



Of Saints and Shadows

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A secret sect of the Catholic Church, armed with an ancient book of the undead called The Gospel of Shadows, has been slowly destroying vampires for centuries. Now the book has been stolen, and the sect races to retrieve it before their purpose is discovered: a final purge of all vampires. As the line between saints and shadows grows ominously faint, private eye Peter Octavian is drawn into the search. And he'll do anything to find the book ... for Peter Octavian is also a vampire.

Ostracized by his kindred for refusing to take part in the 'blood song', he cannot stand by and watch while they are destroyed. In a deadly game with a driven, sadistic assassin, the trail leads to Venice at the time of carnival, where the Defiant Ones, as the vampires are known, are engaged in a savage battle for their lives. Filled with plot twists, mystery, sex and violent death, Of Saints and Shadows is a spine-tingling thriller which opens the door to the world of Peter Octavian.

Of Saints and Shadows Details

Date : Published October 1st 1998 by Ace (first published June 1st 1994)

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Author : Christopher Golden

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From Reader Review Of Saints and Shadows for online ebook

Chris says

If you read this book and really enjoy it, do yourself a favor and DO NOT read the sequels. They will only ruin the intrigue and adventure of this book by comparison -- not in quality of writing (which is still good) but in what happens to every character you grow to like in this book.

Jan says

Peter Octavian is a PI in Boston. He is also a vampire who is trying to live as much as a human as possible. He is separated from the vampire community but when a series of obviously supernatural killings come to his attention, he is determined to find the cause. Soon it is up to him to rescue a demonic book from an evil branch of the Catholic church, destroy the magicians who control it, and stop a vampire apocalypse.

Whew!!!

I enjoyed this book even though it was bloodier than I usually like. The bloodiness was not in the entire book so there were breaks. It took a bit to get some of the concepts in this world, the church is basically controlling all the evil beings in the world, except vampires. The characters in the book are pretty irresistible though. Peter Octavian is very compelling. I am curious to see where this story is going. I can't believe that I only learned about it recently.

Claudia says

As a women studies scholar I am disturbed by the trend in popular fiction of making monsters into romantic characters. It suggests that if you are worthy enough, if you are good and compliant enough you can make a monster into a lover. It is a dangerous idea. One of the reasons that I keep coming back to Christopher Golden's vampire stories is because he never crosses that line. He might skirt it on occasion but he never lets you forget that his vampires are monsters. They will kill you and rip you apart in the process. If you choose to make their acquaintance you must be prepared for the consequences. Of Saints and Shadows is a big book with a big story and it is populated by creatures of epic proportions; Hannibal, William F. Cody, and Peter Octavian, the last of the Byzantine princes. Their adversary is a select group under the auspices of the Catholic Church. This is not a romance but an epic battle story. It is not sparkly vampires playing football but monsters bent on killing other monsters--some human, some not so much. It is fast paced and exciting. The characters are well written and if you will pardon the pun, they are even palatable. It is a novel that challenges what we have been told about what is good and what is evil and especially what the origins of those dichotomies might be. It also turns the long held myths introduced by Bram Stoker in his novel "Dracula" on their collective heads. Anne Rice attempted to do that but never as successfully as Mr. Golden. I highly recommend this book if you are a lover of myth and monsters, of vampires and shape shifters and you don't have a problem with being romanced into a bit of heresy.

Stephen says

Another fine read by Christopher Golden. A thrill ride into the secrets of the Vatican and the society hidden within. The shady priests involved with murder and mayhem, in their search and destruction of vampires known as the Defiant Ones. Delving into history of this group and the Vaticans obscure society of sorcerers, bent on retrieving an historical The Book of Shadows. Containing super spells to inflict upon the Defiant Ones. This is the first of a series in The Shadow Saga. Highly recommended stories as are all Christopher Goldens books. He weaves tales of magic.

Manda says

Not bad. Not bad at all.

A far cry from the overly cliched vampire novels that seem to pop up all over the supernatural/horror genre.

There are some very well rounded characters and also some that nearly make your skin crawl with their wickedness. Fabulous creative ideas regarding the mythology of the "Defiant Ones" and their powers that stem directly from moves made by the Catholic Church.

