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The Demon Chernobog-Foiled but Not Defeated in *The Shadow of the Lion*-is Back to Conquer Venice. First Time in Paperback.

Venice had been thrown into chaos by the scheming of Chernobog, who came within a hair of seizing absolute power, but was thwarted by the guardian Lion-spirit, who awoke to protect his city from the power-mad demon. But the power of the Lion does not extend beyond Venice, and Chernobog has a new ally in the King of Hungary, who has laid siege to the island of Corfu as the first step in his plan to seize control of the Adriatic from Venice. Trapped on the island is the small band of heroes who awoke the Lion and blocked Chernobog's power grab before. They are far from the Lion's power to help them, but as Manfred and Erik lead a guerrilla movement to fight the Hungarian invaders, Maria discovers that the ancient magical powers of the island are coming to life again, stirred by the siege. If she can make an alliance with them, she may be able to repel the invaders-but not without paying a bitter personal price. . . .

This Rough Magic Details

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From Reader Review This Rough Magic for online ebook

Likethereporter says

I have mixed feelings about this series. On the one hand, I keep staying up much too late to keep reading them. They are compelling, the action is enjoyable, I like the characters, and their development over time. Well, the good characters.

On the other hand, every time one of the villains comes along, which is often, I wince, mostly because they are over-the-top revolting. In addition to being gross, it gets tedious. Weird combination, but true. I get really tired of overly-horrible villains, whose horrible, oh-my-god-ain't-it-appalling-and-shocking villainy is lovingly detailed, repeatedly. Enough already! We get it; they're horrible! POINT MADE. I've started wanting to just skip those sections altogether.

On the third hand, (one foot?) I just requested the third one in the series from the library, wanting to know what happens next.

The plots ... well, there's a lot going on. There's a distinct theme and direction, but sometimes it reminds me of a television series; lots -and lots - of only-kind-of-vaguely-relevant action. The books are very long, but Tolkien this is not.

But since I keep reading them, generally with enjoyment, they must be considered successful works of literature. They have done their job of keeping this reader, at least, entertained and engaged. So. Three stars. Maybe three and a half.

Olivia Waite says

I cannot get enough of this series. It winds me up, it breaks my heart, it keeps me turning pages when I should be doing other things. The prose isn't the most stylish, and it has a tendency to put people into Good and Bad categories, but watching the complex plot wheels turn is immensely pleasurable.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in June 2007.

It took me a long time - around two hundred and fifty pages of reading - to get into This Rough Magic, and yet I ended up enjoying it immensely. I picked this up in the local library, without looking at it too closely, and didn't even realise that it is the second in a series.

The central part of the plot is about a (fictional) siege of the citadel on the island of Corfu in 1539, when it was held by the Venetians. The Hungarians, led by the evil King Emeric and manipulated by the Grand Duke Jagellion of Lithuania who is a demon in human flesh, carry out the attack in alliance with the Byzantines. The Corfu garrison has been regarded as something of a backwater by the Venetians, despite the island's strategic position (controlling the entrance to the Adriatic, at the other end of which Venice herself lies). Among those trapped in the citadel are the main characters, including the wild young Venetian Benito Valdosta who is the hero of This Rough Magic.

The last paragraph makes clear both the alternate history aspect of the novel (the Byzantine empire had fallen

to the Ottoman Turks almost a century before the action of *This Rough Magic* takes place) and the nature of the fantasy it contains (non-human creatures, both good and evil, ranging from fauns and undines to demons and angels). This is a typical sort of scenario for what is becoming known as the "new weird" (a term I think is terrible), but where *This Rough Magic* scores is by concentrating on people who have some magical power but are not the most potent around, rather as though a superhero saga like *Batman* was centred on Robin rather than Batman himself. At the same time, Benito Valdosta is sufficiently heroic without the superpowers for readers to be able to identify with his character in an escapist mode, and more interesting than the bland superhero type of central character (as Hans Solo is more interesting than Luke Skywalker) or the hero who overcomes by extreme superpowers (as Laurell K. Hamilton's Anita Blake is tending to become) - ingenuity is more involving to a reader than simple brute force.

