



Shadow of the Winter King

Erik Scott de Bie

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Assassin

Armed with the voracious sword Frostburn, court slayer Regel Winter once shed the blood of countless foes in service to Orbrin the Winter King.

Oathbreaker

But even the coldest steel cannot save those Regel loves: his beloved Princess Lenalin, her daughter Semana, and the Winter King himself, felled by treachery five years ago.

Shadow

Barely an echo of the man he was, Regel forges a pact with the assassin who slew Orbrin, setting out on a deadly quest for vengeance that will change the face of the World of Ruin.

Shadow of the Winter King Details

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Jordan says

Let me start this off first by stating that this is my first informal review of a title. If I go on a tangent or otherwise don't keep to a completely non-bias opinion, I apologize. That said, allow me to also apologize for reviewing this book before even completing it. Normally I tear through books, but this one is taking so long I may not be done with it for a long while.

I promise to try and keep spoilers to a minimum, but for the sake of ease, consider this whole review spoiler-ridden. [Read at your peril.](#)

Shadow of the Winter King snagged my interests initially with its snazzy cover (I'm shallow that way) and its Forgotten Realms veteran author. It sat in my Kindle queue until such time when all my usual suspects were read and I had nothing else to sate my constant book hunger.

Sadly, instead of a new jump into a fantasy world filled with intrigue and action, I found myself in a different genre entirely. Judging by its author, reviews on Amazon, and what I would personally consider not a small amount of knowledge in fantasy genre, I figured this book would be a hit from the start. What I received instead seems to be a genre more in tune with *Shades of Grey* meeting that *Dungeons and Dragons* movie from the 90's. In the hopes of not going too off topic, I'll section this off a bit.

1. Characters Development. In a world of realistic fantasy, there's usually no shortage of diversity even if the world is comprised of only one species and/or race. What *Shadow* gives us seems to be characters who can be grouped into one of four categories:

- Brutish, Muscled, Sexually Abusive Male: All supporting males of any import playing for the bad team.
- Gorgeous, Petite, Sexually Giving Female: All supporting females of any import on any team.
- Protective, Manly, Sexually Deprived Male: Main male character and all supporting males of sexually active age range playing for the good team.
- Secretive, Sexually Frustrated Female: Main female character and secondary female character, the latter falling between this and the other female category depending on the situation.

Sadly, I couldn't seem to reach any character's mindset and enjoy them for the work put into their development because (and I say this being a gigantic pervert myself) I couldn't get past the fact that every single one of them seemed to have only sex on the brain. Conspiracy brewing? Have sex and see who talks. Angst and betrayal? Have sex and abuse them a bit. Feeling Princely? Hit them and sex them until they can't be sexed no more!

2. Dialogue. This goes hand-in-hand with character development, but I'll try not to keep reemphasizing the Sex-on-the-Brain mentality. The dialogue, when there is dialogue, is very clipped. It's extremely hard to follow conversations because each character seems to jump around between their chosen persona with every sentence. Half the time, the personality attributed to the character with pages of self-observation and thought process is ruined the moment they speak. I couldn't seem to conjure up a voice for any character because as soon as I thought I had a grip on their style, their whole personality shifted. It was like watching three to five different actors do a take on all the main characters at once. In Spanish.

3. Action. This category is quite broad, and I always try to keep an open mind when dealing with it. Some

authors will emphasize every moment in a fight so you can visually picture every thrust, parry, pirouette or poke. Some authors tend to be vague when they approach combat, leaving battles to loose interpretation so they can focus on other areas of their talent. In this book, the action is used (as is almost every other facet of the book) as a way to bring about flashbacks. Don't get me wrong, I'm a fan of the flashback technique of writing. It's amazing when done correctly because you end up feeling as if you've read two to three books at once. Sadly, the flashbacks aren't used properly at all. They interrupt the few brief action sequences, conversations, and even sex scenes.

EDIT: I'm deciding to quit while I'm ahead on this book. I've reached Part 3, which took a lot of mental training and good ol' fashioned figurative elbow grease to accomplish. I won't quit because for better or worse it'd be a disservice to the author, and whether or not I enjoy a book doesn't mean I won't support authors for trying. Obviously they're a lot better at the gig than I am in any case.

What I am going to do is put this book on hiatus. It will stay in my To-Read section for a little while. A bit of soul searching, some funyuns, and a retina vacation may be just what I need to get through this book and properly review it. I apologize for the half-finished review in any case.

Wayne Sklow says

Erik Scott de Bie weaves an exciting tale of adventure, betrayal, and revenge that's hard to put down once you start reading. Shadow of the Winter King is definitely a must read and I can't wait for the sequel!!!

Dawn says

I picked up a free copy of this book from instaFreebie.

I'm really not sure about this book. It's a good story, the writing is good... it was just far too complex to sink myself into the way I wanted to - which probably says more about me than it does about the book. So. 4 stars.

Susana789 says

Boring.

