



Shards of a Broken Crown

Raymond E. Feist

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The terrible Emerald Queen is vanquished...but the war in Midkemia is not yet won, as the remarkable Raymond E. Feist concludes his magnificent Serpentwar Saga with *Shards of a Broken Crown*—a *spellbinding tale of magic, conflict, and treachery that sees the rise of a new threat from the ashes of defeat, an evil poised to strike mercilessly at realm triumphant but weakened by war.*

Shards of a Broken Crown Details

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Author : Raymond E. Feist

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Dylan says

The end of the Serpentwar. It was a pretty solid ending overall. I liked that this book focused primarily on Dash and Jimmy this time around. I find/found Dash's character to be incredibly charming and interesting, and his inevitable decision at the end of the book seemed right to me. Mostly this was one big wrap up for all the dangling plot threads from the last big traumatic book in which a whole bunch of characters died... some fallout, mostly picking up the pieces. And finally setting the stage for the overall series to move forward from here. Looking forward to seeing where else this goes, but i'm not sure how excited i am for 6 or 7 flashback books (one series being based on a 90s adventure PC game) before we get back to Pug and friends dealing with their new shadow-war. But after 13 books in Riftwar so far, i guess i'm fairly committed now.

Cherryonion says

This book follows the aftermath of the demon's defeat. The armies of the Kingdom are stretched and the Emerald Queen's forces have decided they want to carve out a new kingdom for themselves. Dash and Jimmy feature more prominently in this book. Feist tends to focus on a couple of characters in each book and these 2 are mischievous like their Grandfather Jimmy the Hand so they were fun to follow. The evil in these books is never completely vanquished and at times I'm not sure how it ever could be. They only seem to be able to temporarily set it back, which I admit is starting to get a little tiresome now. This series in particular has killed off many of the original main characters, so it has more emotional punch than some of the other series. It's been a good trilogy, but I think I'll take a break and read something different before I come back to the next series.

Duffy Pratt says

This was a perfectly satisfactory conclusion to a good, but not great fantasy series. The loose ends are all tied off quite nicely, and there is the distinct promise of more to come. On that, it looks like Feist has made much more of Midkemia, and when I can't find something else to grab me, I will probably turn to these books. They aren't great, but they are dependably good.

In this series, the character of Erik dominates the first book, but his character is rather thin, and by this book he is relegated to a side story, and he remains rather dull. The second book focuses on Roo, and he is considerably more complex than Erik, at least until he sees the light (which for him is the value of family). By this book, he is also a kind of afterthought.

I am not sure who is the main focus of the third book, which may be one of its problems. This one, however, rests pretty squarely on James grandkids, a Dash and Jimmy. Dash, it turns out, is a pretty worthwhile character. And I liked both of them quite well. I'm afraid however that they have now grown up and will thus be too good to be interesting in later books.

I also enjoyed Pug in this book, and always Nakor. The magic here was better than it usually is in Feist. And Pug actually has something to do here other than defeat some impossibly strong threat to all existence

(though there's some of that too).

Not sure when or whether I will get back to these. I really need to latch on to some new writer.

David Meiklejohn says

The war against the serpent folk has come to a head and the queen has been defeated, but that leaves a lot of foreign armies in the kingdom, and they look like they're taking an interest in capturing a city or two for themselves. The kingdom armies are stretched beyond breaking as they try to tackle fighting on several fronts, and we follow Eric, and princes James and Dashel, as they try and hold out against the enemy. Lots of soldier action, plus a bit of magic as Pug lends a hand. The side story of Nakor starting his own religion and finding an avatar for his forgotten God was entertaining as well.

Vera Maslow says

I liked this one because I found Jimmy and Dash, who were big focuses in this one, a lot more interesting than Erik and Roo, who were big focuses in the previous few. Because I found the characters interesting it gave back some of the magic of the series I felt in the beginning, but this book 4 was a lot of aftermath and set up for more to come after what felt like a weak climax. It does the job well enough that it makes me want to continue the series and feel that it looks promising when I had nearly wanted to put it down and only possibly return at a later date.

