



Trumps of Doom

Roger Zelazny

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Merle Corey is a brilliant young computer designer in San Francisco, but, he is also Merlin, son of Corwin, vanished prince of Amber, and heir to his father's wonderous powers. And, someone is determined to kill him. Now he will begin a desperate race through Shadow, not only to escape the mysterious force that threatens his life, but to protect the deadly secret that could destroy both his worlds.

Trumps of Doom Details

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Author : Roger Zelazny

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From Reader Review Trumps of Doom for online ebook

Evgeny says

Corwin's tale is over. Here there is a new narrator, a new story, and lots of new faces. Some people from the previous books make an appearance though.

A seemingly normal guy was leading a seemingly normal life when he suddenly realized something abnormal. Every year on April 30 somebody was trying to kill him. At first the attempts were innocent enough (as far as murder attempts go), but when some supernatural forces appear our hero called Merle finally decided something was really off. He had no clue how much off something really was.

Unlike the start of Corwin's part this book jump in the middle of action practically from the beginning and does not stop until the end.

It also includes several interconnected mysteries with only some of them resolved at the end.

It was also nice to revisit some of the royal family of Amber - at the time when they did not try to permanently remove their siblings out of the game. What do you know: they turned out to be nice enough and interesting people once you get to meet them close.

I already mentioned action. Lots of things happened in a very limited number of pages: in fact it took me two evenings of unhurried reading to finish the book. Once again I was blown by Zelazny's ability to pack lots of thoughts, idea, action, and world-building in such small space.

Dear aspiring writers: read and learn!!!

A popular wisdom is that the second pentalogy is not as good as the first one. To which I can only answer that in my opinion they are equality good and that haters gonna hate.

5 stars.

Cathy says

Very much a reflection of Nine Princes In Amber, but I liked the more modern tone and I think it held the pace and suspense even better.

Joel says

Honestly, my least favorite of the Amber books thus far. A whole bunch of nothing happened, and it felt like a bit of rehash from previous books (namely, I believe, #3), wherein people are being attacked, and they all convene in Amber for some reason, chat amongst themselves, then leave and make a dramatic discovery right at the end.

The book was a definite tone change from the first five, partially due to the change of protagonist, and partially just due to being...different. Not bad, just different. It'll take some getting used to - but even aside from that, the book was much less interesting; neither dramatic nor really fulfilling.

I will still continue through the series (I already bought the rest of the books, so...) but this one wasn't the most inspiring.

Miriam says

For some reason the person who wrote the GR blurb for this made it sound like an entry in the "ordinary guy/gal discovers they are special" genre -- this is not the case. Merlin, the main character, knows perfectly well who his parents are and what powers his family has. He is just hanging out being a computer geek and doing some experiments for fun. The mysterious part is why someone attacks him on the same day every year.

This is the beginning of the second cycle in the Chronicles of Amber. It is not 100% necessary to have read the first five books but it will definitely give you a richer background. Also that series is really good!

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Ken says

I've been reading the Chronicles of Amber straight through, and this book, number 6, is the best yet. I haven't read Zelazny's other work, but I get the feeling that he really grew as a writer over the years from the beginning of the Amber novels. *Trumps of Doom*, the beginning of the second series within the Chronicles, takes us on a new path, as we follow the son of Corwin, the narrator of the earlier books. As with the original series, we begin in our own Earth, and the first half of the book reads like a good, hardboiled detective novel -- with a little magic thrown in for good measure! As established characters make their appearances, and as our protagonist leaves Earth for shadow worlds, we unfortunately lose that gumshoe delivery and tone, which is too bad. Still, this one was fun, and as usual I'm looking forward to the next.

Chris says

I almost gave this four stars, but it falls short of the Corwin books in the series, so I can't quite give it the same rating.

But that being said, Trumps was an enjoyable return to Amber. Merlin's tale is intriguing, and I think I'll be more into it by the end. I don't find myself being engaged as much as with the first set of Amber books, and I don't find Merlin himself as interesting as Corwin. For one thing, Corwin was enjoyable as a smartass and his arrogance helped the character. Merlin is more reserved. He's confident, but not as sure of his place in the family.

Still, a fun story and I look forward to continuing with the next installment.

ETA: December 2011.

Re-read this for review before tackling the rest of the Amber series. I listened to it on audio this time, with Roger Zelazny doing his own narration. That added to the experience, and I'm definitely looking forward to the others, now that I have them available.

