



Obsidian and Blood

Aliette de Bodard

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A massive fantasy omnibus containing all three novels in the Obsidian and Blood series:

SERVANT OF THE UNDERWORLD

Year One-Knife, Tenochtitlan - the capital of the Aztecs. The end of the world is kept at bay only by the magic of human sacrifice. A priestess disappears from an empty room drenched in blood. Acatl, high priest, must find her, or break the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead.

HARBINGER OF THE STORM

The year is Two House and the Mexica Empire teeters on the brink of destruction, lying vulnerable to the flesh-eating star-demons - and to the return of their creator, a malevolent goddess only held in check by the Protector God's power. The council is convening to choose a new emperor, but when a councilman is found dead, only Acatl, High Priest of the Dead, can solve the mystery.

MASTER OF THE HOUSE OF DARTS

The year is Three Rabbit, and the storm is coming...

The coronation war for the new Emperor has just ended in a failure, the armies retreating with a mere forty prisoners of war - not near enough sacrifices to ensure the favor of the gods. When one of those prisoners of war dies of a magical illness, ACATL, High Priest for the Dead, is summoned to investigate.

File Under : Fantasy [Magical Murder | Aztec Mystery | Human Sacrifice | The Gods Walk]

Obsidian and Blood Details

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Author : Aliette de Bodard

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From Reader Review Obsidian and Blood for online ebook

Nathan says

First posted here

A series I had my eye on for quite some time, 'Obsidian and Blood' intimidated me at first. It looked to be right up my alley, but I wondered if I would get lost in a world based around the ancient America's, of which I have very little knowledge. I feared getting lost in the names, lost in the mythos, and feared the book would turn into a giant research project if I wanted to follow the story. My fears were unjustified; the book is a well-crafted, well contained story. I have mentioned it before, the books are surprisingly accessible, and at no point did I lose myself in the names.

What is the series about? In short it is the story of Acatl, High Priest of the Dead in pre-colonization Tenochtitlan. His duties are usually about ushering the dead to his master Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death. But due to his position, he often spends time investigating deaths that affect the boundaries that keep the world safe. The stories are told in first person from Acatl's point of view, and his travels take him all around the capital. Although these are obviously historical fantasy, in many ways they read like urban fantasy detective novels. Our protagonist interviews witnesses, fights little political battles with his superiors, and races against time to bring justice and/or save the world.

The world building is superb. Gods in this world are real and active participants, several times Acatl is forced to talk to one or more of them. Blood sacrifice is a way of life. There is no modern spin put on the realities of this world, sacrifice is necessary and there are no qualms. It would soon seem out of place if Acatl didn't use worship thorns to get blood from his ear. The state of the supernatural is revealed as needed, without annoying info dumps, so that a reader will quickly understand recurring details such as the fifth world is under the protection of the Southern Hummingbird, and what is needed to keep it so.

The author's writing is a no frills style that may not appeal to everyone, but may be part of the accessibility of the book. I hate to call the books easy to read, because that seems to denote simplicity and lack of intelligence, which simply is not the case. But it is true that de Bodard is not trying to be a wordsmith here, the economy of words keeps the pacing brisk and entertaining. Perhaps it was the easy read style that allowed me to keep track of the characters so well. I never had to go back to find who a character was, or which god they attended, or even what that god represented.

The characters in the book were both good and bad. Acatl really grows through the series, from a brooding man who is almost ashamed of his position to a very competent High Priest. His student Teomitl on the other hand was a single not player for most the series. His devotion to Acatl doesn't really fit with his pride and stubborn nature. The Reverend Speaker was almost cartoonish incompetent. But to counteract that several of the High Priests Acatl is forced to play politics with are fiendishly clever and fun to read. Only a few female characters, but with a couple of strengths. Ceyaxochitl was a master of politics, and a strong ally to Acatl. Mihmatini quickly fit into her role as a Guardian. A couple others seemed to exist only to give cryptic messages. All forgivable in a very obviously patriarchal society, the interactions stayed realistic.

I only had a few issues with the books. The main one came toward the end of the third book when we once again followed Acatl on a long runaround between witnesses. I know it is a staple of the mystery genre, but after three books it grew tiring. Just once I wanted a witness to reveal all the information, especially when they had nothing to hide. There were also a couple of convenient "cryptic warnings." I also felt the second

book got carried away with the magic. Hard to describe, but it felt like a TV medical drama at times, with “ok this spell didn’t work, so let’s try this one.” Lastly, if a reader picks up the series in omnibus form, skip to the short stories at the end and read them first. Several of Acatl’s relations are explained that would have been nice in the first book especially.

