



Drakenfeld

Mark Charan Newton

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“I am Lucan Drakenfeld, second son of Calludian, Officer of the Sun Chamber and peace keeper. Although sometimes it seems I am the only person who wishes to keep it ...”

The monarchies of the Royal Vispasian Union have been bound together for two hundred years by laws maintained and enforced by the powerful Sun Chamber. As a result, nations have flourished but corruption, deprivation and murder will always find a way to thrive.

Receiving news of his father's death Sun Chamber Officer Lucan Drakenfeld is recalled home to the ancient city of Tryum and rapidly embroiled in a mystifying case. The King's sister has been found brutally murdered – her beaten and bloody body discovered in a locked temple. With rumours of dark spirits and political assassination, Drakenfeld has his work cut out for him trying to separate superstition from certainty. His determination to find the killer quickly makes him a target as the underworld gangs of Tryum focus on this new threat to their power.

Embarking on the biggest and most complex investigation of his career, Drakenfeld soon realises the evidence is leading him towards a motive that could ultimately bring darkness to the whole continent. The fate of the nations is in his hands.

Drakenfeld Details

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Author : Mark Charan Newton

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From Reader Review Drakenfeld for online ebook

Kevin says

This one hooked me right from the get go... Interesting and well-developed world , interesting MC... a fantasy world with interesting political concepts and its a murder mystery.

Alissa says

Kings and queens may fall, but cloth still needed to be dyed.

Mark says

Drakenfeld is a book that combines a Romanesque mystery novel with the detective work of CJ Sansom, and billed as a ‘fantasy crime’ series.

In this world of Vispasia, Lucan Jupus Drakenfeld is an Officer of the Sun Chamber: an official whose purpose is to travel throughout the eight nations of Vispasia and act as representative of the Vispasian Royal Union, adjudicator and keeper of the peace. Such a difficult position has been maintained by the Sun Chamber for decades, despite attempts to the contrary. “We are peacemakers, not warmongers”, Lucan’s father says at one point.

To this world we are introduced, at a point where Lucan’s world is turned upside down. His father, Calludian, also a respected and long-serving Officer, has been found dead in Lucan’s home city of Tryum in Detrata.

Lucan travels home from Venyn City to sort out the responsibilities required of a dutiful son, despite his relationship with his father being rather estranged in recent years. Once in Tryum, Lucan is also involved in a major murder mystery. King Licintius’s sister, Lacanta, is found murdered in a locked temple room with no apparent means of escape for a murderer. Various motives and suspects are suggested. King Licintius gives Lucan the responsibility of discovering the killer.

As his investigation of this locked room mystery continues, Lucan uncovers secrets that have been covered up, as well as complications from his own past. He is also a target for the city’s underworld who try to dissuade him from his searching as soon as possible. Ultimately, Lucan discovers things that may have much bigger consequences than the case might at first suggest.

I know that Mark has been researching the Romans whilst writing this novel, and it shows. The climate is clearly Mediterranean in the main, and although the people and place-names are different, the sense of a Romanesque empire runs throughout. We have much of the intrigue and violence that such a world would involve.

I could sense that the city of Tryum is a proto-Rome, the King of Tryum an Emperor Caligula-type character. Mark manages to convey this world’s environment of kings and governments well, although details are kept

fairly light in order to keep the plot moving.

And that is something that plays to the author's strengths. Whilst the world is fairly well outlined, the element that worked for me most here is the characterisation. Drakenfeld and his female accomplice Leana are most likeable, with some thought-provoking backstory that could be developed later. Leana, a warrior from Atrewen, comes across as an Amazonian Grace Jones – type character to me, whilst Drakenfeld is the cooler, more logical, Sherlock Holmes – type figure. Together, they have the easy banter and camaraderie that you would expect of two people who have known each other a long while and with a mutual respect for each other's often very different backgrounds. I was reminded of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser a little in that respect, often the template for such characters.

Whilst things at the end move fast, and perhaps a little too conveniently to tie things up in the end, these are characters and places I'd happily revisit again. The first few chapters in Venyn City suggest there's a wider world out there beyond Tryum I'd like to know more of.

