



# The Usurper

*Rowena Cory Daniells*

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## **The Usurper** Rowena Cory Daniells

The third, and final, book in a major new fantasy trilogy. Now a slave, Piro finds herself in the Merofynian Palace where, if her real identity is discovered, she will be executed. Meanwhile, Fyn is desperate to help his brother, Bryen, who is now the uncrowned King. Bryen never sought power but now he finds himself at the centre of a dangerous resistance movement as the people of Rolencia flee vicious invaders. How can Bryen defeat the invaders, when half his warriors are women and children, and the other half are untrained boys and old men?

## **The Usurper Details**

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Author : Rowena Cory Daniells

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# From Reader Review The Usurper for online ebook

## Stephen Mullins says

I've struggled to articulate why these books are good/ok but not great. I've read some really captivating series and just couldn't put my finger on what it was about this series that's lacking. I think reading The Usurper finally clarified it for me. Rather than provide vague statements I'm going to quote the book (nothing significant/spoilery mentioned).

*Lack of sequence flow: from page 210*

What could the mystics master want with him? He stayed and watched the hall, until enough time had passed for Joff and Feldspar to go back downstairs, then he went in search of Catillum.

'You sent for me, mystics master.'

For me, it seems like I'm missing a sentence, something about finding Catillum's room, knocking or opening the door, etc. As is, it just feels jarring to me. I don't have a fluid picture of the character moving through the world because it seemed to jump from going in search of to talking to.

*No reminders for minor characters: from page 213*

'Agent Tyro?' Ovido came trotting into the garden. He ignored Piro as if she was an interloper.

Who is **Ovido** again? I don't remember reading about him before. He must be a servant or something but he was forgettable whoever he was. I think if it's been many pages since this character was introduced, reminding the reader of the minor character would have been helpful.

*Too quick character POV switching: from page 286*

Piro smiled.

...

Fyn walked ...

...

Byren hung from ...

We get all three major characters POV literally on one page. It was a little too jarring for me. I wish I just got more with each character. This is a really minor point but there were several chapters where you only get a page or so from one of the characters before the chapter ends.

Don't get me wrong, I liked the action and what goes on in this series. I just feel like the writing style doesn't mesh with me that much. I'll keep reading. I'll probably just keep giving these books three stars :)

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## JM says

I really like this series. The character development is great. The choice to have a novella focusing on Garzik was a good move. I very much enjoyed "The King's Man." I'm looking forward to book book #4. That said, the showdown with Palatyne was not exactly satisfying for me. I imagined Isolt becoming a warrior queen literally, like one of the Utland Beardless. The prospect was interesting and exciting. Instead, it is her pet who saves the day on her command...

I'm very interested in Tyro. I feel sympathy for him and the stress that he lives with (maintaining two false identities as the most powerful affinity wielding people in the world), but I'm not sure if Piro should trust him. Also, does he have a growing interest in her?

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## Devi says

While nowhere near as bad as *The Archer* (different genre, I know, but it has the distinction of being the worst book I have ever read in my life so far), this still frustrated and disappointed to a major degree - major, because I think the story really had potential to be something amazing, but the author basically just kept to the shallows. My brother in fact hit the nail on the head when I was ~~bitching to him about it~~ telling him about it. He said "Sounds like something you'd enjoy when you were in high school and reading Forgotten Realms books" and I thought, actually, yeah. I probably would have thought this was a great romp when I was a teenager. Instead I was reading the *Thomas Covenant Chronicles* and *The Hobbit*. And I have read a lot of increasingly sophisticated stuff since then so sadly this series did not hold ground well against much more intelligent, thoughtful, risk-taking writers like Parker, Erikson and Martin.

So I guess I have to say I didn't personally enjoy this series all that much. And with the way this book ended, I suspect (although am not convinced) that there is more? Anyway, I had more fun imagining how good they could have been. For people who don't ask for a lot from their fantasy fiction, they're probably worth the short time it will take to read them. They are fun - all frustrations with the author's writing ability and choices aside - and the characters, while a little two-dimensional, were for the most part endearing. I'll be avoiding this author's work in the future, however.

A word of final warning: seriously don't expect anything but the 'dueling kingdoms' issue to be resolved; particularly not the issue raised between Byren and his best friend Orrie. In a world where gay men (view spoiler)

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## Bob Milne says

Picking up where she left off in *The Uncrowned King*, Rowena Cory Daniells brings her King Rolen's King trilogy to a close (if not an altogether tidy conclusion) with *The Usurper*.

