Dru Pagliassotti - The Harrow

Caldos Moriera is a faith healer whose Golden World religion is sweeping the world because it works — his healing is real, public, and unprecedented. But Caldos has other powers, too. When he touches people, he can influence their emotions, pick up their stray thoughts, cause illness, and even kill. They are powers that, as far as he knows, only two other people in the world possess.

And he wants them both in his control.

In *The Healer*, the first book of the *Children of the Panther*, readers met Manoel da Silva, the Brazilian healer who saved Caldos' life and thus brought about his own death. *Darkness of the God* moves the story forward as 6-year-old Ana, an onça like Caldos, flees from the healer in the company of Manoel's blind and deaf onça ward João, Manoel's English wife Heather, an assortment of "unadoptable" children from an orphanage, two of the orphanage workers — Harold and Dulce — and the mysterious Canadian Glenn, whose underground contacts have thus far managed to keep them alive in their flight through South America.

In a Mexican campground, Ana meets 11-year-old Keja, a Rom girl traveling with her family. When Ana hears that Keja's mother reads palms, she offers to do the same, and Keja swiftly realizes that the girl's powers, unlike her mother's, are real. She brings Ana to her parents, and soon the fugitive gaje team up with the Gypsies, who also dislike Caldos Moriera's encroachment into their domain.

But Caldos' hired — and emotionally enslaved — mercenary Garik Kroll is hot on the fugitives' trail. His orders are to bring Ana and João to Caldos alive and unharmed, for the world-famous faith healer intends to exploit their powers for his own ends. But Kroll has reason of his own to hunt the fugitives. Their ally

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# TESTIMONIALS

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Glenn is better known to him as Bala, and Kroll's looking forward to pitting his wits against those of a worthy rival. So far, he hasn't been disappointed.

Darkness of the God leaps back and forth between viewpoints like an action film between cameras, giving the story a sense of urgency as the hunt progresses. The bulk of the story consists of the hunt, with hunters and hunted clashing in gunfire and car chases only to separate and clash again. The rapid movement between characters' points of view— few sections last more than four pages — keeps the reader engaged in the subplots: Ana and Keja's friendship, Harold and Dulce's romance, Harold and Glenn's rivalry, Caldos' political plots, and Garik's conflicted feelings toward the boss he knows has manipulated him. Along the way the reader is also treated to a few brief lessons on Romany traditions and conflicts and gets a whirlwind tour of South America. The only problem with this style may be that secondary characters don't come through very well — for example, none of the secondary handicapped children "come to life" except the talkative Rosie, and we learn relatively little about the Romany's motives and emotions, except for Keja's. It's a minor issue, though; all in all, the novel's choppy style makes for fast, entertaining reading.

Although it's possible to read Darkness of the God without reading The Healer — all the necessary background is provided — readers should be warned that the book ends on a cliffhanger that is linked closely to a revelation about Caldos' child molestation, which serves to leave readers with both a sour taste in their mouths and a sense of regret that they can't immediately pick up the third book in the series, Stolen Children, to find out if Keja and Ana will be all right.

Darkness of the God is a very satisfying novel, as much thriller as speculative fiction, and likely to appeal to a wide reading audience.

### **Shawn Duke, Midwest Book Review**

Darkness of the God is the second book in the Children of the Panther series by Amber Hayward and while I haven't read the first book I do have an idea of what the story was in that novel as it is explained in this particularly book.

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# TESTIMONIALS

## Darkness of the God

### Darkness of the God Reviews and Testimonials

The story follows Ana and her uncle Jaoa as they try to escape from Caldos, a 'religious' figure who has gained support due to his ability to heal people, and control them with a single touch. Caldos has killed Ana's father and brutally raped and murdered her mother. On top of that, Ana has a special ability to heal and control, just like Caldos, and in order to increase his power he needs to put her and her blind/deaf uncle under his control. Helping them are Glen--a man with rather 'interesting' connections--Harold, and Dulce--along with several handicapped children. When the group gets involved with a gypsy family things begin to fall apart not only for the gypsies, but for Ana and Jaoa as well. Caldos is determined to capture them and use their mysterious abilities, and a man like Caldos is willing to do just about anything to get what he wants.

The premise itself is rather interesting. This is sort of a loose urban fantasy. The fantasy element is the mysterious onca ability that Caldos, Ana, and Jaoa possess, which allows them to not only to heal people, but to control their thoughts and actions. This ability is rather interesting in that it is limited and powerful at the same time. Neither of these individuals can do anything to anyone else without touching them, but in touching someone these folks can heal you, give you cancer, stop your heart, force your heart to beat, make your brain shoot off certain chemicals, make you forget pain or past events, or fabricate memories. Basically, with a single touch these folks can do just about anything within the human body (they can even make you suicidal).

The story is good, but does fall pray to some elements that might bother people. Caldos is a despicable human being and Hayward does a good job making that clear. We get a glimpse into his actions and into his mind, which allows the reader to see just how horrible this person really is. One thing, however, that really bothered me that might not bother other people was the scene where Caldos actually rapes another character. I would have been okay not having the visual, but I think because I spend over 300 pages coming to like the character in question it was a big blow to me. I'm not fond of these sorts of scenes, especially since the book doesn't resolve anything around that. The abruptness of the end prevents any resolution to take place, which also leaves

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# TESTIMONIALS

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me with this lingering feeling of distress at what had happened. Maybe that was the author's intention, but for me it was not a good feeling to create. For others it might not matter as much.

The pacing is slow at first, but when it picks up it does get very entertaining, but the by the end it moves a little too fast. Regardless, if you can get into the book from the start it will keep you entertained until the end, especially when Caldos becomes more involved in the picture and you get to see how powerful he and Ana really are. Probably the strongest element in the novel is the action, or at least the scenes leading to the action and the action itself. Glen is the 'genius mastermind' of the group, coming up with crazy plans for escape. The action moves along at a good pace, isn't too graphic, and is put together very well so that it doesn't become confusing. Sometimes action can get muddled with all the details, but Hayward doesn't write that kind of action.

The two biggest flaws of the book are in the structure and in the ending. The structure is split up by character, with markers for character changes with dates, location, and name. One thing that this does is allow Hayward to use a lot of different POVs, but this ends up being somewhat of a flaw in my opinion. Many characters that don't need POVs are given one, and that leaves us with so many characters to care about throughout the novel, many of which never get developed beyond very minor changes. Some characters only get their POVs much later in the book, which leaves very little space for you to really get into their heads. The second flaw is the ending itself. It's an extremely abrupt ending. Unlike *The Innocent Mage*, *Darkness of the God* ends almost in the middle of an action sequence. The scene isn't even finished. There isn't a resolution. A character calls out another character's name and then that's it. A bunch of characters have died, the scene is still playing out, and suddenly it's over. With this being so near the rape scene and a variety of other scenes crucial to the plot I felt somewhat disheartened that there wasn't even a minor resolution. The novel should have taken another ten pages to have that scene end appropriately, since obviously there will be a third book to this.

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Other than those two flaws there aren't really any problems with the book. It has a solid premise that is easy to follow, meaning there is little to get confused about. Hayward paints the picture very clear, making sure you understand which characters are good, which are bad, and which are in that gray area. This book would probably fit best among those that like fantasy, but aren't into your typical urban fantasies with vampires or fantasy epics. It is a fantasy story about relatively normal people (even the gypsies are 'normal' from their cultural standing) doing extraordinary things (running from evil men with lots of money and power...and special abilities).

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