Don't be misled – though there is a lot for a fantasy reader to enjoy, this is not a Tolkien-like medievaesque fantasy, nor a tale filled with magic and wizardry. There are religions and gods, but the mysticism is kept to a minimum, if there at all. I suspect Harry Turtledove fans would like it, even if Drakenfeld is written firmly from the first-person perspective, whilst Harry's books usually include a broad variety of different points of view.

As a Romanesque detective story – an “I-Sherlockius” perhaps? - there's a lot to like in this novel. I understand that Drakenfeld is the first of a series, if successful. I sincerely hope that that is the case. This is a solid, enjoyable page-turner with a wide appeal that I would personally like to read more of.

Anna says

This book combines the elements of my favourite genres: detective novels and history fiction. Just imagine: it's two centuries since the great Empire of Detrata had fallen, and eight new kingdoms were founded on its ruins. Currently, these kingdoms flourish due to the Royal Vispasian Union that unifies all of them, but still neither any of the kingdoms nor the Union itself can reach the level of the Empire. The peace and order in the Union is withheld by an organization called the Sun Chamber – but even in peace, there is hidden strife and murder, and many wish to reclaim the glory of the old days... I admit that we don't get a lot of details on this world, and the setting is rather revealed to the readers bit by bit, what leaves me with some questions. For example, I didn't quite get the Sun Chamber's official duties – is it like police? Internal security service? Peacemaking contingent? Supranational court sort of like in Strasbourg? All of the above? Still, the world is very atmospheric and engaging, that with Roman-like setting, gods who are actually deified humans, brutal and spectacular horse races and embezzlers getting molten silver poured in their eyes.

It's true that our hero, Lucan Drakenfeld, is a stereotypical detective in a way, but he is an enjoyable character nonetheless. I admit that I love such character types: let the others love brooding anti-heroes that are darker than grey, I love an old-fashioned good guy who does his best to uphold the law, right all the wrongs and help people wherever he can. And Lucan is just such a guy with his own worries, problems and ideals that make it so easy to sympathize with him. What makes Lucan especially engaging is his repulsion to all violence, a quite unusual quality for someone living in such a society as him. He took his father's words about Sun Chamber Officers being peacekeepers, not warmongers, close to heart and made them his principle, always seeking to resolve the matter with as little blood involved as possible. That's what makes

the tagline 'They'll kill to hide the truth. He'll kill to find it.' incredibly wrong: Lucan would rather talk than fight. (view spoiler) Lucan's assistant Leana is another awesome character I loved, strong and fierce warrior woman from Atrewe, the country that is considered savage and barbaric by civilized Vispasian Union. So aside from dealing with her own painful past, Leana needs to bear the scorn of Tryum's high-born citizens. But looking at her, you wouldn't know she has anything bothering her – Leana doesn't let her past or anything else to control her, and that makes her an admirable person. I love her relationship with Lucan, with whom she has a strong comradery bond.

The secondary characters weren't as well-developed, but that's something to be expected in a mystery novel. I can say that I was okay with them, but there was one that I absolutely hated: Titiana, Lucan's love interest. She probably was supposed to be proud and strong, but in truth she was haughty and annoying and did nothing but pout at Lucan for the story that happened between them ten years ago (view spoiler). The romance she eventually developed with Lucan felt so forced. (view spoiler)

The mystery of the murder of Lacanta, sister to King Licintius ruling the country of Detrata, was a worthy main plot. Some of the readers noted that those familiar with the books of Agatha Christie would be able to figure out that classic 'locked room' murder. While I'm very fond of Dame Christie works, I wasn't able to unriddle it until some heavy clues were dropped, but I enjoyed building up theories about different aspects of the crime and its participants and seeing some of them come true. I found the pace too slow sometimes, and there was a subplot involving Senator Dirvan and her apparent supernatural abilities that I wish was developed better. The world of the Royal Vispasian Union is not the one of magic, but it's the one of superstition, so when (view spoiler). But this topic was never explored properly or given any explanation. But all of that was easily topped by a great ending. When the true culprit behind all the dead bodies is revealed, I was afraid that the book will take a realistic but sad course, and the criminal will get away and force the law shrug at all the blood they shed due to them having the money, the fame, the connections and the power that made them almost untouchable, and Lucan would have to choose between the law and the justice that would make him break all his principles. But Mark Newton did better than that: he showed us the system where the law triumphs even over those who consider themselves above it and that can force even the highest to bend their knees before the justice. It's true that it sounds idealistic, but the reader has yet to see the real life kick in during the final, making the ending bittersweet.

