



The High King of Montival

S.M. Stirling

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The *New York Times* bestselling author continues his post- apocalyptic series chronicling a modern world without technology.

With *The Sword of the Lady*, Rudi Mackenzie's destiny was determined. Now he returns to Montival in the Pacific Northwest, where he will face the legions of the Prophet. To achieve victory, Rudi must assemble a coalition of those who had been his enemies a few months before and forge them into an army that will rescue his homeland.

Only then will Rudi be able to come to terms with how the Sword has changed him, as well as the world, and assume his place as Artos, High King of Montival...

The High King of Montival Details

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From Reader Review *The High King of Montival* for online ebook

Spuddie says

Another stellar entry in this dystopian/post-apocalyptic/speculative fiction/sci-fi/fantasy series. This entry is set 24 years after *The Change*, when an EMP disabled every electrical and modern device worldwide and changed the world forever. Rudi Mackenzie (also known as Artos I, High King of Montival) continues to make his way with his ever-changing troupe back from Nantucket (where he obtained *The Sword of the Lady*) to home in Montival--what was once Oregon and Washington State. Of course he continues to meet foes along the way as well as new friends, forging alliances.

This is a pretty long-lived series, and these first seven books have spanned almost a quarter century since the Change. I'm interested to see where the author takes the series. Love the writing style, the weaving of all the main characters' stories together, and also enjoy the reading of the audio version, which is very well done.

Paul Steele says

Doesn't add much to the series...

OK, ok... I get that they have to get back to Montival, but did it have to take 476 pages?? Do we have to read a recap of everything that has gone on before? Do we have to continue to tell the same, tired jokes and "clever" tales as in the previous six novels? I struggle to see where this add anything to the overall saga at all which is starting to really drag on... (becoming nearly as tedious as Robert Jordan) and apparently there are two more installments before it's over!

Oh... and the cover sucks. Doesn't tie into the story at all.

Christopher Jam says

A lot of greetings and meetings and eating and tweeting (birds, not thumbs), with two battles as bookends. Very little action, a lot of description of nature retaking what humankind had wrought. The series is getting to feel a little stretched out.

Kathy Davie says

Seventh in the Emberverse overall series and fourth in *The Change* subseries of this apocalyptic science fiction series revolving around Rudi Artos Mackenzie. It's Change Year 24 and our year 2023.

My Take

The main characters in *The High King of Montival* are Changelings, the children born after that EMP took out the world's technologies. They have never experienced that tech and look upon the stories their "elders" tell as fairy tales. They can't tell the difference between those tales and those of dragons and Rings of Power.

Stirling does take some grandiose liberties with that sword. I'm not objecting as I enjoyed the challenges it presented Rudi, as well as the benefits it wrought. Still, it was "amazingly" miraculous, especially when Rudi held it to the High Seeker's forehead. That poor boy. It helps Rudi remember absolutely everyone, to see over the land, to know all languages, to free the possessed, and to view the past or future.

This is a brilliant trip in so many ways and a great experience for Rudi, for he learns much of how others govern, the good and the bad. He'll take these lessons home along with valuable allies. It also gives him time to learn about the sword. Some of it terrible, terrible and great, and some of it a blessing.

The Catholic priests in this are very able to twist events to suit their doctrine. It's all in the hands of God, and it will be a Catholic God. I do prefer Rudi's Old Religion with its incredible tolerance for the beliefs of others.

It's a hard slog, convincing potential allies why they want to join with the Mackenzies and the PPA, and it provides Stirling with the opportunity to explain how the concept of Montival will work, how it will benefit everyone.

Lol, Bjarni adds an incentive to the Bjorning council meeting to hurry up the decisionmaking. Very clever. Mathilda lets us know the Bjornings have kept that Maine accent, lol. Later in the story, seeing the numbers that central America can field, Bjarni wonders why they bothered to come, but it'll be an eye-opening trip for him.

This is a difficult time for Graber, a time for thought, of how to atone, how to rescue his family.

