



## Promise of Blood

*Brian McClellan*

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## **Promise of Blood** Brian McClellan

The Age of Kings is dead . . . and I have killed it.

It's a bloody business overthrowing a king...

Field Marshal Tamas' coup against his king sent corrupt aristocrats to the guillotine and brought bread to the starving. But it also provoked war with the Nine Nations, internal attacks by royalist fanatics, and the greedy to scramble for money and power by Tamas's supposed allies: the Church, workers unions, and mercenary forces.

Stretched to his limit, Tamas is relying heavily on his few remaining powder mages, including the embittered Taniel, a brilliant marksman who also happens to be his estranged son, and Adamat, a retired police inspector whose loyalty is being tested by blackmail.

But when gods are involved...

Now, as attacks batter them from within and without, the credulous are whispering about omens of death and destruction. Just old peasant legends about the gods waking to walk the earth. No modern educated man believes that sort of thing. But they should...

In a rich, distinctive world that mixes magic with technology, who could stand against mages that control gunpowder and bullets? PROMISE OF BLOOD is the start of a new epic fantasy series from Brian McClellan.

## **Promise of Blood Details**

Date : Published April 16th 2013 by Orbit

ISBN : 9780316219037

Author : Brian McClellan

Format : Hardcover 545 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Epic Fantasy, High Fantasy, Science Fiction, Steampunk

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# From Reader Review Promise of Blood for online ebook

## Mark Lawrence says

This book took me a while to read - so you might take that to mean it's easily put down. Actually it wasn't really, the main trouble for me was that when I did put it down the bugger vanished. EVERY. TIME. I've never had a book that's such an escape artist. I half-thought the cover might have an adaptive camouflage mode...

Anyway.

When I did get to hold onto it for any period I found the book highly readable.

The characters and description are good. McClellan's real forte though is in building tension and intrigue, slowly raising the tempo while wrapping the various threads around each other in satisfying ways. The man's a story-teller.

I've read some excellent books of late, including Blood Song, Fool's Assassin, and The Name of the Wind. Promise of Blood held it's head up among that lot and wasn't overshadowed.

My only quibbles.

i) (trivial) One of the countries mentioned several times was called Fatrasta. And for some reason every time someone mentioned Fatrasta my mind filled with images of over-weight Rastafarians ... couldn't say why.

ii) The magic. I understand many readers love highly structured 'magic systems'. Brandon Sanderson (who I've not yet read) is famed for them. I wouldn't say Promise of Blood had a highly structured magic system, excepting that the different disciplines were clearly distinct - certainly we're not talking Dungeons & Dragons rulebook magic here. And I'm very glad of it. HOWEVER, for me the magic felt ... how can I put it ... fake? arbitrary? ... The thing to do is swallow it whole (which I managed) and enjoy the book (which I really did). But every once in a while the whole Privileged thing with special gloves and each finger linked to a different element just made me wince and want to say 'really?' ... and the powder mages with all their weird bullet magic linked to snorting gunpowder ... again ... why? what? And if gunpowder gives you magic powers to deflect bullets in flight etc... can't those telekinetic abilities be applied to objects that ... are NOT bullets?

Before I'm dragged to the guillotine ... note the FIVE STARS and the fact that these are QUIBBLES. I really liked this book. Brian McClellan is a fine writer. I recommend you read his debut.

Finally - it was cool that Brian got his own love of cooking into the book in a big way. It was a refreshing and original idea.

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**Sana says**

I got my copy earlier!! So now it's time for some sexy grandpa! ;)

also BR with my favorite sexy grandpa loving toto ♡? AND Maggie poo ♡?

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**XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

? **MacHaloistic Buddy Read** (MHBR™) with Little One and alicat ?↗? and Loriidae and stuff ?

**Pre-review rating: 2.5 stars.**

**Post-review rating: 1.8899 stars.** *Because I'm ruthless like that.*

**Okay**, so this book could have been pretty **greatly great**. Only that it wasn't. There was potential there. Lots of **potentially awesome potential**. Only that it went **poof** after the first few chapters in less time than it takes to say "get off my back and go skewer some puny humans, murderous children mine!" I mean, the **premise** was indeed pretty cool. Only that the whole **French Revolution Off with their Privileged Little Heads Vibes** (FROwtPLHV™) kinda sorta had a "been there, done that" feel and stuff. But hey, I've always had a **weakness for exquisitely severed heads** and therefore decided—very leniently, if I may say so myself—to give the author the benefit of the erap doubt. Yeah, well, that'll teach me to be **uncharacteristically compassionate, kind, forgiving, patient and stuff**.

**You know** what this book reminds me of, my Clueless Barnacles? The Thousand ~~Slightly Disappointing~~ Names (TTSDN™): very promising story + intriguing characters + military stuff = **slightly mega meh stuff**. Wait. Come to think of it, at least TTSDN™ wasn't a total, utter, complete **boredom fest**. And it featured delicious **bastards** and exquisite **traitors** galore. And the characters, if not entirely and most magnificently **edible**, were moderately interesting and stuff. And didn't feel like yet another **Unemotional Flatter than Flat Herd of Ironing Boards** (UFtFHoIB™). As might ~~or might not~~ perhaps have possibly been the case in this **most fascinating** book here. Maybe. Good thing it wasn't. Phew, that was close. **Lucky me and stuff**.

**One more comparison with TTSDN™** (view spoiler). Beware, for some **fairly restrained screaming** might shortly ensue. It might be a good idea to grab a pair of ear plugs and insert them in your puny human earring appendages. Because **Make Way for the Feminist Rant and Stuff** (MWftFRaS™):

**AT LEAST THERE WERE BOTH MALE AND FEMALE POVs IN TTSDN™. AND THE WOMEN IN THE STORY WERE ACTUAL, FULLY-FLESHED OUT HUMAN BEINGS** (albeit two X chromosomes-clad ones. What can I say, nobody's perfect and stuff). **THEY WERE NOT LIFELESS, LUDICROUSLY ARCHETYPAL, EMOTIONLESS, CARDBOARD-LIKE PAPER DOLL THINGS** (LLAECLPDT™) TO BE USED AS PATHETIC PLOT DEVICES, THE WAY THEY WERE IN **SOME BOOK I JUST READ BUT SHALL NOT MENTION BECAUSE I'M NOT LIKE THAT**.

**Sorry, what?** Did venting in a most subdued way make me feel better, you ask? Yeah, maybe. **A teensy little bit.**

*Then again, maybe not.*

**So.** The female characters in this book are a **most delightful bunch.** And it doesn't matter that there are **very very very very few of them** while there are ~~way too bloody shrimping many~~ countless **superbly manly males** in the story. I mean, it's quality that matters, not quantity, right? **Right.** Anyway, the women in this splendid narrative are most beautifully **complex and lively** and stuff. And such **wonderful role models** for little girls everywhere, too! The ~~kiekass~~ gentler sex is **soooooo accurately** (and most magnificently) represented here. Check out the remarkable array of **superstar heroines** we have here:

- ? A **murderous, vengeful, batshit crazy, erratic** ~~woman~~ bitch.
- ? A **cheating** ~~woman~~ bitch.
- ? A **purely decorative** ~~woman~~ bitch.
- ? A **boring** ~~woman~~ bitch.
- ? A **ridiculously ambitious, selfish** ~~woman~~ bitch.
- ? A **stupid** ~~woman~~ bitch.