Obviously, the strengths of the series far out did the problems for me, and I enjoyed the series a lot. I would recommend to many fantasy lovers. The historical setting and interactions with gods give the series an epic feeling, but the detective style will appeal to many lovers of urban fantasy.

4 Stars

Erulisse says

If you have problems with a society that considers death and human and animal sacrifice as daily living, this probably isn't the book for you. But I've known about and studied about Mixtican society since I was ten years old and reading these was like welcoming home old friends.

The central character, Acatl-tzin, is the High Priest of the Dead and is called upon to discover, by means of magic and the mundane, the methods and meaning behind mysterious deaths. The three independent books that make up Obsidan and Blood take the reader through a journey of several years in the political and religious structure of that empire. Familiar locations are mentioned, places where I've been, so there is a sense of familiarity about much of it to me.

If you have always been interested in Aztec society this might be a good book for you to get a feel for how it might have seemed from the inside looking out. Is it accurate? It's actually well researched and well presented. I can't state that it is 100% accurate, but it's not bad. Take a chance on this one.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

This collection brings together in one convenient volume the trilogy of novels, plus the three short stories, of Acatl, Aztec High Priest of the Dead in the capital city of Tenochtitlan. The Aztecs were an ethnicity whose spirituality was rife with the supernatural, including a pantheon of deities. Spiritual life was for this people an irremediably interwoven aspect of their natural and daily life. Deities must be appeased, honoured, worshipped; hence, the need for one to fulfill the role of High Priest of the Dead.

Well-written and compelling, these stories neatly thread backstory and world-building through the ongoing aspects of action, adventure, suspenseful thrills, and dialogue. Readers who love historical fiction will find this collection appealing, but so also will those who enjoy historical fantasy and epic fantasy. Smoothly engrossing, readers will find themselves turning the pages without thinking in terms of fiction, but rather of observing as in real life.

Krista says

Obsidian and Blood by Aliette De Bodard, a fantasy novel that contains all three of Aliette's works in one. The three books are Servant of the Underworld, Harbinger of the Storm and Master of the House of Darts. Usually I don't read a lot of fantasy novels but this one drew me right in thinking it would have me loving the novel just based on the hype and the cover. Not so much I was totally disappointed, I really wanted to get into the Aztec part of the story, their beliefs about the living, dead and world in between. Well it did get into it but confused the heck out of me. I really felt that a twist between Science Fiction, True Crime and Fantasy didn't mix well. I also had trouble keeping up with all the names. I realize that Aztecs have to have names true to heritage but it was a little weird for me to remember the names as I couldn't pronounce any. Names were Yaotl, Ceyaxchitl, Michtecacihuatl and so on. OK I'm an educated woman have a degree in nursing, not literature but the way everything was spelled and how long the names were started to confuse me, "who was that again?" I had to re-read a lot of parts which was starting to get annoying because an easy read became a long drawn out one. Thus making me not move on to the next book Harbinger of the Storm.

There were parts that also I felt were not explained well starting out at the beginning of the book. Overall I did not like this book I hear good things about the other stories in the book however not moving forward I stopped at book 1 Servant of the Underworld.

Parts I did like in the book, if you don't have a weak stomach and like horror/vampire books this is actually has some really cool descriptive parts, such as self mutilations, ripping off of faces and sacrifices. Might make some people cringe but I thought it was pretty cool. I really wish that the author would tone down the names a bit that might make an easier read to. I love the cover art of the book as well.

Overall I gave this book 1 out of 5 Smacks, DIDN'T LIKE. But don't let me sway you if you are a HUGE Fantasy reader because I don't read that much Fantasy. True Crime YES but I still wouldn't suggest this novel to a true crime reader. I would recommend this to a Fantasy reader who can master the Aztec language!!! LOL

Costin Manda says

Obsidian and Blood is a collection of all the works in the Aztec magical universe created by Aliette de Bodard. It contains the three books Servant of the Underworld, Harbinger of the Storm and Master of the House of Darts, plus three short stories (which perhaps you should read first). The stories can be found online, if you want a free taste.