Johann Pollard says

Damn brilliant.

I was honored to receive an ARC of Drakenfeld from Mr. Newton, and with the publication date around the corner here are my thoughts on it.

First off I really like the cover. It's bold, colourful and will surely stand out on the shelves between all the hooded men and daggers populating the shelves. According to Mr. Newton himself, the cover is the banner of Detrata, the nation in which the story plays out. The plan is that the following books covers' will also depict the nation's flag in which the story takes place. That's a pretty smart idea and should make for a real striking collection of books.

The main character, Lucan Drakenfeld -who has possibly the coolest name ever in fantasy- , is a detective. As an Officer of the Sun Chamber it's his job to keep the peace and find those that disturb it. The first time that we are introduced to Drakenfeld he is busy overseeing the sentencing of someone who broke the law. It's

not pretty, but shows that Drakenfeld is damn good at his job, fair and that the Sun Chamber is not to be messed with.

Lucan is summoned home on the death of his father, who was a highly placed member of the Sun Chamber. The travel home reveals quite a bit of the world we find ourselves in, and sets the first blocks for the rest of the worldbuilding that is necessary to the story. His struggle fitting back into society in the capital also helps the reader get the lay of the land and to figure out who some of the power players are early on, which makes for fascinating reading.

The interaction between Lucan and his assistant, Leana, is well done throughout the book. Leana comes from a neighboring kingdom and the outside view she brings to proceedings is quite a nifty way to slip a few facts about the world into the story, fleshing out the world at large as well.

This book is light on the magic, seeing as it's honestly a detective novel. There aren't priests running around with godly powers, no wizard tower that rule the skyline and no flashing lights. Well, at least not yet. Some hints are made, but mostly as rumour and quickly dismissed by the involved parties. It makes for a refreshing change, seeing as we are spared the explanation of how the magical system works which can bog down a book for chapters at a time. This is a character driven story and I love it for that.

The main plotline of solving the impossible murder of the King's sister is well thought out and a real whodunnit headscratcher. False trails are laid bare and obstacles galore are placed in Drakenfeld's path. Drakenfeld also comes to realise that his father's death wasn't as clean cut as he was lead to believe and this personal case works well to add a lot of depth to the character.

There are more than enough twists throughout the novel to keep the pages turning at a brisk pace, and the conclusion of the case of the murdered princess is quite a doozy. Looking back on the book there were enough hints to figure out who was ultimately responsible, but how they accomplished the murder was brilliant.

I really like Mr. Newton's writing style, and it makes his prose a joy to read. I've not read that many murder mystery novels, but I'm surely going to be following this series very closely. This is a very fun book that made me think back on it, well after I've read it. Now that is what I look for in a story.

9/10

Dominick says

After finishing his critically acclaimed Legends of the Red Sun series last year, Mark Charan Newton decided to try something completely different from his first series. While his Red Sun series was more of a New Weird style, is Drakenfeld a political crime-noir thriller, set in a secondary world based on the ancient Roman Empire. When Lucan Drakenfeld is summoned home after the death of his father, he soon finds himself entangled in one the strangest murder cases of his career. Lacanta, the king's sister, is brutally murdered in a, from the inside locked, temple. When he is ordered by the king to find the murderer, Lucan doesn't know that his inquiry will lead him to facts that will shake the entire nation.

Drakenfeld starts with a slow build-up and an extensive and well thought worldbuilding, which is perfectly normal as this is the first story in a brand new world. The characterbuilding of the two protagonists, Lucan and his comrade/bodyguard/assistant Leana, is well developed with the main focus on Drakenfeld.

Lucan is, despite his line of work and the things he sees in his 'civilized' world, still a rather optimistic person. Probably because he wants to counterbalance the barbaric things he sees around him. Drakenfeld is a man of flesh and blood, with flaws and a disease that is a curse for his line of work. I like him and would love to read more about the man. Maybe someday a prequel about Lucan's time as trainee with the Sun Chamber? (Hint, hint, Mark?)

