



# Valor

*John Gwynne*

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The Banished Lands is torn by war as High King Nathair sweeps the land challenging all who oppose him in his holy crusade. Allied with the manipulative Queen Rhin of Cambren, there are few who can stand against them. But Rhin is playing her own games and has her eyes on a far greater prize... Left for dead, her kin fled and her country overrun with enemies, Cywen has no choice but to try to survive. But any chance of escape is futile once Nathair and his disquieting advisor Calidus realise who she is. They have no intention of letting such a prize from their grasp. For she may be their greatest chance at killing the biggest threat to their power. Meanwhile, the young warrior Corban flees from his conquered homeland with his exiled companions heading for the only place that may offer them sanctuary - Domhain. But to get there they must travel through Cambren avoiding warbands, giants and the vicious wolveren of the mountains. And all the while Corban must battle to become the man that everyone believes him to be - the Bright Star and saviour of the Banished Lands. And in the Otherworld dark forces scheme to bring a host of the Fallen into the world of flesh to end the war with the Faithful, once and for all.

## Valor Details

Date : Published July 22nd 2014 by Orbit (first published April 1st 2014)

ISBN :

Author : John Gwynne

Format : Kindle Edition 680 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Epic Fantasy, Fiction, High Fantasy, Magic

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# From Reader Review Valor for online ebook

## Samir says

Even though the opinions about *Malice*, the first book of this series, are divided, I had fun reading it and enjoyed it very much. Slow pacing and a large cast of characters didn't bother me at all but because I've read it a couple a months ago I decided to reread it and refresh my memory, prepare myself for adventures to come. Upon rereading it I realized two things; I loved it even more the second time and my expectations for the rest of the series were raised sky high. A few people told me that if I loved the first book so much, I would simply adore the rest. Well, let me tell you something; that made me anxious. Of course, I wanted it to be true. I hoped *Valour* would blow me away and surpass its predecessor in each in every way. Every other outcome would mean disappointment. Guess what? I wasn't disappointed. I was amazed. This book is bloody brilliant!

The story picks up right where the first book ended. Events are bursting throughout the Banished Lands like a flood and affecting everyone's lives. The ancient prophecy caused a great turmoil and unfolded the main players in this intricate game of powers. Some are in exile, fighting for their lives. Some are gaining more power by forming alliances. Revelations are changing lives and shedding some light on the plans and secret motives of the real puppet masters. Meanwhile, a great threat in the Otherworld is waiting to strike and bring chaos to the mortal world. Sounds fun? It is.

It's hard to mention something I didn't like about this book. I would have loved it even more if certain characters suffered horrible deaths but you can't have it all. I guess seeing them dead later in the series will provide satisfaction and joy. I'm aware I sound like a sadistic maniac or Cersei in male form but some characters really provoked me with their actions and generally being pure evil so I'm looking forward to their demise.

Just like in the first book, the narrative is shifting between numerous POVs and although we continue to follow the main characters, there are side characters (at least they were in the previous book) and a couple of new ones, who got more screen time and their own POV. Maquin is one of those characters and I'm not mentioning him just because of that but because he totally won me over and became one of my favorites. I really enjoyed all of the storylines and it was hard for me to decide which one I enjoyed the most but as I was near the end, there was one which stood out and it was Maquin's. His story took me on an emphatic and emotional journey which I'll never forget. Betrayal, grief, fight for survival, fight against becoming something opposite of his beliefs, of his nature. His humanity stripped away and forced to sacrifice himself, driven by vengeance and an oath given in the past, an oath he failed to fulfill. Maquin is an exceptionally well written character and I can't wait to find out the epilogue of his story.

Having an interesting story and a set of characters I can root for is usually enough for me to enjoy the book but there is one other thing which I enjoy very much and this book had an abundance of it; great action sequences. Battle scenes are gripping, intense, not too graphic but much bloodier than battles from the previous book and I would love to watch them on the big screen. As I read them, I had a feeling like I was right in the middle of them. They felt so real and I swear there were arrows and throwing knives flying towards me from the pages. Luckily, I have reflexes like a wolf so I managed to dodge them. If you thought I wouldn't mention wolves you couldn't have been more wrong. How could I not mention Storm, now fully grown and even more protective of Corban. Storm makes me want to go to the woods and befriend a wolf. I love the animal companion trope and I'm very glad Gwynne included it in this story.

I could ramble on about this book even more but I'm just halfway through this epic journey and *Ruin* is sitting on my desk and silently judging me for not starting it yet. I'm filling my saddlebags with lembas bread and continuing with this adventure.

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## Choko says

\*\*\* 5 +++ \*\*\*

### **A buddy read with the Fantasy maniacs at BB&B!!! We need to get our revenge on!!!!**

Just read it for the second time and I am just as emotionally invested and ruined as I was the first time around! Goodness gravies! Could John have hit any more tender spots in my soul and attacked my adrenaline centers with the last 30% of the book, just so my body would not know to melt or to explode??? This is what happens when a reader gets attached to characters and those same characters are being put in situations which could terminate them permanently, while in the hands of an author who has shown that he is willing to kill anyone of them off!!!! I need a drink and I need a week of light and fluffy silly reads, just so I can reestablish my equilibrium... HR, chick-lit and Smut, here I come...:):)

*"... "This world may be full of greed and tragedy and darkness, but I am fortunate beyond measure to have such people about me."...."*

I saw a very short review one of my GR friends wrote, which pretty much sums the whole experience up, and I quote : "... *OMG!!!! omg!!!!OOMMMGGG...*" --->>> Well said, Butterfly!!!