Now, while I enjoyed the books, I felt a little cheated. In fact, these are not fantasy books as much as policiers, just set in the tiny and magical Aztec world. Acatl, priest of the Dead, is trying to solve the mystery of various murders and magical transgressions. He is driven, moral and relentless, willing to sacrifice everything in order to save his friends, loved ones and ultimately the world. So it's basically a cop book, only with Aztec gods around.

The writing style is very technical, reminding me of so many other authors that learned the craft in writing classes, with a mentor and a group and so on. However, it was in no way innovative. I felt that the books are

the written equivalent of TV movies: professional, but mediocre. And while I stuck through all the books instead of stopping with the first, it's kind of like watching the rest of a miniseries just because you watched the first episode.

The context is the only thing that elevates the book above average. It is an interesting setup to base the stories on Aztec mythology, but I felt that modern sensibilities prevailed and the author chickened out when it came to child sacrifices and ritual torture and so on. They are mentioned, but everybody, whether heroic or villainous, is rational and follows a modern way of thinking.

Bottom line: I wish these were filled with the horror and majesty of the old blood gods, making me feel something visceral and true, more like the short stories and less than the books. As such, these are just police mystery stories set in the Mexica empire.

Abhinav says

Shadowhawk reviews Angry Robot Books' latest offering, *Obsidian and Blood*, the omnibus edition containing all the Aztec Mysteries novels and short stories featuring High Priest Acatl.

"This is one of the greatest stories ever told. Aliette de Bodard has brought Noir, Aztec and Fantasy together for an explosive and engaging mix worthy of being called a new trend in the genre. If you have ever wanted to experiment with your reading, then you'll be hard-pressed to do better than read the story of Acatl, High Priest of the Dead." ~The Founding Fields

As I mentioned in the intro to the guest post I put up yesterday, *Writing Convincing Non-Western Fantasy* by Aliette de Bodard, I was drawn to *Obsidian and Blood* because of its artwork. The pose by the character is so dynamic and telling that it just draws you in. My only concern with the omnibus was a rather critical one: would I like it, considering that this is all about Aztecs, a culture I have zero prior experience with? Outside of some random Hardy Boys novel back in the blessed days of my youth that is. Other than that, I was all ready to dig into the omnibus soon as I got an advance copy courtesy of the Angry Robot Army. All that was remaining was to find the appropriate time to read, what I presumed originally to be a time-intensive reading experience, the mammoth collection.

Note: This also happens to be the first Angry Robot omnibus I've read. First experiences are weird!

The time did arrive, about three weeks ago, and I picked up the omnibus having just finished Chris Wraight's *Wrath of Iron* only a few hours before. It was a surprise even for me when I burned through the entire collection in about as much time it takes me to burn through a Black Library omnibus edition. Like I said, first experiences are weird, more so in the case of my first proper exposure to Aliette's writing as I've only read a stand-alone short story by her before: *Shipbirth*, which is another Aztec-inspired story, a science-fiction one this time.

From the beginning of the first entry in the collection, the novel *Servant of the Underworld*, Aliette totally hooks you in. I was turning the pages as fast as I could because I couldn't get enough of the setting and the characters. The entire collection tells of a rather bleak yet vibrant society founded upon blood sacrifice, magic, sheer arrogance and an uneasy relationship with gods who are often cruel and vindictive. What's not to love about it? As a layman, that entire phrase describes the Mexica Empire of the Aztecs quite aptly. And each of those aspects are the primary driving forces behind all the events that in these novels.

In their own right, these are also issues that Aliette explores to one degree or another.

Blood sacrifice. This is a constant running theme throughout the Acatl tales. Whether it is offering daily prayers to the gods, or performing the greatest and most powerful of spells and rituals, blood sacrifice is a highly important aspect of channeling magic in the Mexica Empire. Consequently, it just so happens that these stories also have some of the highest and most shocking body counts in any fantasy novel I've read. Doubly so for a mystery/detective-style novel.

This also really sets apart Obsidian and Blood from most other fantasy novels/series out there. The high body-count and the constant blood sacrifice mean that the thematic undercurrents in it are different from everything else. It is quite shocking at first but then that's just our biases speaking. Aztec culture and religious practices are practically alien to what we are used to, even with everything that goes on in GRRM's A Song of Ice and Fire series. All I can say is that this is a point in Aliette's favour.