This final instalment begins much as we would expect, with King Byren quietly raising a rebellion under the nose of his cousin, Lord Cobalt. Although largely consisting of young boys, maimed men, and resourceful old women, the fate of his arm slowly begins to turn with the emergence of the last living warrior monks.

Together, they sneak over hidden passes, led by Orrie and Florin, to recruit the support of the same warlords who swore fealty to his father just months before.

Meanwhile, Piro and Fyn find themselves on the other side of the world, prisoners of tyrants and pirates. It is here that the novel really shines, with the development of some intricate political manoeuvring, backstabbing, conspiracies, and secrets. The friendship between Piro and Isolt is an intriguing development, bridging the warring factions, of you will, and offering a glimmer of hope for a peaceful future. Fyn, meanwhile, is forced to confront his fears, to sacrifice his future, and to take a role in the conflict that his status as a monk would have once forbid.

As the three becoming entangled with Tyro, agent of the mysterious Mage, the story takes an interesting and dramatic turn. Espionage and hidden agendas come to the forefront, with allies turning up in the most unexpected places, and treachery looming in ever shadow. The climactic battle of Rolencia that we had been expecting never comes to pass, with the story centring instead around a more intimate battle of wills. Palatyne and Byren do get their final confrontation, but within the distant halls of Merofynia. Even then, the outcome is not what we've come to expect, but there is a sort of poetic justice in how it all works out. Like I said earlier, it doesn't completely resolve the story line (there's still a traitorous cousin in charge across the sea), robbing us of possibly the most anticipated showdown in the series, but it does offer us hope for a successful resolution.

Should this turn out to be the end of the series, I would have to admit to a little disappointment. There are too many questions left unanswered, too many relationships left in limbo, and too much violence left off the page. The story really does demand one more volume but, should that come to pass, it wouldn't take much to transform that disappointment into satisfaction.

*Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins*

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## **Richard Radgoski says**

These books are an enigma to me. On the one hand, I find aspects of how the author writes jarring. Scene transitions and sudden changes seem to need work. On the other hand, however, I have come to really enjoy reading about Byren, Fyn and Piro of House Rolencia. And instead of reading it with half a dozen other books (like normal), I tend to read these books exclusively which is a mark of how much I am enjoying myself.

Ultimately, I found most of the resolution of the plot lines to be satisfying. I like that our hero's have more allies than they had at the beginning of the book and that things are looking up. I didn't expect to have so much unresolved, however, at the end of what I thought was a trilogy. There is just so much more to resolve, there must be another book to finish the story.

Overall, I felt the three books, ending with this one, told a strong story and I enjoyed it very much. I will definitely read the next book, but hope we get a more complete ending. I want some of the romantic aspects of the book to be resolved and if there is another novel, let them face the issues together.

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### **Patrick says**

Sucked. Couldn't finish it. Feels like a copy and pasted Game of Thrones novel, with the best parts edited out.

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### **Antony De says**

Pretty decent story but just never quite got to great

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### **Shari Mulluane says**

The Good. Book three was everything book one was only better. This one was much more of a page turner. Bryen, Fyn and Piro all had more or less equally important roles and the POV switched smoothly between the three. There was much less time spent on feeling sorry for themselves and alot more moving forward with a purpose. Tension mounted as the story built to a rousing crescendo of an ending. I admit it, I saw dawn break the night I finished this book.

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### **Andrew Judd says**

This one was even better, now that it's not all boring exposition, its an enjoyable, though at time cliché story. I'm still liking it and some things are still catching me off guard.

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### **Riko Stan says**

Horrible ending. So many things are drawn out, then the end comes and it's over in a matter of seconds.

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### **Charlene Turner says**

#### **Very good book**

Well written, if a bit dark at times, great story twists, involving all the characters in the story. I will read the next in the series.

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### **Samantha says**

This series improves notably once Rolen, Mirella, and Lence have all been killed off.

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## Shima says

At last: I'm done with this trilogy!

I often cursed my inability to leave stories unfinished, because this whole trilogy is so ordinary, so common, and instead of feeling happy about reading it, around the second book it started to feel like a chore.

Like I said on my review of the 1st book: the potential is there, but the author just doesn't do anything with it. The affinity "powers" are unexplored and unexplained, the characters are unremarkable, and there are really no surprises, you can see the events and relationships coming from a mile away. And even though the "soap opera" feeling lightens up on the 2nd and 3rd books it is still too present for my taste.

Also, the book titles made no sense to me. I felt no relationship between the titles and the stories.

I am only giving 3 stars instead of 2 because of the potential this "world" holds.