I am blown away and I have no idea how to write a review on such work. It is Fantasy, it is Epic and it is Grim at this point... The first book was just an introduction to the characters and the world, it took it easy, lulled us in the belief that all will be good in the world, despite some unfortunate losses on the side of the Good guys... And by Ch. 4, John G. wipes all hope of rainbows and goodness out of our hearts and proceeds with breaking all remaining tendrils of fancy that maybe, somehow, some of the characters we already care for, would find any happiness what so ever... As I said, by Ch. 4 all hope for happiness is lost, by the end of the book, you go through feelings of love, hope, HATRED, HOPELESSNESS, HELPLESSNESS, DESPAIR, DESOLATION, ANGER, NEED FOR REVENGE, AND PURE DISILLUSIONMENT and DISSOLUTENESS.... It is such a roller-coaster of hope and despair, that by the end you feel as if you have lived every battle, every mile of running, every second of terror the characters were involved in...

Corban is the chosen avatar of G-d's champion and he is, I believe, at this time 17 years old. He doesn't believe that pitiful old him could be the chosen of a G-d, so he tries to do his best and ignore the knowledge. Yes, it is the typical simple village-boy-gone-good-turn-hero trope, but it is one most of us love, so don't hate on it!!! His main strength is his loyalty and the loyalty he has from his family and group of friends. He also has a cool horse named Shield and the coolest pet - a Wolfen named Storm, who thinks of Corban as her pack leader:) They are adorable together!!!

Cywen is Corban's sister and she is a tough one, with a stubborn streak, fiery temper, and is extremely protective of the people she loves, Corban most of all... He resents that, since he thinks it makes him look weak in front of others, that his older sister constantly tries to fight his battles for him. I am guessing she is

kind of cute, because there are several people whose eye she catches in this volume. Definitely one of my favorite characters.

Along with the brother and sister team come their mother, Gwen, who is fiercely protective of her cubs; Gar, the mysterious warrior who has been with the family since Corban was born; Camlin, a woodsman who is very good with a bow; Corban's friends Dath and Farrel, who are hilarious, a bit pathetic and very loyal!!!; and we can not forget Brina, the healer-which and her talking crow!!! There are several others, including a Queen, but those are the ones whose loss I would be devastated by!

*"... I hope you are taking note of this, All-Father. Surely you watch, even if you no longer intervene. All I have done, my whole life, has been in the hope that you watch. That you would notice me...."*

There is a character who has been dealing on the opposite side of the bad dudes but has not yet been connected with the main gang of goodies, Maquin, one of the few living Gadrei, whom I am rooting for big time and the story around him is just devastation after devastation... I want something good for this old, grizzled warrior dude!!!

What makes the book as good as it is, is the bad guy who thinks he is the chosen one for the good side... Nathair, the newly crowned high-king of the land... This character is larger than life and full of charisma, with grandiose ambitions and strong belief that the methods matter not, as long as it is done in the name of the "GREATER GOOD"!!! His naivete scares the hell out of me! Hitler, anyone? It is fascinating to watch him blundering in his quest to unite the land under his rule in order to eventually fight "the bad guys"... Nathair has surrounded himself with a group of loyal followers and advisors, all of which with dubious character except one - his First-Sword, Veradis. He is a good, honorable, loyal young man who believes in doing right, but who has given his oath to a person far from deserving it... His struggle under the oath and his belief in right and wrong is amazing and one of the most compelling parts of this story. I can not wait to see how it all comes to an end!!!

While in the previous volume we got to meet our heroes and got a feel for the part they will play in the upcoming battle of Good vs. Evil, this volume was full of action, battles, duels, pit-fights, and more clarity was brought to the delineation of the camps... So, what I am trying to say is, THIS BOOK WAS AMAZING, Y'ALL!!! GO READ IT!!!!

I wish you all Happy Reading and may you always be filled with emotion from the books you read!!!

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## **Petrik says**

**'War has erupted in the Banished Lands as the race for power intensifies' and with that eruption, comes a well deserved 5-star rating. I gave huge praises to Malice, it was impressive but Valor, the 2nd book in John Gwynne's debut series is incredibly better from its predecessor.** I include both Malice and Valor into one of my all time favorite list, that's 2 out of 4 books already and judging from the quality progression in the series, I strongly believe the other half of The Faithful And the Fallen series, Ruin & Wrath will follow that notion.

The plot in Valor started literally straight from where Malice left off and it's really insane how much better it is. The story is darker and more complex even though there's actually less politicking here since the prophecy from the first book finally unraveled its thread, this means that the Bright Star & Black Sun

identity has also been truly revealed. The unraveling of the prophecy provided a highly faster plot progression compared to some Dark Epic Fantasy series. For example, the nowhere in sight “*Winter is Coming*” from ASOIAF (*books version*), even after 20 years of publication, winter is still not here. Although the politicking is scarce here, this doesn’t mean the manipulation and deception is gone, I can safely say that after reading this it’s even more common and evident compared to Malice, resulting in terminal blind justice and beliefs for two of the main characters.

Friendship and family have always been one the best factor to come out from the first book and don’t be afraid, you won’t run out of them here despite how dark the story is. **There’s so many heartwarming scenes between these lovable characters (*human and animals*), with only two books, John Gwynne managed to cast a love spell that attracted me to care so much towards every character, villains’ aside of course.** All of the characters are really easy to get attached to since their personality, development, strength, and weaknesses are written really well plus it’s always amazing to see how each characters POV intertwined. However, I must remind this, this is a dark fantasy and the world these lovable characters live in is really bleak, heartbreaks are bound to occur. I haven’t mentioned any of the characters names since my 'Malice' review for a reason and I’ll continue this fashion until the end. This is because there are a lot of “*heartbreaks*” in the series and I’ll leave that for you to find out by yourself.