An honorable mention goes also to Leana. I think she's a fascinating character and I find it a pity that there weren't more scenes with her.

Like I said was the worldbuilding very thorough and the setting reminded me most of all of tv-series like Rome and Spartacus, mixed with the movie Gladiator. Especially the final heartbreaking scene with Lucan and Titiana reminded me of that movie. I will not give away spoilers, but if you saw that movie and read this book, you'll know what I mean. Mark scores points with his depiction of a barbaric society with a civilized front.

Since this book is the start of murder/mystery series I can't conclude this review without talking about the murder mystery in Drakenfeld. Or I probably should say two mysteries, because very early on Lucan discovers that the death of his father probably isn't as natural as everyone thinks. The author weaves these two mysteries together to a finale where all fits together.

Despite a slow and, in my opinion, not so very interesting start of the mystery, succeeded Mark in making the murder case gradually more interesting until a point halfway through the book from where it was almost impossible to put down the book.

There are a few interesting and surprising plot twists during the book, twists I didn't saw coming. Especially Maxant's fate came as a big surprise to me.

The solution to the mystery was great, though at an early point in the book I figured out who was responsible. Only the motive I didn't guess. It was very surprising and that made up for the fact that the identity of the culprit didn't came as a surprise to me.

I haven't said anything about the writing style of this book, but I don't think that I have to. Mark has proven with Legends of the Red Sun that he is capable of delivering a very well written story and it shows with Drakenfeld.

Before I write my conclusion I want to give a special mention for Lucan's employers. The Sun Chamber is a very intriguing organization and I loved reading about the workings of that bureau.

And now my conclusion. Drakenfeld is a promising and well developed start of a new fantasy noir series and with some minor adjustments could this very well be a second bestselling series for Mark Charan Newton.

Give me some more Leana and Sun Chamber in the next book, a little more interesting start of the murder mystery and book two will definitely become an instant classic.

Drakenfeld is a more than decent start of a new series in a well-developed world with some very interesting characters. Definitely worth your reading time.

check out my blog www.fantasticaliminations.wordpress... for more reviews and interviews

Mark Newton says

A big improvement on the author's previous series...!

David says

I don't believe I've ever come across such a Fantasy-less Fantasy novel before. This reads more like a

Historical novel than a Fantasy. There's no magic, no other races, no elves, etc. The only thing keeping the book from being straight Historical is the setting, a late era Roman analog, not of our Earth.

It's a Locked-Room Mystery. At least to start with. I really enjoyed this book. It's an accomplished work of fiction. Maybe the best "Fantasy" book I've read this year. Just ordered the sequel. Looking forward to continuing Drakenfeld's story.

Doug says

Lucan Drakenfeld is an Officer of the Sun Chamber; a vast network that oversees the peaceful unity of the kingdoms it polices. Called back to his home city of Tryum after the death of his father, Drakenfeld is quickly given his father's old post of Officer based in the city. He is quickly drawn into his first case – to investigate the mysterious death of the king's sister. Conspiracies, murder and treason are just a few of the things he comes up against in his search for the truth about what happened. I don't want to delve much deeper into the events of Drakenfeld for fear of spoiling the intricate plot that Mark Charan Newton has created here. Be assured, though, that this is a satisfying blend of crime, fantasy and historical fantasy that never short changes and lives up to the mysteries promised at the beginning.

I've never read anything by Mark Charan Newton before (although he has been hovering around my pile for quite some time) but Drakenfeld is the perfect place to start. Heavily influenced by the classical world – immediately giving it an edge of originality – Newton pulls from epic fantasy and crime fiction to give something truly different. Written in 1st person from the POV of Lucan Drakenfeld himself, it still manages to feel like epic fantasy – despite the crime thriller plot and historically influenced setting. Beyond the main narrative, we learn about Drakenfeld's past and the wider world, lending the book a much bigger scope than might be expected. 1st Person Detective Fantasy, to me, is immediately associated with Urban Fantasy, like the Dresden Files or the Iron Druid Chronicles – but here, Newton has managed to create a crime narrative that feels every bit as seedy and sinister as the best crime thrillers, and yet every bit as involved and complex as some of the best epic fantasy. It's a testament to his skill that the worldbuilding never felt superfluous, but rather something I was eager to read about.