There's a fascinating side trip up inside a highrise in Toronto where the Changelings get a glimpse of what their elders miss. I like that it makes them think of the future. Their own future in which they too will do grand things, their *own* grand things. It's a trip that sets Bjarni to thinking about the future of his people.

Oh, thank god. I was so worried about the widowed Cecile Thurston. Seems she has an idea of the truth, and Astrid plans to do something about it with Eilir.

It's an interesting combination: the men-conserving yet ambitious Martin Thurston and the Prophet who cares nothing for the lives of his people. Not like Rudi who will make Mark his uncle's aide in an attempt to keep him safe.

Oh, you smokers will love the Richlanders. They grow tobacco and no one cares about the old days when they *said* smoking was bad for you.

I am in favor of the death penalty, and Rudi sums it up for me: "very odd, to make honest folk pay to support the wicked [in prison]."

The Story

The quest has lost a month and the town on Nantucket Island, but Rudi has gained what they sought: the sword of the Lady. A sword that is the only hope the Mackenzies and their allies have of defeating a force that is more than twice their size. A sword that leaves Major Graber with a life-changing decision.

At least Rudi's possession of the sword means that the enemy's hoodoo no longer works.

But all is not well in Norrheim, for the Bekwa are crossing into Maine, ready for war.

The Characters

Rudi Artos Mackenzie is of the Old Religion and the High King, the Ard Rí, acclaimed by all in his party. **Epona** is the horse he's had since he was a boy. **Mathilda Arminger**, a devout Catholic, is the crown princess to the PPA, and betrothed to Rudi, her best friend since childhood. **Father Ignatius** of the Order of the Shield of St. Benedict is a Catholic warrior-priest whom Rudi will ask to be his Chancellor of the Realm. **Edain Aylward Mackenzie**, a.k.a., Aylward the Archer, is Rudi's best friend and right-hand man. **Garbh** is Edain's mastiff bitch. **Mary** and **Ritva** are his half-sisters; they have a shared father, the deceased Mike Havel. **Ingolf Voegler** is Mary's husband. **Frederick Thurston** is the younger son of the murdered General Lawrence Thurston and married to the bloodthirsty **Virginia Kane**. The **Southside Freedom Fighters** are part of a tribe Rudi picked up outside Iowa in *The Sword of the Lady*, 6, and includes **Tuk**, **Samul**, and **Rattlebones**.

The Mackenzies and Their Allies

The Mackenzies are...

...followers of the Old Religion, and **Juniper Mackenzie**, Rudi's mother, is the Chief of the Clan, their Witch-Queen, and Goddess-on-Earth. **Sir Nigel Loring** is her husband. **Fiorbhinn** is one of their daughters and a dab hand at songwriting. **Maude** is another daughter and both will be furious over missing the ceremonies. **Sam Aylward** is Edain's father and the original Aylward the Archer. **Dickie** is his son, Edain's younger brother.

Eithne is handfasted, to Edain's relief, to **Artan Jackson**, a leatherworker.

The Bearkillers are...

...a.k.a., the **Outfit**, a military group assembled by **Mike Havel** right after the Change. It's now led by Mike's widow, **Signe Havel**. **Mike Jr.** is seventeen now, and an initiated Bearkiller. He likes Rudi a lot more than his still-jealous mother. The one-handed **Eric Larsson** is Signe's twin and the Bearkillers' war-commander.

The Dúnedain Rangers are...

...a group of young women and men who act as scouts and guards. They have a fascination with the Lord of the Rings — they refer to them as the **Histories** — and they all speak Sindarin. **Aunt Astrid** is married to **Alleyne Loring**, and she leads the Dúnedain. She's also Signe and Eric's sister. They have three children: **Diorn**, **Hinluin**, and **Fimalen**. **Eilir** is Juniper's deaf daughter and a co-leader with Astrid. She's married to **Little John Hordle**, Alleyne's childhood friend. **Hírvegil** and **Imlos** are some of the Rangers.

