



The Book of the Mad

Tanith Lee

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In her darkly dazzling finish to The Secret Books of Paradys, Tanith Lee tempts the reader with a tale of horror, lust and madness that leaves no perversity untouched, no taboo unbroken. This time, the seductive nightmare unfolds in three parallel versions of the City - Paradis, Paradys and Paradise. Connected by a labyrinth of ice whose dangers are amplified by the will and emotion of its lunatic travelers, these cities and their mad and near-mad denizens provide the stage for a drama of mythical proportions that none of the players can fully comprehend. Among the mad and the doomed are the murderous, remorseless siblings Felion and Smara; the violated woman-child Hilde; and Leocadia, the artist and visionary. Combining horror and hedonism, art and eroticism, Lee offers an aesthete's amoral view of beauty, pleasure and pain in her inimitable high style. This fourth book in the Paradys series is linked brilliantly to the previous three - The Book of the Damned, The Book of the Beast, and The Book of the Dead - not by plot but by its shared venue: the fantastic, Gothic, atmospheric and changeable city of Paradys.

The Book of the Mad Details

Date : Published July 1st 1993 by Harry N. Abrams

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Author : Tanith Lee

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From Reader Review The Book of the Mad for online ebook

Xdyj says

It's dark, lyrical, brilliant and subtly subversive, possibly one of the most well-written fantasy I've ever read. Like some other Tanith Lee books it features heavily on many of her usual themes, like art, death and insanity.

Dharia Scarab says

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more. But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It had earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Pomme de Terre says

3.5 stars. Puzzles within puzzles. I'm not certain how all the pieces fit together, but the emotional build and fall underlying it all is still horrifying, mysterious, grim, beautiful, and at the end, strangely hopeful. And I now have a strong urge to reread Dubosarsky's *Abyssinia*.

Justine says

When I was in elementary or middle school, I discovered fantasy fiction and tore through our school library in search of new authors. Somewhere between the jovial, no nonsense princesses of Patricia Wrede and the dreamy language of Patricia McKillip, I stumbled onto a book by Tanith Lee. I don't remember what the book was or even why I didn't like it, but I remember it being the first time I read something where I thought... whoa, this isn't for me.

Decades later, I decided to pick up some Tanith Lee to see if I would still have the same reaction. After

finishing the Book of the Mad, I have a few answers. 1) my initial reaction as a 10 year old was probably one of shock at the graphic violence, overt sexuality, and batshit craziness. 2) I actually didn't mind it as an adult! While this isn't my particular brand of fantasy fiction, I appreciated reading something from a writer who is clearly quite original in her thinking.

With that long preamble, I will attempt to provide some kind of synopsis.

Book of the Mad is set in three alternate versions of the same city - Paradis, Paradise, Pardys. One is a post apocalyptic wasteland where incest is encouraged, there is no sun, the river is a poison that is served up in bars, and a pair of murderous twins kill with abandon (and apparently no consequences). One is a semi post apocalyptic version of decadence where a painter leading an excessive life is put in a mental institution. One is an old-timey rigid society where a young girl is sexually assaulted and then put in an asylum. Oh, also, the twins have some kind of time travel maze of ice they use to move between worlds one and two. Get it yet?

Here, maybe I can share some themes that would help. 1) penguins. You think i'm kidding, but i'm not. Penguins, an imaginary/maybe real land made of penguins is a major theme. 2) brutal violence. Because you know what always has really nice scenes? Old timey mental institutions. 3) rampant sexuality (that is actually kind of freeing in its lack of moralizing). Confused yet?

Lee's writing is exquisite in moments - saucy and droll and as DGAF as I've read in genre fiction. That being said I found the book a bit too structurally loose and alogical and can't quite get over whether or not some of the scenes were written with the pure intention of shocking the reader. Now if you'll excuse me I'm going to watch some bad tv to self soothe so I don't have crazy ass nightmares about being waterboarded or stabbed by some blonde twins in an alley.

yengyeng says

i seem to remember a penguin popping up unexpectedly.

R.A. says

This book is crazy. Although, it is called The Book of the Mad and it lives up to that title. The plot is twisted and if you don't roll with that you will go nuts. These characters are a bit nutty. They murder people. They get framed for murder so they can be put in a mental asylum where they will be convinced that they did murder that person. You also have two dimensions of the same city to contend with. Allegedly one is more insane than the other but I felt they were both pretty equal in insanity just different forms. All delivered in Tanith Lee's exquisite prose.

Fraser Sherman says

1.5 which is an improvement over Paradys #3. This starts off with lots of interesting stuff: homicidal siblings entering Paradys from a parallel universe city (Paradise) and a rich sybarite locked in a madhouse so her cousin can get the inheritance. But the third plot seems left over from the old movie *The Snake Pit*, graphically detailing how another madwoman is subjugated and brutalized by the system. And neither of the other two plotlines turn out to pay off.

A says

I'm a bit reticent to give this one a full 5, partly because it's been years since I read the first two volumes of the "Secret Books of Paradys" and I'm not sure how well it compares. However, compared to "The Book of the Dead" it's far stronger, amounting essentially to a novel with three separate stories that intersect in a very ingenuous way that only suffers somewhat in its ultimate ambiguity. Each story takes place in a parallel version of Paradys (which itself is an alternate version of Paris) and is marked by the struggle of the protagonists against sanity/insanity. I'll not go into too much more detail, as the synopsis above does a well enough job. The unanswered questions and remaining mystery at the end will no doubt frustrate many readers, but it works within context of the story as a whole, while maintaining the atmosphere that is so effectively portrayed throughout the series. As with the previous books, Lee's concern with matters of style color much of the narrative. Some will find her too flowery, while others like myself will be impressed by the economy of her description and intense lyricism. Beautiful stuff, as ever.

G.L. Morrison says

Brilliantly tangled storylines, complex and dark. The writing (style and language) is like dark chocolate gelato melting on a slice of hot devil's food cake: almost too rich to bear but impossible to resist.

Millerbug says

I wasn't sure I liked *The Book of the Mad* all that much. It paled in comparison to the other books. It was different, and there were a few elements I just didn't quite get. Like why did the twins have to kill and what was up with the Uncle? Anyway, it was ok, three strange stories that loosely interlinked. Not something that I'll re-read.

Kathyelizabethannrachalblackman says

This book is a real treat..

This is a wonderfully written fantasy book that introduces and interconnects three worlds. It is the story of true madness but also the frequent real lucidity of people who think themselves mad, and the resultant terrifying delusions they weave around themselves and often their real helpers and the reality of many of

their tormentors. It is also a story of good and evil, and how we often take the long trek to get to where we are meant to ultimately be. Compliments to a wonderfully creative author. Kathy R. Blackman

Walter-andy smith says

On of the best of all time.

Laura Anderson says

Wonderful!