You can find a full review of the omnibus over at The Founding Fields:

<http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/06/...>

Diversireads says

I've seen this described multiple times as a cross-genre novel, and I don't want to be repetitive or boring, but it really, really, really is. The Obsidian and Blood books take place in the 1480s, in a Tenochtitlan where the Mexica (better known to Western readers perhaps as the Aztec) gods are real, and where they exert very real influence over the lives of the people. It's also a mystery, as our main character, Acatl, is in charge of the investigation for the abduction of the priestess Eleuia, an ambitious woman who is as divisive as she is alluring.

I'm torn between giving the novels two stars or four (but, like an electron jumping from one energy level to the next, it cannot stop in the middle at three) – because on one hand, the writing was average – De Bodard is prone to using repetitive language and vague, flowery similes that tell us nothing about what is being described, and some of the plot points are re-iterated over and over until I wanted to thrash the protagonist, only I couldn't, because I was reading it via the Kindle on my phone, and my phone is kind of important to me. But on the other hand, her world was well-realised and her protagonist had a unique outlook onto the world in which he lived. I went with two, though, because I think the aspects of the novel that pushed it up to a four were more attributable to personal taste.

De Bodard does an incredible job of immersing the reader within the streets of Tenochtitlan – I didn't study Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican history beyond the one semester course I took on Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art, so I leave it to modern Mexican people and scholars of the Mexica empire to discern whether or not the descriptions of Tenochtitlan were done in an accurate and respectful way, but from the author's notes, it's fairly evident that quite a lot of research went into the development of these novels.

One of the things I most enjoyed about the books was the integration of human and blood sacrifices without taking an atemporal and judgmental attitude towards the Mexica Empire – it is viewed (and indeed, within the context of the novel, it absolutely is) a necessity to ensure the survival of the Fifth World. It's one of those things where the novel could have taken a distinctly nasty turn, painting the people of the Aztec Empire as bloodthirsty savages or the like, and I was very distinctly glad that it stayed far away from that.

The portrayal of the Mexica Empire was also something that was quite nuanced – some of the negative effects of its status as a conquering empire that frequently waged war against and subjugated its neighbours was examined, particularly within the third novel, and it certainly is gritty (god I hate that descriptor), yet at the same time it stays away from the overly grimdark pessimism that I personally hate.

The cast of characters (particularly within the first novel; this fades a little by the third novel, but that may be because I was listening to the audiobook instead of reading for myself) was large, but fairly well fleshed-out, the relationships between the characters complex, though the main character himself was rather underwhelming. I enjoyed him as far as you could enjoy him, and I think he was a very interesting and unconventional choice of a protagonist – though he can fight, his role is predominantly as that of a religious leader, and even so he is a reluctant one. All he wants to do is fade into obscurity, but he is pushed again and again into the spotlight, again and again entangled within courtly (and sometimes godly) intrigue. He's also a great place where De Bodard is able to examine the intersection of class within Tenochtitlan – in the social strata, he ranks fairly high and wields a lot of power (though notably less than his peers the High Priest of Tlaloc and the High Priest of Huitzilopochtli), and while both he and his brother (a Jaguar Knight) are members of venerated sects, they are both sons of peasants, and this very much informs their actions and reactions to the things that happen.

Yet at the same time, he's a character whose development often seemed jerky and inconsistent (inconsistency is another one of my major complaints about the novels), who was passive (which is not a problem) in situations where he should have been active (which is a problem), and often his narration style was grating (though this may be a symptom of De Bodard's writing – there are only a limited number of times that I want to hear about Mictlan's emptiness filling Acatl's insides before I get sick of the phrase 'emptiness of Mictlan.' Same with obsidian. And jade. And I'm Chinese. And you know how we are about jade).

As for the mysteries themselves, I found them (personally) to be needlessly convoluted and – you guessed it – repetitive. The complexity is not so much a problem if you've a better brain than me, I suppose, but there were so many different plots and motives and narrative threads that it was difficult to get them straight in my head. (view spoiler)

Though, take this into consideration: I may be talking a lot of shit, but I still gritted my teeth and sat through all of my frustrations with the novels to finish all three books. And I also loved them. Make of that what you will.

Jade says

I only understood what was going on 70% of the time but loved it!

Margaret says

I enjoyed these books partly because of the very different culture and world view of the characters. I don't know enough about the Aztecs to know how accurate the portrayal is. But they're very enjoyable mysteries, with a main character who is flawed enough to be human, but not so much that he is overly frustrating or unlikable.