CORA, the Central Oregon Ranchers Association is...

...a loose coalition of ranchers allied to the Mackenzies and Bearkillers. **Rancher John Brown** is one of its leaders.

Mount Angel is...

...a Benedictine monastery of warrior monks led by **Abbot-Bishop Dmwoski**. Their brothers are trained in a wide variety of skills with missions sent out all over the land.

The Seven Free Cities of the Yakima are...

...new come to the alliance. **Zillah** is one of the cities.

The Portland Protective Association (PPA) is...

...Matti's inheritance, but her mother, **Sandra Arminger**, is the current regent, a cold killer who loves her daughter. **Castle Todenangst** is the government center and the primary home of the Armingers.

"...some says she's a sociopath. Some say psychopath. Sandra says her chosen phrase would be 'very focused'."

Sir Joscelin is a Wereton of Laurelwood. **Lady Jenhane Jones** is **Lord Jabar**, the Count of Molalla's, youngest. She is confidential secretary to Lady Sandra. **Baroness Tiphaine d'Ath** is the Grand Constable and supreme commander for the PPA armies. **Lady Delia** is still with Tiphaine and chatelaine of the castle.

The Sioux, Lakota, and Olgalla

John Red Leaf is the representative the **Seven Council Fires of the Lakota** send to negotiate with the Mackenzies and the PPA. **Rick Three Bears** is his son. **Fox Woman** is John's wife. (We met them in *The Scourge of God* , 5.) Their land covers half the Dakotas; chunks of Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado; and a bit of Nebraska.

Idahoans are...

...fed up with the CUT and Boise. **Sheriff Robert Woburn** leads them and still feels a debt to Mike Havel and his Bearkillers over events in *Dies the Fire* , 1. His son **Tom** died battling the Corwinites. **Eddie Running Horse** is hoping to catch up on events in their lives.

Nantucket Island

There are three groups on the island: Rudi and his friends, the corsairs, and The CUT. The tribe Ingolf had met on his trip east three years ago includes **Dove** — and Ingolf's young son. **Kills Orca** is Dove's father and the chief of the Sea-Landers.

Hrolf "Blood Ax" Homersson, **Ulfhild Swift-Sword**, and **Asgerd Karlsdottir** are some of the Norrheimers who'd volunteered to come on this trip. **Karl** was Asgerd's father, and he'd been a policeman in New Hampshire before the Change. **Grettir**, **Hauk**, **Erik**, **Brynhildr**, and **Tóra** are her siblings. **Sigurd** was her betrothed before he was murdered by the CUT. Now she and Edain have hooked up.

The Bjornings in Norrheim, Maine

Eriksgarth is...

...the stead of **Godhi Bjarni Eriksson** in what was Aroostook County; he's also chief of the Bjornings and will become Bjarni Ironrede, Bjarni of the Iron Counsel. **Lady Harberga Janetsdottir** is Bjarni's wife, and she's had her baby, **Erik Bjarnisson**. **Gudrun Eriksdottir** is his sister. **Erland Johnsson** is *birdmann*, a guard in Bjarni's service. **Halfdan Finnurrson**, **Uncle Ranulf** will end up staying behind, and **Ingmar** are some of the Bjornings who go to battle.

Kalksthorpe is...

...the stead that had been attacked by the Cutters and corsairs in what had been Robbinston, Washington County. **Kalk the Shipwright** is its leader. **Karl** is the fourteen-year-old door guard. **Heidhveig** is the Norrheimers' seeress. **Thorleif** is her son. **Gundridh Thorvinsdottir** is her great-granddaughter.

Hrossings are led by...

...**Syfrid Jerrysson** and Bjarni's rival. He *had* been Erik's friend and right-hand man who thought he should have become chief of the Bjornings and not Bjarni. **Halldor** is his fifteen-year-old son. Other steadings include the **Wulflings**, **Verdfolings**, and the **Hundings** who are led by **Inglief**.

Readstown in the Richland territory is...