Shivesh says

The shadow of the Riftwar Saga hangs heavily over this series. I couldn't make any judgement on the series as a whole until I finished Shards of a Broken Crown. But now that I have, there grows in my mind a sneaking suspicion that Feist's ghostwriter had a lot to do with the writing of this final, fourth volume in the saga. I mean, there has to be a reason why the gradient of quality between the Riftwar Saga and this cycle of books is so great.

There are three major problems with this book, all of which Feist is completely capable of correcting and avoiding since he has shown himself to be a great writer in his Riftwar Saga. I will get to these issues at the bottom of this review. If you don't want spoilers, click to something else!

At the end of the third book, the demon king Jakan was defeated (with no drama or tension) by Pug, Tomas, Miranda and the annoying Nakor. Although that was an abrupt and disappointing ending to an otherwise good fantasy tale, it at least answered the question of who was behind the bad stuff happening in Midkemia. For some reason, Feist decided to extend the story to one more book, which would presumably be a long denouement to the Serpentwar, dealing with the political, military and personal fallout from the destructive path that the demon horde inflicted on the Kingdom of the Isles.

Shards of a Broken Crown is a book that foreshadows so much but delivers on very little of that promise. Even the title suggests high political drama, and strong military narrative. It is time for a story on the King of

the Isles, the Prince of Krondor, and the devious shenanigans of Rupert Avery, our hero from the second book. But what we get instead is an inconsistent, jumpy narrative from one part of the world to another, without any strong ties until the very end, when all the stories are awkwardly pulled together. Somehow I would not be surprised if Feist did not write this. On the other hand, in the mid-90s when he was cranking out multiple parallel series, it is far more believable that he wrote this last volume far too quickly and rushed to the publisher as soon as he met their minimum words requirement. What other explanation for the odd, rushed ending? What other explanation for the numerous errors in typesetting and basic grammar? This book is poorly edited and badly organized. In short, this whole thing could have been crammed into a single chapter of epilogue at the end of Demon King, which for all its faults, was a much better story than this.

The first irritation for me is the constantly mysterious Nakor, who disguises any and every true mystery and pleasure in the book with cryptic phrases and silly smiles. Feist keeps telling us how much Nakor knows, but never gets him to say anything! It is one of the most frustrating things I have ever had to read and it was pretty damn bad in the third volume. In this book I simply skipped the vast majority of pages that had Nakor's dialogue in it, because it was such a waste of time. Secondly, the hero of Magician, Pug, becomes a caricature of a proper wizard-hero. He is underutilized throughout the entire series (apart from being blown up in the last book in a silly-ass attack) until the very, utter end of this volume, when he literally brings the war to a screeching halt with his magical abilities and vanishes in a cheesy puff of smoke. Feist has concluded his four volume saga with the most contrived and unbelievable deus ex machina of all time, and that includes the one in Beowulf! You can't have regular people fighting for their lives and the ones they love, and go through character journeys, and hundreds of pages of warfare just to have it all wrap up at the snap of a magician's fingers. Sorry but that's cheap. Very poorly done, you lose two stars right there. Thank God I skipped so much of this book. Thirdly and lastly, Feist utterly abandons his characters at every turn. Rupert is given short shrift in this volume. Erik virtually disappears after his usefulness to the narrative runs out. Dash becomes leader of the Mockers (right, sure). Jimmy wanders off somewhere. Throughout this fiasco, major people of the Kingdom are killed in terribly written sequences, only to be forgotten ten pages later. It is a travesty, all of it. Why even write a saga if you aren't going to finish what you started?

This is worse than Wheel of Time's famous flameout. At least Jordan was trying for something cohesive at the end of his last book. Feist does not even attempt at an honest conclusion here. He has no intention of doing right by his readers.

