



## House of Chains

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In Northern Genabakis, tribal mountain warriors raid southern flatlands. Years later, Tavore, Adjunct to the Empress, enters the last Malazan stronghold. New to command, she must hone 12,000 recruits to resist the Whirlwind of her sister Sha in the Holy Desert. The power struggle of the seer's warlords threatens the soul of the rebellion.

## House of Chains Details

Date : Published March 2007 by Tor Fantasy (first published 2004)

ISBN : 9780765348814

Author : Steven Erikson , Chiara Arnone (Translator) , Lucia Panelli (Translator)

Format : Mass Market Paperback 1021 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Epic Fantasy, Fiction, High Fantasy



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## From Reader Review House of Chains for online ebook

### Jody says

A buddy read with the lovely ladies Sade and Orient. Thank you for putting up with me on this adventure. :D

***'Is that all we mortals are? The victims of tortured irony to amuse an insane murder of gods?'***

*House of Chains* is another fantastic addition to The Malazan book of the Fallen. This book started off a little different than the previous installments. The first 20% of the book was focused on one main character, and his journey from his homeland in northern Genabakis to the desert continent of Seven Cities. Probably one of the most fearsome and intimidating characters I have read in fantasy. None other than Karsa Orlong. I will admit to not liking him much at first for his overwhelming bloodlust and barbaric nature, but he did grow on me after a while. I won't elaborate any further as to spoil anything, but I believe most Malazan fans would agree with that assessment.

The continent of Seven Cities is the destination for the main part of this story. The new Adjunct Tavore Paran has taken over the city of Aren and plans to march a company of recruits into the holy desert of Raraku against Sha'ik and her Whirlwind rebellion. It's time for payback for what was done to Coltaine and the Chain of Dogs, but they are severely outnumbered and under-experienced. Also, Raraku is a desert with its own secrets and deadly history. The outcome of this clash is anything but certain.

***'Raraku is a hostile land, resentful of whatever life dared exploit it. Not holy at all, but cursed. Devourer of dreams, destroyer of ambitions. And why not? It's a damned desert.'***

As in all Malazan books we have a huge cast of characters. Some familiar and some new, but all with their own interesting story arcs that intersect in a final convergence that was both epic and brutally sad. After four books you would think I would be used to the horrors that Erikson can manifest in each story, but he always seems to one up himself. And the results leave me heartbroken every time.

***'The glory of battle, Koryk, dwells only in the bard's voice, in the tellers woven words. Glory belongs to ghosts and poets. What you hear and dream isn't the same as what you live – blur the distinction at your own peril, lad.'* - Fiddler**

*House of Chains* is another great adventure sure to delight all epic fantasy and grim-dark fantasy lovers alike. The immensity of this world, characters, magic system, and everything in between is well worth the time put into reading them. I've had a blast reading every one of these books, and can't wait to get started on the next. Coming up *Midnight Tides*!

5 stars \*\*\*\*\*

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### Mayim de Vries says

**Epilogue** This is how you shatter an unbreakable chain. By dying. Which happened to me several times when reading this book.\*

**Chapter 26:** Tavore you said yourself, that sometimes knowledge is not enough. Not a single grain of sand is wasted in this story.

**Chapter 25:** Dogslayers. Bonehunters. Ghosts, assassins, shattered warrens, silent battles. No, it's not the blurb for the whole book. Just one chapter.

**Chapter 24:** Ah these shadow upstarts. They will ruffle some feathers rattle dome chains. Witness.

**Chapter 23:** Ah, the power of storytelling. The responsibility of those to whom the tale is told. And that means us.

**Chapter 22:** Don't worry Tavore, all wars are personal (just look at Iskaral Pust and his wife).

**Chapter 21:** convergence, all loose threads knotted, all chains snapped taut. Exciting.

**Chapter 20:** A plan that **may or may not** work? I like it already!

**Chapter 19:** Grub?! This little brat?!

**Chapter 18:** This insight into the cold iron of Tavore instantly elevated her into my favourite female of this book series. So far.