The point at which I began to be involved in *This Rough Magic* was with the arrival of the main characters on Corfu. The background from the first third of the novel, which leads up to this, is quite important, and is particularly useful to those of us who did not read the first novel (the reader is given enough explanation that *This Rough Magic* can stand on its own), but it is not particularly interesting: judicious editing and dispersal of some of the material to form references to the past in the second two thirds of *This Rough Magic* would have improved the novel.

While not innovative, *This Rough Magic* integrates its various elements of medieval folklore and magic well, particularly in the different ways in which various genii loci work. It is an enjoyable read, and well worth picking up - though skimming the first third is probably a sensible idea.

Jeremy Preacher says

While I like this series just fine, and *This Rough Magic* is a perfectly acceptable entry, I don't like it as much as its predecessor for a couple reasons.

The pacing issues I mentioned in my review of the previous book become almost overwhelming here. This is not so much a book as a collection of three separate novels about the same people spliced together - my paperback copy is 900 pages long. It's hard to pick out what needed to be cut, though, because it's all solid writing and tight plotting - there's just too much of it. And the magical adventure at the end feels distinctly tacked-on - it's foreshadowed well enough, but for being the big emotional climax of the main relationship conflict, it's got next to no time spent on it compared to the rest of the book.

I also have mixed feelings about the female villains and their relationship to sex and power. There's a lot of talk of how many and what kinds of beings one has to fuck to become an immortal dark sorceress, and it feels a little obsessive. There are some interesting things done with the con-artist and his harem of bored housewives, but the actual magicians just don't quite ring true. There's also no mention of the humiliating and painful sex male evil wizards must have in order to gain power, which is probably what bugs me.

So, overall, still like the series, but it's not one I come back to often. It's not quite worth the immense time it takes to slog through it.

K.F. says

Even Better than the first novel! Like the first, there are no boring plot points or characters, and the development and back and forth between Maria and Benito was deliciously satisfying. By far some of the best character development I've read in the past two years.

I love the sheer amount of research that has clearly gone into these novels, and how smooth each transition into a different point of view is. And, since at heart I love my books minus any pretentiousness, the down to earth language is always amusing and appreciated (particularly because so many fantasy authors forget that not everybody from the past talked in flowery, hyper archaic language!)

The goddess worship was satisfying and fit well in with the Increasingly intriguing Christianity/magic hybrid/dissatisfied partnership and the ease at which the alternate America/Vinland with Vikings plot points are quite well done. be prepared for much sobbing tho--beloved characters (though secondary) will die, and because the characters are so three dimensional and relatable, it hurts right in the feel :p

Altogether wholly satisfying, even a second time around. On to book 3!

Joy says

The next installment in the Heirs to Alexandria series focuses on some new characters while continuing to develop the characters introduced in the first novel. You can easily see the characters grow and change without losing their initial focus or personalities. Another excellently written, and very rich story.

Howard Brazee says

This book was written by Mercedes Lackey, Eric Flint & Dave Freer. It is in an alternate universe where the library of Alexandria wasn't destroyed, and the Roman Catholic church has powerful magicians fighting other magic.

Very well done.

Jim says

From Publishers Weekly

Lusciously set in alternative-history 16th-century Venice, Corfu and sinister points northeast, this huge sequel to the authors' equally massive and magnetic *Shadow of the Lion* will appeal to adolescents of all ages. In this world, broken off from ours in A.D. 349 (when St. Hypatia saved the Alexandrian Library), Christian magic battles blackest sorcery, with a wild card-the old, old Mother Goddess still worshipped in Corfu's mountain caves-eventually entering the fray. On the human front, young Benito Valdosta, a roistering rascal and irresistible scamp, derring-dos into modern-man maturity, even snatching Maria, his early love, from the arms of Death himself. The convincing characters range from stalwart Vinland Vikings and conniving courtiers to sex-crazed jealous wives and a fatally shape-shifting shaman, not to mention sadistic King Emeric of Hungary and Emeric's lethal great-great-aunt Elizabeth, Countess Bartholdy, who's bathed into eternal youth by gallons of virgins' blood. All express themselves in stripped-down modern

American idiom and whirl through breathless action, making for hours of old-fashioned reading fun. Who needs depth, when Lackey, Flint and Freer, as mixmasters of nearly every heard-of myth, hurtle through as compelling a romp as this?