Don't read this book. It gets a one star, but it ruins the entire series. Save your time.

Peter says

Please, please it can't end here!: This is a book that hits you at many different levels. Primarily it is about people finding about themselves and being able to live as people within the shadows of legends or of course legends themselves. This has a normalising effect on the characters and you end up seeing them as ordinary people effected by extra ordinary circumstances. On another level it is a great military campaign, the kingdom of the west has to fight a two front campaign and no one but Feist can take you there like this. The only problem with the book is that it ends. There are hints and suspicions woven into the book about Nakor but you still don't know that much about his heritage. I for one am dying to know the fate of Eric and the Crimson Eagles, does Patrick set up a standing army with Erik as general? I only hope that one day Feist will treat us all to another spectacular journey so that we can meet old friends again.

2Karl Tessier-Ashpool says

Pug's amazing, Nakor's amazing, Jimmy and Dash's (and Arutha's) struggles with constantly living in the shadows of their forefathers is incredibly relatable to me and everything is just so masterfully done. EXCELLENT end to the Serpentwar.

Nigel says

The concluding story of the Serpent War is another gem from Feist. With the defeat and death of the Emerald Queen one might think that the Kingdom would have time to rebuild and consolidate. Not a bit of it. The Keshians seize the opportunity to make a grab for land they claim as their own and he Emerald Queens old general sets himself up as King of the Bitter Sea and is looking to expand his empire. With Krondor destroyed and many dead as a result of war with the Emerald Queen who is left to defend the Kingdom. Eric von Dartmoor and the brothers Dashel and James the ones on whom the task falls. Even with magical help from Pug, Miranda and Nakor can the kingdom survive treachery, and war on many fronts? Who will survive the battles to come?

This was I felt an excellent conclusion to the Serpent War saga wrapping up a lot of loose ends whilst at the same time providing struggles enough for the survivors to take into future stories. One or two of the saga's main characters die (as they did in earlier novels). Whilst it is always disappointing and sometimes shocking to have a character you have invested in killed off I quite like authors who do this from time to time. Not only is it more realistic as for a large group of central characters to always survive battle after battle it somewhat unbelievable. I feel it adds to the tension as each time a key character enters and life threatening situation you aren't certain if they will live through it or not.

I am really enjoying the Riftwar series and am now looking forward to the next group of stories.

Sotiris Karaiskos says

Σε αυτ? τη σειρ? ο συγγραφ?ας επιστρ?φει στην κλασικ? του συνταγ? και μας μεταφ?ρει το χρονικ? εν?ς μεγ?λου πολ?μου στον οπο?ο εμπλ?κονται πολυ?ριθμα στρατε?ματα αλλ? και οι παν?σχυρες μαγικ?ς δυν?μεις, δημιουργ?ντας ?να αποτ?λεσμα ιδια?τερα ενδιαφ?ρον. Στο πρ?το βιβλ?ο ξεκιν?με κ?πως ?συχα, γνωρ?ζοντας τους νεαρο?ς και οι ?ρωες μας και την απλ? ζω? τους, η οπο?α γρ?γορα ανατρ?πεται και τα μπλεξ?ματα τους οδηγο?ν στην καρδι? των εξελ?ξεων. Στο δε?τερο κ?νουμε ?να δι?λειμμα απ? τη σωτηρ?α του κ?σμου με μ?α ιστορ?α επιχειρηματικο? Πνε?ματος που νομ?ζω ?τι μπορο?σε να ε?ναι μικρ?τερη και απλ? να ?ταν ?να subplot της ιστορ?ας. Το τρ?το ο μεγ?λος π?λεμος φτ?νει στο αποκορ?φωμα του καθ?ς οι ?ρωες μας αντιλαμβ?νονται ?τι πα?ζονται πολλ? περισσ?τερα απ? τον ?λεγχο κ?ποιων εδαφ?ν, με τις σκοτειν?ς δυν?μεις του σ?μπαντος να επιδι?κουν την καταστροφ?. Σε αυτ? ο συγγραφ?ας πραγματικ? μεγαλουργε?, περιγρ?φοντας μας με τον πιο συναρπαστικ? τρ?πο ?λη αυτ? τη μ?χη, κ?νοντας μας να μην μπορο?με να ξεκολλ?σουμε απ? το δι?βασμα. Στο τ?ταρτο, ?μως, η κατ?σταση δεν ε?ναι δεν ε?ναι και τ?σο καλ? καθ?ς μετ? την κορ?φωση δεν υπ?ρχουν και πολλ? να πο?με, με αποτ?λεσμα να μοι?ζει με ?να τερ?στιο επ?λογο που αν και αυτ?ς ?χει μ?α κορ?φωση που στο τ?λος στην πραγματικ?τητα λ?γο ο συγγραφ?ας μας ξενερ?νει. Συνολικ? π?ντως μπορ? να πω ?τι αν και δε