Despite all these great things I said, what Valor excels the most from the first book is its action sequences. Characters from the first book are well established already and because of this, John Gwynne could focus more on the action scenes with fantastic results. **Valor’s pacing is really well paced, filled with a brawl after brawl with a short break before some shit happened again. There is so many wars and intense actions scene spread throughout the book and by that, I mean really huge action sequences and climax. Shield Wall, strategy, stealth, giants, magic, I absorbed these amazingly written action scenes as if I’m truly inside all the madness.** Also, reading the wars and seeing the events from the POV of each opposition added a huge amount of depth and emotion. Consisting of 120 chapters of around 600 pages, I estimated that half of those pages are all phenomenal actions scene.

I must also mention this one quote from the book that I could relate to deeply.

***“Memory is a double-edged sword, Uthas. It can keep you strong through dark times, but it can also cripple you, keep you locked in a moment that no longer exists.”***

Honestly, I have no complaint about the book at all. The only flaw (*if I have to nitpick*) probably will have to be the lack of the main characters physical description. However, I already put a face towards all of them with the information I compiled from Malice so this doesn’t take away my enjoyment of the book at all.

Valor is an amazing 2nd book of a series, it doesn’t suffer the infamous 2nd book syndrome and as a whole, it provides a highly engrossing experience. It’s hard to put down, it has many plot and characters development and I’m really happy to know that I still have 2 books left in this series to read, not one. I can’t wait to see how the story evolved from here, in fact, I’m starting the next book, Ruin, straight away after writing this review. **Once again, I highly recommend this series to anyone who’s looking for a fantastic dark epic fantasy with compelling characters, greatly written action sequences and unpredictable plot.** I’ve only finished half of the series and the experience I got from it is **Sic Parvis Magna -greatness from small beginnings. There’s absolutely no reason for you to skip this series if you’re a fan of Epic Fantasy with the classic 'Good vs Evil' theme.**

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

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

More people freaking die, but of course that's to be expected right? I didn't cry though! Yay, me!

And of course I loved the book! ♥

This book starts up where the first book leaves off. Corban and the crew are on the run after the fall of Dun Carreg (where they lived). They sail across the water getting into more troubles, meeting up with new people, more deaths, etc. and so forth.

I loved when the Jehar Warriors came! I was so looking forward to reading about them. I hope to read more in the next book, but PLEASE don't kill anyone I like in that group!

Corban's sister Cywen is still stuck in Dun Carreg with the evil people because they thought she was dead, but she was not. That's not a spoiler, if you read the first book you will figure she is not dead either.

Cywen gets to learn about the evil people that are there, that killed her friends and part of her family. But, she just may have a few on her side. She also has her father's dog, Buddai on her side and Corban's horse, Shield. I just wish she would have tried to sneak away at night. Like I said before, it all turns out for the good though. And Veradis is there, I'm hoping he will see more reason and something will happen with him and Cywen. I love him, for now at least!

The book is really good if you love epic fantasy books. There is still the God-War going on and I don't see it ending any time soon with all of the prophecies.

I'm afraid to pick up the next book and I'm going to wait a little bit because I'm afraid who or what will die next. NOOOOOO!

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

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## **James Tivendale says**

"One thought circled in his head like the black birds swirling about the mountain peaks. They must be stopped." - Corban

Valour carries on literally minutes after the action when Malice presented us such an amazing breathless finale. We witness the so-called Bright Star Corban; and his bizarre accumulated band of all sorts that incorporates warriors, witches, Queens and outcast woodsmen - following on from the evacuation of Dun Carreg due to the unforeseeable monstrous actions that took place, with the effects still lingering amongst the groups' morale. It also picks up with readers favourite, Maquin awakening in the tombs underneath Haldis after the ultimate betrayal and follows him overcoming his tragic loss, knowing that his main ambition is

now purely revenge.

All the point of view perspectives from Malice, if the characters are still alive that is; still continue here and Gwynne has united a bond between player and reader throughout the narrative. We really care about these guys as in one book we have already been through so much together. The Malice players perspectives would only cover about fifty-five percent of the world's happenings so many new and just as engrossing characters are introduced who let us prance around their minds and hear what is going on. These include hardened female Giant-fighter Coralen, Jehar warrior top-dog Tukul and Uthas, a giant who was featured in the first book of the saga but whose motives are unique and mysterious. The need for these new perspectives is so that when factions cross as either friends or foes, we have someone we can relate to on both sides which will help us understand the necessary camaraderie felt or potential hatred.

Corban is still the main perspective that we follow. At the start of this book, he doesn't accept or even really believe his foreseen destiny. He envisages that the people closest to him who believe these predictions are a little bit mad and focusing on fables and faery-stories, however much that he loves these comrades. He still trains with former stablemaster, Gar for reasons he doesn't understand but Corban will not yet even contemplate what the truth could be. We can see that he is growing up to be a very clever, respected and influential individual. People are still awestruck when they see him fight or train with Gar but he doesn't know why. Throughout the tale, more and more different factions become intertwined and infected with his destiny. This book really presents a lot regarding the unity, joy, and comradeships of friendship. Once, a Camlin scene comes to mind, it was slightly unrealistic with his statements regarding his change from hard brutal forest warrior to Corban's kinsman and troop leader essentially. I like the positive sides of people so if a character could change this much and it is for a progressive story reason I will not see it as a negative. Corban also notices these weird things that keep staring and smiling at him. Ladies. Will a love story impact on our heroes destiny? It would not be the first book that such a dilemma had occurred.