**Chapter 17:** You tell these deities, Karsa. What do they think, they can prance around and play gods just for the fun of it? No, better you show them.

**Chapter 16:** What do you means that it was a threesome not just Dancer and Kellanved? And then Onrack you too?! Threesomes everywhere!

**Chapter 15:** Well, at this point of the book, I decided that sleep is for the weak.

**Chapter 14:** From wandering to hold, from hold to house, from freedom to chains. "Bastard broke my sword" - really Karsa?

**Chapter 13:** This monster mutliating women, he really needs to die a nasty death.

**Chapter 12:** Brother with a singular will and a borrowed grief. Do you not recognise the famosity exuding from him. Famosity? There must be such a word, Iskaral Pust used it!

**Chapter 11:** Tavore, I am rooting for you. Raraku sings her song for Bridgeburners, may she sing for you too.

**Chapter 10:** Whenever I think of Teblor deities, I think of Mount Rushmore. But then, Karsa's sculptures are more like Easter Island statues.

**Chapter 9:** Children of Farther Light, I am sorely disappointed in you. Pride precedes the fall.

**Chapter 8:** Madman with a sharper. Finally! Speaking of chains - sapper and their own chain of command. Always priceless.

**Chapter 7:** Seven cities, seven deities and seven hounds. We are dancing with the shadows here and with things that don't cast the shadow at all.

**Chapter 6:** The flower has been cut and lies in the Shadow. (To be plagued with the need to be truthful is a rare curse indeed).

**Chapter 5:** A sister who doesn't know, reaching out blindly, what she will find in the eye of a desert storm.

**Chapter 4:** Oh now everything makes sense (except for the things which don't)!

**Chapter 3:** Humans are but children whose favourite playground is war.

**Chapter 2:** It is obvious that Erickson likes the armies of three attacking the whole towns. No, not three armies, the armies of one, two, three.

**Chapter 1:** I should probably not be admitting to liking Karsa Orlong and liking his chapters. I am though. Admitting and liking.

**Prologue:** I don't understand what's going on. But then, it's one of the most common Malazan-invoked reading reactions.

\* **I am not going to even pretend that I could in any way give a pale shadow of justice to this book or indeed a whole series in a proper review.** There are many better than me, here on Goodreads (and many of those I'm lucky to have among my friends), who managed to grasp and convey the sheer brilliance of what awaits those who open the Malazan Book of the Fallen. **All I can give you is a chapter breakdown of my own chain of thoughts.**

The Malazan Book of the Fallen:

1. Gardens of the Moon ★★★★★
2. Deadhouse Gates ★★★★★
3. Memories of Ice ★★★★★
5. Midnight Tides
6. The Bonehunters RTC
7. Reaper's Gale RTC
8. Toll the Hounds RTC
9. Dust fo Dreams RTC
10. The Crippled God RTC

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### **James Tivendale says**

It is astonishing how every book in this series seems to get better than the one before. The sheer size of the cast is phenomenal however it seems like each character has an important role to play in the grand scheme of things and there are no 'bit-part' players. New characters such as Karsa Orlong, L'oric and Trull Sengar become favourites straight away and that is down to Erikson's skill as a writer. I will admit that I go a bit sentimental when we find out what characters such as Quick Ben, Kalam and Fiddler are up to when reading. To the extent where it transpires that Strings is Fiddler I actually did a mini fist-bump and silent whoop to

myself lol. In the first few books, the world Erikson was describing was so vast and complicated it was sometimes confusing and I had to read certain sections more than once. Yet, now that we are revisiting some of these places again it adds to the overall creation and heightening of the picture that Erikson is trying to paint for us. The book takes place after the events of Deadhouse Gates and Memories of Ice. A lot of the story is almost the opposite of the path Coltain walked on the Chain of Dogs. As previous books in the series I love finding out about the God's motives and as a previous reviewer stated - these sections are 'Homeric' when the God's converse with humans/mortals. I am interested to find out more about Cotillion. This book made him seem more human and emotional than we were given witness to before and that intrigues me. I won't delve too much into the plot. I will say that I am looking to start reading *Midnight Tides* straight away as I can't wait to be thrown headfirst back into Erikson's world. Peace. James x  
[www.youandibooks.wordpress.com](http://www.youandibooks.wordpress.com)