The plot is always going to be absolutely core to any crime novel, and in this Newton does not disappoint. Centred around a locked-room mystery, the central case around the death of the king's sister will have you constantly second-guessing yourself as layers are peeled away from the mystery and new ones are piled on top. Drakenfeld's own sub-narrative is weaved in beautifully, giving depth to his character as we learn about what really happened. The resolution is satisfying and well-constructed whilst also leaving an element of mystery going forward. There are no cliff-hangers here, but elements are certainly in place for the continuation of Drakenfeld's story.

The main setting is Tryum, a city that loosely grabs elements from Ancient Rome and the social, political and cultural make-up of the classical world, whilst also maintaining more progressive elements of the modern world. The city itself is a fantastic creation – one that feels as deep in its creation as Camorr and as pivotal as King's Landing. The setting allows for much of Newton's originality, feeling genuinely different to anything else I've really read in fantasy and showing a thoughtful writer, not afraid to take risks in exploring a progressive culture within a fantasy world, when it may have been much easier to simply use the medieval framework seen in so many other epic fantasies.

But central to my enjoyment of Drakenfeld were its characters. In Lucan Drakenfeld himself, Newton has

created a man with a history. He is not the chosen one, nor a warrior. A man of mental tenacity, but who has seen a lot in his life already. He has flaws, both historically, mentally and physically. He feels real, and being inside his head for the entire novel feels right. Alongside Drakenfeld is his...assistant, Leana. A black foreign woman in a city that sneers at those different to themselves, she doesn't have the easiest prospects in Tryum. But Leana IS a warrior, and she could take on fifty of the city's best and still be home in time for dinner. Leana, quite easily, is my favourite character in fiction this year. A progressive, intelligent take on a character who, in the hands of a lesser writer, could have been hackneyed and cliché, Leana is wonderful. I defy anyone not to smile every time she has a line of dialogue. The host of senators, generals and royalty round out a colourful cast that fill out a novel where no one is as simple as they may seem.

Drakenfeld is a progressive, intelligent fantasy that provides a thrilling story alongside its more thoughtful elements that serve to create something truly unique. In a market saturated with books about thieves, assassins and grit, Mark Charan Newton has written a novel that takes the elements of crime thrillers and epic fantasy and created something that transcends the boundaries normally set by either of those genres. Regardless of the fact that it must adhere to the expectations of its narrative in solving the central mystery, Drakenfeld remains a forward-looking and genuine read from an author determined to do something original and progressive. He's succeeded. It is quite easily one of the best novels of 2013.

Mihir says

Full review over at [Fantasy Book Critic](#)

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: Over here at Fantasy Book Critic, we keep an eye out for special writers and I was looking forward to this book since it was announced back in 2011. While I've read the first two books in Mark C. Newton's debut series, this book almost felt like from a whole new person. Let me clarify that; as I don't think that Mark was a bad writer with his earlier books, no he was a different kind of writer. With this one, he re-invents himself and goes on to write a book that is vastly different than his debut effort in terms of plot style, genre & characterization.

Drakenfeld introduces us to Lucan Drakenfeld, an officer of the Sun Chamber who is called back to his birth city of Tryum. Tryum is the capital city of Detrata, which along with a few other nations combine to form the Vispasian Royal Union. A confederation of monarchic nations, which is controlled and policed by the Sun Chamber. Set in a quasi-Roman landscape and with a world that is very slowly & surely revealed, the author focuses on the main character of Lucan Drakenfeld as we learn all about his past life and his route to becoming an officer of the Sun chamber. Lucan's father has passed away and when he learns about it, he goes back to Tryum wherein he learns that the King's sister has been murdered in a locked room.

Tasked by the king to find his sister's murderer, Lucan Drakenfeld soon learns that the past never truly is in the past. As revelations about his father and his ex-lover shake Lucan and he is embroiled in the royal murder mystery with no end in sight. The author then conveniently proceeds to involve the reader in this quasi-roman world via his smooth operative protagonist. Lucan Drakenfeld is a superb protagonist who is a cerebral character and one who looks to avoid violence whenever he can. The author has commented about this in a blog post and after reading this story, it's very apparent how the author has gone about this. I enjoyed discovering Lucan's past and how some of it ties into the current mystery. With first person narratives, it's entirely upon the narrator to enrapture the reader and so here the author excels by creating

such a everyman protagonist. Lucan is a simple, honorable man who has made mistake but has learned from them as much as possible.