Valour is highly focused around three amazing sieges and battles following High King Nathair and his alliance with Rhin in the West of the Banished Lands which is where the majority of this tale frequents. Nathair believes he is the heralded Seren Disglair and has been advised by his Lord that he needs to obtain the seven Giant treasures to save the world from darkness. It is obvious that Gwynne knows his swords, weapons and can create the most amazing battle sequences, arguably some of the best I have read in fantasy. The shield-wall reminds me of the Battle of Red Cliff in China. The warfare is full of unpredictable awesomeness, betrayals, tricks and not forgetting the side who decide to trick the side who just tricked them.

The tale in the East follows the 'Old-Wolf' Maquin, an honourable hero who has somehow failed in keeping all his vows in life thus far. I will not say too much but this side includes brain-washing, fighting pits, degradation and extreme inhumanity.

We analyse the point of views from both sides of the armies, so we know exactly what their opinions represent when certain sequences happens. Such as analysis and proof that enemies have shapeshifting demons amongst the flanks, an undefeatable shield-wall and not forgetting a talking crow, raven and a brutally loyal extreme skin piercing howling Wolven are in the mix.

The ending was unique and as a critic, I have nothing critical to say about it. Instead of the one aforementioned (see my last review) scene to finish off Malice, we have three to "enjoy". I will say that word lightly as like me, you will have no idea what will happen before this novel's conclusion. All three scenes end up with enticing cliff hangers. I have to wait two days until I can afford Ruin and that really annoys me. I was debating on whether I was going to give this book four or five stars. After much deliberation, I decided that the only reason I would rate this four stars is that I think the next book will be better. Valour itself is a



five star book so I will not be distracted by how great the extremities are that this saga could reach.

In my mind, and I know Gwynne has a lot of respect for the gentleman, and I do not blame him, but I think this series is superior in consistency, the amount of amazing characters and superb point of views to ASOIAF. I know that is a huge statement. Let me hope my sweeping statement is not premature with two books left to go. From what all my Goodreads friends say, there is no way I will be disappointed. I hate to admit, a couple of errors came through in the novel, I saw two spelling mistakes and a few randomly missed speech-marks. I have a critical eye and these small, very minute issues did not detract from my enjoyment at all.

I love you all Goodreads friends. Take care. Your pal, James Lafayette. x  
www.youandibooks.wordpress.com

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### **Michael Britt says**

*Actual rating: 6 stars out of 5. This book gets an extra star solely because of how amazingly well written his female characters are. More on that later.*

I really wish I would've had more time throughout the week to have read this beauty! As much as I loved it, I actually think I liked *Malice* more, for reasons I can't really put my finger on. I think it felt like more was going on in *Malice*, but I wasn't ever bored while reading this.

I would say that the only complaint I would have with this book is how a lot of the tragedies are pretty predictable. Even though the outcome is predictable, he executes those events in a way that I still enjoy them. Well, not enjoy, but you know what I mean. I also got kind of annoyed that every chapter ends with a cliffhanger, but that was only when I had to stop reading and leave for work. It didn't bother me so much while I was reading. I actually like it, then. So take that for what you will.

I really, *really* love how Gwynne writes his characters. More importantly, his female characters. Most authors tend to write them either too weak or they go completely opposite and write them as the heartless assassin type. Gwynne has managed to write his female characters where they feel like actual people. Crazy, huh? Even his male characters are written in a way where they feel different. These are times where I wish I was better at putting my thoughts into words.

The plot is pretty predictable, but like I said above, his prose and execution more than make up for it. He kills off just enough characters where you don't get frustrated that he's killing all your favorites, but you also get pretty worried anytime there's a battle scene. Which is also something rare; finding that balance. One thing we do know is (view spoiler)

All-in-all, I'm really excited for the next book! Highly recommend this series, as of right now!

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### **Celeste says**

**Full review now posted! Original review can be found on Booknest.**

“Two born of blood, dust and ashes shall champion the Choices,  
the Darkness and the Light.”

Valor (or Valour, depending on which copy you end up with) is book two of The Faithful and the Fallen and sequel to Malice. While I thought that Malice was an absolutely incredible debut, Valor did nothing but improve upon an already fantastic story. There have been many comparisons between this series and Martin’s A Game of Thrones, and I completely see where these comparisons come from. **But The Faithful and the Fallen seems like a much more hopeful and emotionally compelling story than A Song of Ice and Fire, and I believe that one day it will rise above these comparisons and stand firmly on its own as a classic of the genre.**

*Everything I loved about Malice was improved upon in Valor.* The relationships, be they between friends or family or humans and their animals, were handled with finesse, and their growth was completely believable. **I have never in my life been so attached to literary animals,** and they are many and prevalent in this book. I’m especially attached to Fech, though I love them all. There is a sense of camaraderie in this series that is completely unique. There isn’t the sass present in the Gentleman Bastards series or in Sanderson’s books, but **there is a deep closeness between family and friend both human and animal that I’ve never experienced in any other fantasy series.**

“This world may be full of greed and tragedy and darkness, but I am fortunate beyond measure to have such people around me.”

And yet, in spite of this closeness, **no one is safe. People die. Often.** And because their attachments to their groups are so emphasized, their loss is felt more keenly than in many other books I’ve read. Every death is mourned, both by the characters left behind and by myself as a reader. *(Because of the unavoidable death, I’ve decided not to mention any characters by name. Except Fech. I couldn’t help myself there.)*

“Memory is a double-edged sword. It can keep you strong through dark times, but it can also cripple you, keep you locked in a moment that no longer exists.”

