



The Council of Shadows

S.M. Stirling

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New from the "New York Times" bestselling author of "A Taint in the Blood."

Adrian Breze defied his own dark heritage as a near-purebred Shadowspawn for years, until his power-hungry sister Adrienne kidnapped his human lover Ellen.

Now, Adrienne is dead, and the Council of Shadows is gathering its strength. To stop the Council from launching an apocalypse, Adrian and Ellen must ally with the Brotherhood, a resistance group dedicated to breaking the Council's hold on humankind...by any means necessary.

In the coming confrontation, Adrian must fight not only the members of the Council but also his own nature—and, as he will come to suspect, traitors within the Brotherhood itself..."

The Council of Shadows Details

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From Reader Review The Council of Shadows for online ebook

David Marshall says

Well, this is a book of fairly unhappy compromises as "urban fantasy" meets science fiction with some human police procedural elements thrown in for those who were bored by the other bits. Its all a bit of a shame because, with a better focus, I suspect this could have been genuinely entertaining. A lot of thought has gone into constructing this "world" but it's mostly wasted.

<http://opionator.wordpress.com/2011/0...>

Janice says

I really liked the first part of this series, and I enjoyed this one, but... There had better be a third book, though I haven't heard of one. If it ends this way, well, that's just lame. I don't necessarily require my books (or movies either) to have happy endings, but they do need to end. And not just feel like the author got tired of writing or couldn't figure out what to do next.

Okay, so there is a third book. I feel much better about this one now, though it does still have its shortcomings. Felt like I was getting the same explanations twice, in the same book, from time to time.

Kathy Davie says

Second in the Shadowspawn urban fantasy series revolving around an unexpected couple who intend to save the world.

My Take

A terrifying world in which the monsters are the true rulers of our world, and they intend to come out into the light.

This particular story is a bridge as Ellen acclimates to her new world and to understanding it! Together, Adrian and Ellen set things in motion to figure out the power including how to stop it, change it, or better use it, believing that Adrienne is dead.

Whoa, Adrian's idea of training is...intense. And yet extremely practical. You do have to know what it will feel like so you don't freeze up at a critical moment. Still, ick. Another scary consideration is that Adrian is good at small group tactics while Adrienne was better at large-scale planning.

Oh, too funny! See if you can spot the Piers Anthony reference...! I do enjoy Stirling's *Star Trek* and James Bond references.

It's interesting to see how Stirling manipulates history to support his version of the world. And the "real" reason our world leaders age so quickly once they get in office. *Makes ya wonder...* We also get more of Adrian's back history and his being with Harvey. The old nature versus nurture argument.

Oh, they do eat well in these stories...

The humanitarian in me says I should feel bad about the terrorists, but, hey, they're terrorists... And Ellen is learning how hard it can be to fight the bad guys. How much of a bad guy she'll have to be. For a fantastical tale, there's a lot of home truth in this.

Curious, Stirling is providing a background on Cheba. Must mean she has a part to play in this.

Gawd, it's so incredibly creepy to listen to Adrian's grandparents talk about Adrian and Adrienne's childhood, how casually and *kids will be kids* they are about the horrible things they did. Stirling is brilliant at how consistent he is in portraying them.

Hmm, if you're a survivalist, you may like reading about Adrian's house in Santa Fe. Very cleverly situated and set up for...well, anything.

Gawd, listening to Tiffany---a renfield *waitress* at a coffee shop at Rancho Sangre!---talk about humans as meat sacks and having no concept of humanity, anticipating the *fun* of the Shadowspawn taking over the world...yuck... Seriously creepy. Then Tiffany gets off on how hurtful her little sister Jilly's initiation is... "Sweet", little Tiffany would be one of the first on my hit list...

The Story

It takes up from their honeymoon and hints at the training Ellen is undergoing. It's work, more work than Ellen could imagine with danger coming at them from all sides. Yet, it will be survivable because at least Adrienne is dead.

