



Shadowrise

Tad Williams

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With King Olin imprisoned and Prince Kendrick slain, the royal twins Barrick and Briony have been forced to flee their homeland. But both families and nations can hide dark and terrible secrets. Even if Barrick and Briony survive learning the astonishing truths at the heart of their own family and of Southmarch itself, they must find a way to reclaim their kingdom and rescue their home-from traitors, tyrants, a god-king, and even the angry gods themselves.

Shadowrise Details

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From Reader Review Shadowrise for online ebook

Damon Caraway says

Very solid effort for Williams. Great character development in a vividly described, and dangerous, landscape. If anyone can create elves/faeries better (and more realistically) than Williams, I can't wait to read them. Skurn (the foul fowl) continues to be my favorite character with the twins coming in a close second.

Terence says

For me, Tad Williams is a "comfortable author." I can rely on him to write engaging stories that don't push the envelope too far but still manage to inject enough creativity and energy to make reading enjoyable.

And he really has a handle on fairies. They're just alien enough so that you believe they're more than humans with pointed ears (unlike Terry Brook's "elves" in the *Shannara* series) but their motives remain comprehensible. A similar sense of otherworldliness also made Williams' earlier *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* stand out and explains, in part, the 4 stars I gave it.

I'm a little disappointed that, so far, Williams hasn't gone quite as far out on the limb in these books as he did in *Memory*; the series takes few risks. The northern continent of Eion differs little from early Renaissance Europe. The kingdom of Southmarch, which protects the more southerly lands from the fairies north of the Shadowline, can easily be mistaken for England (or perhaps Scotland is the better comparison). To the south, across the sea, lies Xis, a realm from the Arabian Nights ruled by a mad, Caligula-like figure, the Autarch Sulepis.

And the characters are familiar: Briony, the headstrong, spoiled daughter of Southmarch's king, who's forced to grow up when she's driven into exile; Barrick, her twin brother, crippled and lost on the wrong side of the Shadowline; Qinnitan, fleeing from the Autarch's harem and carrying the same fairy blood as the twins; Ferras Vansen, captain of the royal guard who harbors an unrequitable love for Briony; Chert, a simple Funderling stonemason caught up in events; Yasammez, the fairies' chief general, driven by a millennial anger to destroy humanity; and many others.*

But that's what makes Williams a "comfortable author." I know what I'm getting, and I know it'll be good.

He does begin to push the envelope more strongly in this third book, however, particularly in regards to the gods and the apocalyptic consequences of their return. Which is why Williams stands out among the crowd of Fantasy hacks today, and it makes him an author worth reading.

Recommended for the fantasy enthusiasts who like grand, multivolume epics and good storytelling.

* Perhaps too many "others." Williams' stories tend to get out of his control to fill up a lot of pages; he could use a good editor to prune the bushes.

Metaphorosis says

I have the occasional argument with friends about whether Tad Williams has anything of his own to say. While I agree that *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* was derivative, I thought *Otherland* was innovative and interesting, as was *The War of the Flowers*. The first two books of *Shadowmarch* seemed to bear out that promise.

Shadowrise, unfortunately, bogs down substantially. It's not bad, but it is dull. The complex plot moves on, and Williams does a good job of keeping all the key characters in play. Potentially intriguing things happen, but somehow they're not really intriguing. For one thing, he doesn't really explore them - they just happen, then are left behind. While all the characters are on desperate, life and death quests, the book somehow becomes just a series of events - "this happened, then this happened, then that happened, then the other thing happened". Even the complex relationships of the gods, which we learn more about, didn't really hold my interest. One revelation apparently intended as a key tipping point in the human-fairy relationship evoked no more from me than acknowledgement - because I never got very deeply involved.

The book isn't bad - it just feels like filler. Williams notes that he intended it to be shorter, and it probably would have been a better book that way. One case when one wishes for a firmer editorial hand.

I already have *Shadowheart*, book 4 of the series, but I feel as if I can fairly well predict what will happen in that heavy volume. I foresee more of the same - moving, complex parts, but no great surprises. I hope I'm wrong.