**Yay and stuff.** But you know what one of the **truly amazing** things about this book is? Not a single one of them **Wondrous Estrogen-Filled Characters** (WEFC™) have an actual voice until all of a sudden, out of nowhere, towards the end of the book and stuff, **we finally get a female POV!** I kid you not. The slight problem is, the woman in question is the **above mentioned ? stupid woman bitch**, who turns out to be an **even bigger nitwit** than I originally assumed, and whose actions **make about zero minus ten sense.** Oh, goody.

**Bloody stinking fish,** how I love this book! And wait, it gets better! Because there is actually one female character in the book that **I actually liked.** No kidding and stuff. She is one of those **disgustingly young things** I usually abhor a little bit, too. So the fact that she is my **favorite** female character in this book should tell you something. **Yes, it should.** But anyway. That girl has **viciously awesome potential** indeed. She could have been phenomenally sensational and stuff. So you'd think that, very logically, the author would have given her a **strong, powerful voice** and **imposing presence**, right? Of course he did. You know how? By making her a **bloody fishing mute with less personality than an apathetic barnacle.** I mean, why bother to give your most interesting female character a smart, assertive voice when you can turn her into a **silent, ghost-like individual** only to be seen through the eyes of a bunch a macho types who keep referring to her as a **bloody shrimping "savage"?!**

*Yeah, pretty much.*

**But hey,** let's be honest for half a quarter of a second here: this really isn't the author's fault. I mean, I'm pretty sure creating a **cleverly developed, intriguing, complex, mute female character** is impossibly impossible. It's not like Glen Cook managed to do it in **The Marvellicious Black Company of Glorious Marvelliciousness** (TMBCoGM™) or anything. Of course not. Don't be silly now, my Tiny Decapods. So if

**Glen Cook Is A God** (GCiaG™) couldn't do it, I really don't see how anyone else could. **QED and stuff.**

► And the moral of this **I Thought Feminism Only Committed Suicide in Refreshingly Progressive PNR Books Silly Little Me Goes to Show One Can Be Both Devilishly Nefarious and Pathetically Naïve Sometimes Crappy Non Review** (ITFOCSiRPPNRBSLMGtSOCBBDNaPNSCNR™) is: this book should have been called **Promise of Male Chauvinism**, not Promise of Blood. **Ha.**

? *A very private message to all you estrogen-intolerant male authors out there: May I suggest you call the 1-800-Women-Are-Human-Beings-Too emergency hotline, then either press 1 for Glen Cook, 2 for Craig Schaefer or 3 for Richard Kadrey? You might learn a thing or two about **Most Wondrous Female Characterization** (MWFC™) and stuff. You are quite welcome.*

[Pre-review nonsense]

**Actual rating: 2.5 stars.** *Because I'm in a most lenient mood today.*

**Oh, noes!** I just read ~~yet another~~ a book with a stellar average rating utterly wrong! **Shock! Dismay! Befuddlement! Horror!**

► Full **The Way Women Are Not/Badly/Poorly/Insert Negative Adverb Here Represented in This Most Delightful Masterpiece is Quite Wondrously Fascinating and Stuff Crappy Non Review** (TWWANBPINAHHRiTMDMiQSaSCNR™) to come.

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**Conor says**

Promise of Blood was an intense, action packed opening to a series that I'm really excited to continue. It had a complex, brilliantly executed magic system, great characters and a good plot that was interesting up until the very end. I'm definitely going to read the sequel soon.

The magic system in this book was incredible. I've heard it compared to Sanderson's Mistborn series but having never read it I can't really comment. What I can say is that this was one of the most complex and intriguing magic systems I've read. From the very start McClellan establishes a comprehensive list of the rules, powers and limitations of magic and then proceeds to use this set-up to brilliant effect to propel the story and especially the action. I also really liked how it meshed with the 'flintlock fantasy' of this story. The magic and firearms were linked really nicely and it made the world even more unique and interesting. One complaint that I did have was that shortly after the magic system was established early on 2 extremely powerful characters showed up who were seemingly immune to the rules of magic that the author had established and that made the system so compelling.

A setting similar to France during the revolution was an interesting and unique idea for a fantasy series. Unfortunately gunpowder and magic aside the setting wasn't particularly deep or engaging. The revolution in

this book was over unbelievably quickly. It didn't make sense to me that the entire nobility, easily the most powerful group in the country, were completely wiped out so quickly and easily. Also I never really saw why such a drastic revolution needed to take place. A strong military leader deposing a weak king was more reminiscent of Cromwell in England or any one of the butload of times this happened during the Roman Empire rather than complete social upheaval of the French revolution. Maybe we were supposed to take it that motivations similar to the revolution existed in the background but it was never really explained why and how such drastic, unprecedented events took place (Edit: The novella's give some background on social conditions and world politics prior to Tamas' revolution.) At times it also seemed that the author was desperate to show his world was 'modernising' rather than letting the world speak for itself.

The characters in this book, especially the 3 main POV characters were compelling and well-written. Tamas was a really cool character. His political manoeuvring was enjoyable if not overly complex and his POV's showed the ruthlessness needed to carry out a bloody revolt, even with good motives. Although I kind of wish his action scenes had been toned down a bit. It was kind of ridiculous that the de facto ruler of the country was personally fighting off assassins and going on dangerous missions throughout the story.

Taniel was another cool character and his interaction with Ka-Poel were some of my favourite parts of the book. On the downside he suffered from what I like to call badass/wuss syndrome (in other news I've had my medical license revoked after a series of non-existent diagnoses). For the most part Taniel's sections were really interesting, especially the intense, well-written action scenes. However I was frustrated by how frequently he deteriorated into self pity about his father not hugging him enough and his fiancée cheating on him.

The POV character I most struggled with was Adamat. Going in to this book I knew he was a private investigator who was being blackmailed via his kidnapped family. I was pretty jaded about both the 'P.I.' bit and the 'kidnapped family' bit and as usual my assumptions without any evidence proved dead on. I didn't find his sections anywhere near as engaging as Tamas or Taniel and the kidnapping of his family was extremely annoying. A murderous, powerful, mysterious underworld figure tries to blackmail him into committing treason and when he refuses promises to return 'with leverage'. This apparently doesn't alarm veteran detective Adamat. At all. Anyway a few chapters later his family is kidnapped. As leverage. Gasps\* If only he could have had some kind of warning or clue that this would happen. From there he decides not to warn Tamas about the conspiracy and get his help in rescuing his family. Instead he decided to trust that the secretive, murder-happy international crime syndicate will let his family/9 witnesses go when he is finished helping them.

