



The Redemption Engine

James L. Sutter

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When murdered sinners fail to show up in Hell, it's up to Salim Ghadafar, an atheist warrior forced to solve problems for the goddess of death, to track down the missing souls. In order to do so, Salim will need to descend into the anarchic city of Kaer Maga, following a trail that ranges from Hell's iron cities to the gates of Heaven itself. Along the way, he'll be aided by a host of otherworldly creatures, a streetwise teenager, and two warriors of the mysterious Iridian Fold. But when the missing souls are the scum of the earth, and the victims devils themselves, can anyone really be trusted?

From acclaimed author James L. Sutter comes a sequel to *Death's Heretic*, ranked #3 on Barnes & Noble's Best Fantasy Releases of 2011!

The Redemption Engine Details

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Author : James L. Sutter

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From Reader Review The Redemption Engine for online ebook

Matthew says

Get ready for a course in philosophy - mixed in with incredible action! This was a wonderfully rich story that takes the normally two dimensional stereotypes of good and evil and turns it into a fantastic and entertaining romp! It is indeed pretty "heavy" for sword and sorcery, but Sutter pulls it off beautifully without feeling like its a exercise or homework =)

Kendra Lawrence says

Having been a long-time reader of Forgotten Realms, I have recently delved into the world of Pathfinder. I enjoyed the first book in the Salim series, Death's Heretic, and this one was even better. I love seeing the different planes, and the theological debates. Salim is a flawed but fascinating character. I'm not a religious person, but I don't really understand the Rahadoumi (sp?) philosophy. Paying tribute to the gods doesn't mean you have to be yoked to them. They would rather spend eternity in the atheist graveyard than in a true afterlife, all for the sake of pride? It doesn't make sense to me, but it adds to Salim's character. In The Redemption Engine, we see him continue to grow.

Aside from Salim, my favorite characters in this book would have to be Roshad and Bors. I loved the idea of the Iridian Fold, and the inclusivity of this book (I hope to read more like it). Their love for each other was palpable, and it was refreshing to see.

And of course, there were the angels. Being a fan of angels, I enjoyed seeing the Pathfinder's take on them, and the idea of "redeemed devils" is something that comes into play in my own writing. Aruzethiel was an interesting character, and I wish he had been featured more prominently.

All in all, a great read, and I hope to read more about Salim's adventures in the future.

Rick says

In another Pathfinder Tales book set in the world of Golarion, James Sutter takes us on a ride through the different parts of the Pathfinder/Paizo universe. The story's protagonist is Salim Ghadafar, a cleric of the goddess of death, who is from a country that does not worship gods. So, he has this inner conflict over helping the goddess and being independent. The goddess' minions send him on interesting quests (this is not the first time we have met Salim). This time, he is to investigate souls that went missing from the city of Kaer Maga. Salim's investigation of this trouble leads him to both heaven and hell, as well as parts in between, before he solves the riddle, and fixes the problem.

The story begins a bit slowly for me; it took a while to get into it. Salim is not my favorite character, as I find him a touch whiny. But, I warmed up a bit as the plot thickened. James Sutter is an editor at Paizo, so he knows the landscape there very well. I enjoyed reading as much for the scenery as I did for the story. But, as I read, I found the story to be enjoyable. It pulled me in and kept my interest. And, really, isn't that what you

want in a story?

Peter says

Decent tie-in fiction.

Tries a bit too much to be comment on morality, which makes the simplified good/evil, law/order system of D&D/Pathfinder a bit too restrictive.

Tinkergoth says

Full review originally posted on <https://thegrassygnoll.wordpress.com/>.... Version posted here is just the summary and selected excerpts, as the full review contains some spoilers

Would I recommend The Redemption Engine?

Short Answer: Yes.

Long Answer: Hell yes I would! Read it. Right now. Then tell me how awesome it is. Go on, I'll wait. In fact I might just reread it right now, in the hopes that when I'm done I'll look at the list of upcoming books in the series and see a third Salim story on there. It's got everything I wanted out of it. Angels, Devils, other miscellaneous Outsiders, plane hopping shenanigans, long coat (or robe) wearing clerics who kick ass and take names. Twisted plots and powerful magic. What more could you ask for?