If you're considering whether to read past book 2, and you're not a die-hard Williams fan, I'm afraid I have to advise against. Too big an investment of time for too little return.

Reginac1 says

The penultimate book in Williams' latest series. You can see the author begin to draw all the strings together from this massive world he has created. It is a finely realized world and the characters are internally consistent. The plot is fast paced yet there are places the reader can relax and draw a breath before plunging into the next round of action. The worth of the series will be determined by the last book but this 3d volume is a positive indicator for the future. I hope to be around in November to read the concluding volume.

Victoria Osborne says

This is the Third book in a series of four thick epic fantasy series. Like many middle books it has a tendency to drag a bit. I found that Barriks adventures in Fairy land somewhat tedious and hero's quest.

William's novel structure is not as clear. However, despite the rather flabby prose it is still a gripping book. His adventures with Briony and Qinnitan are especially riveting. I am thoroughly engrossed by the story surrounding the Autarch. The Egyptian god king from the desert adds more risk than even the otherworldliness of the fairies.

If you are a fan of big meaty epics then please read this book. It is not a book for the fainthearted or someone

that has problems keeping track of multiple plotlines and a cast of thousands. But if you find book like that challenging and fun then you will love this series.

Paul says

Yes, that's right, I've juiced this rating to four stars, because as my band teacher taught, avoid the middle of the road. No, actually, the first book was a crappy two star, while the second was a borderline three, and this book is really getting better. Highlights (my laptop is dying) include his ever-improving depiction of madman Autarch Sulepis from the POV of his incredibly normal prime minister and the unbelievably satisfying way in which he wraps up the book with Barrick's storyline reaching a not only unexpected but sensible and loosely verisimilitudinous climax.

I was wondering if the series was going to end with this book (I'd forgotten that the reviews on the back cover promised an ending in the unpublished Book 4), so important is Barrick's piece of the plot, but there's still probably just enough to wrap up in one full additional novel. It's funny how many, many elements of the final resolution are quite clear, including Barrick and Quinnitan's roles in the future (the fact that Quinnitan has any bloody purpose being in the novels at all is an unexpectedly refreshing twist), but I'm still looking forward to seeing how Tad chooses to resolve all the piddling little questions like how many of the flock of POV and other major characters he needs to kill to raise sufficient tension, who Briony marries (I mean, duh, it's Vansen, you've known that since his first POV, but it would be REALLY refreshing if Tad chose to marry her off to...the obvious candidate in this book...MUCH more verisimilitude there), etc.

Bob Milne says

Oh, Tad . . . what a tangled, deceptive, infuriating web you weave! It seems as if the Shadowmarch series has been going on forever, and it seems that I've been reading Shadowrise (the first half of the concluding volume) for even longer than that. With it's deliberate pacing, slow unveiling of the deeper mysteries, and fitful advances of the plot, this is hardly what one would describe as an all-consuming read . . . and yet, no matter how many times I put it down, it was never long before I found myself itching to take it up again.

Although a far more languid read than the first two volumes, this is also the first instalment where we really begin to get a sense of what is going on in the realm of Southmarch and beyond. All the various tangled threads begin to come together here, hinting at deeper meanings, yet never really coming right out and declaring the story's intentions. King Olin's story develops nicely, alongside that of the insane Autarch Sulepis, but it takes so long that, by the time it comes, the Autarch's grand revelation of his plans for the King is largely anticlimactic.

On the other side of the world, Vansen and Chert finally get a chance to show what they are made of, putting them squarely at the centre of the only real action within the novel. We also begin to see glimpses of who Flint really is, and what his role in the story is to be, but he's still a character-in-waiting. More disappointing is the way in which Chaven is wasted, relegated to a supporting role as the crazy old man.

As for Briony, the young woman who dominated much of the first two books is largely left to fill space here. She gets entangled in court politics, a long-distance love triangle, and even some mystical affairs, but she really does nothing to advance herself or the story. It's almost as if Tad felt the need to insert some courtly

scenes into what had largely become a story of forests and tunnels, and chose to draw out her return home just long enough to win her few enemies and a few friends. Meanwhile, Qinnitan is provided with some early growth and exposure, hinting at some deeper ties to the royal twins, and even gets the chance to seize her own fate and dictate the final chapter of her story, but her significance has been held back for far too long to make her a truly effective character.

