



The Thief Who Wasn't There

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Bellarus, saved from utter destruction, is now plunged into vicious civil war. Amra has vanished, and while Holgren has a plan to find her and bring her back, the plan teeters between impossibility and insanity.

But before he can even implement his plan, Holgren will have to deal with three separate armies vying for control of Bellaria, who view him as a threat, an inconvenience, or a potential tool. He'll have to trap and break to his will one of the monstrous rift-spawn, abominations born of the Telemarch's madness and power. And after that, he'll have to traverse several of the eleven hells in order to steal from the Black Library an ancient artifact of incredible power...

The Thief Who Wasn't There Details

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Carl Phillips says

A pleasant surprise. I was worried about the change in POV but in actuality it was a refreshing change. Holgren's 'voice' was unique and interesting and I enjoyed my time in his head. Furthermore, I felt that this book moved the meta-plot ahead at a pleasing pace, and in a manner that makes me more interested in the rest of the series than I may have been otherwise.

Sakuko says

I really liked Holgren as narrator, he's sarcastic and funny and I like his way of casually breaking the 4th wall. I didn't even miss Amra all that much (I know, bad fan I).

About half-way through I got a bit annoyed, since the book seemed to keep focusing on irrelevant stuff, instead of just getting the actual objective done. And while I assume that stuff might be relevant for the next part of the story, it wasn't for this plot right here.

Because of this, the end did feel quite rushed. I'd have rather read more of the hells and the eye instead of all that in-fighting in Bellarius.

I thought the other books felt more... impactful. Harder decisions, harder fights, this one just kinda fell into place.

I still liked it well enough and it was an enjoyable read, but the other 3 parts were just this much better.

Neil Dawes says

Fun

Never going to be accused of being Tolkien, but definitely a fun, light read. Quite compelling in its own way

Kitvaria Sarene says

Another great sequel in the series!

Starts off with quite a twist, and brings a new perspective with it...

I don't really want to say too much, fearing I might accidentally spoil something, suffice it to say it was just as fast paced and fun as the others! And at last as crazy...

I'm addicted, and I hope there'll be a lot more books about Amra!

Kevin O'Malley says

This is a really great series. This one is mostly from

Holmgren's viewpoint, so a departure. The characters are all getting a bit more powerful, so it is different. I enjoyed it though and await the 5th.

Joy says

Holgren literally goes to hell and back for his beloved thief. The conclusion to this adventure is yet to come...hurry book five!

Thush says

A book from Holgren's POV? Yes, please!.

I love Holgren and after reading and learning more about him, I love him more?

It was a very different pace to Amra's POV but I liked it because Holgren is so focused, kinda crazy but at the same time such a cool cucumber. It made reading about his adventure all the more fun. He was also immensely relatable.

"I was tired of being around people, even the ones I liked."

"I've never been terribly good at running."

The team Holgren assembled was also really fun and interesting to read about. I hope we get to see more of Keel in the future.

As usualy the story took me through a whole lot of feels (especially when Holgren talked about Amra and in general just reading about what he would do to get her back) but it opened the door to a lot of questions about the the blades and the Eightfold Goddess that went unanswered.

So now I'm burning to read the next book...can't wait to read what crazy idea Amra and Holgren plan to pull off next!

Tim says

I read the four books that have so far appeared in this series after it was recommended by Mark Lawrence. I will be reading book 5.

Readers have compared the books to Fritz Leiber's Grey Mouser series, and one can see the connection. However, while Leiber constructed a series of short stories held together mainly by the focus on the main characters, McClung has a story to tell; there is a progression from book to book. The heroine's character and her central dilemma - which centres on the extent to which she can exercise any degree of control over her own destiny - develop through the series, and her adversaries - or are they allies? - are bit by bit revealed.

Another difference with Leiber's approach is, I think, that Amra and her companion, Holgren, are much given to internal monologue and soul-searching in an endeavour to give them depth of character, while the Grey Mouser and Fafhrd just got on with things (it's decades since I read them, and I may be mistaken about this, but I think not). I prefer Leiber's way.

The adventures pace out nicely, and the players blunder about in the usual way (Holgren is particularly

numb-skulled, getting himself mixed up in city politics for which he has not the slightest talent). The author makes much use of the *deus ex machina*, but it's that kind of world (if Homer could do it, why not McClung?).

The series may be a long one, as Amra seems to need to make a collection of the eight knives of the Goddess of Ultimate Destruction. By the end of the fourth volume, she's only found two of them, so this one could run and run. I'm certainly up for at least another two episodes. After that, we'll see.

Steve Kimmens says

The author certainly maintains a high standard of storytelling. As in the previous Amra Thetys books the interest in the storyline keeps you turning the pages eagerly, and again it was easy to devour in my spare time over just a few days.

Previous volumes have Amra as the main POV. In this volume it largely features Holgren, her Mage partner. Unlike Amra (normally) he can 'click his fingers' and use his other powerful magics to get himself out of problems. As I've said before that sort of fantasy hero isn't normally to my taste. But at least he has tasks and adversaries that require that ability for him to even attempt what he must, especially towards Amra to whom he is devoted.