Nila was an interesting study in how a revolution, even when done for the greater good, can leave innocent people's lives in ruins. I do think the author missed a chance to do more with that perspective though. (view spoiler)

Of the 4 POV's Nila played easily the smallest role and this was echoed with women being marginalised throughout the story. Vlora appears and is mentioned more than almost any other non-POV character and yet the only thing of note she does throughout the story was be seduced as part of a plot to break her engagement with Taniel. I was really hoping for some explanation as to how a powerful mage was so easily tricked into betraying the man she loves and her foster-family but we never heard anything about it from her. I'm hoping she'll be more prominent in the other books and maybe get a redemption arc where she faces some karmic justice and gets to repair the relationships she damaged. Another complaint I had about women in this book were the harems. There were a lot of harems. The royal mages in every country traditionally each keep a personal harem and Bo, one of the main good guys, still keeps this tradition. There was also a high ranking religious figure whose sprawling mansion was filled with a massive harem (yeah, he was that kind of priest).

I mean with this female to male ratio there have to be some interesting female characters right? One female character who I really liked was Ka-Poel. Despite falling into something of a stereotype as the white male protagonist's, lovable 'savage' sidekick I still found her an awesome character. Does that make me a bad person?

This was a really enjoyable book with a great setting, good plot and interesting characters. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in this series and seeing how it expands on what was introduced here.

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### **Petros Triantafyllou says**

Promise of Blood is one of those books you pick up with low expectations and they proceed to blow your mind. The storytelling was great, as was the pace. Interesting circumstances kept occurring, and the tension was building slowly but steadily. Brian McClellan is unique on codifying the inherent over-specificity of juxtapositions.

"The world is changing. People do not exist to serve their governments or their kings.

Governments exist to serve the people, so the people should have a say in those governments."

The strongest part in Brian's creation is the building of characters. Never in my life have I read such well composed fictional characters. I completely understood every decision they made, every word they said, every action they took, even in minor characters like Ka-poel or Mihali. I do have a problem with one specific character though. It's something that I not once read in other reviews, and it keeps bothering me. One of the protagonists, Adamat, is considered the finest detective of the country. More than once I read about his detective skills, and I was expecting some Sherlock-Poirot-Batman thing to happen. It didn't happen. The guy was just walking around asking questions, until finally someone gave him answers. No detective skills at all. Yet no other reviewer was bothered by it.

Of particular interest is the fact that many of the smaller plot arcs were very short. Every time a minor problem arises in the story, the resolution comes very soon afterwards, giving you a constant feeling of danger, without actually endangering the characters or the general plot arc. All in all, it was a very good book, but I will wait to finish the whole trilogy before I recommend it to someone.

Update: Just finished the trilogy, totally recommend it!

Update no2: Half a year passed, and I realized I loved it more than I originally thought. You. Should. Read. It.

Ps. I made a terrible mistake and read Mark Lawrence's review before reading the book, so every time I read about a state called Fatrasta I kept imagining fat Rastafarians.

You can find more of my reviews over at <http://BookNest.eu/>

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## Will M. says

When you've read a few novels of the same genre simultaneously, odds are you'll eventually start rating the latter ones lower than it should receive. I've been in a Fantasy marathon, and some were really great, but some were terrible. *Promise of Blood* falls under neutral, it wasn't boring or bad, but it didn't blow my mind. I picked this up because the premise seemed really interesting, and gunpowder sounded really cool to me. I didn't get what I wanted though, but I almost did.

*Promise of Blood* was a mixture of character driven and plot development. While it had those two, unfortunately they weren't sufficient to make me *love* this novel. The pacing of the novel was terribly slow, and I don't seem to like the writing that much. It wasn't bad, but also not commendable. It wasn't a page turner, so breezing through the novel was kind of a pain. This being an epic, page turner is something that it should really have.

The main thing that kept me going was the Knacked. The Knacked were people who had special powers. Some could know when you're lying, eat as much as he wants or don't eat at all, and other cool shit. The possibilities were endless with the Knacked, and that idea was actually original. Original in terms of the recent Fantasy novels I've read. The idea of them existing made the novel quite interesting, but aside from them, I didn't find the other main ideas enjoyable. The Power Mage/s were not as amazing or crazy as I wanted them to be. They were a bit tamed, and I hated that. I wanted action, I was craving for blood, but the novel consisted mostly of dialogues and strategies.

The characters were also not as interesting. Adamat and Tamas were a bit likeable, but not characters I'd remember. That's the problem with this novel, I don't think I'll even remember most of what happened. It didn't captivate me, but some parts were better than the others.

Not trying to be pun-y but it made the promise of blood, but it didn't deliver. There were some blood, but not enough to be called amazing and remarkable. 3/5 stars, maybe even 3.5, but not worthy enough to be rounded up to 4. I really hope the next novel would improve by a long shot. The fact that the next one has 300+ more pages, it should be a page turner. I'll probably give this series a break first, though. I'm not that interested with what's going to happen to the characters, so I'll most probably read the next novel next year.

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## Petrik says

*Buddy read with these Powder Mages: Sarah, Mary & Haifa lurking*

**Promise of Blood, the first book in The Powder Mage trilogy and the debut work of Brian McClellan, Brandon Sanderson's apprentice is indeed imbued with great promises and it didn't disappoint.**

It's not uncommon for a high fantasy book to start their story with the death of a king, it's been done a lot of times already and *Promise of Blood* used the same plot device but there is a little bit of a twist. The main protagonist, Field Marshal Tamas is the assassin and the story that follows in the book is all the aftermath of his revolution. There are tons of actions to be found here, making the book's pacing an ebb and flow of fast and slow with great climax resembling Sanderson's formula waiting at the end of the book. Of course, the revolution alone won't provide an intriguing plot, this is where the rumors of the old Gods coming back to the world, the characters and magic systems combined to make the book more interesting to dive into.

The story is told from three main POV, Tamas, Taniel, Adamat and one side POV, Nila. There are some great characters in the book but my favorite will have to be Taniel and Ka-poel. It's awesome how Ka-poel, one of my favorite characters in the book is a mute and this means we never see her spoke but her character, abilities and relationship with Taniel is really compelling to read. If you haven't realize it, the characters names in this book are mostly ugly and quirky. This is due to Brian adding or replacing one letter of the original name for his characters. For example, Thomas -> Tamas, Daniel ->Taniel , Flora -> Vlora and how do I know this? Well, one of the characters is named Petrik (*gasp*), Patrick -> Petrik. Not gonna lie, it pleased me to see my weird name used in a book, or anywhere really. Other than his uncanny descriptions with me (*skinny, wear glasses, did Brian stumbled upon my profile somewhere during this character creation?*), his brief appearance also took the spotlight with his sass and I love him for it. It may sound weird at first but you'll get used to the names much faster than you think, most likely.

One of the main strength of the book is its unique magic systems. Clearly this is where Brian's apprenticeship under Sanderson shines. There are three main magic systems here and they all played a huge factor in bringing the actions to life.

-**Powder Mage**, by ingesting black powder, it will boost the users perception, physical abilities and have the ability to float a bullet with high accuracy or explode a gunpowder from faraway. The best comparison I can give is that Powder Mage has a high resemblance with the effect of digesting pewter in Mistborn series (*read this amazing series if you haven't!*) by Brandon Sanderson.

-**Knack**, not exactly a magic systems but a special set of skills bestowed such as perfect memory (*this may sound awesome but can you imagine remembering all bad decisions you ever made?*) or the lack of need to sleep.

-**Privileged**, a powerful Sorcerer that required a special Privileged glove with arcane runes embedded upon it to use their magic without limitation (*so far*). Think of this one like what like Roy Mustang from Full Metal Alchemist did, where he draw his runes on his gloves, wear it and with it, he could cast fire alchemy.