Having said all that, this is the book where Barrick gets to shine, and it's his presence that makes this a must-read. He grows, evolves, and develops more over the course of this one book than most heroes do in an entire saga. I dreaded his scenes in the first two books, and often found myself skimming over his "pity poor me" ranting. Had I been Gyir, or even Vansen, I would have sacrificed him long ago. Fortunately, being left on his own (accompanied only by a crazed bird) frees the young prince to stop playing against others' expectations and start being himself. He has some powerful scenes in this book, so much so that I actually found myself caring for his safety, and ultimately cheering his heroic maturing.

As it always the case with Tad's books, the writing here is stellar, with the dreamlike scenes beyond the shadowline more powerful than anything I've read in recent years. The dialogue is crisp and clever, and the theology/mythology is wonderfully detailed. Even the minor characters stand out on their own, instantly recognizable no matter how little page time they receive.

Part of me wants to rail against Tad for choosing to split this final volume into two parts (with Shadowheart concluding things), unnecessarily drawing out the story, and dragging us through a novel that's as much set-up for the end as it is movement towards that end. The other part of me, however, is perversely thankful for the prolonged climax and the chance to spend a little more time in his world. Don't get me wrong, this is no Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn, but it is Tad Williams, and that means it's epic fantasy of a higher calibre. Had this been any other author, I likely would spend more time singing its praises, but Tad has created such expectations that I (perhaps unfairly) feel the need to nitpick.

Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins

Cornelia says

This time "only" four stars, because some passages felt too packed with stuff, which should have been better to be handled in a longer chapter. But still fascinating, and I'm wondering, what'll happen to those characters, we currently don't know, where they are and what they're going to do. I'm sure, that the cloaked beggar is Shaso - back from the dead -, and I really hope to see Sparrow again. I also hope, that Sulepis will get, what he deserves! And I'm looking forward to the clash of gods, which will happen for sure. If only gods with eachother or gods with Quar, mankind and the other races involved - we'll see.

Vivone Os says

Zanimljivo! Zanimljivo! Zanimljivo! Radnja se sve više i više zapetljava, baš me zanima što će biti do kraja.

Bradley says

This series continues to be something of an enigma, but not in the usual sense of the word.

Sure, there's a number of great reveals in this volume that let us dive deeper and deeper into what the gods are and what they were and how they work. We understand the god's children, the Fae who are bursting out into this fantasy land and displacing or killing the lesser, or rather, quite equal humans.

There's even a great deal of good action and epic battles and tons of court intrigue and traveling on the road if hobnobbing with gods isn't your thing. It is my thing, however, and I count that part of the storytelling to be some of the most interesting. By far. Keyword STORYTELLING. Those of you who've read this will understand what I mean. It's quite beautiful how the gods and their lands work.

Dreams, imagination, passing on of immortality, the difficulty of children... all of it wraps up into something quite delicious.

And then there's the enigma.

How can something with such core awesomeness in an epic fantasy wind up having so many tedious passages? I'm sorry, but the book is too long. I might have said the same about the other two and by the look of things, the fourth is the worst.

Unfortunately, some storylines lost my interest. I might have perked up with the assassination attempts and the escapes and the times of good dialogue where reveals were being had, but the rest was full of sad tedium.

And yet I still rate this as a four star because on the whole, I love the story. That's the strength of Tad Williams and it's why I'm willing to slog a bit. It's worth it in the end. Especially this novel. The end was pretty fantastic and has me rearing to pick up the next. :)

But I shall wait a little. I need to recharge. :)

Elisabeth Wheatley says

Me when I started the series:

Me now:

Wm says

On the surface this series is underwhelming and doesn't break any new ground. But the more I think about it, the more I like. It's solidly plotted. It's well-written. It's entertaining. I care about the characters. In other words, it's Tad Williams. I'm reserving one star, though, until I know how it turns out in the end.