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From Booklist

The continuation of the alternate-history fantasy begun in *The Shadow of the Lion* (2001) is just as vast and absorbing. The Valdosta brothers are now ensconced in the Venetian nobility, but young Benito is not adjusting well. He is exiled to the island of Corfu, where his beloved Maria has gone with her elderly husband and new baby. Meanwhile, the demon Chernobog, who is possessing the grand duke of Lithuania, has allied with the witch-king Emeric of Hungary and the Byzantine Empire to descend on Corfu, a notable site of ancient magic. The ensuing siege of Corfu takes up two-thirds of the book, and it is almost impossible to put it down while the tension remains high. Benito redeems himself, material and magical treachery nearly overthrows the islanders' resistance, characters who have become real to readers suffer and die (some of them richly deserving it), and Lackey and associates' areas of expertise, including naval history and classical mythology, are smoothly blended. Too long to be read in one sitting, but with few other "faults." *Roland Green*

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? BookAddict ✍️ La Crimson Femme says

I read this during my Fantasy kick. It's filled with political intrigue and a question for our youthful heroes. It was more gritty than the usual Ms. Lackey because of her co-authors, in my opinion. I liked the world building. It was pretty complicated. Still, not something I'd read again. A bit too dry for me now.

Zach says

This is the sort of alternate history that's right up my alley. A thoroughly enjoyable blend of history, mythology, and fantasy.

The main reason that it doesn't have five stars like its predecessor is that the novelty of the setting wore off a bit, and, while the adventure at the end was quite fun from a number of perspectives, it tended a bit towards a combination of deus ex machina and plot invulnerability.

James Oden says

Well, I had to have liked the book somewhat to have finished all 893 pages of "This Rough Magic". The book is the second book in a series that is centered around characters of 16th century Europe. Most of the characters come from Venice and the fate of that country seems to be of central concern to the book. Though it is in 16th century Europe, making it historical fiction, the book also fits squarely in the fantasy genre as there is much sword and sorcery a foot with a bit of the smell of gun powder to boot. The authors (it seems to

have been written by multiple authors) weave together quite a cast of characters and independent story lines and yet they always keep the central storyline in view and clear.

The only negative I would have to say about the book is that by the time we get to the climax of the story it really doesn't feel like one...maybe they gave too much away to soon, or maybe in the end their use of Deus ex Machina was a little too forced and contrived. Post climax just kind of got silly.

Michal says

I actually liked this book much more than the first one in the series. Seems that since we're already familiar with the main players, we can get on with the story right from the start. That said, the ultimate evil vs ultimate good chasm was a bit much for me, especially at the end. I also felt the female adversaries weren't as deeply thought out as were the males.

Gail Morris says

catching up on my records

K.F. says

OK seriously I always forget just how good these books are! It's a marathon of a read, but honestly, I enjoy that because I want something I can just reliably turn to every night. I can't wait to get to the next book (I LOVE Mongols).

Excellent parts:

--Benito outsmarting Hades, go you, Benito

--Alessia and the whole undine thing like as a little girl I would have killed for a mermaid godmother

--Maria's development in general

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RIP to Umberto and Svanhild tho boooooooo! For killing off amazing characters for plot development.

Lorena says

So far one of the good historical fiction books I've read. Intertwined with magic and mystery this book gets into another level. I generally like combined genres and do find such books enthralling. The main issue with this book I think it was its length. Usually I'm fine with long books and series but particularly found this plot too difficult to follow. There were many stories stitched together and events which took place in several

countries, sometimes at the same time. The research on historical events and characters made the plot even less fictive and I liked that. I think if the plot would be just a bit more linear it would be easier to follow and immerse in it.