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## **Markus says**

*The rage of the Whirlwind Goddess was an inferno, beaten on the forge of Holy Raraku.*

The Whirlwind rages at its most dangerous. The Army of the Apocalypse stands behind Sha'ik Reborn. And all that opposes it is an untested commander with an army of fresh recruits...

*House of Chains* is a return to the Seven Cities story arc that was opened in the second book of the series. A return to the place where the Chain of Dogs was slaughtered to the last man and where a gargantuan rebellion against the Malazan Empire rages with religious fervor.

And yet the book begins on distant Genabackis, where a young Teblor leads a raiding party far away from his village, venturing forth with the ambition to slay thousands of 'children'. And the fourth instalment in the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* is more than anything Karsa Orlong's story. The story of how the mighty warleader journeys from the home of the Teblor and into the heart of the Apocalypse in Seven Cities. But also the story of how he changes from a bloodthirsty brute to something altogether different.

*"I care not for fame," Karsa said. "I did once..."*

*"And then?"*

*"I changed my mind."*

Sadly, I did not enjoy this fourth book as much as the previous three. For the most part, I had huge difficulties connecting with the story, and I felt that it had same pacing problems as the last Seven Cities book; in other words, sometimes being hopelessly boring. Luckily, that changed toward the end, and the book sucked me in completely. About two thirds through and on to the end, I was barely able to put it down. But before that, I just didn't enjoy it at all.

Nevertheless, the road goes ever onwards, and I'm getting more and more immersed in the Malazan world for each book.

### ***Malazan Book of the Fallen reviews:***

#1 Gardens of the Moon

#2 Deadhouse Gates

#3 Memories of Ice

- #4 House of Chains
- #5 Midnight Tides
- #6 The Bonehunters

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## Conor says

The Malazan freight-train of awesomeness rumbles on.

House of Chains was another epic, ambitious instalment in the Malazan franchise. This was a great read, and while it lacked the emotional impact and sense of grandeur of MoI and the Chain of Dogs it added a new aspect to this series in proving that Erikson can write an engaging, focused story with the best in the genre.

As a bold young warrior sets out from his isolated mountain village to carve for himself a path to fortune and glory, he finds that the world is far different than his grandfather's stories had him believe. Years later an untried commander lands on the continent of Seven Cities with 12,000 fresh troops determined to take vengeance for her fallen comrades and bring an end to the Whirlwind, the great maelstrom of upheaval and destruction that was unleashed in DG, or die in the attempt.

I found this to be a much easier and more engaging read than the previous books in the series and while it lacks the sweeping drama and emotional power of MoI it still had a number of powerful moments. The opening to this one especially was very different to what we've seen in the series before. Whereas previously we were thrown into complex situations with strange characters and confusing settings this opening was seemingly straightforward; a young man leaving his village in search of adventure. However nothing is ever simple in Erikson's world and he uses this straightforward beginning to examine the idea of the noble savage and develop the already astonishing world-building in this series even more. I liked how even in this 'simplified' opening Erikson didn't feel obligated to provide any transparent explanations of culture or phraseology. This led to a cool revelation when it turns out that Karsa and friends aren't actually obsessed with killing kids, 'children' is a term used by the giant Teblor to describe average humans (they're still kind of knobheads at this point though).