φτ?νει την πρ?τη σειρ? σ?γουρα πρ?κειται για ?να εξαιρετικ? δε?γμα του ε?δους που πιστε?ω ?τι μ?λλον αφ?νει ικανοποιημ?νους τους φανατικο?ς. Υπ?ρχει φυσικ? η δρ?ση, υπ?ρχει η περιγραφ? του φανταστικ? κ?σμου που φτ?νει σε μεγ?λο β?θος με τη λεπτομερ? περιγραφ? της μεταφυσικ?ς δι?στασης του, υπ?ρχουν αρκετ?ς συναισθηματικ?ς καταστ?σεις - αν και πιστε?ω ?τι σε πολλ?ς περιπτ?σεις ε?ναι βιαστικ? γραμμ?νες - και γενικ?τερα ?λα ε?ναι στη θ?ση τους. Οπ?τε στο τ?λος σ?γουρα δεν ε?ναι χαμ?νος ο πρ?τος που αφιερ?νεται στην αν?γνωση.

Em says

When I first read this book, years ago, this was my least favorite of this particular quartet. I like the brothers, Jimmy and Dash, but I couldn't really get into "the brothers' tale."

Rereading it now, though, I was quite pleased with the story, for the same reason I enjoy Feist's other stories. I liked watching the rebirth of Krondor, like a phoenix from the ashes. I liked watching Jimmy and Dash come into their own, and watching the men from Novindus embrace the concept of a nation.

I did find myself wishing that this particular saga was a quintet. I really wanted to know what happens next in Dash's life. The rest of the characters, the rest of their stories will be plain enough, but Dash... his looked interesting.

Not that Feist ever has uninteresting stories.

Elar says

And haste again won. It was quite enjoyable to read about warfare and different schemes to keep kingdom together and then in the middle of book out of nowhere came some mystic black power which appearance felt to book story and style likes nails on blackboard. Book badly needs refurbishing and reediting to make it more enjoyable as the story was great.

Louis says

I find that this was not as good as the prior book in the series. While interesting it wandered much more in scope, and in character views, and I think this affected my view of the story.

I read this as an ebook and found that there was no break between viewing the story from character to another and this caused confusion several times. I would read about Eric fighting and giving orders on the field, and the next line would be Patrick being hailed at the palace. This was not a chapter based separation but between character interactions. Perhaps the printed version is more clear, but the nook version was not.

As such fair warning to those reading on ebook format. Even with a bigger margin, the skipping around is rather hard to follow.

Matthew says

In this book, Pug is all like:

Another great book from Feist - this one wraps up the Serpentwar Series and is almost more of a full book Epilogue than a final chapter (I hope that description makes sense). I think that might be one of the main reasons I didn't go the full 5 stars on it - it was great, but after how much the last book blew me away, I wasn't feeling the full score for this one.