The story relies upon powerful mages, demons and gods in conflict with each other (as well as some poor weedy mortals!) and this means that one is less able to empathise with the main characters, although Holgren is more sympathetic and rounded as a character due to the time spent on developing him in this volume.

It might seem that I'm holding back some enthusiasm for the book but that's only really compared to the excellent preceding volume in the series. But it genuinely is a satisfying, absorbing read, in the context of a series which is building up the tension, and the central role of intelligent, hard nosed Amra in a cosmic drama. And although not to my normal 'gritty realism' tastes I want to know how the story develops so I'll be reading the new volume when it appears.

James Webb says

Well it's book 4 but even by book 2 we were watching essentially very high level characters. It's rare to see fantasy succeed past this point as everything degenerates into simply uglier and bigger monsters, silly magic, and grafted on in-group conflict to generate artifical interest. Not here, not quite yet. Holgren was treated to some pretty good concepts as he sought to do the impossible. I wont spoil anything but we explore the godly pantheon more (like), and through a different set of circumstances than this very orphian story calls back to (very like), but we don't quite see the sort of levels of novelty and pure originality as you would in say, a China Meiville novel (understandable).

I'm not a fan of the chronicle format, particularly when used as an opportunity for the characters occasionally to drop hints as to the future as they look back on the adventure. This is a writing technique that should be wielded only in the right cirumstance because every lacklustre use viscerally detracts from the enjoyment of a book. It's like cooking with butter. Do it right and in small amounts and you create a work of art. Too much

and you disgust yourself and others.

I say this because i've seen the chef pile in a fair bit, but have yet to taste more than the bread. You can stomach a lot more of this sort of thing at the beginning of the meal. I'm not taking stars off this novel for that because I can't prejudge this new POV character yet, but it needed to be said.

I chose to review this one rather than the ones before it because this is so far the apex and i'd like it on record that thus far the actual story is working for me. It will need work going forward. Sensible scaling (up) of conflict, a larger cast, and commitment to not just paying lip-service to the future references. A little less recycled from other works as we delve deeper into the metaphysics and theology would also really set the future novels apart, however obscure and blended the reference material.

Buit this has *promise* and that's rare. I'm hopeful because I think the components of the world can come together into something original....but then i've been Anthony Ryan'd before.

Jason M Waltz says

Another good read, another fun entry in Amra's story. Different (but known) main character, and while mostly about Amra, she's not seen or heard from very often. Missed hearing from her honestly, but really, really enjoy Holgren and all he puts himself through. Great adventure, lots of sorcery, blood, and guts; there are sharp blades, but with Holgren they're mostly unnecessary. I like the story, and even with a different POV it rollicks along, though the flavor is slightly different too. I hope this is due more to the POV than any possible story fatigue, as we've several books to go yet. My only real complaint is the suddenly abrupt last few pages, the paced story suddenly took off in a sprint to? I don't know what exactly. But I certainly do look forward to reuniting with the starring duo and associates sooner than later. Side sad note: editing grew shabbier last half on, making me interestingly observe that Michael's previously selfpublished titles were edited far better.

Lina says

Good one

Great book and can't wait until the next book comes out. Just enough action and mayhem to make you want to read more, magic but not too gruesome

Leigh009 says

Not a stand alone story. A very confused and disappointing ending to a story that underwhelmed you the more you read. The slow, lacklustre writing embodied nothing, no joy or passion, no depth or colour of emotion. Nothing like the previous books from this author.

Stale, I think is one word to describe it!! It could have been such an amazing jaunt through the land that he'd built in the previous 3 books, the characters mature and grow in the other books, it was really thorough, the world was full and fleshed out in detail. You, as a reader, felt that the forth and final book would be the crescendo!! But, NO!!, falling flat on its face after tripping over a banana skin. Its a tired story, bringing none of the passion of the previous 3 books!! She should have stayed lost, ending at book 3 as this story lacked it all, it is plain to see if you have read the previous 3.

Such a shame, as the others now suffer the worst injustice, being judged by this one!

Also, the writer must know when it is time to move on.....even if it pains them.

Sadly, I hope it was contractual, with the writer now being able to stretch his wings & give us a new story!! I hope so and I'll return to see.....good luck!!

E.Y.E.-D says

While I love the series and Amra, I didn't have high hopes going into this one. I have never really liked Holgren or gotten into his back story and this book did not change that.

The first three quarters of the book had an interesting enough plot, but once Holgren ventured into the Hells I lost interest. I can't put my finger on why exactly I didn't like the end. I am unsure if it was the plot itself or the way it was written.

I will definitely continue the series but this one was by far the least enjoyable one for me.

xx Sarah xx (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

► **And the moral of this reread is:** "live and let live," you say? Oh, please. That's totally passé and stuff. Just ask my yummy (if a bit one-eyed) boyfriend **Holgren Angrado**. Pretty sure he'll tell you that being slightly **vindictive** and **blowing people to bits** is the in thing to do these days. Much to my **nefarious delight**, obviously.