...where Ingolf's people are. **Doc Pham** is their doctor. Ingolf's brother, **Ed**, is the sheriff there and is married to **Wanda**. Their son **Mark** is anxious to go off to war — he's Ensign Mark Vogeler, First Richland

Volunteer Cavalry now, and there is nothing Ed or Wanda can do about it but consign him to Ingolf's care. The rest of their children include baby **Jenny**, young **Ingolf**, **Dave**, and **Melly**. **Wilma**. **Samantha** is a Wiccan and the Voegler's housekeeper. **Major Will Kohler**, the local drill instructor and teacher of martial arts, is the temporary commander of the Readstown contingent. Colonel Ingolf will have to take command due to Will's status.

Otter was **Jake sunna Jake**'s wife, and she grieves his loss. She'll follow Rudi back to Montival. Rudi and company have to impart the news of **Pierre Walks Quiet**'s death which devastates his wife.

Sheriff Bill Clements is the high sheriff over all of them. Events in Iowa have them all up in arms, and the towns all around are gathering up contingents to send with Rudi. They include **Dan Rassmusen** in Fargo, **Greg Johanson** in Marshall, **Carl Mayer** in Nebraska, **Andy Hickock** in Kirksville, and **McIvery** in Concordia. There's no more tolerance for Cutters here anymore.

The Provisional Republic of Iowa is...

...now led by the Regent, **Lady Catherine Heasleroad**, on behalf of her son, **Thomas Heasleroad**, heir to the Bossmanship (their story is primarily in *The Scourge of God* , 5 and *The Sword of the Lady* , 6). **Abel Heuisink** is a landed gentleman, a Farmer, and he's the Chancellor helping Kate rule. **Captain Dietrick** is the commander of the State Patrol.

Canada

Dickie is a young man they meet outside Toronto and provides a thoughtful lesson for Bjarni.

Inspector James Rollins is the Canadian commander, soon to be made general. **Premier Szakacs** and **Premier Wuthrich** lead the territories of Moose Jaw and Minnedosa, but I'm not sure which.

The Dominion of Drumheller covers...

...the province of Alberta. **Constable Ian Kovalevsky** is with the Force (modeled on the Mounties) and perform the same sort of tasks as the Rangers. Led by **Corporal Dudley**, he and his fellow constables are charged with getting Ritva through to Montival. **Premier Mah** is the leader of the Dominion.

The Anchor Bar Seven Ranch is...

...within the Drumheller Dominion and run by **Avery McGillvery**, a captain in the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment, a Justice of the Peace, and a member of the Legislative Assembly. His father, **Keith**, was the ranch manager when the Change hit. It's also an outpost protecting the Drumheller border. **Naomi** is Avery's wife; **Dirk** and **Amy** are their children. **Doctor Padmi Nirasha** was part of a gang who raided the ranch years ago. **Annie** is one of the young girls on the ranch, and she fires a mean crossbow.

The Cutters are...

...followers of the **Church Universal and Triumphant**, which is led by the psychopathic **Prophet Sethaz**. The **High Seeker** in charge of the troop chasing Rudi is demon-possessed and turns out to be **Bobby Dalan** from Scrabbledown Ranch, now a five-year-old boy in the body of an adult. The man who had torn Mary's eye out. **Major Graber** commanded the troop that has been hunting Rudi since *The Scourge of God* , 5.

The United States of Boise...

...joined with the Cutters once the current president, **Martin Thurston**, killed his father.

The Bekwa are...

...an Indian tribe stirred up by the Cutters, and they hate the Norrheimers.

The corsairs had...

...been on parole for their actions in *The Scourge of God* , 5, but their aid leads Rudi to change his decision. **Abdou al-Naari** is their leader. **Ahmed ibn Abdou** is his son. **Jawara**, captain of the *Gisandu*, had been Abdou's friend.

Montival consists of "what the old world had called Oregon and Washington and parts of British Columbia. **William the Great** is the king of England and a friend of Sir Nigel's. He's also looking at the east coast of America.