**Gif: Roy Mustang from Full Metal Alchemist casting flame** (*an example of the Privileged magic.*)

Magic aside, the world-building itself is really great. For the first book in a trilogy, Promise of Blood provide lots of background in its industrial revolution settings, lore, religions and Gods that will be a great foundation for the rest of the trilogy.

I usually put one or two memorable/philosophical quotes from the book in my review but you won't find them here. Brian's prose is really simple, easy to access, it's there for the purpose of guiding the story-line fluidly and it did successfully. There is however one specific quote that I'd love to put in my review but I won't. It got something to do with a doctor and cyanide, everyone who has read this book will know what I'm talking about and it's better for you to experience it for yourself cause it was so memorable, came out of nowhere and hilarious.

Sadly, I do have two minor issues with the book, the first lies in Adamat's POV. It's not that it isn't interesting but it bothers me how everyone praised him to be the best investigator and with that praise, came my expectation that he'll be someone with genius intellect like Sherlock Holmes or maybe Detective Conan. However, all he did was asking questions and have the answers given to him without any threats or obstruction. For someone with the Knack of a perfect memory, I expected so much more out of his story but

there aren't any genius deductions to be found in his POV.

The second being the storytelling construction of the book, most of the chapters felt somehow a bit disjointed. Chapters consist mostly of an event or mini arc that get resolved in that specific chapter as well, even if the conflicts weren't exactly solved yet, the next POV chapter will always fast forward several hours or sometimes days after the previous chapter. They all of course provide something to the main overarching story and although this decision provides a sense of quick pacing to the book, consequentially, this made the book seem like a consecutive set of short stories that kills the sense of intensity after a while.

These are minor issues for me and in the end my overall experience with *Promise of Blood* is still a very enjoyable read with great promises. **It's a great flintlock fantasy debut from Brian McClellan and I will continue to binge read this trilogy, especially after hearing from my trusted friends and fellow reviewers that the series only gets better from here on out.**

*You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest*

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### **Matthew says**

Holy pit! This book was pretty good! (Not a typo - the most common exclamation in this universe is "pit")

Black powder artillery magic in a fantasy world? Yes, please!

Lot's of action, intrigue, deceit, and magic. Oddly enough, even with all this it was a little slow in a few places. Also, I swear there were a few big plot holes. There is one scene where I there was a character not there and in the middle of a one on one battle, the writing changed to include another character out of nowhere. (Read it a few times to see if I could make sense of it).

But, even with the couple of iffy points, I can still recommend this highly to fantasy fans and I hope everyone will enjoy this unique approach. I look forward to continuing the series.

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### **Samir says**

Actual rating: 4.5 stars.

First time I've heard about flintlock fantasy I imagined a bunch of military men in trenches wielding muskets and fighting for a small piece of territory day after day and having long and dreadful conversations about tactics, armory and shortage of supplies and personnel whilst drawing plans of attack on a huge map.

For that reason alone, I avoided this kind of fantasy and this book in particular because I didn't want to go through that kind of experience. But this book kept popping up in the recommendations page and it was critically acclaimed and I was starting to get curious. So, I decided to give it a shot just to see if my imagination, or should I say, slightly formed prejudice, was the right guess. I couldn't have been more wrong! I expected a boring warfare documentary and instead I got a rollicking blockbuster spectacle!

This is the kind of book that grabs you from the first page refuses to let you go. It starts with a coup d'état in

the spirit of the French Revolution. The king of Adro and his royal cabal are dead and the military leader of the coup, Tamas, now faces resistance from the Royalist army, impending threat of war from the bordering nation Kez, troubles with his own council and ancient prophecy about a god's wrath.

This story has brilliant depth, with plethora of things happening to get you reading long into the night.

Magic system is truly rich and inventive. I mentioned the royal cabal and they are an example of a more traditional magic system; they are called Privileged and they use their natural gifts and rune covered gloves to control the elements through the 'Else', the source of magic. As their counterbalance, we have the Powder Mages or Marked as they are called. They can magically control gunpowder, setting it off with their own power. They are also consuming the powder which allows them to enter in a state of trance which enhances their strength and senses. The relationship between Privileged and Marked plays a big role in the flux of the world.

There are also characters known as Knacked and they have abilities like no need of sleep or perfect memory and although being less magically gifted, they contribute to the story nonetheless.

McClellan has no shortage of interesting characters and in the end you'll have trouble deciding about your favorite.

This gripping fantasy novel is bursting with outstanding action sequences, political intrigue, awesome and well developed characters and cool magic system, so naturally, I'm excited to find out where McClellan takes us in the next installment of this potentially excellent series.

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## **Haïfa says**

**Actual rating : Somewhere between 3.5 and 4 stars**

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**Buddy read with the Fantasy lovers at BB&B !**

*You can check Choko's excellent review if you want a more enthusiastic perspective :)*

**Alright, this was one of my most anticipated reads of 2017 !!**

And I should have learned by now to keep my expectations reasonable ! Don't get me wrong ! This was a pretty good book and a debut, at that !! But despite bringing together amazing Fantasy elements and magic systems, Promise of Blood didn't blow my mind and there were some details that bothered me a bit (and that I will list below).

***"The age of kings is dead, [...] and I have killed it."***

So this is my ~~first~~ second (My sweet friend Mary kindly reminded me that Mistborn Era 2 was Flintlock Fantasy too, shame on me!!!) attempt to read **Flintlock Fantasy** and I must say, this is a genre I will gladly try again ! In the Lightbringer series, by Brent Weeks, there was mention/use of firearms but it was definitely

negligible compared to the "Fantastic" aspect. **In Promise of Blood, the equilibrium between magic and technology was totally enthralling !**

*People do not exist to serve their governments or their kings. Governments exist to serve the people, so the people should have a say in those governments.*

Against a **backdrop of French revolution, a complex story of revenge, deception, betrayal, emancipation, survival and justice is told from 3 main POVs** : a Field Marshal, a detective and a particularly skilled soldier. Numerous tropes and genres intertwined in the book in perfect harmony : **fantasy, military tactics, investigation, religions, politics...** You name it ! Honestly, the way Brian McClellan juggled all these elements was fascinating !

*"It's a poor commander who gives in to the whims of his troops," (he) said. "And an even worse one who ignores their wants and needs."*

Promise of Blood had a LOT of great historical and fictional influences imo. The magic systems were pretty intricate but one of the magics, in its principle, was in a way reminiscent of Allomancy (Mistborn) so I wasn't very surprised to learn that Brian McClellan has attended Sanderson's writing classes ! :D But be assured, despite the slight similarity, **the magic systems in Powder Mage are totally creative!** I also got my fair share of **Fullmetal Alchemist vibes** and it made me sooo happy because I'm an absolute fan of FMA and it brought me both a nostalgic touch and a closeness to McClellan's world !

McClellan's writing was pretty sober and not very sophisticated. The worldbuilding was cleverly done and the historical/mythological/magical explanations were progressively introduced. As the story unfolded, the plot thickened as more protagonists entered the game, some in plain sight others placing their pawns and tugging at the strings in the shadows. **Political intrigues, subterfuges and mysteries within mysteries are enough to keep you intrigued until the final climax !**

Then what went wrong ?