As soon as the story started, I was sucked into the city of Kaer Maga. That danger is present is made immediately clear as Salim's first encounter in the city is a trio of muggers... but the same moment reminds you that Salim isn't your average priest, as he deftly deals with the situation, and walks away cool as a block of ice. You get a really good feel for just how strange this city is based on how he reacts to it. After all, if it's weirding out a hard-bitten inquisitor who regularly travels to other planes of existence, can use magic and isn't allowed to die due to the spite (as he sees it) of the Goddess of Death, I think it's a pretty good indication that you're not in Kansas anymore. So much that the inhabitants of the city take for granted is strange and confusing to Salim, with full-blooded orcs wandering around freely, undead servants being accepted and allowed, and an area of the city ruled by freed slaves who somehow seem to have reconciled themselves with the fact that the rest of the city still condones slavery.

Let's talk about the writing style. The Redemption Engine is an action packed novel. Once it gets rolling, it rarely slows down, and it gets rolling early. That said, James Sutter's writing makes it easy to keep track of what's happening. There's no confusion about who's doing what, where the characters are headed, it's all very clearly written and easy to understand. Combat is well written and exciting, with the descriptions giving a strong mental image of the action. Violence wise I wouldn't say it's any worse than any of the other novels in the Pathfinder Tales series. There are descriptions of injuries caused by magic and blades, but none of it is gratuitous or overly graphic, just enough to make it clear that they're fighting for keeps.

I'm also a big fan of the way he manages to get across core concepts of the characters, like Salim's disgust at having to use Pharsma's power. Rather than state that Salim hates it, we get a descriptive element to it,

where he likens the feeling of her divine power a taint contaminating him, like a mudslide pouring into a clear pond. Little touches like that are what make it such a joy to read.

Like Death's Heretic, it's one of the longer of the Pathfinder Tales, taking me most of a day to read. Death's Heretic took about the same amount of time for me, as did Chris A. Jackson's Pirates Honor and Ed Greenwood's The Wizard's Mask. So it's one of the meatier novels in the series so far.

Dave Walls says

The second Salim book is at least as good as the first. Here we get more planes travelling, great characters, and insight into Salim's psyche.

The Iridian Fold characters were touching. I'm hetero myself, but it is good to see LGBT/GSD characters treated as "normal," and not some odd (or worse) character who happens (or because of their oddness) to be gay.

Salim's conflict with himself, Pharsma, and those he must work with kept me wanting more. Salim grows as he understands his own motivations for his past decisions, the consequences of his past, and how his current decisions reflect on his current feelings, whether he admits them or not.

The travel to the different planes is fun and interesting, as it is something we don't see much in fantasy books (including other Pathfinder tales). And of course, it adds to my Pathfinder gameplay as I learn more about the world of Golarion in a deeper sense than from source books.

Peter says

If I would have been able to award half points as well, this would have been a three and a half star book. This is the second Salim book in the pathfinder tales series. In the previous book we got a tour of the planes, in this one the focus is hell, heaven and the boneyard. I know that they are technically also planes, but the focus here is more on the difference in morality and viewpoint than on the strange landscape. And the means to do this is an action packed detective story about stolen souls.

This book comes heavily recommended if you have any interest in Golarion or pathfinder.

Stephen says

Every now and then I'll read a book by an author I've never tried before. A lot of times it can be disappointing. Good plots gone bad, repetitive storytelling, or disastrous endings. But sometimes those new authors can payoff. In the case of James L. Sutter and his book The Redemption Engine, the gamble was a jackpot. The book combines compelling characters with deeply imaginative environments and a very fun plot. If you're looking for a good fantasy story, this one is worth your attention.