The Characters

Ellen Tarnowski Brézé fell in love with a Shadowspawn and paid a price for it when she was kidnapped by his twin sister in *A Taint in the Blood* , 1. The life she has now is not one which anyone with a BA in Art History could have ever conceived.

Adrian Brézé is a Shadowspawn trying to do right. One of those rights is marrying Ellen and training her to survive in his world. His creature is a Smilodon populator, a sabertooth tiger.

Harvey Ledbetter, a 27 and a field team leader for the Brotherhood, is an old friend and partner of Adrian's. It seems that Harvey has his own plans aside from Adrian, and he's leading his own rebellion. **Anjali Guha** and **Jack Farmer** are Brotherhood and part of Harvey's splinter group.

Professor Duquesne is a physicist who comes too quickly to the bad guys' attention; he will administer the **Aegis Project**. **Herr Müller** is Adrian's financial manager; **Frau Saraço?lu** is his efficient assistant.

Shadowspawn and their people

Great-uncle Arnaud would be better if he no longer existed on this earth. Adrian's grandfather, **Étienne-Maurice Brézé**, a diabolist, murderer, genius, born heir to the Duc de Beauloup, and Grand-master of the Order of the Black Dawn and the Council of Shadows, is very accepting of Adrian's killing his twin sister. His grandmother, **Seraphine**, is, as Adrian puts it, "only marginally less dangerous".

Adrienne Brézé is Adrian's telepathic, psychopathic twin sister. Where he struggles to retain his goodness, Adrienne wallows in the pain and suffering of others, doing her best to make it worse. **Leila** and **Leon** are her twin children, and Adrian is their father. **Jules and Julianne Brézé** are Adrian and Adrienne's body-dead

parents and quite pleased about Hajimie's fate (see *A tain in the lood*). They're holding down the fort at Rancho Sangre.

Adrienne's people at Rancho Sangre---her lucies and renfields

Eusebia "Cheba" Cortines was lucky enough to survive the party, but not enough to win free of the compound. She has her own plans in place, if she can change her attitude. **Jose Villegas** is Theresa's cousin and quite happy about his impending release. Happy enough to try and help Cheba. **Dr. Peter Boase**, formerly a scientist with too many questions, is a time bomb allowed to escape. **Monica Darton** has two children, **Josh** and **Sophie**, and, strangely, is looking forward to having her soul eaten. **Dr. Fiona Duggan** chose the renfield life. It was that or die. **David Cheung** is a lucy as well as a guard and enforcer. **Theresa Villegas** is a renfield, Adrienne's household manager; generations of her family have served Adrienne. The sadistically murderous **Captain Harold Bates** is a Gurkha and in charge of Brézé Enterprises' site security forces. **Jamal** seems to have had a name change to **Jabar**. *Somebody watching too much Disney??* Then there's **Thomas Kenworth**, the assistant household manager. He screws up bigtime. Not his fault, but that's not how Adrienne will see it, I'm sure.

T?kairin Michiko and her husband **Ichir?** now lead the T?kairin clan with her grandfather's death. **Dimitri Usov** has shown on Adrienne's side at the Prayer for Long Life Party; his shifted form is as a silverback gorilla. **Dale Shadowblade** is the Council assassin and his form is a wolf. The **al-Lanarkis** are another clan.

Back in Santa Fe

Giselle Demarcio runs **Hans and Demarcio**, an art gallery in Santa Fe where Ellen used to work. **Detectives Eric Salvador**, still battling his demons from war, and **Cesar** are investigating Ellen's disappearance and the arson at Ellen's apartment building.

Noémi Lasalle is something of a caretaker at Adrian's apartment in Paris.

José Figurerez, a.k.a., Dhul Fiqar, is about to find out just how big of a dupe he and his people were.

The **Council of Shadows** is Shadowspawn, immortals who require blood to survive and can't step into the light of day or tolerate silver. They all have a talent for magic and prefer blood that's been "stimulated". They can also shapeshift into any DNA they can swallow. And they are the true masters of the world. The **Order of the Black Dawn** recognized what they were and have been manipulating their genes and training in the use of their magic. Their idea of missionaries is sending Shadowspawn out to find more of their kind.