Newton Nitro says

É sempre muito difícil para um escritor de uma série mudar o protagonista, iniciando uma nova história. Muitos fãs, acostumados com o protagonista dos primeiros livros, resistem essa mudança.

No caso de Trumps of Doom, a transição para Merlin, o filho do protagonista dos primeiros cinco livros, ficou interessante, mesmo com a história seguindo o mesmo formato do primeiro livro da saga de Âmbar.

A narrativa em primeira pessoa mostra a habilidade de Zelazny, pois Merlin soa bem diferente de seu pai. Ele é mais cerebral, menos impulsivo, mais mago ocultista do que guerreiro.

A trama segue a linha do mistério, com o protagonista investigando uma série de ameaças e atentados contra sua vida, e se vendo dentro, é claro, de uma conspiração que envolve tanto a Cidade Primordial de Âmbar quanto os Reinos do Caos.

O ritmo é frenético, com momentos de ação, reviravoltas e revelações.

Mais uma vez, Zelazny consegue contar uma história com personagens com poderes sobre-humanos, estilos de vida completamente bizarros (são imortais para valer que viajam em infinitas realidades paralelas) e mesmo assim gerando identificação com o leitor. E seu estilo sintético de prosa também ajuda muito, encaixa muito bem no estilo pulp-chique de suas histórias.

E vamos para o SÉTIMO LIVRO DA SAGA DE ÂMBAR!

Loreley says

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Ariel Hudnall says

The Cycle of Corwin has ended. Now come the adventures of his son, Merlin, born of Dara, holy terror of the Courts of Chaos. You might remember her as the demon that disguised herself as Corwin's grand-niece, in order to learn how to walk the Pattern and gain enough power to destroy Amber. Yeah, her. I didn't like Dara, but maybe this book would have been more interesting if she'd been the main antagonist, because the book certainly needed one.

A sorcerer, artist, warrior, athlete, and technological genius, Merlin (aka Merle) lives a boring, uncomplicated life in one of his father's old Shadow haunts, trying to emulate the father he wishes he could have gotten to know better before he disappeared into Shadow. However, the white rider Corwin met in the Courts of Chaos in the last book is a far cry from the 'Merle' shown to us in this novel. He is unquestioning, uncaring, and in general, unaffected by anything going on around him, which makes the narrative a boring trod through "This happened", and then "this also happened", and "Wow, what a coincidence". Very rarely does his 'humanity' show through, and when it does, it is self-serving. While I didn't like Corwin overall, Corwin at least had real moments of questioning his motives, or feeling sincerely bad for the things he had done. Merle has only one instance of this, but after what felt an obligatory 'whoops, my bad', he carries on without being truly affected for the rest of the story.

The book begins on April 30th. April 30th is an unlucky day for Merlin, and has been for the last seven years, on account of the reoccurring attempts on his life. He has come to expect them now, and hopes to get to the bottom of it this time.

Following the horrific death of one of his ex-girlfriends, and his procurement of some very strange Trumps, Merlin jumps off to solve the mystery of the Trumps (the title of the book, after all), but after the only real interesting scene of the first half (in which he plays a riddle game with a Sphinx), this plotline is promptly forgotten and never picked up again. Instead, it becomes another "Who-dunnit", without all the weight and skill of "Sign of the Unicorn", or even a conclusion. No real spoilers to give here. Nothing happens. The antagonist's name is revealed, but that is basically all. Again, all a teaser for the next book, which I have no real inclination at present to read.

Other things that really bothered me about this book: it is clear that only a couple of decades have past, as there are still friends of Corwin alive on Earth (Bill Roth, lawyer, and suddenly the only council to Amber, out of all of the infinite number of universes and people closer to the conflict... This is the man Merle bounces ideas off of for most of the book, rather than contacting one of his aunts or uncles.)

Suddenly everyone seems to have the ability to draw Trumps on a whim. This was a skill that was heavily guarded, and for good reason, but now anyone who is related to Dworkin can do it, and it takes away all of

the interest for that magic system for me.

And speaking of the magic system, Merlin has the ability to do a "backwards shadow walk", which means he can conjure anything he desires out of shadow, no harm, no foul. It doesn't even seem to tire him. Yet when it comes to the climax of the book, he decides to take the longest possible route, rather than pulling that thing to him, easily. It's also just one of those ultra-convenient abilities that makes things a little too easy.