The book stars Salim Ghadafar, a servant of the Lady of Graves. The Gray Lady is the goddess of death, fate, prophecy and birth. However Salim is not typical priest. While he reluctantly uses the powers granted by the

goddess, and also performs her bidding, he's an atheist. Before he was pledged to the goddess, he was an ardent priest-hunter, a truly devoted servant to his godless homeland. Yet when fate intervened, he made a desperate deal, and ended up in the Gray Lady's service. Despite those circumstances, and knowing that the gods are real, he refuses to promise his soul to anyone, thus clinging to his belief in atheism. It's an interesting conflict for the character.

The main plot revolves around Salim's hunt for a group of soul thieves. His investigation leads him to explore the diverse city of Kaer Maga. Built at the top of a cliff behind massive walls, it's a place of refuge for outcasts. Salim encounters escaped slaves, necromancers, soothsayer trolls and even the occasional zombie slave. As he chases down clues, his adventure takes him to some very interesting places. Some of those journeys have a Lovecraftian touch to them while others are more like Dante's Inferno.

For those looking for diversity, *The Redemption Engine* takes a few steps to satisfy those readers. One of the antagonists (and later protagonists) is another servant of the Lady of Graves. She is a psychopomp who has an intimidating human form and a more terrifying spider form. Unlike Salim, she's not human, she relies on magic, and she's entirely devoted to her goddess. Unfortunately her story arc doesn't kick in until later in the book, but it does play out very well.

Other female characters include a few minor players, but several of the primary antagonists are females. Adding to the diversity are people of color, including Salim, but further jumping into the mix is a warrior couple who plays a very central role in the story. The warrior couple are both males. Now I've seen authors do this kind of thing before and it can feel very forced or very much like an afterthought. In this case, though, it's done in such a compelling manner that I have zero complaints. In fact the warrior couple turns out to be some of the best characters in the book.

One really surprising thing about Sutter's writing is how well he handles everything. The dialog is good, the characters are rich and fascinating. He does a great job at describing the environments and writes some really good fight scenes. The pacing of the story builds into several climaxes, each hitting as the characters go to new environments. As Salim's investigation continues, the stakes are raised and each climax gets a little bigger. The ending hits with lots of excitement and action. There's a nice amount of resolution, nothing drags out, and the book finishes on a high note. Best of all, it's not a slow starter. There's action right in the beginning with plenty of hooks to keep you reading. Overall, it's a great book.

When *The Redemption Engine* started out, I was drawn in pretty fast. Salim was a mysterious character, a sword fighter who dressed as a priest but who wasn't a priest. A guy who could hold his own in combat but was deeply troubled by his past. I wanted to know more and I wanted to see where his character would go. Then, as the world was slowly revealed, I was hooked. I loved all the creative and inventive elements. The sights described in the story create a deeply immersive experience that fuels the imagination. Throughout the story, that bar is raised to even wilder and more diverse environments. As a Star Wars fan, I'm a sucker for strange worlds and stranger inhabitants. *The Redemption Engine* takes fantasy to a level that I love. There's great characters, great landscapes, and it all comes together into a great adventure. I give it a five out of five and I'll certainly be adding James L. Sutter to my list of favorite authors. If his other books are as good as this one, I'll be buying them all.

Seth says

A fabulous read. I could hardly put it down. My list of unfinished chores will attest to that. While I did not

care so much for the previous novel by Sutter featuring Salim, this one was much better. It had great passing and character growth. It is not so hard to find a novel that takes you to Hell, but Heaven is another matter. Redeemed devils, dangerous angels, and ancient horrors make for a great story.

Paul says

James L. Sutter delivers another excellent Salim Ghadafar story with the *Redemption Engine*. From the wonderfully strange city of Kaer Maga and its equally weird citizens to far off planar locales, this story never slows down. Oh. Be on the lookout for two characters who in my opinion almost stole the show. To sum up, I really love this story, its characters and its locations. Do yourself a favor and buy this book. You will not regret it!