The biggest complaint that I found with the novel was that it took a long while to Get. To. The. Point. Once I hit the half way mark though, it was pretty easy sailing.

I will be checking out the next novel in the series... I'm interested to see what the "big revelation" will bring about.

Michele bookloverforever says

I enjoyed this novel. A complicated anti-hero, a vampire with a will of iron and a strong sense of ethics, admirable female characters, complicated plot involving evil sorcerer priests persecuting vampires and controlling demons out to commit genocide against the vampire race. Bad vampires fighting for their lives and trying to evolve in the end. self-sacrifice of hero at the end.

Kelly says

Now, THAT'S what I'm talking about! Goodbye to such dark fantasy themes such as Peter Pan and a severely twisted rendition of Winnie the Pooh. It seems Mr. Golden has put away his boyhood playthings and materialized with a whole new set of toys. Watch out my dear readers, Papa's got a brand new bag and opening it could be fatal!

The plot was refreshingly original and captivating. Taking into account all that has been written on vampires from the dawn of the written word, Golden puts it right up to your face and then throws it out the window. The story combines mythology; religion, politics and plain old human nature to further enlighten and complicate this epic. Perfect! The pace in the story is tantalizing. Pulling you in immediately with the first

page, it pushes you to a hurried anticipation only to twist—slow down, and then speed up again.

The atmosphere in the book is quite simply mystifying. The mood switched between an air of madness and the sweat of the persecuted. Though the story is weighed down with a heavy element, it never feels burdensome. Golden's style of writing is uninhibited, effortless and without a doubt filled with the author's own emotions. Without a trace of overly complex theories and only a handful of big words, the author keeps it simple without sounding condescending.

With skill and ease, the characters appear at face value as any random person you've walked past or talked to. It is only as the story unfolds that you begin to see the people behind the mask and it is then that the fear sets in. With each having their own identities, personalities and past traumas, Golden gives his characters what most dream of doing— substance.

My rating? I give it a 5. Rush out and buy this book, this series new today!

-As reviewed for Horror-Web.com

Krissys says

Book One in the Shadow Saga is a brilliant epic that takes you into the secret world of vampires--and a secret society sworn to destroy them.

Sweeping, sensuous, and shocking, it is a powerful vision of immortality that will hold you in its spell...forever.

I love that Golden is brave enough to cross several topics that some would consider more sensitive material for some readers but its handled in a humane way which is interesting because most the characters involved were supernatural beings.

I liked the whole vampire/ PI thing, the spiritual / supernatural mystery.

The way Golden created the world of the Shadow Saga is different from all the other fantasy/horror books in this genre I've read. In a small way Of Saints and Shadows had a paranormal Dick Tracy feel to it which was great because you don't get that very often.

Although I felt the characters could have used more personality, more development as far as their characterization because a lot of them seem to be very similar and muted in a lot of ways I felt Golden could have gone a little extreme with it and it still would have worked well without feeling over done.

I have to admit despite being a new author to me I really enjoyed this one. I look forward to reading the next book in the Shadow Saga series.

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If any of Krissy's Bookshelf Reviews has been helpful please stop by to like or let me know what you think!
I love hearing from followers!

Thank you!

J'aime says

I was so happy to see Christopher Golden's Shadow Saga getting re-released in new editions with an emphasis on urban fantasy, and a new volume on the way. This is my favorite vampire novel, right alongside with "The Vampire Lestat." These two are my favorites for the same reason - they are very original, and have dynamic, charismatic vampire protagonists. Plus, I like when vampires are not all evil - it's more fun when their motives are just as murky as a human's. Peter Octavian is a private investigator, and a vampire. The Catholic Church has been on a secret crusade for centuries to harness or destroy all paranormal creatures - including vampires. When a priest gets hold of a book of shadows that could shift the balance of power, Octavian must intervene.

The character development here is strong (especially when well-known historical figures turn up as vamps), the world-building is detailed and Golden is exceptional at taking common vampire myths and making them fresh again. His explanation of why holy water burns, and vampires can turn into bats, made me laugh out loud at his cleverness and sheer audacity. I felt myself drawn in like never before. Highly recommended, and the rest of the saga as well (Angel Souls, Devil Hearts; Of Masques & Martyrs; The Gathering Dark).