Frakir. I'm assuming that there is a short story somewhere out there in the universe that Zelazny wrote that explained things more, but I do not know why Merlin is in possession of a half-sentient, invisible thread whip, or what even its full abilities are. More convenience, that was never really explained.

Ghostwheel. I can not believe the willful ignorance on the part of Merle regarding his creation. When Random (thank goodness he was in the story for a few pages... that's one of two reasons this book has a star at all, honestly... the other being the conversation with the Sphinx) brings up valid concerns about the latent power of Ghostwheel, Merle just pouts and says "I don't care. I do what I want." ...to obvious calamity.

It was really disappointing to read this first book in the second cycle of Amber, and find basically everything from the first books that are still unanswered abandoned, and instead get led around by a shadow of a shadow of Corwin (without the arrogant wit, or any real defining personality trait) on a mostly mundane and speculative journey to... well, I suppose it was less of a journey, and more Merlin thrown in a whirlpool of coincidences and events thrust on him by other characters trying to have a story.

In short, I will keep reading, but only because I feel obligated to finish the omnibus. But, if you are looking for a casual read to pick up, you can stop at book five, "Courts of Chaos", and pick up something else on your to-read.

Karl says

This is copy number 38 of 400 signed numbered copies.

Kevin says

Kinda of a steampunk fantasy, the second arc of Amber series starts off strong with Corwin's son Merlin the main character. The series is getting stronger, and more interesting as it progresses.

Dan Schwent says

Merle Corey's got several problems. He's secretly Merlin, a Prince of Amber. His father Corwin has been missing for years. Oh, and someone tries to kill him every April 30th for reasons unknown. The story starts with Merle getting ready to leave Shadow Earth behind and devote himself to working on his Ghostwheel when an old girlfriend he goes to say goodbye to winds up dead. The trail leads Merle to a conjurer and then back to Amber, where he learns he isn't the only Amberite whose had attempts on his life. But what does his friend Luke have to do with things?

It took me almost a calendar year to finally start reading the second Amber series. So far, I'm liking it a lot. Having read the first series, it's a little easier to follow due to knowing something of Amber's workings already. The mystery of Luke was pretty well done. I like that the bullets Corwin had created in *Guns of Avalon* came back into play. I also like that Merlin isn't a Corwin duplicate.

Like I said, so far I'm enjoying the second chronicles of Amber. It's like visiting with an old friend. On to the next one!

Jason says

The first time I read this, I remember being so disappointed that this second series set in the Amber universe featured a different protagonist from the first series. I also remember being told that the second series didn't really hold up compared to the first and that the critics viewed it far less favorably. Despite that, I still absolutely love this book.

The first series focused on Order and was much more about that protagonist's single-minded journey toward capturing a throne that he felt was rightfully his. He is a man of action so the universe as presented through his first-person perspective is a backdrop to his tale of intrigue and revenge. The protagonist of this second series is a much more cerebral character. He is a representative of Chaos and is a student of the magical workings of the universe, therefore his tale naturally includes the fleshing out and explanation of the actual underpinnings of the universe that are only hinted at in the first series. I highly enjoy a well constructed fantasy universe, and I think a lot of the detractors of this series are put off by the relatively larger focus on the hows and the smaller focus on the whos as compared to the first series.

The structure of this opening book is a nice rhyme to the opening book in the first series. We start on the shadow Earth with our main character trying to figure out who is attempting to kill him. His father is missing and presumed dead. There are family members nearby keeping an eye on him. The parallels continue but for the sake of remaining spoiler free I'll simply say that I enjoyed the poetry of the symmetry, especially since being inside a new character's head was quite a jarring transition after following an entirely different character for five previous books.

Zelazny again crafts a compelling mystery and it's quite obvious that he did some serious planning for this series with all of the hints he plants so early on. His requisite cliffhanger ending makes its usual appearance, and it's a testament to his skill as a writer that this new narrator's voice doesn't sound like his old narrator's voice. This younger narrator is far less cynical, more naive, less droll, but still as compelling because of his unique background. The only thing I'm not really a fan of is the name of the book since it's never really seemed to be a good fit with the rest of the titles, but that's a quibble so minor that it's not even really a quibble.

I probably still prefer the first book in the first series more than this one, but they're both extremely satisfying beginnings for entirely different reasons. I'm glad that this one has held up for me no matter how many times I've read it and I'll be forever sad that Zelazny died before he could write his third series that would have featured both of his main protagonists working together.