The Cover and Title

The cover is a faded out landscape with a pale, pale blue sky, a mountain range in the background, and a withered grassy plain with a wrecked plane behind Rudi. Artos is in his combination leather and armor and what appears to be black combat boots, side-on to us, and holding *the sword* up in a ready position.

The title is what Rudi is acclaimed, *The High King of Montival*.

Kathy Klinge says

Faster paced,

Rich says

I really enjoyed the first several books in this series, but it seems as if the storyline has bogged down quite a bit by this point. I'm sure I'll finish out the series, just because I'm emotionally invested in the characters by now, but it's disappointing how the author seems to be needlessly prolonging the story in order to pad the series with more installments.

Donald says

I have enjoyed this series so far and was excited to dive into this latest foray into the post-apocalyptic "Change" world. Very, very disappointed.

For the first 350 pages Stirling leaves out the things the series does well and focuses on the things that are just average or worse.

Out: battles, action, plot twists, mad-dashes for safety, feats of daring, political intrigue.

In: lots of dialogue (where characters explain the same things over and over again, giving the reader zero credit for being able to remember something from one book to the next) and descriptions of people travelling across landscape.

To be fair, there are two bits of action in the first 350 pages; one battle and one skirmish. Neither lasts very long though. Essentially what we have is a lot of space used to tell us how Rudi and company make their way across half of the continent, even though nothing significant happens to them in that time.

The last hundred or so pages get back into the things that make this series enjoyable for me, but I can tell you if I had not previously invested in the “story so far”, I never would have made it to the good stuff.

Stirling has jumped ahead in the timeline before in this series, skipping over large periods of time to get to the point. Either jump straight from Nantucket to Iowa. Or give us the battle and a bit more, knocking out at least half of the pages devoted to this journey. The story would not have lost anything.

One star for the first three quarters of the book, four stars for the end. Two stars overall.

Starfire says

Book 4 in the second series of the Dies the Fire universe - and yeah, I confess, I loved it.

The fantasy element is growing stronger and stronger, but that's OK - Stirling has me firmly hooked and long for the ride. We're seeing a LOT of character change in Rudi (now Ard Righ Artos), but I think, given all that's happened to him over the past few books, it would be highly implausible if we didn't.

I still absolutely love the dialogue and banter (this appears to be a running theme in my reviews - I won't try to argue that)

The plotting? Probably not one the strongest books in this series, but at the same time, I'm having so much fun coming along for the ride on the journey that I don't actually care which direction it's going in.

Without wanting to give any spoilers, there's some wonderful happy-making stuff right at the end, and I kept on not-quite-trusting it and expecting Stirling to do some thoroughly Jossian ripping my heart out and leaving me on a cliff-hanger - so I kept my guard up the whole way through it and probably didn't enjoy it nearly as much as I could have.

My one major complaint is that I should know by now not to read these books on an empty stomach. Seriously... Mr Stirling's description of various feasts always make my stomach rumble!

So yeah - all up, I've given this one an 8/10. It was good reading, and I'm looking forward to Book 5 - but at the same time, I'm not on the edge of my seat waiting for it - I'm happy to just read it when it gets here :-)

Donna says

Rudi and his friends travel home while revisiting some of the people he met on his journey to the east coast.

I enjoyed the first Emberverse trilogy despite (or maybe partly because of) its excesses, but this follow up series has become disappointing. The idea of Rudi crossing the continent with a small group of young people who grew up in the changed world is pretty great, but reading about him meeting and usually winning over members of various wacky post-change cultures has gotten repetitive.

I assumed that we were going to finally see some aftermath of his journey, because it would be great for the

story to finally move on a little further. Instead, this one is heavy on recaps and the characters talk every idea and feeling to death. The battle scenes seem thrown in to liven things up a little, most were low-stakes to the point of boring.

At this point I'm still invested enough to want to find out about the resolution of the war, but I hope the author gets on with it already.