► **And the other moral of this reread is:** my dear Mr McClung, I am done with my reread of the series, so please **do finish writing book 5 post haste**. I might unleash the murderous crustaceans on you if you don't. **But hey, no pressure and stuff.**

P.S. Just so you know, "**Gorm on a stick!**" has now officially become my second favorite expression of all time. After "**Kerf's withered testicles!**" of course.

· **Book 1:** The Thief Who Pulled on Trouble's Braids ★★★★★

· **Book 2:** The Thief Who Spat in Luck's Good Eye ★★★★★

· **Book 3:** The Thief Who Knocked on Sorrow's Gate ★★★★★

· **Book 5:** The Thief Who Went to War - *to be released 2018.*

· **Short stories:** The Last God ★★★★★

[Original review]

► **Previously, on Amra Thetys:**

- Episode 1: Amra got a little revenge act going.
- Episode 2: Amra & Holgren got a little hero quest act going.
- Episode 3: Amra got a little "poof, I'm gone" act going.

► **Presently, on Amra Thetys:**

Watch out world, Holgren Angrado is coming for you! His mission? Saving private thief badass Amra Thetys from something. Somewhere. Somehow. This now one-eyed, semi-retired mage's got his work cut out for him. Chaos and mayhem ensue. So do a few casualties. A few. **It's not like Holgren atomizes people or anything.** It's just that sometimes he gets a little frustrated with the distractions getting in the way of his mission. So he does some spring cleaning and gets right back on track. **Gotta admire such unfailing tenacity.**

My poor Holgren. These silly people have the worst timing. I mean, did they really have to start a civil war now? What's the big idea? Sigh. These locals really are useless, might as well get rid of them all. I mean, **did they help you find a rift spawn and get into hell?** No, they just keep thwarting your insanely suicidal plans with their frivolous pursuits. And in the meantime, what is Amra doing? Frolicking away with a knife. Somewhere. Somehow. **No wonder you slightly struggle to keep your cool, and have very minor self-control issues.**

My dear Holgren. May I venture to offer you a piece of advice? No, no, no, please don't flick your fingers at me just yet, I promise to behave and not to waste your time. Besides, you are now safely under lock and key in my harem, you've got nothing better to do right? Muahahahaha. Anyway, here's my advice for you: **you might want to work on your social skills a little.** Because being a cold, insensitive bastard with the morals of a barnacle rarely helps in the allies-making department (please notice I'm not even talking about making friends here. Making allies would be improvement enough on the current situation). What is it? **You didn't know barnacles had morals?** Well they don't, that's the whole point, my dear. Oh please don't feel insulted, you might be cold-hearted and uncaring but I still love you. **Why else would I have kidnapped you** and secured you away in my harem, you silly? I swear, for all your cunning mage ways, you can be really slow to catch on sometimes. Yet another shining example of your **stellar social skills** at work.

I'm sorry, it only just occurred to me that there might be people reading this review. Please forgive me, I tend to get carried away when it comes to my Holgren. I'm not sure Amra would approve if she knew, but **she's not here to kick my ass** so I'll enjoy it while it lasts. Actually, I sometimes wish Holgren wasn't so

intent on rescuing her at all costs. It would be just him, the cold insensitive bastard, and me, the cold hearted cynic, until the end of times...**A match made in heaven.**

But I digress. Where was I? Oh yes, there might be people reading this review (well there might only be one of them left at this point but I'll just pretend that there's a crowd out there, cheering me on). I'm supposed to actually tell these lovely people something about this book, right? **Something non-Holgren obviously.** Damn. I hate writing reviews ~~sometimes~~. Okay, here goes: this book is amazing, this book is freaking fantastic, this book is brilliant, this book awesome, this book is cool... Sorry, did you just say something? **Oh, you were expecting something a little more descriptive?** More detailed, maybe? Okay, right, I can do that, no problem. Well I can try anyway. This book is amazing-freaking fantastic-brilliant-awesome-cool because it features: villainous villains, **severed body parts** (I think I see a trend there), deadly magic, demons, blood-and-gore-yay, a god of fools and drunkards, **pigs' hearts**, lots of action, frogs dancing jigs, **nefarious knives**, great dialogues, sarcastic teenage sidekicks, good old testosterone, weird creatures, a fantastic cast of secondary characters, **a teensy little bit of Amra** (it's not the quantity that counts) and Hell (all eleven levels of it).

What else? I don't know... Let's see... Errr, I love this book? This has become one of my favourite series ever? I'm in ♥ with Amra? I'm in ♥ with Holgren? ~~I'm in ♥ with severed body parts?~~ I think that's about it. **In other words:**

ARC kindly provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.

Pre-review nonsense :

Damn. Michael McClung did it again. And with almost no Amra to be had. **Damn.** I've fallen in love with a one-eyed mage who's seen better days. **Damn.** This is so freaking cool even Florence Welch is **fangirling about it.**

(view spoiler)

Damn (yeah, yeah, yeah, I know I keep repeating myself). This is going to be a **hard one to review**. But I shall do it. For Amra. For Holgren. For Michael. **For the world.**