Cape Rust says

Book Review—The *Redemption Engine* (Pathfinder Tales)

June 6, 2014 / Cape Rust

Salim Ghadafar is an atheist who happens to be the cat's paw of the goddess of death. Yes, you read that correctly—he serves a goddess he doesn't believe in. When the worst of the worst show up dead, yet their souls are unaccounted for, Salim is dispatched to find those souls. His first stop is the anarchic city of Kaer Maga. While there, he finds clues that lead him to Heaven and Hell. Along the way, he meets a cast of characters that would have P.T. Barnum salivating. Salim must find the lost souls, no matter how despicable they may have been in real life, and he must do so while trying to figure out whom he can trust and how he can avoid becoming more indebted to a goddess he doesn't believe in.

The Pathfinder Tales once again prove that just because a book is based in an RPG setting, it doesn't mean that said book can't be deep and thought-provoking. This is a bit of a weighty tome; the paperback version I read came in at 509 pages of story with additional pages containing the always appreciated glossary beyond the story. This novel is as weighty in concept as it is in length. Sutter combined steady action with addressing some of the most esoteric concepts that can be tackled in fantasy writing. Combined with the subject matter are some interesting characters that continue to develop along with the story.

I am a fan of the art used for the covers of the Pathfinder Tales books. I got into this book and was ready to slam the Paizo folks for making the cover a huge spoiler. I wasn't even halfway through the book when I was convinced that the well-executed cover had a flawed concept: Thank you, Paizo, for proving me wrong. The cover depicts a pivotal scene, but it in no way spoiled who the actual culprit in this story was. Because I have read many books, I have seen several fantasy publishers spoil some great fantasy intrigue stories with well-drawn but poorly thought-out cover art.

Now for the characters. As is to be expected, there is a wide variety of characters of all sexes, races, and even species. Their personalities are as varied as their physical aspects are. Roshad and Bors are two men from the Iridian Fold that Salim encounters early in this story. Homosexual encounters in fantasy novels are nothing new and have been on the rise in the last few years, and this couple appeared to be yet another way for an author to jump on the bandwagon, and once again this novel proved me wrong. Yes, Bors and Roshad have a

homosexual relationship, but the physicality of their relationship was so minor as to be almost nonexistent. Being from the Iridian Fold, their bond and relationship is so much deeper than the physical aspects that you might expect. Sutter did something beautiful with these two characters: He took a hot-button topic and applied it to a philosophy that not only transcended the physical, but in many ways the typical emotional bonds that are normally formed in our real world societies. I can't possibly do justice to Sutter's take on this, but pay close attention when Roshad describes his relationship to Bors and the philosophy behind it. No matter what your personal feeling are on this subject, I can assure you it will blow your mind.

Salim, the main character, is both exciting and deep. The fact that he is an atheist in the service of a goddess is the first indicator of his complexity. The powers that his goddess, who really isn't his goddess, make Salim formidable. During the course of the story, we quickly learn that even without those powers he is still a BAMF (I'm sure it says that on his wallet). Many of the foes that Salim faces would be insurmountable without assistance from a higher power or at least more powerful beings, and his magical sword doesn't hurt his cause either. In his very subtle way, Sutter made the biggest conflict that Salim faced internal. There was plenty of action throughout the story, but the most significant conflicts come from within. Through the course of this story, I enjoyed watching Salim grow without compromising himself, too much.

Now for the story: Wow, just wow. This is a deep story. Sutter tackles so many deep issues and still keeps the action nicely paced and everything interesting. For the hack and slash fans, there are some gaps between fights that might turn you off; stick with it because it is worth it. Sutter tackles a rules book worth of concepts into a fluid story that never overwhelms the reader. Sutter explores such lofty subjects as law vs. chaos, love, alignments, heaven vs. hell and redemption to name just a few. I could actually see this book as an unconventional teaching aid for college-level philosophy classes. But even with all of the weighty concepts that Sutter engages, he keeps things on terms that the average reader can understand. As a reader you can easily delve into his take on these concepts, but it isn't a requirement to enjoy this story. His blend of addressing high concepts and well-written, descriptive action sequences made this one of the best fantasy books I've read in a long time.