Despite all the great vibes and a cast of rather compelling characters, the story didn't totally grip me. I enjoyed it but I didn't love it. I was mesmerized when I was reading but when I had free time, I didn't die to pick up the book again. And it made me terribly sad ! Because I wanted to love this book so badly ! But :

? Some chapters lacked introspection. There were times where I felt very indifferent to what happened to some protagonists: One major character found himself in a dire and kinda tragic situation and he just accepted it !! No denial, no despair, no rage. So I felt very detached at times and I couldn't bring myself to fully love or care about the characters (except two of them).

? The book seemed like a succession of stories, each one having its closure before moving to the next with usually a 5 (or more) days leap. Which made the whole story a bit disjointed at times. And more importantly, **some closures happened so fast, the tension didn't have enough time to build up fully before it was**

**already over.**

? **The lack of female lead characters** ! 3 main male POVs and a tiny female POV! Some people may argue that considering the time setting (18 to 19th century), women didn't get access to high governmental or military functions. Well that's precisely my problem: women did get access to important positions in the book. Councils, workers unions, army, powerful sorcery cabals... and yet women were mainly relegated to roles of secondary importance, roles of villains or roles of sexual objects (Harems were as natural and common in this relatively modern society as female soldiers. And those were pretty common) ! Why didn't Ka-Poel get a POV ? Why didn't Vlora or Julene or Rozalia get one ?? A close friend of mine asked me if women were poorly handled in this book and honestly I don't really think so because some of the female characters showed interesting and promising development and amazing skills so I still have hope for the next books ! I just regret that they don't get as much importance and space than their male counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

Despite these points, this was a very good and enjoyable debut. I loved how some of the main characters weren't completely good or bad but more like real persons with struggles and doubts and tough choices and with equal potential to cruelty and to honor and kindness and justice. I loved the lore and myths and how religion was handled in this book. I also loved the comical situations and the sassy retorts the author included in his rather brutal setting.

If you're fan of Flintlock Fantasy (or just Fantasy, really), you will probably love this book ! And though it's only the first book of the trilogy and despite my complaints, I truly recommend Promise of Blood because it has a lot of compelling elements and influences to satisfy a wide range of readers ! I just regret I didn't love it more !

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### **Liam Degnan says**

4 stars. Sorry I'm only just getting this up now, I had a very busy weekend =].

I'll say this right at the beginning: everybody should pay careful attention to Brian McClellan. I have a feeling that this trilogy is just the start for him. If the quality of his writing is any indicator, we can expect great things from him. I had my few issues with the book, but seriously, this guy knows how to write.

This was a great book. *Truly interesting world, as well as excellent characters with multiple POVs, but an unfortunately under-explained magic system and slightly lackluster ending.* I picked up this book after seeing a huge amount of positive reviews, and I'll admit, it honestly wasn't as good as I was expecting or hoping it to be. But for a debut, it was a pretty solid book, definitely earning the four star rating.

I think part of the reason I enjoyed it so much was that **it has a lot of strengths where other books tend to lack.**

**For one, the worldbuilding was WAY above par for your average fantasy book.** This is obviously flintlock, so I won't waste time describing that. There are a few things worth highlighting though. A lot of times I get tired very quickly of authors incorporating god's and all kinds of higher powers into their books, because they tend to only pop up when the author needs a quick-fix for a problem in the story. This makes their presence feel really cheap.

Not so with this book. Right at the beginning, the author introduces the reader to the primary focal points of the plot line, at the start of an uprising/civil war within the Adran government. This is fascinating in and of itself, and the author does a great job of explaining how military tactics and positioning, politics, and even culture/religion all contribute to this. It had an ultra-realistic feel to it, because you could really sense how multi-facet and complex a military uprising truly is. Mr. McClellan clearly did his research.

Also right at the beginning though, we have hints that *something even larger* is going on, beyond just the military coups that have been staged against the king. Having hints at this, and then continually developing it throughout the book, allowed the presence of religion and gods to feel a lot more natural within the flow of the story. He didn't just toss them in there; there was a lot of thought put into these aspects of the story, and it worked really, really well. For worldbuilding, I would give this book a full five stars.

The second thing that this book did an excellent job of was character development, which is largely due to Brian McClellan's obvious skill in writing multiple POVs. ***Ever read a book with multiple POVs, but you find yourself skimming through certain sections just to get the POV you really care about?*** \*Everybody raises hand\*. Yeah, me too, and I basically hate it.

You won't be doing that in this book. The three main points of view (Tamas, Taniel, and Adamat) each equally kept my attention, and the characters were very well developed. I'm sure we'll get to know them even better in the books to come. Interestingly enough, one thing I loved is that these three POVs all represented a different age group and role within the military. It's a pet-peeve of mine when a book only writes from the perspective of the young strong-headed heroes who are in the thick of battle. This book clearly shows how an old military general and strategist, a middle aged investigator, and a young war-hero can each play equally important roles. Only one issue: I would have liked to see a female role that was more prevalent, because this was definitely not present. The only strong female characters were villains haha. Definitely could have done a better job of this.

### **And now for the negatives:**

The magic system in this book is awesome. Everything I heard about it sounded really cool, between the Privileged, Powder-Mages, and the Knacked, it had the potential to be super good.

Unfortunately though, the magic system was the biggest draw back for me. And not because it wasn't cool. It just wasn't well explained - at all. We are told what they can do, and we see how they perform in all different kinds of battle, *but we are never told how it works*. Sanderson is the obvious point of comparison for this, because if you've read one of his books, you know that he makes you *feel* the magic his characters are using. You'll finish Mistborn understanding Allomancy so well that you can't even leave your house without seeing metal everywhere, thinking about how you could use it as a Coinshot or Lurcher.

An under explained magic system wouldn't be a big deal, but ***only if it doesn't play a vital role in the story and the world you are making***. And magic plays a huge role in this book, both in the culture and the religion, as well as the action and battle tactics. Which makes the lack of explanation into a huge downer.

The second thing that was a big draw back for me was the ending. Remember those hints at something much larger that I mentioned? Well, it was so well developed, only to conclude within approximately one paragraph at the end of the book. I'll include a spoiler for those who have read the book: (view spoiler). I was really hoping for something bigger here, but was unfortunately let down.

That being said, in spite of the two draw backs I had, this was truly a great read. I think that any fantasy fan

could read this book and enjoy it. I'm definitely going to keep an eye out for Brian McClellan's books in the future. Read it =].

\*\*SIDE NOTE: The audio for this book was definitely sub-par. I'll be reading them on Kindle from this point on, I think.

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## **Aristea says**

Extended review on my blog and I am looking forward to reading your thoughts about it!  
<https://todaysdecameron.wordpress.com...>

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First and foremost, this book reminded me that I am a book addict. I was not able to stop thinking about it when I was not reading it. Sleep was secondary to reading.

So I need to find a AA meeting for book readers.

Now, let's talk about the book though because this is what this media is dedicated to. 4.5 stars well deserved!

The story is told with majestic skill. It starts with a bang (view spoiler) and it continues to deliver to extremely high standards. The story is never overextended and it just keeps developing and intriguing more!