Alex says

My favorite quote so far, from Tinwright's mother:

"Didn't the good book always say people are to be sausaged?"

"Solaced, mother, solaced"

Tim says

"Shadowrise" lifts a few more veils and deepens the various plots running through this fine, four-book fantasy epic. In this third volume, Tad Williams again resists tossing in new elements willy-nilly, instead getting the big wheels of this story moving a bit more inexorably toward a climax.

At Southmarch castle, the fairy folk begin their assault above ground and deep in the warrens of the stone-dwelling Funderlings, as the reasons for their obsession with the castle become clearer. The imposing Qar bitch Yasammez finally sets the destruction plans in motion with the evident failure of Prince Barrick to successfully fulfill the Pact of the Glass and deliver a mirror deep in the shadow realms of the Qar that will save the fairy queen. But not so fast. Barrick's quest does continue, and his adventures in search of the city of Sleep and the Dreamless (after being pursued by the slow but sticky-fiber-throwing cocoon-y Silkins) with the talking Raven, Skurn, are exciting and highlight "Shadowrise." They're joined by a patchwork-clad human we've met before who now is trapped in the beclouded fairy realm.

Meanwhile, the ruthless Autarch of Xis continues his journey to Southmarch, his reasons similar to the Qar's. Qar blood and god's blood are mixed up in the troubles, but for now the gods still sleep.

Princess Briony survives attempts to kill her and flees again, finding a new ally.

Deep beneath Southmarch, Funderlings and a few humans try to stop the finally moving Qar invasion, ratcheting up the Funderling angle that sometimes had dragged in the earlier books.

With the third book under my belt, it becomes increasingly evident that those who somewhat understandably bailed after the series' first book, "Shadowmarch," missed out. Williams really did know what he was doing, and his tale is quite good even through an inconsistent start. Spending more and more time with these strong characters is increasingly rewarding.

Jim Pfluecke says

Ok, so I am a fan of Tad Williams and will read almost anything he prints for adults. However, this series got off to a bit of a rocky start with the first book, which was very tightly written and, in fact a little too tight. It felt more like a scripted, by the numbers fantasy book. Much of it seemed like he was trying to write a more original, grown up version of the Memory, Sorrow and Thorn series. It was still good and interesting but it seemed like too much was going on yet nothing was happening. The second book picked up and got better, with a lot of unexpected stuff and, imho, a really imaginative world taking shape.

This book, the third, is fantastic. Much of the plot falls into place and the theology of the world comes into focus and becomes a front and center part of the plot. The representations of good and evil become confused and some annoying characters become interested. And the world itself, with its people's, fairies and gods, really comes into its own and feels like a believable, renaissance era world...

So, the point of this poor review is that if the first book seemed a bit dry, hang in there and keep going, because it gets really good.

Brandon says

Where *Shadowplay* really picked up the pace from *Shadowmarch* not only in terms of action, but in terms of originality and creativity, *Shadowrise* continues forward in one direction, but I feel steps backwards in the other. The story really comes into its own in this book, with all the characters starting to sound much more like full entities instead of cardboard cut-outs, and a lot of really great ideas are introduced (or expanded upon). Despite this, however, I found myself feeling restless throughout large portions of the book - other than Barrick's various adventures beyond the Shadowline, very little in the way of action happened. Don't get me wrong, I'm not looking for R.A. Salvatore-style nothing-ever-stops-happening fantasy, but I felt through reading this book that I would really like to just skip passed major sections and get back to the story, which to me, seemed odd considering its placement in the series. In particular, I found Captain Vansen's storyline to be extremely dull, and seemed almost like filler to me - which is a shame, because during the first two books, Vansen was my favorite character.

Something else I've noticed is that I feel that Tad Williams' prose doesn't have the grace it once had. I did not pick up on this through the first two books, possibly because I was enthralled by the origins of the story as well as by a lot of action, but during the slower parts of *Shadowrise*, this really stood out to me. When I look at series like *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* and *Otherland*, where I have memorized passages of text because of how they stand out to me as being so beautifully-well crafted, I definitely feel that *Shadowmarch* is a slight step down. Some of it these feelings I attribute to my overall unrest with the book, but some I feel come from some new stylistic choices Williams had made in these books - such as becoming a bit more graphic in his speaking of sex (though nothing like Martin, who I often call the Stephen King of fantasy).