Lannister says

Of Saints and Shadows had a really interesting synopsis, with vampires battling a centuries-old hidden group within the Catholic Church. There's a mysterious ancient book, some grisly murders, a few dodgy priests and a lot of conspiracies. It sounded right up my street! And I did like the plot. I found it interesting and imaginative. The lead character Peter figures out that vampires not being able to go out in sunlight is simply not true. They were taught to believe this in a massive cover-up by the Church a couple of millennia ago, and now they'll burn in the sun simply because they expect to. The reasons behind this are the basis for the story, and I thought it was a really interesting concept to build around and I enjoyed the vampire world that Christopher Golden created.

What lets the story down is its characterisation. The characters never truly came to life for me. Peter was interesting, but he never leapt off the page and transformed into a fully fleshed-out being. And the female lead, Meaghan - also the love interest - was completely unconvincing. I don't object to a bit of romance in a book, provided it doesn't dominate the plot, but this relationship was utterly flat. It felt like it was put there simply because readers expected it, and I felt the book suffered for it. Cody was a little more interesting, perhaps simply because he was livelier and fun, but his antics weren't enough to save the story. The bad guys weren't completely convincing either and they barely managed to stay on the right side of an 'Evil Cartoon Baddie' caricature.

The book isn't like typical UF that gets churned out these days (it was written in 1998), which isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's more of a thriller with vampires, than a paranormal romance. It actually reminded me a little of The Da Vinci Code, which probably isn't a compliment!!

Overall, it was far from the worst book I've read and the interesting plot carried it. If the characters had felt more real to me, it would be a four star book. As it is, it's more like two and a half. But, I always try to be more generous with first novels in a series, as the author needs time to develop, so I'll give it three. And I am intrigued enough to want to read the second book.

Nic Echo says

About the Book:

The Church is not what it seems. Lying within its folds is a sect of sorcerers and priests whose sole purpose is to rid the world of The Defiant Ones, or what would be commonly seen as vampires. Peter Octavian is one of these vampires, but unlike the others of his kind, he is able to walk in sunlight and touch religious items. The reason for this isn't because he was born to be special or anything like that. No, he simply disbelieves that crosses and sunlight will not hurt him therefore they don't. Granted, the only reason it hurts the other Defiant Ones is because the Church brainwashed them into thinking it would. Peter needs to convince the other Defiant Ones otherwise however, or the Church will come and wipe them out.

Review:

Christopher Golden has come up with an original and intriguing plot. Evil runs amok in both the Church and the vampires, but one seems much more so. He brings forth elements that I hadn't seen before such as brainwashed vampires, but even with this fabulous idea, this book was a wreck. I enjoyed Twilight better than this. The writing was so horrible that I debated putting it down for good several times a day (I have only not finished two books thus far). His writing style was very similar to what you may find in a Dungeons and Dragons type novel. If that is your preference, go ahead and read this. As for me, I could not stand the stagnant and repetitive writing style that constantly told me things instead of showing me. The latter also lessened the characters immensely, making them seem flat so that I could care less what happened to them.

Speaking of the characters, my god, they nearly all seemed like Mary Sues and Gary Stus. Peter, the main character, certainly was one. He's supposedly handsome and good with the ladies. Check. He has special abilities that others of his type don't have. Check. He is connected to royalty (bastard son of the last emperor of the Byzantine Empire). Check. Then, there is his love interest, Meaghan. It seems everyone is intrigued with her, and when she is (view spoiler) Plus, Meaghan, well, I wanted to smack her. Where Golden was trying to make her assertive, I found her to be something of an idiot when she just starts going off with her temper, but of course, it's "sexy." Ugh. I seriously cannot see how anyone can stand these characters. The only one I could stand was Liam, the main priest, and that was when he was out murdering people. He still remains a two dimensional character.

Golden also seemed to have this notion that since he was writing a book for adults that he should add as much gore and sex as possible. Now, I did enjoy some of the grotesque scenes; they were disturbing in a good way and Golden sure had a knack for coming up with some unsettling creatures, even if they got old after a while. As for the sex, it just seemed put in there most of the time because it could be. While that is bad enough, the sex scenes weren't even arousing. No, it's not the worst I have ever read, but it was still boring. Then, of course, since a man wrote this, there had to be a fair amount of random lesbian scenes for extra sexiness.