The setting is just a bit refreshing. (view spoiler) I liked the fantasy 1600/1800 hundred setting. Carriages, rifles (view spoiler) are different than what I traditionally read in a fantasy story and I loved the delivery! (view spoiler)

I loved the characters. And here is where I have my only minor complaint: Female characters are not really present in this book. And if they are, they are mute (albeit I want to get to know (view spoiler) Ka'Poel!) and speak through other's interpretation of their hand gesture.

But I want to express also a companion thought: Developing a poor female character would have hurt the book more, so I am just a tad disappointed by the choice but it is just a minor criticism!

As for the rest of the characters, I just loved them. Tamas, Taniel, Olem, Adamat, Mihali, Ka'Poel, Bo! There is dialogue, the dialogue (including use of sarcasm!) and the description of body language is so entertaining and realistic I had a blast.

Finally, let me point out another stunning element of this book: The magic system(s). There are several abilities, several specialties and intensity of abilities that you might think it would be a mess. Instead the powers and abilities are described slowly, in connection with description of a character's abilities, with skill and clarity! I have to admit I was not expecting to understand any of it yet the unveiling of abilities and skills is done in an uncanny way!

Who would like this book? Anyone who loves fantasy really would enjoy it.

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## **Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says**

There wasn't a single thing I didn't like about Promise of Blood.



The best components were the characters. It struck me as profound in several places of the book how damn good McClellan was at creating deep connections between his characters to the point where it felt like reading about real people (making it all the more poignant when something happened to one of them). Most authors tell you there's a connection, McClellan makes you feel it. The character profiles were nuanced and detailed, and they always played brilliantly off of one another. I don't think I've ever seen it done as well as it was in *Promise of Blood*, so for that alone the book jumps up a few notches.

And then he took those fantastic characters and made them **funny as shit**. And not in that "I'm clearly adding a joke here" kind of way, but rather he infused humor in the details – subtle gestures, the ways the characters thought about things, and dry wit within the dialogue (aka, exactly the type of funny I prefer in my books). It sent the book up a few more notches.

As if all that wasn't enough, I also found the plot highly engaging. There was a lot of political maneuvering and a "traitor in the midst" mystery to uncover, from which I found additional entertainment trying to puzzle out.

And then there was even a cool magic system (or two). Before diving in, I would have almost guaranteed you that my biggest takeaway from the book would've been the magic system (that sort of world building always amps me up), but surprisingly it was perfectly content to take a backseat to all the other interesting elements. Its casual inclusion in the story was brilliant, and pretty much notched this book into the solid 5-star category for me. Well done, is all I can say. :)

Were there a few pacing issues? Possibly. It's a slow burn with multiple POVs and allocates a lot of time for dialogue and establishing relationships between characters. I can see how that might cause some to lose interest, especially if they weren't as engaged with the mystery, humor, and subtle character development. Personally, I ate up every single moment and would gladly sit through a reread. If anything the slower beginning made the whirlwind of the end that much more exciting by contrast.

Series status: I'm on a long waiting list for the next two books, but liked this book well enough to consider buying them outright. Either way, book 2 has the highest priority spot.

**Recommendations:** *Promise of Blood* is a highly recommendable flintlock fantasy that will likely appeal to most fantasy readers (especially those who don't mind a slow burning plot). It had the perfect blend of mystery, magic, humor, and an extra splash of brilliance when it came to the characters. Depending on how the series goes, this could shape up to be a top recommend for me.

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at [www.NikiHawkes.com](http://www.NikiHawkes.com)

Other books you might like (these recs are borrowed from a great post [DragonsandZombies](#) did on flintlock fantasy – I've read 3 of the 5 listed and can attest to the genre amazingness):

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**?Luna? says**

**1000/5**

*"The Age of Kings is dead . . . and I have killed it."*

## I.AM.DEAD

I haven't had the FEELS like this while reading a book in a such a long time. I swear, I had the feeling I had when I first read mistborn.. wait okay, maybe not that amount of feels but it was close. I love when you find a book you can't put down! Every chance I got to read this book I would drop all my other priorities. Even eating! This is my favourite read of 2017 so far.

*"He had to do it the old fashioned way. One bullet at a time. No, he realized. He was Taniel Two-Shot. He'd take two at once."*

So this book is the debut novel from Brandon Sandersons writing student Brian McClellan. I definitely saw the similarities in the writing style & honestly it made me so goddamn happy. I've been waiting forever for an author like Sanderson, his writing is so unique and simple. Brian's is very similar but it was still different. In my honest opinion Sanderson is still the king and I don't think his student will ever surpass his awesomeness (obviously, no one can). But Brian McClellan has a new mega fangirl.

This book is amazing & I am so impressed that this masterpiece is a **debut novel**. Basically the plot is about Field Marshall Tamas who has just killed the King of his country to help the citizens of his country. But in doing so he has provoked a war with the Nine Nations. Tamas is stretched to his limit and only has his Powder Mages to protect him. This is a compelling & beautifully written, Flintlock Fantasy with one of the coolest magic systems ever. People are comparing it to Full Metal Alchemist and I think that's a perfect comparison for the magic system, so if your a FMA fan, you'll love this series.

The feels were so strong with this one, it literally had everything I love in a story; Main Characters who are tortured by their past, friendships, bromances, badassery, sass & heartbreak.

The story is told from three main POVS, Tamas, Taniel & Adamant. It also features another POV from Nila but she only had a few chapters. I enjoyed all POVS in this book & wasn't bored once, I definitely had my favourite point of views & that was Taniel's & his dad's Tamas. I thought Adamants POV was less exciting, his meant to be a detective but he wasn't a very clever one imo. I also didn't enjoy Nila's mainly because, **i hate her guts**, but hers was still more exciting then Adamants. Some of the side characters were absolutely amazing Olem, Sabon, Gavril, SouSmith, Vlora, Mihali, Bo & my second favourite character in the whole novel Ka-Poel. She's now one of my all time favourite female characters ever. Like this chick is the definition of badass, she's also a very special snowflake because she's a mute. Somehow she still managed to be hilarious & captivating, without even saying a word. My favourite was Taniel, I love Taniel so much. My beautiful, troubled, sweet, black powder sniffing babe. *"I need to get me one of those," Taniel said.*

*"What?" Gavril asked. "A harem?"*

*"Yeah," Taniel said. it's official guys, I'm joining Taniel's harem.*

If I only had five words to describe this book I would use: *fun, thrilling, unique, badass & amazing.*

*"You the toughest one here?"*

*"Huh?" Fesnik seemed taken aback by this.*

*"Simple question," Taniel said. "Are you the toughest, fatherstabbing, goat-raping, inbred son of a whore in this place?"*

Definitely a must read for all fantasy fans and all Sanderson fans. I expect great things from this author in the future and I am officially addicted to the Powder Mage series & I can't stop snorting gun powder in the hope of becoming a Powder Mage.

**Buddy read with my favourite Privileged; Wifey, Dr Petrik,Haifa,Terry,Stefan & Twila.**

**P.s. when I die please bury me with Mistborn, Stormlight archive & the Powder Mage series. I'll be fangirling from the grave.**

**P.s.s. my soul has left my body from that ending.**

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## **Jody says**

This was a buddy read with my fellow fantasy fanatics at **FBR**.