Meganm922 says

This was a wonderful collection. It combines fantasy, mythology, and mystery quite flawlessly. This series is a refreshing take on mythology and fantasy by incorporating Aztec mythology instead of the much more common Greek and Roman stories and characters.

Acatl is a likeable main character. As High Priest for the Dead, he's in a relatively distinguished position, but doesn't see himself that way. He tries his best to avoid politics, but through unraveling the mysterious activities in each of the novels, he discovers how much politics is intertwined in the doings of his fellow people. While he is good at figuring out if someone is lying to him, it takes him a while to truly figure things out because of his lack of understanding of the importance of politics in his Empire. This conflict forces him to grow as a person in each of the novels, form alliances with people he dislikes, and enter into the territories of various gods. Not only do people struggle with each other for power, gods do the same in these novels. And figuring out who is power hungry isn't the only task. Acatl has to figure out in what god's favor the people are and if the gods themselves are responsible.

These novels are extremely interesting and well written. If you like mystery and mythology or mysteries set in foreign places with different cultures, these books are certainly right up your alley.

This book can be difficult to read at some points. The names alone can trip up readers, as well as remember the gods and the people who serve them. Because the Aztec culture is foreign to me, figuring out how and why they do things and what certain positions mean and how their city forms it's alliances with other cities can be difficult, too. The author jumps right into the story, so as readers, we are learning how things work as we go. This can be difficult and sometimes I had to backtrack and make sure I was fully understanding what certain events meant. Without patience, I imagine this book wouldn't be enjoyable for some. If you don't take the time to read slowly and learn the ways of the world in these books, I imagine you'll care less about the characters and their fragile empire.

Overall, I would definitely recommend this book. I enjoyed it. The rituals and sacrifices and bits of magic were extremely interesting to me, moreso than the mystery, but mystery is not one of my top genres. What makes this book so good is the fact that while it is full of action, scenes are slower as Acatl or other characters perform spells and rituals to help them along the way. Each spell is written out and each action is described.

Wonderful fantasy/mythology/mystery!
<http://meganm922.blogspot.com/2012/06...>

Donna says

OBSIDIAN & BLOOD ended up being one of those books that kept me reading but I wasn't over the moon about. Don't get me wrong; I liked what I read but I only read through SERVANT OF THE UNDERWORLD. I just didn't feel compelled to keep reading.

I liked the world that de Bodard created. It felt effortless, as if it didn't need explanation. It just was. It might

be because it's Mayan, of which people have a general understanding of. They may not know the workings of the years (I sure didn't) or which gods to curse to and why (something that nagged at me a lot but I eventually just started ignoring it) but even without explanation the world felt fully fleshed. It felt like it was something that actually existed. It was tangible and I believed it in absolutely from the very beginning. I'm not going to sit here and pretend I know a ton about the Mayans. I don't but reading de Bodard's world felt genuine to me.

I also liked how she made the gods beings that humans could actually interact with. They bestowed power to the priests and priestesses directly. You could visit one of their temples and speak with them as if you would speak to someone in your house (assuming your sacrifices were worthy, of course). They were a part of the created world as much as the temples and people themselves. They weren't intangible beings that people worshipped to blindly. Faith was essentially removed from the equation because the gods had proven themselves in multiple ways. No one could deny them; it would be like denying a chair. Or a reed mat.

The effortless blood-letting and sacrifice, while kind of shocking, felt like it fit. This was a natural occurrence for the Mayans, part of daily life and it was treated as such in the text. Attention wasn't drawn to it, there was never a big deal around it. If Acatl had to cut himself to serve a purpose he did it and that was that. If something had to be sacrificed it was and no one bat an eye. The author really kept herself out of the story in terms of moralizing and I really liked that. This was what the Mayans did. Full stop.

I liked Acatl as a character. He definitely had some issues to contend with especially when he started getting deeply involved in his brother's murder trial. But a distance was there. I just couldn't connect with him on a deeper level than as a character I was reading on the page. Not necessarily a bad thing but it had me skating through the story, skimming the surface.

The overall story I felt was far more murder mystery than anything fantasy. As much as I really liked the effortless feel of the world it ultimately played second string to the story as a result. Personally I like my fantasy worlds being characters in the story itself. I like them lively and front and center. So I definitely have a double standard here. I admit that. What can I say? It's just how I feel. I wished there was more of a balance between the world and the plot, where it didn't feel so much like a crime novel with a different background. I think that kept me from really connecting as well since I'm not too big on the crime genre overall. I'm okay with it but I don't actively read it.