Jeffrey Jelmeland says

I want more! The threads all started coming together again, and the tapestry is really coming together quite clearly. Yes, the ending of the series is obvious, and the culmination of this book was clear before I even cracked the cover. However, the obviousness of the overarching plot is not why I read this series. Rather, for me, the point of the series is to watch the story unfold to the inevitable ending. The journey is the point, and the story that enfolds that oh so obvious conclusion. We are now seven books into what is sure to be at least nine books, and I do NOT want to wait for the next book in the series. Unfortunately my desire to close the covers on this book and open the next in the series has been thwarted by the necessity of the author actually transitioning the story from his mind to the published work that I so desperately want.

Yes, this is a retelling of the Arthurian legends, reworked to fit the setting. Yes, the conclusion is inevitable and obvious. What is not so obvious is the little stories that create the tapestry of this story. The characters that enter our lives through the journeys of the protagonists. The characters that we grow to love, and the characters that grow and evolve over the course of the series. These are the reasons I keep coming back to these books, and what made this book so difficult for me to put down. Now that I have finished the book I am forced to patiently wait for the next one to be published. I do NOT want to be patient.

Penny Ramirez says

Well, I managed to forget (**again**) that Stirling names his books in this series after what pretty much is the final climax of the book.... but it was still a fun read. Guess this isn't the end, as I'd thought it would be. But now I'm caught up with the series, so I'll have to be patient like everyone else!

The one thing that struck me in this book was the endless descriptions of meals. Made me hungry all the time. Wonder if Stirling is on a diet?

Duffy Pratt says

The cover shows a close-cropped, grizzled man, wearing tattered camouflage, and holding a gleaming sword in a two hand fighting position. Behind him, there is the broken fuselage of a jet, with the Rockies looming in the distance. The landscape is otherwise desolate. This picture captures a bit of the soul of the Change world, and it's this world that I liked so much in the first three books.

The man in the picture is Artos, High King of Montival, nee Rudi Mackenzie. Or at least it's supposed to be. But let's get to some problems with the picture. First off, there is no wrecked airplane in the book. Secondly, the picture of the wreckage doesn't ring true. The Change happened in a flash, instantaneously cutting off all

electricity. If this plane had been flying at the time, it would be a much more severe wreck than what is shown. And if it was not flying at the time, what is it doing out in the foothills of the Rockies, all on its own? Of course, these are just quibbles.

Let's move on to Rudi. The books are quite clear about his description. He's tall, has shoulder-length hair that is curly and fire red. Oh, and he wears a kilt when he's not wearing armor. Moreover, he would not just be carrying a sword. He would also have a quiver of arrows and a bow with him in all likelihood. And even if he didn't have that, then he would have a scabbard for his sword. And the scabbard would definitely appear in the picture.

I don't necessarily mind the use of artistic license. (I will note that I find it puzzling that Stirling, who tries very hard to be accurate, or at least plausible, in his descriptions, would approve of a cover that veers so far from his own descriptions.) But I do find it emblematic of my major problem with the book: I like the world in the picture, which was the world of the first three books; I'm increasingly less fond of Artos, his kilt, and the fantasy world that has somehow grown out of the Change.

In this book, Rudi and his gang travel back from their quest, from Nantucket to his home in Montival (formerly Oregon and surrounding territory). In keeping with the pace that he has set for the series, Stirling has determined to fill us in on every step of the journey. It's a long walk. Along the way, there are some reunions, some skirmishes, two battles. And it all feels a bit old. The Cutters again are faceless, mindless villains who attack and attack, chanting "Cut! Cut! CUT!", and, by comparison, they make the orcs in the Lord of the Rings feel like full-blown characters. There's also a fair amount of alliance making, and that was a bit more interesting, but only a bit.

Ironically, the feeling I had for this book was best expressed by Rudy himself:

"I'm tired of this... It's been years now; fighting and running, now them running and still more fighting. I'm tired of seeing brave men die; tired of killing them. ... I want it to stop." Unfortunately, that about sums it up for me as well.

