



Sung In Blood

Glen Cook

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For centuries, the legendary Protector, Jehrke Victorious, has kept safe the Crossroad of the World—Shasesserre. The City is kept guarded and blanketed from smaller-scale threats to dark magical anomalies. All was calm and peaceful for generations under the peaceful wizardry—until one day, a mysterious stranger brutally murders the Protector.

In this tale of *Sung in Blood*, responsibility now falls on Rider, the slain Protector's son. Presuming responsibilities as Protector of Shasesserre, he dedicates his duty to avenge his father's death. Joined by his loyal companions, Rider is not alone in his search for the killer. His companions are a diverse bunch, which include a shape-shifting imp, a northern barbarian, a wild philosopher, and many others.

Together, Rider and his companions battle against the vile minions of the brooding Kralj Odehnal. Soon they will face the ultimate evil, Shai Khe, the merciless sorcerer bent on ruling all of Shasesserre. The desperate mission will be a hard-fought one. They will utilize the sharpest of swords while facing the most powerful of spells.

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Sung In Blood Details

Date : Published November 1st 2006 by Night Shade (first published 1992)

ISBN : 9781597800631

Author : Glen Cook

Format : Hardcover 200 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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From Reader Review Sung In Blood for online ebook

Don says

felt like the beginning of a series, but have found nothing to follow it, so far.

Jim says

Probably the worst thing I've ever read by Glen Cook. That is to say only 4 or 4-1/2 stars instead of "Why am I limited to five" stars. The thing I liked less than usual was that the main protagonist is so good at everything. (And to a lesser extent, so are his friends) It's a murder mystery that turns into a kingdom security matter and there are unknown forces at work that seem like their discovery could have been the basis for another book or two, but since this was published eight years ago, it doesn't look like that will happen.

Mike says

I really like a lot of Glen Cook's stuff, but this one felt like a story that got written at the beginning of his career and then published much later without any major changes (I don't claim to know if that's true, but it certainly reads that way). The main character is a painful Marty Stu, women are rare and only occasionally described as speaking (almost never given actual dialogue), and he just can't stop saying "oriental" -- and I get that it's fantasy, but why not use whatever you decided to replace the continent of Asia with? Why not "easterner" if the reason you were using "oriental" was directional? And all in all, this novel just didn't have much going for it in terms of story (e.g., the plot device of having a name come up that the good guys recognize but just can't quite place is used three different times) that could counterbalance these kinds of unpalatable choices. I expected better; especially considering how much better the Black Company series and (more recently) the Instrumentalities of the Night series are.

Joe says

Fantasy pulp action

While a bit short, it harkens back to fast paced action days off yore. Rider is a fantasy Doc Savage, trained from his early youth to fight evil and save his city. If you like Gluten Cook's of beat characters, this novel has them.

Joshua Bizeau says

This novella will undoubtedly never procure a sequel, something which this short action-packed fantasy adventure cries out for when the final paragraph has been digested. The ideas here in the book feel half-

baked at best and practically scream to be explored in further context. Cook's prose is snappy and thrilling and while his usual care for detailed, fleshed-out characters is put by the wayside, the team of quirky protagonists on display here are fun none-the-less and a couple can certainly be rendered as particularly memorable (Rider, Su-Cha, Shai-Khe). The most noteworthy comment regarding "Sung in Blood" would be to mention its obvious tribute to the Doc Savage and Fu Manchu series, both in tone and color. The action hardly lets up yet, like any thrill-a-second roller coaster, yet the book's charm really only lasts while you're in the midst of it. There's little left to ponder or explore once you're done spinning, tossing and tumbling through the ride. Certainly the most unimpressive work the masterful Glen Cook has written but I can still recommend it to fans of the author as an enjoyable, short-lived thrill ride-- nothing more.

Terence says

A very, very minor effort from Cook. It reads like something dashed off in a weekend for some contractual purpose. There's no character development (not that that's ever been one of Cook's strengths); and the plot is a rehash of earlier and better work from his Black Company and Dread Empire novels (among others).

I can't really recommend this even for Cook fans. Unless you can find it in a library or really, really cheap *and* you like Cook don't waste your time or money on this one.

"Real" rating = 1.5 stars

Joseph says

A fast-paced and playful standalone novella.

Andy says

Quite a strange book really - even for a Glen Cook book this lacked character development or world building (but that doesn't seem to matter in his books) and the ending is almost as if he just decided to stop writing and wrapped it up as best he could. But it does work though. Definite potential for another series of books but I assume this won't happen now (and it could well have been a practice run for the Black Company). It's also not that long so you have to decide how much it's worth paying for it.

Michael says

This book was a fun read by a master of Fantasy, Glen Cook. It is somewhat different than his usual fantasy works. The main character, Rider, is reminiscent of Doc Savage and his follower remind me of Doc's men. If Doc had been in a world of swords and sorcery he and Rider would have been two of a kind. I recommend this book to Fans of Glen Cook and Doc Savage.

Periklis says

"That's what I've been waiting for all my life. A chance to go one on one with a guy so bad he scares himself when he walks past a mirror."