**Something else I really love about this series is the overarching religious and supernatural elements of the war being waged.** Spiritual warfare has always fascinated me, and some of my favorite books are Christian fantasies where spiritual warfare is the focus. Gwynne has handled this aspect of his series incredibly well. **There is no preachiness here.** The spiritual part of the war is presented as matter-of-factly as the rest of the war. And in no way does Gwynne seem to be expressing his own views on religion through his work. It was lovingly and respectfully handled without any aim to proselytize or tear down the beliefs of others, and I appreciate this immensely.

On to the warfare itself. War has erupted across the land, the smaller pockets we saw in the first book spreading far and wide. And **the descriptions of the battles never bored me. Which is one of the biggest compliments I can pay this book.** No matter how well written, I almost always get bogged down in books where warfare and battles are such a large part of the narrative. Not so with this series. Gwynne’s descriptions of the battles taking place were completely enthralling. The combat always felt close and personal, even in the presence of new, less than honorable techniques.

**The world itself also feels close and personal.** With Westeros and the lands beyond it in A Song of Ice and Fire, I often felt lost. I never feel lost here in the Banished Lands. They feel tighter, if that makes sense. I never forget where I am. At least, I never forget where I am in the book. Because I often forgot where I physically was while reading. **This series is absorbing and moving and incredibly well-written, so while I am only halfway through, I have absolutely no qualms about recommending it to any and everyone.**

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## **Bentley ★ Bookbastion.net says**

*See this review and more like it at [www.bookbastion.net](http://www.bookbastion.net)*

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### **Related Reviews:**

*Book I: Malice* ★★★★★

Picking up exactly where *Malice*, left off, John Gwynne re-enters the epic fantasy foray with a stunning followup to his debut novel that I won't soon forget.

Those who worry about picking up series written by a debut author, have no fear here because the story movement and character building here is just as lovingly crafted by Mr. Gwynne as it was in the first book. Whereas *Malice* is a bit slower in its delivery as it establishes the world, the characters and their places within it, *Valour* places its focus on getting that plot up and running, and from page one to the very end the characters are on the move, getting stuff done. There's a real tendency for fantasy to have brief moments of action followed by hundreds of pages of exposition and incredibly slow movement. Here, Gwynne focuses on keeping his plot rolling within constant movement and action scenes instead, **giving *Valour* an almost frenetic pace in keeping with the chaos the characters endure as their world descends into turmoil and death.**

Sometimes in fantasy that is told through shifting POV, there is a tendency to repeat information or see the same scenes unfold through various eyes, which I think is one of the traps of multiple perspectives. Gwynne deftly avoids them here, **using shifting perspectives to create a finely woven tapestry of tension that lends the reader a better understanding of why things are unfolding the way they are, without boring them along the way.**

This entry to the series is darker than its predecessor in tone and content, as much of the world we come to love in the first book descends into war and political machinations. **The real heart of the series continues to come from its characters.** They are varied and well crafted, each presenting a distinct take on the world and situations unfolding through their unique POV chapters. I love them all, and the ancillary characters that surround them are just as easy to root for. When people are in danger or meet their demise here, it is always devastating and heartbreaking. The threat of my favorite characters being in danger created a very real compulsion for me to keep reading, to find out what was going to happen next.

While some plot points were a little too predictable for my taste, I do think that the overall movement, pace and thematic content present in the story was enough for me to overlook it and continue to enjoy the directions the story headed. **Another aspect I particularly enjoy about Gwynne's writing is his ability to describe battle scenes!** They are always epic, easy to envision and extremely fast-paced. While some scenes

are particularly brutal, *Valour* places its focus on the horrors of war, rather than glorifying in it.

I'm very excited to see where the series goes next. There's some crazy plot movement in this entry to the series that I can't wait to see built upon in the next book! Wherever the story goes next, I am certain that it will continue to be epic.

★★★★★ = 5/5 stars

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## **Orient says**

After *Malice* I didn't know what to expect from Mr. Gwynne. Book one was some kind of peculiar and I felt unhooked while reading the first part of it. Book two is way more different, I loved it from the very start till the very end. Wow, just wow, the adventures, intrigues, fighting, friendships, loves, secrets, betrayals, lots of action and suspense... This book just left me mindblown and def wanting for more!

My total fave obviously stays

\*sending million of hugs to Storm\*

Also the characters I became to love from book one. It was great seeing them evolve, become more mature, gain depth. Some staying true, a lot experiencing the cruelty of life, some turning villain (aww what a heartbreak).

I loved following the characters, not just the goodies, the baddies too. The new ones were an awesome addition. I just loved Coralen! To my sadness, (view spoiler), but I guess, I'll let Mr. Gwynne do it, too as damn but he's awesome <3

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## **Emma says**

'Wolven, crows, ravens, hounds....What will it be next?'

I am adoring this series! We hear the story from all POVs and we lurch almost from action scene to action scene. My heart was in my mouth on many occasions. You know people you care about are going to die- it's just a matter of who and how soon.

Despite the dark content, this book manages to make me warm and fuzzy inside too. Corbin has a big heart and the love seems to spread out from him. Camlin and Coralen are just two examples of how people are transformed by his attitudes and simple way of being and living his life.

Then there's the animals.

Again, Gwynn does a superlative job in the animals' portrayal- it could very easily read like some Disney type tale, but it just doesn't. There's a scene near the end where the raven Fech is berating himself which was really moving.

And on to the baddies: Poor Fidele. Boo, Lycos! Horrible. Worst for me were the white wyrms. Nearing the end of the book, I was unable to put the book down, even to eat. But once I started reading the scene with the white wyrms defending the cauldron, I found that in fact, I COULD put the book down until dinner was done!

I almost felt sorry for Nathair towards the end. He has been naive, full of pride and arrogance. I'm fascinated to see how his character will develop from this point forward.