Also, I wish Feist would have been a bit more creative with names. I know he is trying to honor past characters, and that is a common thing for royalty to do, but for the first third of the book I got confused if he was talking about a current character in the story line or one from previous storylines. This also led to confusion as to the character relationships - if your Dad has the same name as your son and you are talking about both in the same discussion . . . it's gonna get confusing!.

But, overall, the series keeps going strong. I believe some of the next books in the suggested reading timeline are flashback stories so it will be interesting to see how those go now that I am used to the timeline where it is.

Simon Barron says

Where to start? This book, the last of the (1 book too long) 4-book Serpentwar Saga has a lot to enjoy. Finally we see Pug and Tomas entering a real war at the right time, and actually fighting alongside each other. Kind of. We have two brothers, the grandsons of Jimmy the Hand, finally growing in to two very likable, well developed characters with differing values and distinct personalities. Nakor features far more prominently, which would usually be only a good thing, but for the reemergence of that annoying trait of his: allowing himself to be used as a lexical plot progression device. It happens a lot in the later part of the book, when it seems clear the writer has no other way to deliver certain information - perhaps mainly because the topics are often so abstract and outlandish that no one would have a way of knowing the information for sure. Unless they were some odd mystic character who doubles as a convenient conduit for information.

But put that aside! The building of tension regarding the plight of Krondor is really good. The betrayal and counter betrayal really adds to this. The fact that the reader loses sight of General Fadawah in this book, whilst carrying some knowledge of his intentions from Book 3, helps. One genuinely has as little idea of the enemy's real design as the heroes do. Erik is still brilliant, but you can tell he's reached his peak from a story-telling aspect and Roo has become a peripheral character. These two, who were so readable from the outset, have become characters that I get the sense the author has grown a little tired of. Trina's character is very good, and the influence he has on Dash's path in life is good to read.

Obviously, not everything is perfect here though. Prince Patrick, while he always had an impetuous, pompous side, has now in the space of a year apparently downed some pretty powerful toss-pot medication. Then there's Malar. Spoiler! He's a baddy. He's one of the most obvious baddies there is. That he will betray

Krondor is so foreseeable, I actually got a little mad at Jimmy for being so bloody naive.

My main problem with Shards though, is a lack of epic proportions. The enormity Feist was able to convey so well in book 3, albeit with a slackening grasp of the physics of time, simply goes missing here. The western army's march north to face Fadawah's southern flank ends up feeling like two men waging a thumb war standing on a narrow coastal path. There is no sense of the sprawling slaughter of warfare conveyed in Book 3.

And the end...it just seems cobbled together. It all stumbles off the page in a confused rush. The vision of the world is lost in the magic flight Pug and his friends take north to face Fadawah. The whole book has portrayed a stagnant and quite narrow battle line and a war of attrition, and suddenly Pug swoops north and fight the 'end of level baddy'. I don't have a problem with this in principal; I think earlier books suffer because the almighty Milamber doesn't do that enough. The problem is, because the reader has never been behind the enemy lines, we don't have a picture in our heads of the region. And the plot section in which we discover this region is such that it MUST be high paced, so there's no time to dwell on details. Unless it's stammered out details explaining random philosophical points of interest that need revealing at that moment, because the ending of the books needs it. It's just a lack of attention to detail - illustrated perfectly in a passage where Pug is sundered by touching a mind so alien that it brings him to his knees. And then brings him to his knees again in the very next paragraph. Poor editing? Possibly. But I think that's symptomatic of the possibility that the enormity of the project just seems to have slipped away from Feist; and I don't mean the breadth of it, I mean the multi-layered ethereal depth. We're starting to deal with planes of existence, levels of hell, and all sorts. It gets a bit much. Especially when you're trying to tell the story of a siege too.