There's also the world that is introduced and with this opening story, we are only shown the city of Tryum. I hope the author explores remaining city states in further volumes as this series is ripe for exploration. The side character cast introduced in this one is also intriguing beginning from Leana who provides an interesting foil to Lucan and provides the reader with some of the interesting dialogue in this book. Also primarily what it does is hold a mirror to Lucan, his views and actions. In the sense that Lucan is a man who advocates avoiding violence but Leana often counters by providing reasons that violence might actually be the better option. I enjoyed this intellectual foreplay and will be interested to see Leana's past explored in the future volumes.

The author has to be lauded for lacing such a good mystery story within a secondary fantasy world. The world he has created is a very low magic one and there's almost none within this story. Perhaps this is a world with its superstitions that is slowly but surely on its way to dispelling them. Or it's a series that might present some later, either way it's a series that will draw in the readers comfortably. Not much to nitpick about it, besides the fact that there's almost next to none of any magic, but the way the story is presented, most readers shouldn't have any quibbles about it.

With strong characterization and a very smooth plot, the book was an excellent read from the first page to the last. I very much enjoyed this new turn by Mark C. Newton and will be looking forward to further adventures featuring Leana and Lucan. Very highly recommended for those who love strong mysteries, nuanced plots and an intriguing protagonist. Join Lucan Drakenfeld in his ancient world, for the author is sure to dwell in it for a long, long time to come.

Mpauli says

Did you ever want to read a fantasy novel that feels like historical fiction? If the answer is yes then Drakenfeld is the book for you.

Lucan Drakenfeld is an agent for the Sun Chamber, an organization that is tasked with keeping order in the Visspassian Union, a union of 8 kingdoms, each with its own agenda.

When Lucan's father, who was also a prominent member of the Sun Chamber, dies Lucan returns to his home city of Tryum. He is ordered to take over the office of his father and the first case to investigate turns out to be a prominent one, as the murder of royal proportions happens shortly after Lucan and his companion Leana arrive in the city.

The setting author Mark Charan Newton invokes for us is quite similar to ancient Rome. Next to the king there is a senate with influence and all the naming conventions and the technological level within the novel are period appropriate.

From the setup with the many nations as part of the union, this could have easily been an epic fantasy, but Newton goes another way and presents us with a murder mystery mainly focused on Tryum. Lucan as our main character and only pov is clever and capable, but is far from turning out to be a super-detective ala Sherlock Holmes.

The story is told in first-person and if you follow my reviews frequently you already know that this is my least favorite narrative style and that I rarely give 5 or 4 stars to those novels.

Overall the murder mystery was interesting and I didn't figure it out by myself, but I still had the feeling that some of the clues came up more by chance and Drakenfeld's quality was more of making connections between the clues as of actually finding those clues.

And for a fantasy, the novel had next to none fantastical elements, so the sense of wonder which is very important for me in a novel wasn't really satisfied.

My personal highlight of the novel was definitely the supporting cast, cause we have some very interesting and likeable characters. Apart from that the amount of historical research to invoke a believable ancient setting was commendable and if you're into settings like Rome or maybe The Greek polises, than Drakenfeld will be of interest for you.

As I received Retribution, the second novel of the series as an ARC copy, I will directly jump into the sequel and hope to see a little more fantasy and hopefully a bit more of complexity.

Greg (adds 2 TBR list daily) Hersom says

This one was a little slow for me, but I could see where another reader would like it more. Some things I really liked but its more for the fans of "Who done it".

Dee says

Giving up at page 215 (of 429, so about halfway). It's part a shambles of ordinary writing; part the tedium of unravelling mysteries that are still mysterious, not compelling; and part that the world is so straight-up classical that I find myself yearning for some Falco, where at least ancient Rome is virulently alive, compellingly everyday, and no one ever says "OK"...