I loved some of the character details. For example, When Corbin is seized by the enemy, his first thought is how upset his mam will be. And I adored the idea of Nathair stomping around on his pet draig, loving the statement it makes about him, when in fact he is trailing the stench of rotten meat and shit around with him! This book has a philosophy about it. This quote:

'Memory is a double-edged sword, Uthas. It can keep you strong through dark times, but it can also cripple you, keep you locked in a moment that no longer exists.'

This is very thought-provoking to me because it's so true. It's certainly held me back on many occasions in my life. And it shows how, for me, as well as the characters in this book- our actions come from a certain level of self- mastery- or not as the case may be.

No-one should be in any doubt that this book and series is strongly Recommended!

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## Haïfa says

**I was so happy to discuss this book with my VALORous warriors: Petrik and Sarah ! (Petrik you should be proud of me for that one!)**

**Warning no. 1:** Some tagged spoilers from Malice ahead. Proceed at your own risk !! No spoilers from Valour though !

**Warning no. 2:** Valour is bloody gory and definitely not for the faint of heart.

It is also a **5 stars** read ! I loved everything about it. It made me cry, it made me swoon, it made me grit my teeth and it tied knots in my estomac. I literally found nothing to complain about ! (O\_o)

*"You humans are all the same. Willing to live a lie, any lie, as long as it is prettier than the truth"*

While Malice was a long and slow introduction of the characters and of the Banished Lands, its kingdoms, myths and customs, Valour was literally a long journey! **A bloody, action-packed and emotionally-charged journey** through the (view spoiler)kingdoms of the Banished Lands. The story starts soon after the last events of Malice and focuses once again on Corban and (view spoiler).

*The friends he'd made were not like that. He'd finally found a sense of belonging, of doing something right. It probably won't last, he thought, but while it did, he would not be leaving.*

*Not today.*

But again, the story isn't only about Corban. Like in *Malice*, the multiple and short POVs allowed to increase the scope of the tale and keep track of the multitude of other individual storylines taking place all over the land. **The plot thickened, the myths becoming reality** and I was delighted to see many storylines crossing, interweaving and splitting once again. **The Good Vs. Evil trope was still a central theme** in this book but the line between good and evil often blurred depending on which side you stood in. Also another theme very present in this series, is how "the end justifies the means". I absolutely love to read about how far some characters can go and how much they're willing to sacrifice to reach what they deem ultimately good, or honorable, or simply profitable.

*It is for the greater good.*

Three particular things I absolutely loved about *Valour* are :

??? **The characters** : Their development was extremely well done : subtle, realistic and credible. It's only when you reach the end of the book that you realize that they came a looong way from the starting point. **All the characters were well fleshed out and their bonds and interactions were larger than life !** And often, either you love them with passion or you hate them with every fiber in your body!! And don't get me started on the absolutely **wonderful, fierce, strong and relatable female characters!!** Well done there Mr. Gwynne ! :-)

Source: Lawrence Mann <http://lawrencemann.deviantart.com/ar...>

??? **The battle and fighting scenes** : Stunning! Gwynne undoubtedly knows how to describe battle scenes! Man! I was completely carried away and transported in the Banished Land. **I was so immersed in those scenes, grasped all the details and almost heard the battles cries, the screeching of the dying, the cawing of the crows...** Which is amazing because I often have trouble picturing this fighting sequences !

??? **The prophecy** : One of the most important elements of the book! The wording of the prophecy was wonderfully mysterious and misleading, since book 1. And I enjoyed discovering the hints dropped by Gwynne here and there.

## **Conclusion**

A solid second book to an addictive and compelling series! Unpredictable story, lots of twists and emotionally taxing moments and an epic journey!! I already recommend it to all Epic Fantasy lovers! ^^

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**?Luna? says**

5/5 -

*"Memory is a double-edged sword, Uthas. It can keep you strong through dark times, but it can also cripple you, keep you locked in a moment that no longer exists."*

**Bravo to Mr John Gwynne for writing another fantastic book!**

*This is what happens when Lord Of The Rings meets Game Of Thrones..*

**THIS BOOK IS BRUTAL & I LOVE IT**

I thought Malice was good.. This book is even better! Shit got real and hectic on page one! I absolutely adored this book and pretty much devoured it, I couldn't take my eyes away every POV chapter ended on a cliff hanger. Like I was ready to fucking combust. This book literally consumed me.

I described this story to a friend as a car crash it is so horrible but you can't stop looking, and by that I don't mean the writing is horrible, nearly everything that happens to the characters I loved was horrible from wars to being tortured. So pretty much just an emotional rollercoaster haha. But in saying that I loved this book, I loved how my favorite characters grew, I pretty much loved everything and yes I LOVED ALL THE GORE & DELICIOUS DEATH. Yummy yummy, keep quenching my bloodthirst John Gwynne.

This book was better than Malice, it is full of action and the prophecy is explained better. We found out who was the champions for good and evil in book 1 and in book 2 the prophecy is explained we find out who true heart is (I was right, yay!) and who the other players in the game are. \*gives stink eye to all baddies\*

Okay everyone says this book is cliché, well um back the fuck up, it Ain't. Sorry but not sorry I disagree it is NOT CLICHE, yes the plot may not be original but it is the best book I've ever read in regards to a god war.

**DID I MENTION I CRIED THE WHOLE TIME READING THIS... Yep I'm a sook..but I had so many feels for the goods guys I just literally wanted to give them all a cuddle and tell them everything would be fine.** my emotions consumed me with this one I felt the good guys were my friends lol and I did not want anything bad to happen to them. (Even tho everything bad happened to them) the friendships between the good guys is what relived me from this dark grim fantasy read.