I really liked the way in which different storylines were woven together in this one. While DG was dominated by the Chain of Dogs and MoI had a pronounced focus on the allied army (especially early on) this one felt a lot more balanced, with none of the storylines feeling like weak links and all contributing in interesting ways to the overall plot. Karsa's storyline was obviously very prominent, especially given the unprecedented fact that he was the only POV for the first fifth of the book or so. Another interesting aspect of Karsa's arc in this book was the growth of his character. While most characters in this series are pushed along by the tides of fate and the seemingly impossibly complex machinations of gods and men (\*ahem Quick Ben\*) Karsa demonstrates a unique level of control and independence. This left room for much more character development than is normally seen in this series. At the start of this book I found Karsa to be a despicable scumbag but by the end he was possibly one of my favourite characters in the series and definitely one of the most interesting.

Probably my favourite storyline saw 'Strings' (a familiar face we'll remember from previous books) joining the army sent to Seven Cities to avenge the Chain of Dogs. While the grizzled soldier whipping raw recruits into shape is a common trope it was done brilliantly here. The familiar storyline was flavoured with the Malazan military culture that has been brilliantly established over the series so far and included some interesting new characters (Bottle, Borduke) as well as some of my old favourites (Cuttle, Stormy, Gesler). It

also produced some of the books funniest moments, such as the scorpion battle royale (Birdshit FTW). I also found the examination of the Sha'ik/Whirlwind vs. Tavore/Malazan Empire conflict to be extremely compelling. As much as I like the Malazans (thanks to all the awesome characters outlined above) I found myself struggling to root against Sha'ik. Despite not exactly being the most popular character amongst fans of the series (\*understatement\*) I thought she was a brilliantly developed character who was both sympathetic and intriguing. This was especially true in comparison to Tavore who I found to be frustrating and unlikeable. (view spoiler) The ending was typical of this series. While I was somewhat disappointed at the (view spoiler), it was still a suitably epic climax that brilliantly wove a massive amount of disparate plots together.

Skilfully blending characters and plotlines that were both old and new, House of Chains was more accessible and easier to read than the previous books while retaining the series' trademark scope and depth. This was another great instalment in what is fast becoming one of my favourite series'.

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### **Emma says**

It horrifies me a little but I'm reducing my star rating from 5 to 4 on this one. While it ends with an epic battle and has some excellent character moments, I still skipped the whole first quarter of Karsa. Yes, he shows some serious growth through the book and his answer to Bidithal has my full appreciation, but otherwise he gets on my last nerve.

One of the things that occurred to me because of this was how much more rereaders get from this series. At this point, everyone should have realised that nobody is safe, but also that each character introduction could lead to an ever deepening relationship over pages or books...or they could be gone in the next paragraph. It works for me because I can skip Karsa's origin story and jump in when he meets Keeper, where it starts to get interesting. It also means that each new meeting resonates with our emotional responses to past and future actions in a way that newbies can't yet get. It's the same for any book, I suppose, but I feel it in this series more than any other.

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### **Stefan Bach says**

I think there's nobody out there that haven't heard about *Conan the Cimmerian*.

*"The Barbarian."*

The essential one, and if not the first one, then the most recognizable and influential character that shaped the genre of epic fantasy.

When it comes to books he is a talking, fighting, drinking, brooding grim-dark, sword and sorcery sub-genres trope.

Especially in past 20 years when we have witnessed not just revival but full on blossoming of such genres where anti-heroes are taking the spotlight again.

Usually the story goes like this: North. (*It's always north in these books.*) Mountains, tundra and snow. It's only natural that such hostile environment breeds harsh society. Or stalls the progress of it. So we're left with nomads and tribes - barbarians. Brave stoics honorable in their own way.

Driven by their own moral codes; mystery, spiritualism and connection with the nature their mantra.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, in the south, usually around some delta rivers, civilization strives. Wealth and stupidity as per usual goes hand in hand. Boredom and greed, we mustn't forget them. And, of course, they have a vast army. Hence the expansion of this decadency to the remote northern mountains. And everyone is so... villainous and despicable in the south. So evil.