I'm also a bit perplexed that the gritty promise of the logline ("They'll kill to hide the truth... He'll kill to find it") seems to be in direct opposition to our "but *why* does there have to be violence?" hero. The dark spirits promised by the blurb have failed to manifest as anything other than a once-off rumour, and the political assassination likewise promised has also completely failed to loom with dire consequences. Instead, we have apparently ordinary actors, chatty and helpful senators, the re-emergence of a boringly ordinary childhood sweetheart tragedy, and a hero who is having trouble with the gossip about the murder victim because she didn't seem like a slut to him when he took one quick look at her bedroom.

I'm bored. I'm genuinely perplexed as to why I've seen so many excited reviews about this book. I have a stack of other books beckoning. Moving on.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.blogspot.com/201...>

If you ever get the opportunity to check out Drakenfeld, I highly recommend doing so! Go ahead and pick up the book, take your time to admire that striking, gorgeous cover, and give the first chapter a whirl. For myself, I was irrevocably hooked by the third page. It's hard not to be intrigued by the opening scene, when

the descriptions of a brutal, torturous act of punishment is at once juxtaposed by the eponymous main character's deep regret and compassion, especially since he was the one who so doggedly hunted down the condemned in the first place.

Indeed, Lucan Drakenfeld has his work cut out for him. As an officer of the Sun Chamber, the independent organization tasked with maintaining the peace and stability of the various kingdoms in the Royal Vispasian Union, he has traveled far and wide and acted as lawkeeper in many places across the land. Yet when news of his father's death reaches him at the start of this story, Drakenfeld is recalled to his childhood home of Tryum.

Unfortunately, our protagonist has scarcely settled into his new post when tragedy befalls Tryum's royal family. The king's sister Lacanta has been found murdered, and Drakenfeld is called in to investigate the case. But with the princess' body found inside an empty locked temple just minutes after she was last seen alive by numerous witnesses, the baffling circumstances around her death seem quite impossible. Furthermore, the rumors that she was struck down by sorcery and witchcraft certainly aren't helping one bit.

First of all, I was absolutely delighted to find a book like this! I'll admit, despite hearing it described as a "fantasy mystery", I had my doubts in the beginning, namely in the "Mystery" part of that combination. After all, I've read a lot of fantasy in the past which have been lumped into this category (specifically, a lot of urban fantasy and paranormal) but only because they happen to contain a few elements of the genre like noir or crime. Don't get me wrong; I've been known to enjoy those kinds of books a lot as well, but it was still very exciting, the moment when I was reading Drakenfeld and realized that I was holding an actual bonafide whodunit murder mystery in my hands.

It only gets better. The book's fantasy setting is one rich with politics, religion and culture, with an atmosphere reminiscent of Ancient Rome. Mark Charan Newton's writing style is wonderful, bringing the world of Drakenfeld to life in a way that gives it an almost classical, literary feel. As a lover of epic and historical fantasy, I was in my comfort zone, even as the meat of the mystery plot unfolded.

But perhaps my biggest attraction to this book is the character of Lucan Drakenfeld himself. In a genre that has seen the rise of many anti-heroes and other darker, morally-ambiguous characters in recent years, I was actually a little taken aback to encounter someone like Drakenfeld. Put simply, our narrator is a good person. Not perfect, no; but he values life and law in equal measure. His code of honor, as I said, was something I was able to determine very early on, from his attitude towards crime and punishment in the opening scene. A genuine belief in the adherence to regulations combined with a respect for personal freedoms made him an intriguing character whom I knew I was going to love. Coming down from reading a lot of epic fantasy starring thieves, mercenaries and assassins as of late also made meeting Drakenfeld a refreshing change.

This is the first book I've ever read by Mark Charan Newton, but it certainly won't be my last. With its perfect blend of fantasy and mystery and an excellent cast of characters, Drakenfeld gave me one of the more unique reading experiences I've had this year, and I think those who enjoy both those genres will really like this one. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, definitely check this one out.

Olivier Delaye says

A very good Agatha Christie-like murder story set in a Fantasy world reminiscent of Ancient Rome. I liked every single page of it!

OLIVIER DELAYE

Author of the SEBASTEN OF ATLANTIS series