Monical says

Another re-read in my review of Stirling's books in this series beyond the first three. To recap, I really liked the first three books, and totally HATE the most recent ones in the "series" (in quotes because the series has diverged a lot from the original premise and books!). I decided to re-read the set(s) of books after the first three to see when the books wandered off track (in my opinion, of course). This book is mostly filler, moving Rudi/Artos from his acquisition of "the sword" back to Oregon. (Boy, did I get tired of the "shock" reports every time the sword gets used... really, the author says "shock!") While Artos picks up a few battles and allies along the way, the characters (including Rudi/Artos and Matti) are increasingly cardboard. I did like the reunion with a number of the characters from the first three books at the end of this book, but its amazing how the dialogue has deteriorated (for Sam, for example, and John Hordle) and how increasingly "fake harp" Artos is. It seems this book just moved the story back to Oregon to set the stage for the major battle to occur. I've already re-read that book, and I think that is when Stirling lost his grip on the story, since to really bring it full circle he should have had Artos die during the final confrontation and instead he tried to keep the series afloat.

Elar says

This book is just setup for coming war and it is just too idealistic in some places, writing style and characters reminds me of old epics.

Philippe says

One of the better entries in the series. I found after the first three that the pagan religions started to pale, verging on the boring. Then I realized it was one way the author was 'converting' this world into one with magic (in my opinion) which is exemplified by the Sword.

jammastere says

I still can't get enough of this series!

This book covers the trek back from the island of Nantucket to what is now called the kingdom of Montival for Rudi and his friends. Along the way they gain even more allies in the upcoming war against the CUT. He also learns more about the sword and what it can do.

This series, that started out very much urban fantasy, has definitely moved into the epic fantasy world. I wasn't sure I would like the move but I am really enjoying the story and the characters. There is a stronger fantasy element involving the "gods" as they caused the Change. This is still a character driven story and I really love the cast of characters! Is this accurate and would things happen exactly this way? Of course not! This is a fictional "what if" that is so enjoyable to read and think about. Big thanks to Mr. Stirling for writing these stories and letting me enjoy the world he has created. Can't wait to read the next one.

Susan says

3.5 really. I almost gave it 4 stars, but I think that's more because it has been so long since I read the last book, which seemed endless to me at times. Yes, he did repeat a number of things from before, but since it's been a while, that put me back in the world of the book. I can see how it would have annoyed had I read it soon after the previous one. Despite all the lengthy descriptions, I did enjoy it.

Jen says

GAHHHH, why does he keep having freaking cliff-hangers?!

I do like this series; there's nothing mind-blowing or You Must Read This Before You Die about it, but it's fun, it's informative, and it's usually pretty engaging. With this new installment (which, I'm told, kicks off

ANOTHER trilogy--fie upon you, S. M. Stirling), the troop of adventurers from the previous two trilogies begins the long hike back from Maine to Oregon, meeting several adventures and new people along the way. It's a fun hero journey romp with a lot of neat tidbits about various things, and there are some great one-liners; yes, it gets a little out there with the fantastical sometimes and I almost laughed at the blatantness of it, and yes, there were definitely chapters where I had to go back and verify that they DID, in fact, just cover four states in about 10 pages compared to the one state in 5 chapters that just happened. But, like I said, this is no Nobel laureate piece; it's fun, it's fast, and I'm definitely eager to see what comes next.

Richard says

The end of the Emberverse series. By far the weakest of the books. The first couple of books were good, and memorable. The rest seem more written to fill out the series.

Read it if you've read the rest and need to complete the set. Otherwise there are better books out there to spend your time with.

Donna says

This has been a long series. I'm glad I've finally read the last book. All the detailed descriptions of war, fighting techniques and weapons got a little tiring for me. The original concept of the novels (what would happen if all technology suddenly ceased to function) was compelling for me, but the execution of this concept was "over the top." There were so many characters that it was difficult to remember them all and how they were related. However, I do have a greater appreciation for how medieval life was lived.