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## Todd says

This book is chock full unbelievable coincidences you can be confident that every new character with a name will show up again later. Overall this book is pretty worth reading.

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## Mieneke says

*The Usurper* is the final book in Daniells' *King Rolen's Kin* trilogy. As such a review of this book will unavoidably contain some slight spoilers for the previous books in the series, if only by dint of alluding to events and characters in the prior books. So read on at your own peril, if you want to remain completely unspoiled, now is the time to click away.

Still with me? Good! So this is the final book in the *King Rolen's Kin* trilogy and while I loved the trilogy as a whole and enjoyed this last instalment tremendously, I did have some problems with the book, the biggest of which was Byren. Because Byren? Can we say clueless about relationships? In fact, his bumbling became rather annoying by the end of the book, where I ended up just wanting him to just wake up and smell the coffee, because he is being totally dense. Not just about his feelings for Florin and his reactions and behaviour because of this, but also his inner conflict about Orrade's feelings for him. He's partly glad when he thinks Orrade and Florin have taken up together, because it solves both the problem of having people find out about Orrade and suspecting him and it makes Florin unavailable so he won't have to deal with his feelings for her, while at the same time being angry and jealous about it. It just annoyed the heck out of me, because it made him seem really immature, something which I didn't find reflected in the rest of his behaviour. At the same time there is a scene where he and Orrade talk about what is happening, or not happening as is the case, which I found really touching and I think will resonate with anyone who has ever fallen in unrequited love with their best friend.

'No,' his hands dropped and he stared away, so that all Byren could see of him was the line of his lean cheek and jaw, lightly dusted with a wispy black beard. 'No, you haven't offended me, quite the opposite. But you don't want what I want. And tonight I can't pretend I feel only friendship for you.' (p.159)

The other thing that bugged me a little was the resolution of the Palatyne problem. Everything converged on this scene, but at one point it looks like the boys aren't needed at all, as Piro and Isolt seem to be solving things all on their own. This had me literally cheering in my seat, as I loved the fact that these girls were smart enough and strong enough to solve things by themselves. Unfortunately, they never get the chance to see their play played out, because the boys take over and solve things their way, though arguably Isolt has the last word. This rather saddened me, because it felt like it negated all that the girls had done and had them just be rescued like damsels in distress, which they are emphatically not. It's true that in the end they still come back and are instrumental in defeating Palatyne, but in reading the scene it didn't feel like that at all, it's only now I write it out like this that I realise how important they were in the actual resolution of the scene. However, the wrap-up of the book gives plenty of promise of both Piro and Isolt coming into their own in the future and making their own destiny.

Looking back at my review for *The Uncrowned King*, I had some suspicions on where the story and certain things would go. It turned out I was completely wrong. That thing I thought would happen with Lord Dunstany? Not so much, there was something up with him, but Daniells took it in a completely different direction which took me quite by surprise. And which I actually really enjoyed. In fact, I loved Piro's story arc and the character of Isolt. The entire Ostron Isle sequence was wonderful and I think my favourite part of this book. There is so much mystery and so many revelations in this section, that I just couldn't get enough of it. Also, it had the one not too complicated, star-crossed romance in it and that sucked me right in.

One thing that bothered me a lot in the last book was the development for Byren and Fyn's guilt complexes. Luckily in this book, Fyn deals with his and in quite a satisfactory matter. I loved how Daniells made him go all the way to the bottom only to be forced to confront it and then set free of his guilt and fears. It was a powerful scene and I loved the resonance of his journey in it. Unfortunately Byren still struggles with his guilt. On the whole, Byren's character arc didn't feel finished at the end of this trilogy, he still has a lot of growing up to do and issues to resolve, such as his guilt and his mixed feelings about Orrade. Then again, the story isn't done, there are still more things to do and Daniells is working on a concluding book provisionally called *King-maker, King-breaker* which is due to be published by the end of 2013, so hopefully he'll have been able to do his growing-up by the end of it.

*The Usurper* was a really enjoyable novel, but didn't feel like the end of the story, even if it ended at the right time for this book. I'm glad that I knew before finishing this book that Daniells is working on a continuation of the story, wrapping the story up in a fourth book, otherwise I would have been really frustrated at the ending. As it is, I think one shouldn't think of this series as a trilogy – even if it was published as such – but as a quartet. Despite my problems as described above, King Rolen's Kin is a really fun series and if you enjoy high fantasy tales, this one comes very much recommended. And if you start now, you'll have time to catch up on the series before the publication of the final book next year!

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