*Promise of Blood* drops you right into the action from the first chapter. With a unique magic system and a diverse cast of characters this is a fast paced story that kept me turning the pages deep into the night.

Field Marshall Tamas is doing what he thinks is right for his country by overthrowing the king and nobility of Adro, but the consequences may be more than he and his co-conspirators are ready to handle. Events have been set in motion and the world they know will be gone if their enemies prevail.

The storyline of this book was good, but I thought the characters are what made this 5 star material for me. The way they were portrayed and their individual struggles really brought out the heart of this story. I couldn't pick a favorite, so I will go with Taniel, Ka-poel, and Olem as my trio for this book. Each character was vital to this story, but they stood out the most to me.

The magic system was one of the best I have read in a while. Powder mages, Privileged (sorcerers), and Knacked, and these all range in ability or what their specific knack is. It was very well thought out and made the battle scenes crazy exciting.

I had a great time reading this, and can't wait to start the next book. I would recommend to all who love fantasy, military fantasy, or fiction readers in general.

5 stars\*\*\*\*\*

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## Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

When this debut novel by Brian McClellan first hit shelves several years ago, it had loads of hype. Everyone seemed to be raving about how creative it was, how amazing the powder mages were, and how cool the whole flintlock fantasy setting was. And because of all that great word-of-mouth, I . . . stayed away from *Promise of Blood* like the plague.

Might sound strange, I know, but I did have a good reason: I never seem to like hyped books. Not sure why, but we do not ever seem to hit it off. So I decided to wait and see on the series.

Finally, though, I decided to take the plunge, and now I'm sorry I waited so long, because I absolutely loved this book!

*Promise of Blood* is a flintlock fantasy revelation. A splendid marriage of fantasy magic and French Revolution Era science. A place where guns and spells vie for control. A world where deadly combat, explosive sorcery, godly intervention, political revolution, and personal tragedies rule the day. Simply put, this is damn good stuff here!

As the cover of the book declares, "*The age of Kings is dead ... and I have killed it.*" And *Promise of Blood* begins with the bloody coup led by Field Marshall Tamas succeeding. Now, though, the difficult part starts, as he tries to hold the diverse members of his rebellion together, gather additional allies, and put together a new government. All this while trying to stave off war with Adro's neighbors, whose royalists view Tamas's actions as not only dangerous but blasphemy against the god Kresimir: He who legend says created the nine kingdoms, set up the rule of kings, and swore to destroy anyone who dared to disturb this divinely created system of rule .

Quickly, Mr. McClellan adds into this explosive mix Tamas's returning son Taniel "Two Shot." This prodigy (and prodigal) child having been in the "new world" fighting in a rebellion against the hated Kez. To say Taniel has "daddy" issues is putting it lightly; he is constantly craving and demanding respect, which his father seems unwilling or unable to give. When you add to this a certain addiction Taniel brings home with him, it gels into quite the wonderful plot, as Tamas and his son dance around one another throughout.

Then there is the mystery, because we have to have one really. A retired police inspector being drawn into the deathly political machinations of the nine kingdoms, as Field Marshall Tamas assigns him a task; one he doesn't know if he is up to, especially when powerful figures from the underworld take notice.

There are so many great things about this novel, I really find it hard to only name one or two. Honestly, all the different aspects of the story blend together so well, so completely, it is difficult to separate them. They really belong together. Each supporting the other, making the story better for their inclusion. The whole greater than the individual parts. But since I always try to shine the spotlight on my favorite things about a book, I'll give it my best attempt here too.

First, the flintlock fantasy setting, which is so similar to French Revolution Era Europe, sucked me in. Since I'm a huge history lover and consumer of alternate history fiction, it was probably inevitable that I would adore this world, but I have to give credit to Mr. McClellan's brilliant world building. He did an amazing job molding Adro and its world into a doppelganger of real world France, then turned it on its head with powder

magicians, magical cabals, and gods. The place is absolutely amazing.

Second, those powder magicians and their magical talent. I won't bore everyone with my talk of how this is the most interesting magical system since Brandon Sanderson's Allomancy, because I know everything about these super powered gunpowder snorters has already been said before. What I do wonder is how none of us thought of such a simple yet freaking amazing idea?

Third, Mr. McClellan brought these characters to life. Each person had good and bad qualities; they would do amazing things before turning around and being petty or ridiculously judgmental. One minute, I'd wish for them to succeed, then I'd want them to fail. Yes, that includes Tamas or Taniel. Both of these guys had moments where I desperately wanted to slap some sense into them, lecture them on what idiots they were being. And that is when I knew all these people were now real to me, because those are exactly the types of reactions I have to real life people every day.

Lastly, I loved the shifting points of view. From Tamas to Taniel to all the others, Mr. McClellan kept me popping from one head to another, experiencing all the dramatic events through different eyes, from totally unique perspective; this bringing the whole rebellion into focus for me, allowing me to experience it outside of just Tamas's narrow viewpoint, which made it much more epic in scope. Plus, I not only heard our main characters justifications for their behavior, but witness how they themselves truly behaved. Quickly, I was able to see them not as divinely inspired heroes, but as real people doing the best they could (and sometimes failing miserably) in dramatic and desperate circumstances.

As for any criticisms, they would all be personal dislikes of this character or that, this behavior or that, or this decision or that. Nothing related to Mr. McClellan's writing at all, but rather my personal feelings regarding how I would like to believe I'd behave in similar circumstances and how my "heroes" did not live up to my expectations.

Not very often do I give five stars to novels as I have *Promise of Blood*. Perhaps it was merely a case of the right book at the right time for me, but I really believe it is more than that. Rather this debut novel by Brian McClellan reminds me of a house remodel. Here he has taken a standard fantasy story, stripped away the usual environment and classic elements (medieval Europe and whatnot) then rebuilt a flintlock fantasy upon its sturdy frame. Yeah, sure, underneath this is still an old school fantasy, but damn, it is so cool and fresh looking who would ever believe it isn't brand new.

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## **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

Just as good as the first time around, but I tell ya.... I probably should have waited for the re-read because I still don't know when I'm going to get to the second and third one!

Re-reading with my wonderful friend ORIENT ♥?

\*Read with some wonderful friends over at BB&B\*

When I first started the book things were just thrown at me left and right. My poor little brain couldn't keep up with all of the people and what was going on, but my peeps in the book group said it gets better. And guess what? It did, I started to learn some of the people and what was going on. Now make no mistake, I am still a little confused about things but I always am in books and that's okay.

This book is told through 3 different POV's. We have Tamas, who decided to (lets just say) take everyone out and try to make things better - ish. We have Adamat, who is a retired cop that is hired to look into some things. Then we have Taniel, he is Tamas son and he's awesome!

Taniel is a powder mage and they can do a lot of things with gun powder involving magic. Taniel can shoot for lonnnnnnnnnnnngggg distances as well. I'm not going to try to explain all of these things as I will get confused.

There are different people with all kinds of different powers in the book. And after a bunch of people are executed, the shite hits the fan and there is war and all kinds of stuff going on. It was such fun!