They clash. Civilizations, cultures, nay, worlds collide. Atrocities are committed. And when all is finally done, there's none alive from those northern barbarian villages.

Except this one fisherman who wanted naught but to care in peace for his family and his ducklings. But, they murdered his family. They killed and ate his ducklings. And he will have his revenge. He wages war. Alone. Against the south. Against the entire world.

And of course, us readers, are coming from such civilized society, and since something in that remoteness of the north is strange and new, almost exotic to us - and since we are deeply moved and hurt by death of ducklings - we demand justice. We wish for this troubled, heroic, and already fan-favourite fisherman bent on vengeance nothing but success.

*Oh, just how many books with this similar beginning or entire premise have we all read?*

So, it's no wonder that Erikson, who already decided to spit in the face of the genre with his series, within the series itself, in writing his own Conan the Barbarian in character of ***Karsa Orlong***, tried something new with this northern barbarian trope. Tried. Because, despite the intention and despite the effort, I'm not sure that he actually succeeded.

***“How far from our own sensibilities can we be pushed before it's too much?”***

Erikson tried to address this northern barbarian hero trope and in his book show us, as realistically as possible within the genre, and more importantly within the human nature, how in this barbaric warrior-based society that arrogantly and with sense of superiority looks down on everyone else, and how from certain point of view, there's nothing heroic nor worthy of romanticizing about them. It's actually quite uncomfortable watching them.

And in first 200 pages of this book, which is a separate book itself where we go back in time and witness (*pun intended*) Karsa's origins and travel with him until he himself, and we readers, catch up with main events, I think that Erikson managed to show us what he intended.

In those 200 pages we are following Karsa who rapes, murders his foes and endlessly belittles his friends. There are so many shocking and jaw-droppings in disbelief that at some point you have to ask yourself: *why am I doing this to myself*;

and of Erikson: *why are you making me following journey of this piece of sh\*t?*  
But, by the end of this part of his story you understand the intention.

The problem kicks in when that story ends and we are left with 800 more pages of the novel.

Karsa is extremely powerful being, who in his alienated society knew nothing of dealing with problems without usage of that vast power.

***"The poison itself had coursed deep within him, and the only answer he gave – when he gave one at all – was of violence, often misdirected, a lashing out on all sides."***

In seeing this estranged integrity and sense of honour he upholds, we are left with appalling atrocities committed along the way.

Until there comes a time where he lifts himself up from this one-dimensionality of a character and we witness the moment where his power won't be enough.

Where he knows of defeat. Then struggles. Desperation. And finally weakness.

Where he finally seem like a person and not as a walking and talking proclamation.

But with each layer of Karsa's character we get, and with each moment he fittingly for the story kills a villainous character that annoyed us in this book, he gets sympathy from us, a form of recognition and sort of a pardon for his devious acts at the beginning of the book.

And with each sympathy, pardon and cheer he gets from us, he deviates from the intention of dismissing that heroic, romanticized northern barbarian trope – and in becoming this anti-hero (*but hero nonetheless*), fan-favourite, we love and care about – he becomes that same fantasy trope he was created to battle against.

Now, don't get me wrong people, I do find interesting (*parts of*) his story, but overall, I cannot like him nor love him, due to the fact how he was introduced to us.

For example, in ***Kameron Hurley's Worldbreaker Saga*** series, there's a character called ***Zezili Hasaria***. Main antagonist of that series.

I find her story interesting and her character's progression amazing, but I will never say that I like her or love her. She's a rapist and a genocidal maniac.

Same as Karsa here.

So, whenever I see Karsa I remember that he raped a woman beside her daughter and then proceeded into raping the entire village.

And then he continued with stupidly killing everyone on his path, and the only reason why he stopped doing that was *because others overpowered him and chained him*.