This story of the siege of Krondor promised so much! When Jimmy realises what's happening and turns his forces north; when Erik sends the bulk of his force back to the western capital, and when Dash discovers sappers in the city waiting to open the gate from within...that's all FRIGGING BRILLIANT! I loved it! And then the Keshians arrive and it's ON! Let's have it! We've 10% of the book left, let's make this epic! And then Pug's stupid fight with a caterpillar happens. And stuff. And it's all just...lost. By the time we get back to Krondor and the fight is about to be joined, Pug arrives and - in a fit of pique that can only be seen as a temper tantrum - he flies around shouting "This ends now" over and over. And it does. People just drop their swords and wander home. And then Pug gives Prince Patrick and the enemy general a dressing down I've heard from my sister in law when telling her twin boys off. "You sit over there, and you sit over there! I want to hear no more, do you understand?" "Yes mum."

And that's it. The whole book promises much and builds great tension, and then doesn't really deliver. The finale tries to deliver on two fronts, and achieves neither. Trying to do this has thinned out, somewhat, the ending. I don't know; perhaps had Fadawah been dealt with earlier, and then Erik, Tomas, Pug etc arrived at a besieged Krondor in time to save the day, after the fight had really been joined, then perhaps that might have worked.

I'm just left feeling a little flat by the end. It's been an epic slog to read through these four, which really honestly could have been delivered in a trilogy. And yet, that epic...ness (I know it's not a word!) is somehow lost in the story. It was there in parts, but unravels and dissipates in the end. It was a relief to finish it in the end, and that's not a feeling one wants, right? I'm disappointed that a stronger editing hand didn't take control of this series, perhaps. Maybe. Who knows.

Next is the Krondor: trilogy - three Feist books I've actually never read! Might be interesting. Let's see.

Kiwii says

Enfin ! ENFIN ! Après 4 mois, je suis enfin parvenu à me traîner (c'est vraiment le mot) jusqu'au bout de ce quatrième tome.

Deux-trois chapitres de plus à la fin du tome 3 auraient suffi à boucler le cycle, plutôt que de le traîner en longueur pendant 650 pages -_-'

Et pourtant, les trois premiers tomes étaient géniaux.

Maintenant, j'espère que le cycle du Conclave des Ombres saura reprendre sur de bonnes bases :)

Hayley says

Really struggled with this book. Not sure if this is because there was quite a gap between me finishing the previous book be starting this one. I just found that I didn't really care and I had to force myself to finish. Very little tension and even though old characters, such as Pug were included, they did not feel as developed to me. I loved this series but am not sure now whether to continue. Will leave for a bit and then try the next saga and hopefully find my interest reawakened

Barbara says

Man I've had a strange time reading this series. I loved the first half of the first book, but was let down by the ending. I detested the second book, it was a one-star for me. I loved the third, 5 stars all the way, and this fourth book was also pretty good but the climax was pitiful. Having read Sanderson's essays on the laws of magic, I am really beginning to understand why using magic to solve problems is directly proportional to how well the reader understands the magic system. In Feist, there is no magic system, there is just random magic that gets them out of trouble whenever the main characters are faced with a boss battle. And it always feels anticlimactic.

What I did love about this series was Erik, and his development. I'm also glad that Roo got his comeuppance and changed for the better because I could hardly bear reading about him. Once again there were a couple loose ends that are so typical to Feist books. Calis? He was a main character for the first 3 and barely featured in the fourth. As did Roo. I get that Calis had his big moment in book 3 (another example of random magic solving the story's crisis) but for a character who cared so much about the invasion from Novindus, it seems very out of character for him to retreat to his home and spend the final chapter of this saga doing pretty much nothing at all.

Oh well, Feist has his moments. I've read 12 of his books and on average they're 3-star novels. This was a fraction better, he's also improving on his dialogue. I remember in "Magician", his dialogue felt so static and as if everyone was constantly stating the obvious. No subtlety, no subtext. But that's improved dramatically since his debut book.