Mhabrogast is the language spoken in Hell. A **renfield** is a human who voluntarily chose to serve the Shadowspawn, while a **lucy** is involuntary and simply used for blood. The **Alberman Scale** is a test for *nocturnus* genes, a test of power levels in humans; you have to rate a 25 or better to consciously use the power. **Wreaking** is what they call magic. The **Brotherhood** evolved to battle the Order, witchfinders.

There are two versions of **Operation Trimback**: the first will release an EMP pulse and destroy us while the second will unleash smallpox---to trim back the overwhelming numbers of humans.

The Cover

The cover is a pastelish (the medium, not the colors) looking Euro-trash effect with Ellen in a sleeveless form-fitting dress standing in the background next to a hot, hot car as Adrian in button-down shirt and blazer evaluates his surroundings. The backdrop is a European city with old buildings almost forming up around a square.

The title is Adrian and Ellen's target, *The Council of Shadows*.

Jason says

Whew! Well, THAT took forever. The first half I tried to read on paper, and kept putting it aside for Kindle format books. Then I just bought the damn Kindle format version, and finished it in a week and a half.

Good book. I still like his Emberverse series better (Hail Montival!), but this is great. Man, don't read S.M. Stirling books when you're hungry! He definitely has an affinity for writing about eating and food in super detail.

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Read my review on Tor.com
<http://www.tor.com/blogs/2011/04/an-s...>

Aaron Anderson says

Basically more of the same of book 1. The bad guys are too bad, the good guys are a bit unbelievable. I do like how murky the moral issues are at times. That and the action is really what it has going for it.

I still have some weakness where I still personally felt this was 4-star. I'm kind of a sucker for Stirling, same as I tend to be for Modesitt JR. We all have our weaknesses.

Teresa says

I'm not liking the Shadowspawn series as much as I'd hoped, but it wasn't bad. Going on to the third at some point, so good enough to stick with anyway. ;)

Cami says

I managed to make it all the way to page 36 in this book and then just couldn't drum up the desire to keep going. I didn't like the first book... I shouldn't have held on to this second one. It's going back to the library for now. Maybe I'll try again someday, but probably not. There's too many books I actually DO want to read!

David says

SM Sterling takes us back to a world so close to our own that you can see yourself walking around in it. But there are differences, and those differences are monsters. As politics among the shadowspawn heat up, two

plans are floated on how to deal with the humans, destroy the technology and set everyone back to the medieval age or unleash a plague to cull the heard, either way you and I would see a world where monsters reign, fear is rampant, and hope is gone. Mostly because those emotions make us taste better to the shadowspawn. In the middle of this, Adrian, spadowspawn and the greatest hunter of shadowspawn ever, starts dismantling the structure his sister had built up, and as he does learns that there are deeper plans in place. Can he learn about a plot to force the plague upon the world? The weakness to this book is that a transition book, from our introduction of the world and characters in A Taint in the Blood to the climactic chase and intrigue of the final book Shadows of Falling Night, and it feels like it. There are a couple of exciting scenes, a couple new characters emerge, but overall, it feels like the content of this book would have been a training montage at the start of the movie. I recommend reading this book, but it is the weakest of the trilogy.

Kurt Vosper says

Another good outing from Stirling. It's not the same as his other works, but he also departed from those with his series about Mars. As with most of his work the world building and the revealed back story is well done and thought out. The battle between the Breze siblings and associated Shadowspawn families is heating up and we get some new characters and plot lines introduced. The overall plan of the immortal faction isn't good for the normal folk and the Brotherhood is out to stop them. Overall, entertaining.