Finally, the dialogue seemed forced and unrealistic such as "Girl, get in the gondola and we will leave the trouble behind. Your tears and those things you fear." or my personal favourite, "My name is Robert Montesi. For the murder of my father, I must kill you." Yes, Golden tried to pull a Princess Bride and failed miserably.

So why did this book get so many good reviews? I could not tell you. To me, it only had one thing going for it: originality, but that simply doesn't cut it. You still need a good storyteller to really make the story come

alive, and Christopher Golden missed that mark completely. Maybe one day they will make it into a movie. I think it would make an excellent movie. However, as a book, this one would go straight to the bin for me. If you do want a vampire book that has more monster type vampires and originality, I would suggest Brian Lumley's Necroscope series instead. A much better read.

Ryan says

I read this book, actually the entire series, years ago but am not really sure what happened to the books themselves. I think I sold them to a used bookstore the last time I moved. I wasn't all that careful about what books I got rid of them, so I've been having to repurchase a lot of books as I find them. When I saw this reissue mentioned on both Book Chick City and SFF Chat, I knew I had to get it again.

The story is pretty simple, and I'm going to try and keep what I know about the rest of the series out of this review, it's your basic good vs. evil. The twist is that the roles have been reversed. This time around the vampires are the good guys and the church and its agents are the bad guys.

For whatever reason the church, while subjugating and even destroying other supernatural creatures, were never able to get the vampires under their total control. Instead they systematically brainwashed the vampires into controlling their own powers. All those myths about daylight, garlic, shape shifting limitations, all of those supposed limitations are false. They were all ploys used to get the vampires to act the way the church wanted them to. Peter Octavian is the first vampire to begin to realize the truth, he starts to go out in the daylight and even turn into a column of fire. But even he is unsure of how vast their powers really are.

The theft of the book though changes the church's game plan. If that book falls into the hand of their enemies, The Defiant Ones make discover the truth. So the Church under the influence of Father Mulkerrin decides to take them out for once and for all, eliminate them all during their gathering in Venice. Little does Father Mulkerrin know what Peter and his allies, including Buffalo Bill Cody, have in store for them.

I first started reading Christopher Golden when he was writing books set in the Buffy universe and quickly fell in love with his writing style. This series was the next logical step for me and it cemented my liking for him as an author. This is the beginning of an interesting take on the origins of vampires and it's one I urge all fans of the genre to pick up and discover for themselves.

SterlingSpider says

Book one of The Shadow Saga. This one sort of skirts the line between Urban Fantasy and Horror, yet somehow comes off kind of like a romance novel in writing style (though while there is some sex there is comparatively little compared to most of the "sexy urban fantasy" stuff that seems to be floating about). I think my biggest issue with it is the level of introspection of the characters. It feels like every other page is someone magically plumbing the depths of their soul to learn the truth about themselves and it's awfully contrived. I will probably read the rest of them but I'm not exactly bursting with the need to do so. Reasonable sunny day hammock reading but don't expect to be blown away.

Claire Flower says

I have really mixed feelings about this book. It took quite a while to really draw me in but contained a lot of genres I usually enjoy. I liked the main character and even the romance that took place didn't seem too fanciful (as with a lot of other vampire novels). I liked the historical elements and the involvement of the church. Not wanting to give spoilers but I thought the explanations for the myths around vampires, well thought out....

However the last few pages and especially the epilogue just didn't feel right to me. I had to go back and re-read it and I hadn't realised a character had died. It built up and then, there was so little response from the other characters I didn't register it.

And then putting two female characters together in the last bit and describing their sexual encounter just seemed like lazy writing.

momokaachan says

This is not your typical vampire romance; not even close. It is absorbing, complex, and really un-put-downable. Many POVs, some you want to keep following and some you want to wash your mind of. I can see why some reviewers did not like it: the religious themes and references were uncomfortable and the Bad Guys were certain they had God on their side. All in all a well-written roller coaster ride which I found thoroughly enjoyable.