This review was first published at www.koboldpress.com

Joel Flank says

James Sutter returns to the Pathfinder universe with another tale of Salim, the agent of Pharsma the goddess of Death. This time around, he's told to investigate why souls of evil men are bypassing judgment in the afterlife, and going directly to Heaven instead of Hell. Imagine Harry Dresden in a high magic fantasy world where he has to navigate the politics of the afterlife, gods, angels, demons, not to mention mortals who don't feel like helping him, and you get a sense of things.

Along the way Salim has to figure out who's really on his side, and appearances can be deceiving. He meets a strange duo who prefer being chained to each other and follow the obscure philosophy of the Irridian Fold, and has to examine the concept of redemption, both forced and willing, and determine what's more important, free will or empowering good to fight evil.

It's these weighty topics and examination of what it means to be mortal, and how that matters even in the absolute world of morality that gods and immortal beings live in, that makes Sutter's adventures more than simply an adventure tale, as he explores the most exotic realms of the Pathfinder world.

Neil McGarry says

I've read a good many of those RPG-inspired novels, but *The Redemption Engine* is definitely among the best. Sutter has a strong writing style, and he does a good job of giving the characters their own voices. Kaer Maga is an interesting place and, most surprising for a fantasy novel, filled with people other than white heterosexuals. It's surprisingly progressive for a genre not exactly known for blazing new trails in terms of diversity. The Redemption Engine itself (the device, not the book) was an interesting idea; can one be redeemed unwillingly?

That being said, there are some problems here. Although Kaer Maga is an interesting place, we don't spend as much time there as we should; instead, we're treated to a tour of the outer planes, which are really just the receptacles for additional information needed by the main character, Salim. This becomes especially noticeable at the end of the novel, in which a coalition force from throughout the city is assembled to deal with The Big Bad. Because the reader spends 40% of the story not in Kaer Maga, she doesn't get the place-familiarity she should to make this work well. In my view, Kaer Maga needs to be a character in and of itself, and it isn't.

Caramine, the bloatmage in charge of the Redemption Engine itself, isn't a very imposing antagonist, and Salim gets the better of her at each encounter. In fact, the final confrontation with Caramine's forces is somewhat of an anticlimax, because they just don't seem very intimidating. The same is true of the force of renegade angels, which when it attacks Pharsma's stronghold, is said to be smaller than the defending force. You don't build narrative tension by pointing out that the antagonists are tactically inferior.

Although I'm happy to see the inclusion of a gay male couple, I'm less than enthusiastic about the way their story is resolved. I'm not a fan of the you-go, I'll-sacrifice-myself thing to begin with--it's too pat and familiar--but in this case it's particularly problematic because it results in the lovers becoming, in a real sense, asexual. The neutered gay man is a tired trope in fiction, and it was not welcome here. (There's also a hint of Kill Your Gays, another unwelcome cliche.)

Finally, I don't understand why the Caulborn (read: mind flayers) are involved in this story. They do nothing but assist Salim for reasons I cannot fathom, and their inexplicable involvement in the final showdown really doesn't make much of a difference anyway. In fact, the entire "secret city" story line feels stapled on, as if it had been written later to pad out the book. You could have removed the entire undercity thread from the story and never miss it, which means it really doesn't have any place in the novel.

I've said more negative than positive, but I really did enjoy *The Redemption Engine*, if you keep your expectations modest, you will too.

Dave Gerard says

Does a really amazing job of explaining the cosmology of the Pathfinder universe especially in how it deals with good and evil.

Pastor2112 says

This is the second tale of Salim Ghadafar - the atheist priest-hunter who serves the goddess of death - in the Pathfinder Tales series. Immediately after reading (and greatly enjoying) his first tale in "Death's Heretic" I moved to this much larger sequel. It is bigger and better in every way (with the exception that missed the romance from the first novel). Salim's adventure takes the reader from a rogue city full of scoundrels to a deep underground vampire culture, to hell, to heaven, to heaven's library, and to the outer edges of the planes of existence. It's quite a ride, and feels epic in every way!