I discovered this novelle through Black Gate magazine. It was first published in the '90s by NESFA Press in recognition of the author's status as Guest of Honor at Boskone 27.

It is a mixture of pulp conventions, from **the Phantom** (the mantle), to **Fu Manchu** (the Oriental villainous mastermind) to **Doc Savage** (the Hero and his crew) in a low fantasy setting (no elves or dwarves). My main problem with this is that Glen Cook emulates the writing style of the pulps. The short chapters, little character description and constant switching of POVs make it a bit tiring to follow the action. Which is plenty, if not predictable for someone familiar with a typical Doc Savage story (like Fortress of Solitude). That said, anyone looking for a good retroactive adventure will love this short novel.

The system of magic that Cook devised is really interesting (the aether-like "Web"), involving not only fireballs but flying ships also. I really enjoyed most elements of this but would enjoy it a lot more, if it was written in the author's signature style. What Steven Erikson describes as "[..] Vietnam War fiction on *Peyote*" ...

Derek Bailey says

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, you do all the right things at the bookstore. You look through a section that has your favorite type of book, you grab one that looks like it's a good length, it has a decent or even spectacular cover, the synopsis is good, the Goodreads score is pretty good, and what little you read of it seems like it's something that will love. You're excited to read it, but when you finally do, it's just a bundle of disappointments stacked on top of each other. I use the second person in this scenario because I'd like to think I'm not the only person that this has happened to. Unfortunately this is pretty much the experience I had with Glen Cook's *SUNG IN BLOOD*, a fantasy book that seemed like it would be a quick little hit for me yet somehow managed to feel like it took forever to get through in spite of it being less than two hundred pages long. Now this might be a harsh way to open a review and it's important to set the precedent that there were **SOME** things that the novel handled well, but there were just so many annoyances along the way that I find myself hard pressed to say that I liked this. Cook constructs an intricately compelling setting that I am absolutely a fan of. It's just too bad that I found the characters and story-line to be every bit as dull as the world was vibrant.

CHARACTERS

There really isn't all that much to say in this category. Are there just as many characters as one might expect in a fantasy novel? Yes. Is the cast diverse and colorful? Yes. But are any of the characters at all compelling? No, not one bit. For starters, they have really dumb names. There's Soup and Spud who I constantly got confused, probably because both their names have to do with food and both their personalities are equally indistinct. Then there is Preacher who likes to spout verses, though we are rarely ever treated to what those verses are which feels like a huge cop out when it comes to his character as well as the station he occupies. There's a stereotypical-ly grouchy barbarian named Chaz and probably one or two others that I'm forgetting about in the supporting cast, but all of them a pretty forgettable. The main protagonist here is a man known as Rider. He's the strong, handsome hero with all the power and none of the personality. Yeah he has emotions and such, but there's no real depth to his character. There's never a sense that he's doing what he does for any particular reason and I never really knew what makes him tick. Rider's got a little demon minion

named Su-Cha and if anyone is the life of the party, it's him. He's no less one dimensional than the rest of the crew, but he's a welcome source of comic relief in a story that takes itself rather seriously. The villains are a mix of just okay. The big bad is maniacal, but the only thing that really makes him scary is the obscene amount of power he wields. He's got a general named Emerald who's crafty, but otherwise inconsequential and then there's Caracene, who's supposed to be a witch, but she's more of a wallflower in most cases.

WORLD/SETTING

The world in this book is by far one of the best fantasy settings I have EVER seen in a book. This is the one (and only) area in which the book shined and frankly, it's what kept me reading. I think many would probably describe this as a steampunk setting, though I'd argue it's more of a high fantasy world. There are airships and all other sorts of crazy medieval-ish contraptions and a TON of magical elements to be found as well. The way magic works in this world is very cool. There's this mystical construct known as "The Web" which Rider seems to derive some of his abilities from. Then there's also heavy use of totems, demon summoning, and the good old fashioned practice of shooting powers out from your hands. Even the airships themselves are much more magic-based (hence partly why I wouldn't call this steampunk).

The entire story takes place around one city, but the landscape of it is still quite varied. There is Rider's father's workshop, the castle, and lively streets that the characters explore along with some lush islands which surround the city of Shasesserre. The space never once felt confining and I truly did long to explore more of it even in the face of how little I liked the rest of the novel's components. I also loved that the broader world was mentioned in conversation in ways that felt meaningful to the world building. All in all, it was just a breathtakingly different place to visit and I'm glad to have had a book take me there.

PLOT/TONE

I really don't know what to say in this category. The plot starts off very strong with the assassination of Rider's father, Jerkhe who's long served as the city's "protector." His death was undoubtedly organized by one of his enemies and has deep implications for the safety of the city. It's up to Rider and his ragtag band to find the mastermind behind the assassination and prove to everyone that they can keep the city safe from harm even without Jerkhe. If all of that sounds interesting enough, that's because it certainly is on a superficial level. But the stale delivery of each and every line of dialogue and the constant lack of tension or suspense of any kind really just made this "adventure" feel like a chore to get through. It's possible that I was just so dispassionate towards all of the characters that I wasn't feeling the full effect of the more action-packed sequences, but either way there was a certain impact that I simply did not feel even though I appreciated the creativity and careful choreographing of the action. On the note of action though, I should point out that while Rider, Su-Cha, and some of the bad guys are all very proficient fighters, the rest of Rider's crew is almost useless. It is staggering how many times they are captured after putting up a pitiful fight during the course of this short work. I REALLY don't know what the deal is with that.