Without a doubt though, one of Tad Williams' greatest strengths as a writer is his ability in a series for the penultimate volume to finally begin putting together all the plot pieces like a puzzle - and like a puzzle, the picture becomes clear in a way that is very satisfying to the reader. This story does not disappoint in that regard - the way Barrick's history with the Qar is slowly revealed, similarly overlapping various reveals of his father Olin, and the slave girl Qinnitan, is pure genius, and I found myself being very delighted to read the last few chapters where the reveals became more important. This made me hunger for more, which is another of Williams' stronger authorial techniques, and one that he has not yet failed at delivering as far as I'm concerned.

Overall, I would say this book is a pretty strong B+ for the fantasy genre as a whole, but well below average for Tad Williams (who I make no excuses for being my favorite author - fantasy or *otherwise*).

I will not be able to start *Shadowheart* until next week, but from the non-spoiler reviews I've read, I expect it to really pick up the pace to go out with a bang.

Jessica says

This continues to be a great, sprawling epic.

It's not exactly a quick read, though. I found myself able to put it down and read other books, but I was always able to come back to it and instantly know right where I'd left off and what was happening. It's because of Williams' characters. He creates real people, and the instant you see their name, you know exactly what they're doing. The one problem I have with this book/series is Barrick. Him wandering around with the gross raven was the only part that dragged. This book ends with a fantastic plot twist centered on Barrick, but I wish we could have gotten there sooner!

Andrea says

The third book of the Shadowmarch series is the Tad Williams I fell in love with when I read *Memory, Sorrow and Thorn*. The pace has now picked up completely, and things are happening everywhere. Characters that were only annoying in the first two books are now compelling and interesting. Who would have thought that I'd ever enjoy reading about a disgusting, talking raven? We still have all the same story viewpoints. Briony in Syan, Barrick's voyage through the Shadowlands, Ferras Vansen and Chert in Funderling Town, the Autarch of Xis and Olin, Qinnitan and her captor, Matt Tinwright in Southmarch and a few glimpses at Duchess Merolanna and Sister Utta in captivity.

I personally found the Matt Tinwright and Chert viewpoints to be the least interesting. Matt is too overdone, but he was much improved on the previous books. I don't know what bothers me about Chert, but he just seems dull. I do however want to know the truth about Flint. (view spoiler).

In *Shadowrise*, Tad Williams finally starts unveiling some of the secrets that he's been building since the first book. We find out what the Pact of Glass and the Fireflower are. We find out the autarch's plans and the truth about the Curse of the Eddon family. Everything is pointing at Southmarch now, and book 4 should solve those final secrets that are still left. There are still quite a few. What's Qinnitan's story? What's Hendon Tolly's plan and what game is Chaven playing? What's this Avin Brone curveball? And will we ever find out what other plans Ynnir had for Flint? The whole series has so many strings that make up the story, and they're still not all unraveled. I think he'll be able to pull this off to a satisfying conclusion, and I cannot wait to read *Shadowheart* now.

Michelle Elizabeth says

This is long...really long...but I'm not sure that I could say that anything should be cut (except maybe most of Briony's scenes! Mr. Williams is many things, but not really a master of court intrigue). Barrick's journey only serves to illustrate just what strangeness he's gotten himself into, while other storylines emphasize the trouble Southmarch is in. I didn't really think Qinnitan's storyline was very exciting this time, but I like her (better than Briony - Briony's not a bad character, just a victim of a pretty dull storyline). Overall this volume answers a lot of questions, but doesn't give the endgame away.

Cindy says

Dieser dritte Teil ist teilweise etwas langatmig, an anderen Stellen aber auch sehr spannend. David Nathan liest auch dieses Hörbuch wieder großartig. Ich freue mich auf das Finale der Reihe.