**THIS BOOK HURT MY HEART ESPECIALLY THAT ENDING**

I love John Gwynnes writing style so much he doesn't spend two pages explaining land scape or what a saddle looks like he is a no bullshit writer and I love that, I still cannot believe these are his first books he is such a fantastic writer it's like he has been writing forever.

I did however not like the fact that I didn't even know what Corban or Cywen looked like until the middle of

book two, I was also disappointed to find out Veradis was the opposite to what I imagined, so I think in future the author should describe his characters at the beginning even if it is brief. And that is literally all I didn't like about these books lol.

John Gwynne is very descriptive when it comes to battle scenes and does not hold back. He has shocked and made me cringe on more than one occasion. I personally think the battles in this are better than GoT, but that's just me. Another thing I loved about this book, if you're reading a book about war you know it's gonna to be bad and John Gwynne absolutely delivers. **Can't wait for book 3&4 I need my precious NOW !**

So pretty much to sum up the story..  
This happened (beware hectic gif's usage)

& this

& more of this

Then everyone got their witch on

***You tamed a wolveren?"***  
***"She's not tame!!!"***

I need a bottle of wine after this one lol

Ps. Maquin is the stealer of my soul and the reason for my whole existence

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**Liam Degnan says**

“Memory is a double-edged sword, Uthas. It can keep you strong through dark times, but it can also cripple you, keep you locked in a moment that no longer exists.”

**A Full Five Stars: ☆☆☆☆☆**



Absolutely **riveting** continuation of a series that is as gripping as it is brutal. A slow start that turned into nothing other than a perfect sequel. I was blown away by how good it was. From the themes, the story, the characters - even the action and battle scenes - John Gwynne shows himself to be a truly great writer, and if this trend continues he is sure to be listed among my favorite authors of all time. I'm going to break this down into just a few of my favorite elements from this book in particular, because this book really is truly unique compared to what's currently out there in terms of fantasy.

“Life was so frail, and he had not just seen men die, an impartial observer, he had taken lives himself. More than I can remember. . . What am I becoming?”

### **The Themes:**

By far my favorite thing about the way that John Gwynne writes are the themes that he weaves into these stories. In the first book, the biggest theme communicated was all about fear. In this book, as each of our characters move forwards in their place in this story, we see them dealing with the harsh reality of **becoming somebody that they don't want to be** in the face of suffering, war, and loss. Even from the villain's point of view, we see how easy it is to be deceived by the simple belief that what you are doing is right, and how this kind of self-deception can lead you down a path you never thought you would be walking down.

So many books have too many happy endings, with heroes who are unwavering in their pursuit of what is good and right - and there is a place for those books. I'm not saying we shouldn't have stories with idealized heroes. What makes this book so refreshing is how **totally different** it is in that our heroes have to fight through pain, loss, grief, and a lot of blood as they strive to reach their goals. We see them dealing with painful realities of life, doing things they wish they didn't have to do, often paralyzed by their regrets, and it is heart wrenching. **This series has a realness to it that I've never experienced before in a book**, and each POV contributes to this in an excellent way. A lot of books try to accomplish this through brutal, violent content - in a gratuitous way, while this book actually accomplishes it mostly through the characters and themes Gwynne writes about. And while this book definitely has its share of brutality, it is never without reason, and it wasn't offensive or overly graphic like many Grimdark novels can be.

“Is the human heart so fickle? So ready to embrace such evil?”

### **The Action:**

**The fights and battles scenes in this series are some of the best I have ever read.** This applies on a large scale, and on a small scale. Somehow Gwynne can write about a battle with thousands of men on either side, while still having the fights between just two people be equally captivating. Maquin's POV in this book, though it started off slow, turned into one of my favorites if only because of the incredible fight sequences that he goes through. I can't really speak highly enough about this aspect of the series - just read it.

“Without fear there is no courage.”

### **The Characters:**

If for no other reason, Gwynne's talent as an author is shown through his ability to write dozens of characters, with a huge amount of POVs sprinkled throughout, and still make each of them interesting and compelling.

I've never seen a cast of characters quite like what we have in this book. Gwynne gives us POVs and perspectives on characters that are obviously good, and characters that are obviously bad (that's a given). But he also writes characters that are **becoming** good and doing their best to redeem themselves from their past. In addition to this, **most interestingly, he writes from the perspective of characters who start out as heroes and slowly become villains without realizing it.** And it is actually believable. It's unlike anything I've read before.

### **In Conclusion:**

My "favorite series" list is very small, even though my favorites books list is large, because a series really needs to blow me away if I'm going to call it a favorite as a whole. If the last two books of this series are as good as the first two, **then it's safe to say that this will be tied with Mistborn as my second favorite series of all time.** Just under Stormlight. It is that good.

Can't recommend it enough.

For this review and more, check out my blog: Thoughts of a Thousand Lives.

Happy reading =].

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### **Lema says**

**I have officially crossed over from the Dark Side...I am a HARDCORE FAN as of now!  
This book you guys! this glorious wonderful brutal heart-wrenching book!!**

I literally went from this during Malice (Click here for my not-so-happy review)..

..to THIS, and only from reading two chapters of Valour..

It's like everything I didn't like about Malice has just vanished and everything I DID like has been expanded on like there's no tomorrow.. I just loved Valour to pieces, and the series has finally taken its place in my heart as one of the best I've read in fantasy despite our rocky beginnings!