Another major issue I had was with the perspective switching. It's third person and Cook kind of uses a narrative voice that is similar to how a camera might follow characters in a movie. The trouble is that he is so stingy with providing visual descriptions that I often got lost as to who or what I was reading about at. And it's weird because in spots, the imagery is top notch, then it's nonexistent in others. It's just a wildly inconsistent mix that really bugged me almost more than the weak characterizations.

CONCLUSION

If you're the type of reader that really just loves a compelling world, then I think I might actually recommend this to you. The trouble is, if you're like me and characters and plot are actually the main draws when reading a piece of fiction, then this story will leave A LOT to be desired. It's certainly got it's charming moments and at it's best, it reminded me of one of those fantasy cartoons from the 90s (except in a much more adult

flavor). Ultimately though, this should have been a much quicker read for me than it was and I found myself largely finishing it simply because it's short and I'm a bit behind where I want to be with my 2016 reading goals. I am also quite upset by the fact that this seems to be a standalone work, yet it had a ridiculously open-ended conclusion. At the end of the day, I'm sad to report that it wasn't to my tastes which is really too bad because Cook has an unbelievable knack for sucking readers into a living, breathing world of magic and mystery.

Bard Bloom says

I generally like Glen Cook's serious fantasy, like this. When I read it, I kept checking the date: it seemed like it must be his first book, from when he was learning to write. Actually, it's a somewhat later book, a quick thing he wrote for some specific occasion.

It's one of Cook's worst books. It's not **bad**, and if you're a Cook fan you might as well read it when you're out of other Cook books. But it's very shallow: all of Cook's usual flaws, and only faint versions of his usual virtues.

Paul McNamee says

Short burst of Cook. A Doc Savage like team protects an Empire from an unsavory Fu Manchu like character - all in a fantasy setting as only Cook can create with imps and sorcery and airships powered by demons. Some repetition and abrupt ending make it feel like an abandoned long novel, rather than a short novel. Some argue it would be better as a longer piece, I think it would be tighter with some trimming.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at [Bookwraiths Reviews](#)

Sung in Blood is a little known work penned by Glen Cook, the author of such amazing series as *The Black Company* and *The Dread Empire*, and it was written by Mr. Cook for dissemination at a convention he appeared at in the 1990s, then later published in novel form. Truthfully, the book can be characterized as either a long novella or a very short novel, and while it has all the hallmark features of one of Cook's traditional fantasy books, it lacks the usual complexity and polish. Be that as it may, *Sung in Blood* is still a rousing adventure, filled with interesting characters, classic Cook-esque magic, airships, and an urban setting. Well worth any fantasy reader's time.

In the great city of Shasesrre and its empire, the kings are overseen and guarded by the great and powerful Jerhke. The Protector, as Jerhke is called, is a great sorcerer, having lived for hundreds of years and kept Shasesrre safe from its enemies by the use of a magical web that covers the city, allows him to monitor everyone within, and that powers his great acts of sorcery. But in a couple hundred years, Jerhke has made more than a few enemies, and as the story begins, one of these adversaries accomplishes the unexpected: assassinating the Protector in his own city!

Into the magical void steps Rider, son of Jerhke and the chosen successor to the mantle of Protector. Quickly,

Rider and his group of trusted friends begin the frantic search for the murderer, battling against the agents of a mysterious foreigner called Kralj Odehnal.

As soon as Rider and his friends run to ground the vile assassin, they discover that his was only a small part of a greater scheme of terror; one which is so vast and so intricate that Rider wonders if even his father with the help of the “Web” could have foiled the plot of the deadly sorcerer who wishes to rule Shasessre or destroy it!

All in all, this book was an old school pulp fiction adventure with a twisting, turning narrative filled with intrigue, magic, humor, and suspense. Sure, it is short, has minimum character development, and little world building, but even with those qualities, Cook delivers great action and even gets in a lot of witty dialogue like the following: *“That's what I've been waiting for all my life. A chance to go one on one with a guy so bad he scares himself when he walks past a mirror.”* So like I mentioned earlier, any fantasy fan should give this one a try – especially if you like Glen Cook.

William Gerke says

Glen Cook takes on the pulp hero genre with this homage to Doc Savage set in the fantastical city of Sasshere. Rider and his cohort investigate the assassination of Rider's father, the publicly-acclaimed Protector of the City. They uncover a conspiracy of evil that tests them to the limits. Mixing classically Cook-style magic, airships, and an urban landscape that's new to his works, Cook creates a short, lightweight, yet readable rendition of the classic pulp tropes (down the the hero's companions being captured and then rescued by him). There is, frankly, nothing else out there quite like this.