And the reason why there has been change in his perspective and perception of other, weaker species, wasn't when he was all-powerful so that at some point he simply said: *"OK, this isn't the way"* - but that change came to him when he was powerless; when he was unable to inflict even more damage on others.

Which, to me, is cowardly, weakly and most importantly - boring.

*Karsa, to me, is the weakest link Malazan Book of the Fallen series has to offer.*

To get back to Zezili Hasaria, the reason why I find her more interesting than Karsa, despite both having appalling similarities, is because Zezili Hasaria had a change of heart when she was the strongest, when she was most powerful.

She recognized that nobody should have that much of a power, so she decided to do something about it. She didn't had to. But she did.

That, to me, is interesting.

Enough of Karsa. As I've mentioned, there's 800 pages of this novel yet to unravel.

And they do not disappoint.

After we finish introducing ourselves with Karsa, we get back to that much dreaded for readers after the second book ***Deadhouse Gates - Seven Cities*** and ***Raraku Desert***.

[Link to enlarge](#)

[Link to enlarge](#)

### Story.

In the city of *Aren*, upon which walls we have seen the end of that endless suffering of refugees running through *Chain of Dogs* while *Coltain's Wickans* and Malazan army battled to protect them until they were all perished, reinforcements arrive.

Green recruits lead by equally inexperienced Adjunct *Tavore Paran*, sister to *Ganoes* and *Felisin*, now have to retrace the steps of their fallen comrades and go deep into Raraku desert, to battle army that waits and hopefully end the rebellion.

In the desert however, leader of the uprising is Tavore's younger sister, Felisin, possessed by a *Whirlwind Goddess*, growing more powerful and equally insecure as her sister and their final duel approaches.

*Kalam, Apsalar* and *Crocus*, now named *Cutter*, get recruited and sent to their missions by *Cotillion*, patron God of the assassins, to defend a certain Throne, and with it the humanity.

Many new faces, especially within the Malazan Army, as interesting as *Bridgeburners* (*because I'll be damned if I won't defend and point at sheer awesomeness of Gelser, Stormy and Truth*), that fittingly replaces their absence.

And there is Adjunct Tavore herself.

One of my favourite characters of the series. Close battle with *Silchas Ruin* for that No 1 spot.

Usually, when a writer decides to withholds character's point of view and grant us a direct access to their train of thoughts, he comes up with a solution that we nonetheless stand on our tiptoes when they enter a room, simply awestruck.

(*khm khm, Anomander Rake*)

But to manage that with a character that so far we knew only that she sold her sister to protect her from death, character that from the moment she enters the fray is welcomed with grudge, doubted because of lack of her experience even by her army and chain of command, is something that I really didn't think I would ever say about.

She doesn't have a bad-ass sword, she doesn't wear into a dragon, she doesn't have any magical ability - but the power nonetheless oozes out of her.

Because she is capable.

And for me it's always pleasure following such strong characters.

Many have expressed their frustration because of the way the book ended.

It was Shakespearean. This whole series is Shakespearean.

When we take that in consideration, I say that ending was only fitting.

### Prose.

Reading that first quarter of the book, it felt to me like this whole section of Karsa's story was written earlier,

perhaps maybe at the same time when *Gardens of the Moon*, or maybe it was meant to be implemented in Deadhouse Gates.

I thought maybe even the reason for me having issues with his writing here was the fact that, because of chronological reading order, I'm coming straight from book 5 of the series, *Midnight Tides*, to which this book simply fails in comparison.

But the more I thought, it actually occurred to me that also it fails in comparison with previous installments of this series.

Bigest issue I had were dialogues. They weren't as fluent as I'm used to reading from this man, and sometimes they felt too convenient for the plot and story to move forward and it felt like he was leading me with a carrot on the end of a stick.

The reason why I love this series and his writing is because he usually tends to avoid doing just that.

### **3.41/5**

So it is closer to 4 than it is to 3. If prose was better, it would easily topple over.

Overall, 3 is anything but a bad rating.