If you're a fantasy fan the Mayan world in *OBSIDIAN & BLOOD* is definitely one to take a look at. It stands out again your more standard fantasy fare of castles and dragons and Merlin-like magic and whatnot. Beware of the names as I found them very hard to pronounce and don't expect to get much by the way of explanation for anything. The book is written as if the reader is already aware of the world they're reading about. So it might take some acclimating or you might end up like me and feeling a little distanced from it as a result. Still it's a pretty good read. I just didn't feel compelled to read beyond the first book.

Joseph says

Omnibus edition of de Bodard's trilogy about Acatl, an Aztec priest, plus three related short stories. These are set in the Aztec empire at its height; the gods are very real, and priests can work magic. In the first book, Acatl, priest of the death god whose name I'm not even going to *begin* to try to spell, is brought in to investigate a murder; what begins as a sort of mystery/procedural grows to involve all manner of intrigues amongst gods and mortals alike. A fascinating portrayal of a very alien world.

Iguanaditty says

I really enjoyed the first two books and then never got around to the third. Which I interpret as, I needed a long break.

Love the interpretation of Aztec life in a fantasy style. The magic is great, the court intrigue is great, the characters great. The second book gets even more into the magic than the first to mixed ends but I loved the far out place it eventually went.

Worth a look for what it does differently.

Kyle Sullivan says

Really fun! A great way to get to know the pre-Columbian Mexica. Bodard had managed to merge a world of magical fantasy where gods are real, the style of old film noir detective story, and a cultural exploration of the Aztecs. This was fun. Would make a crazy film!

Jacey says

Obsidian and Blood: Trilogy Review

Newly out from Angry Robot is the omnibus edition of the first three books about Acatl, high priest for the Dead in Tenochtitlan, heart of the Mexica empire of the Aztecs. Set in a historically accurate fifteenth century Aztec world it's the setting that lifts this trilogy out of the ordinary.

The three books are all mysteries which Acatl must solve, though there is an overarching plot involving the transfer of power from the deceased 'Revered Speaker' to the undeserving heir, Tizoc, the books are independent and can be read as stand-alones. I know little about Aztec culture and history but this seems to be well researched and an accurate representation of the society at the time with the addition of magic – not just any magic but the Aztec's own blood magic of their various gods made real, active and powerful. Ms de Bodard gets under the skin of the culture.

The biggest stumbling block is unfamiliarity with Aztec names. As a reader I like to be able to pronounce the names in my head even though I'm not reading aloud. Acatl himself is relatively easy, thank goodness, as is Teomitl and Mihmatini, but then we get to people/god/place names like Ceyaxochitl, Xochiquetzal, Mahuizoh, Tlatelolco, Chalchiutlicue and Huitzilpochtli and my brain feels bruised. Of course, it comes along with the culture, so there's no getting round it, but I would have liked some kind of pronunciation guide. In my e-ARC there was nothing. How do you pronounce X when it's at the beginning of the word? (In Zulu it's a back-of-the-throat mouth click, what is it in Aztec?)

So to the three books...

In *Servant of the Underworld*, Acatl, newly appointed High Priest of the Dead must struggle with his new appointment, his dislike of politics and his fragile equilibrium when his brother is arrested for the bloody murder of a priestess. It's a good introduction to the world, the characters and the gods. We meet Acatl's

family and Teomitl, younger brother of the Revered Speaker, and eventually Acatl's student.

In the second book, *Harbinger of the Storm*, Acatl's world is changing. The Revered Speaker's special connection to the sun god keeps the end of the world at bay, but the Revered Speaker is dead, a new Revered Speaker must be confirmed, and the council and other high priests are too busy putting all their efforts into political wrangling to notice that someone is summoning star demons, until one of their number ends up shredded to gobbets of flesh. It's up to Acatl and Teomitl to find out what's happening before it's too late for Tenochtitlan and the whole empire.

In the third book, *Master of the House of Darts*, Tizoc-tzin has been confirmed as Speaker, but his all-important inaugural war has been a disaster. Too few sacrifices have been brought back for the gods which makes Tenochtitlan and the Mexica empire vulnerable. When plague strikes Acatl is sure it's the result of magic, but who is causing it and why? It's Acatl's job to keep the balance of the Fifth World (ours) but how will he achieve it with plague and revolution brewing?

Recommended.