David Montgomery says

Essentially a book-length epilogue to the epic confrontation in "Rage of a Demon King", this book bothered

me more the more I thought about it. While not overtly unpleasant to read, everything about it is disappointing.

It had the potential to be really interesting: a story of trying to rebuild a devastated land in the midst of a three-way war. Feist could have combined the military story of Erik von Darkmoor, the economic story of Roo Avery and the political story of Krondor's ruling nobility into a story of the compromises and struggles needed to restore peace and prosperity.

Instead, it was a largely pointless exercise in box-checking, in which the main characters are largely passive. The economic and political recovery of the Western Realm just sort of happens on its own, with protagonists only supporting characters. Most of the book is taken up with desperate struggles, but all of them are rendered moot in the end when a group of demigods finally decide to get off their asses and resolve everything in a massive *deus ex machina*.

Feist kills off characters repeatedly, but their deaths seldom have meaning. Instead, they only serve to remove from the table characters who were just beginning to become interesting, and who matter mostly in their absence. Instead, the surviving characters are largely reactive. The most dynamic character in the series, Roo, is left on the sidelines except for one brief episode mid-book.

The villains remain as off-screen and flat as they were in "Rage of a Demon King," but this fault is more egregious since the demonic-control justification for that struggle had already been removed in the prior book. But instead of letting the former invaders struggle with the enormity of the crimes they were forced to commit as they try to establish a home for themselves in the new land they've partially conquered, Feist just reestablishes new mystical command, sort of a junior varsity army of darkness. The evil plot comes largely out of nowhere in the final act of the book, and is resolved almost as quickly as it's introduced with little help from the characters we've spent most of the book following.

As for the political plotline of the invasion from Kesh, we're treated to some second-rate skullduggery and lots of hamhanded blustering from the mouth of Patrick, the new Prince of Krondor, who is uniformly dismissed as incompetent and over his head (if generally decent). General Duko had the potential to be fascinating, an invader who cuts a deal with his enemies and has to balance his own interests against his new masters, his old masters and Kesh in a delicate power play. Instead he's instantly identified as trustworthy, and never gives anyone any reason to doubt this assessment.

Largely this book exists to wrap up loose ends from the first three books in the Serpentwar series, and to lay the groundwork for the series to follow, about which Feist seems indefinitely more interested than he does in the bland plot points he has to tick off in this book to get there.

If you've read the first three books in the series, you might as well read this one, but it's a letdown through and through.

Majanka says

To be honest, I don't know what Feist was thinking when he wrote this novel. It's like he put everything he had into the previous one, *Rage of a Demon King*, and was now left to tie the knots of storylines that were half-developed, or spin a new beginning and end to plotlines that were already long passed their due time, and had no inspiration whatsoever to do this in the marvellous way he knows how to. It's very peculiar how

Feist portrays his greatness as master of the fantasy genre in *Rage of a Demon King*, and then totally and utterly fails to even get half-way the standard he set, in the last novel of the series. Maybe I'm getting something wrong here, but I was always convinced that the last novel of a series should be its greatest, as everything finally comes together and it's time for the final showdown. Unfortunately it seems as if the showdown already happened, and Feist just wrote another novel for the sake of it.

Right from the start, there was something about *Shards of a Broken Crown* that bothered me endless. It was like I couldn't get a grip with the characters, although we had been bonding for three novels now, and I knew the attachment was there. I just couldn't find it. The characters seemed flat, emotion-less, and kept reminiscing about the past and great heroes like Prince Arutha conDoin and Jimmy The Hand, who made it to Duke of Krongor. Yes, I got the message first time around: Feist killed off all his masterly-crafted characters, and is now stuck with a bunch of wannabes of whom none has even the slightest potential to do something extraordinary. However, *c'est la vie*, and move on already. Unfortunately there aren't incredibly clever or undoubtably courageous people in every war we end up fighting. I don't see any reason how continuously whining about it is going to get the Kingdom back. Not only is the total lack of effort of any character in the first hundred pages in the book absolutely annoying, it also made me feel one emotion I have never felt before when reading a Feist book: boredom.