Rob Clayburn says

Fun romp through a fast passed story.

The strong points were the relationships between the characters, perhaps sometimes the motivations were not completely clear - perhaps these will be expanded upon further along in the series.

David says

I enjoyed it. The way the author layered the flashbacks to the events of one evening 5 years previous to the present day of the story really served the narrative well as I felt like it allowed me to be both surprised by revelations and suitably attached to the characters to appreciate how those reveals impacted them as well as the story. At the same time I think it gave the book a similar quality to *Memento* or the best episodes of *LOST* where you want to revisit the story to see how interconnected it is and pick up on details you may have missed. I liked how deeply flawed all of the characters were, even though it made them unlikable at times while reading (particularly Regal Frostburn, the titular Shadow of the Winter King). About midway through the book his decisions and internal motivations had totally lost my sympathy although he earned it back by the story's conclusion. Also the *World of Ruin*, as a post apocalyptic fantasy world, is awesome as a setting and if I still had a regular D&D group I would hijack it for our next campaign.

Elijs Dima says

Eh. It's alright, on balance, but nothing to get hyped about.

Reasonably well-written and paced, so the author has some promise. Unfortunately, the world/setting feels like a rip on the "world is fubar'd, here's the last humans being all shitty to each other" theme that we saw in, say, Lawrence's *XYZ-Of-Thorns* series, or Sanderson's *Mistborn* trilogy. Except... this is not as interesting. Maybe a followup work details this world more sufficiently, but as-is, the novel doesn't paint the setting in an intriguing light. It's a backdrop that has no relevance to anything else going on.

Worse, though, is the characterization. Nearly all women in the story seem to be largely defined around who they fuck, or are being fucked by, and who they want to be fucked by. (Sorry for being crude, but that's more or less the extent of their characters, once you strip away the fluff). Beyond that, the characters and the story feels very, very, very trope-filled and unsurprising. There was one review on Amazon (5 stars, ofc) that compared this novel to a videogame. And, well, yes, it does feel a lot like the story of some mediocre "edgy" RPG from circa-2005. In other words - hey, it's really not that great.

Eric Landreneau says

One thing to know ahead of time is that this book is set in "The World of Ruin." Before you even get into the story, you know that this place has been falling apart for so long that the people living here generally acknowledge it as a fact of life. It is unclear in this book if Ruin is a direct dark force, some sort of intentional malevolent happening, or just an example of the pattern we've seen in our own history; a civilization rises, becomes too bloated, collapses and falls, and on come the ravening barbarians, from within and without. But that does not matter for this story. What matters is that the author has created a world where the bones of a glorious, beautiful, powerful civilization are showing, while the flesh is falling off in rot. So don't be prepared for valiant, radiant protagonists. People like that don't live here. The whole place is falling apart, and even the most heroic knights, with the greatest love for the honor and dignity of days gone by, even they are soiled down deep and choking on ruin.

This may not sound like a good thing, and some people may indeed not enjoy this book. But I did. The protagonists Ovelia and Regel are weighed down with layers of old secrets, years of dirty deeds and hard choices, and blood they can't wash off. Their secrets have secrets, and every choice and interaction resonates through their respective wells of deep, old, dark pain. It can get heavy and frustrating for readers sometimes - the emotional layering of the story is less of like a familiar epic fantasy and more like a spy thriller, Shakespearian tragedy or a really heavy family drama. You know, the kind where you want to shake a character and scream "Tell him! Tell her! Use your words!" But for all that, probably even because of it, the story kept a hold on me.

The old bones of this world ring sadly of past glory, but that echo and the glints of light, love and valor that shine off these two tarnished souls kept me hooked, grasping to see what good they might forge out of this world where everyone - even them - seems to have wheels tuning within wheels all driving toward an inevitable, staggering collapse. If I have made this tale sound heavy with gloom and doom, think of it this way: Imagine Lord of the Rings, but there is no Gondor, no Rivendell, no Shire. All the bastions of hope have fallen to Sauron. That jerk. You just have two old hobbits with a ring and a memory of what the sun looked like. And maybe you have Aragorn too, but he's hooked on smack and has Arwen's blood on his hands. Imagine that story, those people fighting against the dark to bring something good into the world. The darkness is deeper, but if hope can come through, then it's all the more precious for that.

As brutal and emotionally wracking as "Shadow of the Winter King" is, it's all to set the stage for a story to remind us that, no matter how dire things get, hope lives as long as there is still one of us left to strive for it.? It isn't until the last few pages, maybe even the last few words, but this story gives birth - from the hearts of some deeply troubled and wounded people - to a burst of light and human spirit that just might in the coming books push back against the tide of Ruin.

Alissa says

Interesting world-building, main character and plot, if you can get past the first 50 pages, and a helpless submissive and sexually eager trope-centered vision of women, and sex (or lack thereof, and not for trying) as a defining feature of all characters. Flowing prose, I liked to read it. I'll read the sequel.