**The plot really doesn't allow you to breathe,** everything becomes intricate and convoluted but in a very fluid way.. When POV changes between chapters, it isn't clunky anymore and it is done in a way that gives you a full immersive experience. Sub-plots are sprouting everywhere but they are all pertinent to the bigger picture, and I care about EVERY. SINGLE. ONE. OF. THEM! it's not about training the young warriors and

attacking some random giant camps anymore, it became much MUCH MORE than that, a ragtag band of refugees running for their lives, hot pursuits, badass animals, brutal sieges, moral crises, slavery, pit fighting... and that's just the first third of the book :D

**The Characters are EVERYTHING! now that's a dramatic 180 turn if I've ever seen one..**

I had major trouble imagining them in Malice, and whenever I managed to picture them in a certain way, something happens and makes that picture crumble away, or they just turn out to be passing by never to be seen again, which was a source of endless frustration for me.

However, now that I identified the major players and knew exactly about their deeds and where their loyalties lie everything came to me much easier and I was able to appreciate more their varied personalities and discern their indeed unique voices.

I also commented about lack of variety since all the recurring characters in Malice are teenage boys training to be warriors, **well Valour couldn't surprise me better than with a cast of badass ladies in all shapes and sizes!**

**Cywen** -which was my favorite character in Malice and continues to be my fave in Valour- has finally spread her own wings and is no longer used as a device to drive Corban's narrative, she's the heroine of her own storyline and she's freaking SLAYING IT!

Not to mention that my shipping heart has also started to beat full force... Nothing cripples your interactions with regular humans like a book throwing in your face all these wonderful possibilities for happiness and then pulling the rug from under your feet :')

Seriously, this book gave me all the feels..literally! I laughed and snickered at the banter between them (Brina again, that old lady is gold!), I cried buckets of tears at the emotional parts, I felt hot red anger (I wish I could run into **Lykos**..preferably with a kitchen knife) and I felt deep fear for my favorite characters because everyone is prone to endless suffering ~~me included~~.

Finally, I just wanna recommend reading this with your buddies because you'll need your circle of emotional support (Petrik and Haifa you guys are the best!)

Why do I feel I'll be using this gif a lot in the coming days? :')

\*runs to read Ruin\*

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## **Deborah Obida says**

*This review is spoiler free for book two, since its almost impossible for me to review this without mentioning the first book, they are tid bits of spoilers from book one, I mentioned names of characters that lived and died so don't worry about that.*

This started just where Malice left off, no time jump. This consist of a lot of battle scenes that was so well depicted, why am I even surprise, the book is titled Valour for a reason. Lots of battle means the loss of characters, so many died and others are stuck in a situation that is slightly better than dying. The friendship, loyalty, family relationship is what I love most about this book, the way those that made it out of Dun Carreg look out for each, their unusual band that consist of men, women, wolver, birds its funny and I love it. Sadly I didn't get my wish, people I want dead still lives, more evidence of mean fantasy author.

The angels and demons finally made an appearance, I thought the author would drag that to the last book but no he did not, and that battle was epic, angels with wings, that is even cooler than dragons. Another thing that I love about this book is the abundance of great characters, amazing POVs, even the ones I want dead. The author also revealed the dark sun and the bright star and my guesses were correct.

### World building and Writing

From the first book we were made aware that the book will have lots of different locations, but more were added here, we get to visit Cambren, Domhain, The Vin Thallum's island and a host of other which the author did not falter in portraying. The depiction is perfect. The book is written in third person multiple POVs of the characters from the first and some new additional ones like Uthas, Tukul, Fidele, Maquin, Coralen and a host of others.

### Characters

The author performed a miracle here cause I was rarely annoyed by any of the characters. Veradis annoyed me a bit but that changed when he voiced out his opinion to Nathair instead of blind followership, I feel so bad for Nathair, whatever will he do now. I hope Veradis don't abandon him in this cause he trust and love him like crazy.

***There is more chance of my mother assassinating me than of Veradis turning against me. Please – outside.'***

Corban is still as amazing as ever, he made some decisions that I didn't agree with but the outcome was worth it, cause if he would have followed blindly they wouldn't have achieved half of what they did, I hope his loyalty to his friends and family don't stand in the way of duty cause I doubt things will go this well next time.

Cywen my girl, I love this crazy impulsive girl, She really made good decisions here, even the suicidal ones, her bravery is so admirable.

Coralen is one of the new characters, if you think Cywen is crazy and badass then you haven't met this girl, she is arrogant which I hope tames down in the next book.

Maquin just refused to be a pushover, I can already see the danger he will be in the next book, I weep for his enemies, am so glad he is among the good guys.

Camlin is just the guy to have around when you are running, he is an amazing scout and his skills with bow and arrow is enviable, glad he switched sides.

***This honour thing, Camlin thought. It has its downside. I'd not think twice about running away. He looked at Edana. Or maybe I would.***

Now that I know Alycon better, I actually feel bad for him, I loathe Calidus and all this revelations about him.

I love Dath and Farrell so much, their conversation is just so hilarious, especially this one.

***'You'll need to get yourself a pet wolvern,' Farrell said to Dath.***

***She's not a pet, thought Corban.***

***'Like that's going to happen. How about a crow?' Dath said. 'Brina – can I borrow Craff for a while?'***

*'Ha,' said Brina, who was sitting a little further along the table. 'We all know Craff scares you witless.'*

*'He does not,' Dath said.*

*Farrell squawked in Dath's ear and he jumped, then scowled.*

*'There's still hope for us, Dath. Not all of the lasses smile at Corban, anyway,' Farrell said. 'Coralen doesn't.'*

*'Now, I am scared of her. I think she actually tried to kill you in the practice court today, Ban,' Dath said.*

Finally Gwenith and Gar, so glad Corban has them, I love Halion, Marrock, even Vonn, I actually feel bad for him.

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