Yes, sorry to admit it, but this book bored me. And not even slightly, but a whole lot. The characters were dancing in front of my eyes doing God-knows-what, fighting off the army of the Empire of Kesh (who found no better time to attack the Kingdom then now, when it's lying in complete ashes and a trail of devastation right across the land) or the demon army of the now-dead Emerald Queen, and I found myself not caring in the least. I actually flipped through some pages, sighed when once again the heroes were fighting an epic battle without any good cause, and wished they would already do something useful, unexpected or funny. Anything. All I got from this novel was: battle, battle, battle, Patrick does something stupid and acts like a spoiled brat and everyone hates him but he's the King so no one will tell that to his face, battle, battle. No clever games in the style of Jimmy the Hand or heroic endavours by any of our heroes, no.

The thing is that Feist tried really hard to give the general feel of a kingdom at war here, with the perils and feelings of devastation, the civilians turning on each other, and the hardship of each day. But he took two wrong turns with that, and suddenly all I get from the novel is 'blah'. First thing he did wrong is that he focused too much on the actual battling, especially when he added the 'sort of plot twist with the dark energy that I saw coming from the start of the novel' and we were off again for another heroic showdown between Pug and who-the-hell-cares. Secondly, he tried so hard to make Patrick seem like the worst ruler in history and to be able to think back of old times when the kingdom was still led by Prince Arutha. But newsflash. Patrick isn't really such a bad ruler. Sure enough, he goes and bosses Pug around which you don't do towards a magician who could basically make you explode in a matter of seconds. And yes, he doesn't always make the right decisions, and he's short-tempered, and sometimes a bit childish. But are Feist's chosen two, main characters Jimmy and Dash really that much better?

In comes Malar, some fellow whom Jimmy and Dash found along the road. Everything about this fellow screams "SPY" yet the two chose to trust him, a mistake their grandfather would never forgive them for, had he known. Naturally Malar The Spy turns against them at some point, and they end up greatly endangering their Kingdom by trusting The Most Obvious Spy in History. Later on, Dash gets romantic feelings for a young and supposedly really, really hot female thief. Now I don't want to spoil everything for you guys, but the decisions he makes afterwards are very irrational, and sometimes even downright stupid. Once again, Jimmy the Hand would turn around in his grave, and do everything he possibly can to come back and haunt his most idiotic grandchildren. And the thing about these two? They think they're all-so-awesome, and everyone likes them, but in fact they're no more grown up than Patrick is.

That being said, Patrick was the only character in this novel I could remotely relate to, and that's saying something. Really, I can imagine it can't be easy being so young and unexperienced and being in charge of the only army standing between the enemy and the total destruction of everything and everyone you're ever loved, and you are responsible for. Plus, everyone is counting on you to make decisions wiser and greater men would have trouble making. But I can tell you, at some point in this novel, when against all odds Patrick appears on the stonewall facing the enemy, I was cheering for him. I really saw a King in the making, a King who will be able to rule properly one day, once his Kingdom is restored. But nevertheless, when the only character you can actually relate to is the one the writer has desperately tried to portray as being childish and immature, you know something is wrong with the book.

I wouldn't have shed the tear had Feist just written another fifty pages to *Rage of A Demon King*, and called it the end. Start another series on how the Kingdom rebuilds itself, or whatever, or just rewrite this novel completely, because it really isn't good. Flat characters with hardly any personality, a predictable storyline, and just...bad. Not the Feist I'm used to, and definately not a Feist I want to read more books from. Ofcourse you should read it for the sake of the rest of the series, but after seeing what amazing things this author can do in *Rage of A Demon King*, *Shards of A Broken Crown* is nothing but a major dissapointment.

Read the review on my booklog.