Max says

The first book in this trilogy wasn't anything to write home about, but it managed to be at least kinda fun, even if it was basically literary popcorn. The Council of Shadows can't even manage that much. The big problem is that there really isn't actually a proper plot. Honestly, this could probably have been reduced to a short story interquel between books one and three, or even just tacked on to the front of the next book in an important bits only version. Far too much of the novel involves Adrian and Ellen wandering around the world on their honeymoon. It reminds me of the last Fifty Shades novel, with our supposed heroes mostly having (thankfully skipped over) kinky sex and Adrian showing off how incredibly rich he is (the latter being thanks to no effort on his part beyond his probability manipulating magic powers). Subplots abound, many of which are more interesting than the main plot, which isn't saying much. Adrian's evil sister is, surprise, not dead after all, and there's a bit of time spent with her recovering in her evil village of evil. There's some stuff about gathering some physicists to study the series' magic system, which only kinda becomes relevant at the end. There's also a more or less totally pointless subplot about a couple of cops investigating Ellen's disappearance, which mostly serves to act as a summary of a little bit of the first book. One of the cops does join our heroes towards the end, but he doesn't really bring anything to the table that couldn't have been provided by a different character. The other big problem with the plot is that the timeline was really confused - this is one book that really could have benefitted from each section being given a time and location stamp at the start. I get the feeling the author himself lost track or just never cared to begin with. Plus, I realized partway through that this book is supposed to take placed around a decade or so after it was published, and yet this has basically no impact on the plot - so what was the point of not just setting it in 2010? All in all, I'm left with the feeling that Stirling just needed to fill a contract for a trilogy, when this story could probably have been told in two novels, and so he's just kinda filling out a page count here. It's still not quite as bad as Saberhagen's Dracula series, but like the first book of the Hel's Crucible fantasy duology, this is an almost

insultingly dull waste of trees.

Mitchell says

Part 2 in a S. M. Stirling vampire series. So perhaps a bit better than your typical vampire book but not better enough. And definitely a book 2 - no beginning and no ending - so if you don't remember book#1 it is a bit irritating. And two much violent sex for my taste whether on or off screen. 3.5 of 5.

Peter says

THIS IS A GOOD BOOK BY ONE OF MY FAVOURITE AUTHORS. PROBABLY I COULD HAVE GIVEN THIS BOOK FOUR STARS BUT I FELT THAT THE BOOK LACKED SOMETHING. THE CHARACTERS WERE VERY GOOD AND ARE DEVELOPING FINE. BUT I FELT THAT THIS WAS AN INTRODUCTORY STORY TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE CHARACTERS AND THAT THERE WAS A LIMITED PLOT WITH MUCH MORE TO COME I HOPE. FOR THOSE OF YOU THAT LIKE THIS TYPE OF READING I RECOMEND THIS BOOK, I ALSO HOPE THERE IS MUCH MORE TO COME.

Nicole Luiken says

Quick read, well-plotted with some nice twists, good action. Looking forward to book three.

Quibbles: lots of gourmet food and wine scenes which don't mean much to a plebe like me. The cop plotline took a long time to join up (it starts six months out of sync with the main plot) and I wasn't sure what it really added.

Paul Bonamy says

On the whole, the concept behind the Shadowspawn books is a potentially interesting take on the werewolf/vampire trend: the legends are more true than not, and stem from a racial memory of super-predators who used to rule and prey on humans before being overthrown. Now, of course, they're making a comeback.

The actual science (such as it is) seems more than a little sketchy, but it's interesting to see someone actually take a stab at explaining why vampires/werewolves have the abilities and limitations they do beyond 'that's the way it is'. This is not hard science, but it at least tries to start from a core premise and then derive meaningful conclusions from it. This also sets up an interesting dynamic which could let science triumph against very real threats because, really, if you can reshape reality on a whim what's the point in trying to understand how you do it?

It should be pointed out that the overall tone and style of this series differs pretty significantly from Stirling's Change books. The tone is rather darker, and sex and seduction play a greater role, in keeping with the

traditions of the genre. (Thankfully, there are no impossibly pretty people here, nor does anyone sparkle.)