My favorite character was Taniel because he was just too cool. But there are other people that work with some of the people in the book that I loved as well. Ka-poel works with Taniel and she's beyond bad to the bone. I'm sure we will learn more about her in other books.

Taniel found his father's command post just out of range of the royalist barricades. The empty streets were full of rubbish, the passing stones damp from a brief rain the night before. The city smells threatened to overcome his senses, enhanced from the near-constant powder trance he'd been in for two weeks. The world smelled of sh\*t and fear, of empty piss pots and distrust.

Ka-poel was at his side. Even after all this, she was still mystified by the sight of the city-so many buildings, each one so tall on every side. She didn't like it. Too many people, she had indicated with a series of gestures. Too many buildings. Taniel sympathized. His real talent as a powder mage was being able to float a bullet for miles-to make long shots across the widest battlefield. What good was that when his view was obstructed on all sides?

We have Olem who is a guard to Tamas and I like Tamas too. I have to add that I love Tamas dogs as well =)

I like Adamat and his guard, Sousmith. It seems someone is always coming after Adamat and his big ole family even though he hid them away.

This book has so much magic involved with gunpowder and different things. It's really hard to explain but it was fun reading about one or the other that had magic, snorting the powder. I can't even imagine. Lol

Great book once I figured out who was who and what was going on for the most part.

FIN

MY BLOG: [Melissa Martin's Reading List](#)

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## **Dan Schwent says**

In the aftermath of a bloody coup against the monarchy, Field Marshal Tamas struggles to hold the country together while trying to figure out who among his trusted allies is a traitor. Meanwhile, his estranged son

goes into the mountains to kill a friend and stumbles upon a plot to summon a god...

As I've said in other reviews, there are certain times when a reader stumbles upon a book that hits all the sweet spots. For me, one of those special books was *Promise of Blood*.

I've read a fair amount of fantasy over the years but I find myself tiring of quest stories set in worlds resembling medieval Europe, frequently with a heaping helping of medieval stasis thrown in. A lot of fantasy seems to be rehashes and brings very little new to the party. Not only does *Promise of Blood* bring a lot of new things to the party, it brings the party with it.

The book opens with Tamas making an effort to finish the coup and clean up his mess. Meanwhile, his son Taniel returns from foreign lands with a big reputation and a chip on his shoulder. Things are quickly ratcheted up a notch and things never let up.

The setting is similar to the era of the French revolution, complete with gun powder and guillotines. That was enough to interest me, along with the tagline "The Age of Kings is dead and I have killed it," which hints at how innovative this book is compared to most fantasy on the racks. Throw in the magic system and I didn't stand a chance.

In addition to the Privileged, the usual wizardly types, we have the Knacked, who have one or two small magical talents, and the Marked, who are a bit more powerful and possessed of a mystical third eye. Some of the Marked become Powder Mages, spellcasters who can use gun powder to do some pretty cool things.

Another thing that kept me reading well into the wee hours was the shifting points of view, from Tamas to his son Taniel to Adamat, the investigator Tamas tasked with finding the traitor, who happens to have some secrets as well.

The characters are an interesting mix, from Tamas with his stubborn streak to Adamat and his conflict over his duty vs. his family, to Taniel and his growing powder addiction. Taniel Two-Shot snorting lines of gun powder and the resulting nosebleeds will stick with me for a while.

It's quite a bit more complicated than my summary has indicated. This is one book I wouldn't want to spoil for anyone. It has everything I look for in a fantasy novel: grit, action, intrigue, surprises, and new ideas rather than rehashing old ones. Five powder-burned stars! Now if I could just snag an ARC of the sequel...

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## **Bradley says**

I've been hearing a lot of good things about this book and while I was somewhat skeptical at first, I am quite pleased to announce that it was delightful. :)

Delightful as in lots of blood and guts, gun-mages, sorcerers, revolution, plain war, resurrected gods, a very sneaky Chef and a fantastic investigation that's all gumshoe mystery in a fully-realized fantasy realm.

What makes this stand out, though?

I think it's mostly the characters, the bright pacing, and the magic system.

A lot of these epic fantasies get bogged down with too many characters, IMHO, but this one keeps a great balance with three PoV's, truly interesting storylines for each, and a few that are sufficiently non-standard that it was just a breath of fresh air. I mean, where else are we going to get octogenarian generals in the forefront of a big action tale and pull it off well enough that it's exciting and crusty and never boring? I tell you, it's a treat! Or an investigator who used to run a printing press being pressed into service as an investigator again for the revolution? :) Good stuff.

But what really stuck in my mind was the writing. I may be wrong about this little intuition, but there were enough stylistic callbacks in this novel to make me think I was reading some of Brent Weeks. Not only that... but some of the naming choices seemed to be a loving shout-out to Weeks as well. I was tickled pink. Again, I may be wrong about this, but I don't think I am.

I'm putting this series on a "must grab" status in my mind. It reads quickly and deliciously and it was never a chore. It's a long book, to be sure, but it was still never a chore. I can't wait to see what the gods are going to do to us poor mortals. :)

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## Choko says

\*\*\* 4 \*\*\*

### **A buddy read with the Fantasy fans @ BB&B! Because we love Fantasy in every shape and form:-)**

Well, this was a pleasant surprise! Flint Lock Fantasy is nothing new for me, but this is the debut book for this author and you never know how it would go, despite the many good reviews. I am very pleased to say that it was not disappointing ?

Field Marshall Thamas and his cabal of Powder Mages have staged a coup in the tradition of the French and Russian Revolutions. Now they have to figure out how to govern a nation severely divided in factions and figure out what other dangers await them. In order to discover the more veiled threats, Thamas hires Adamant, a weathered inspector, to start snooping around. For the more physical dangers he can rely on his mages and his estranged son, Thaniel, who also happens to belong to the group of Mages who use gun powder as their fuel and drive behind their particular kind of talent. Thaniel is a legend among his peers despite his youth, but seems to have an unhealthy addiction to the powder and could bring much unfortune on himself.. On top of all that, the young soldier has just returned from an assignment on the front after two years and discovers his fiance in bed with another man... Needless to say, he is not pleased... Good thing he has a young Savage girl to look after him...

The three guys are our main characters and most of the action in the book happens around them, each having POV of their own. As always, I am a big fan of changing POV's since I find they give the reader a wider panoramic view of the story and all of its components. There are some ladies popping up from time? to time, but they are few and far between... As I already mentioned, the Savage girl is awesome and probably my favorite character at this point. The Field Marshall is larger than life, his son is searching for his approval, Adamant is right on the verge of being over the hill, and the political health of the land is a minefield! Add a weird religion with some of the most corrupt and debauched clergy, wizards who want to destroy the powder



magicians and bring back their G-D, a budding proletariat, vengeful royalists, and a hostile neighboring country which wants to invade and take over, and you have the bases of this exciting plot. Having so much going on, I can understand the more minimalistic approach to writing the author has chosen to employ. That is not to say that the writing is perfect. No, there are some issues, but the potential is there and I think with some more experience and additional editing, the following books will only get better!

So, if you like a Fantasy story with bayonets and grenades instead of swords and rapiers, but still full of magic and supernatural creatures, mixed with some detective Colombo, this is for you!!!! So go get it and enjoy!

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and may you always find what you need in the pages of a Good book!!!

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