#### ***Kharkanas Trilogy***

***Forge of Darkness***

***Fall of Light***

#### ***Path to Ascendancy series***

***Dancer's Lament***

***Deadhouse Landing***

#### ***Malazan Empire series***

***Night Of Knives***

#### ***Malazan Book of the Fallen series***

***Gardens of the Moon***

***Deadhouse Gates***

***Memories of Ice***

***Midnight Tides***

#### ***Ultimate Malazan Chronological Reading Order***

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#### **edge of bubble says**

I don't know what to say about this book, rn. yet again, I'm left mentally and emotionally exhausted. and sad. it is a wee bit different this time, though. encompassing one.

will try to write a review later.

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## Samir says

19.08.2018. Re-read thoughts:

A much better and far less confusing experience. Re-reading Malazan really pays off big time.

Original review:

Every time I finish a book from the Malazan series it usually takes me at least a month before starting the next one because of several reasons; they are dense reads and they are soul crushing because of what Erikson does to his characters. Compared to him, George R.R. Martin looks like a boy who stomps on other boys' castles in the sandbox just to annoy them.

Even though *Memories of Ice* left me heart broken, something urged me to continue right away (and I got a nudge from my dear GR friends :)). I was excited to read about the convergence of storylines from the last two books and I wanted revenge for some deaths, especially the ones from the *Deadhouse Gates*.

I started this thinking I was going to be thrown in the middle of the battle but Erikson had other plans. He did something he had never done before; he dedicated the first quarter of the book to a single POV, a character by the name of Karsa Orlong. I must admit I was a bit shocked with this start and with this character and I was wondering why the hell am I reading about this dude when there is a war going on, damn it!? Karsa is an acquired taste so it took me a while to get used to him and as more as I read about him I started liking him even though he is a brutal savage but I started digging his no-nonsense approach. If you want a more accurate description of him, just imagine the Hulk wielding a huge sword but without the "Karsa smash!" catchphrase. There is a quote from later on in the book that perfectly embodies his character:

***A House is just another prison. And I have had enough of prisons. Raise walls around me, and I will knock them down. Doubt my words, Crippled God, to your regret...***

The ending of the first quarter of the book and the first chapter of Karsa's storyline was great and a huge surprise. It made me realize why Erikson chose to start the book this way. Those of you who have read the book know what I'm referring to, and those of you who haven't, well, you're in for a treat.

And then came the struggling. I was treated with the ultimate Erikson special; a bunch of new characters to follow. The man can write some seriously good characters but at this point, I really wanted to read about the ones I already know and love. Sometimes I wish this series was about the Bridgeburners but who cares what I want. I struggled the most with the Tiste storylines because I didn't understand the half of what was going on with them because they all seem to be haunted by the ghosts of the past. I managed to get the hold of things eventually but it dragged the story for me and took away some of my enjoyment.

I wanted to read about the clash of the armies in the Raraku desert but I got just a glimpse of it in a couple of skirmishes and when the clash finally came it was over in a blink of an eye and it was so uncharacteristically underwhelming and I was left with mixed feelings. A mix of disappointment with a WTF!? expression on my face.

And since I'm in the rant mode, there was one more thing that bugged me; the excessive use of the word

“nonetheless”. I think this is Erikson’s most favorite word with “thus” being close second. I know I’m nitpicking but nonetheless. (Oh, the irony!)

There were, of course, a lot of things I liked. Karsa was a great addition to the story, Crokus and Apsalar had an interesting journey, the brief encounter with Icarium and Mappo was fun. I loved the scenes involving Fiddler and the ones involving Kalam but the absolute scene stealer and star of this book for me was Cottillion. He isn’t just the Patron God of Assassins, he is the Patron God of Badassery! Every action scene was superbly written and I wish there were more of them because who doesn’t want to read about epic clashes between gods and humans and ancient beings and races.

This was the weakest book in the series story wise so far and I hope that it doesn’t go downhill from here but I can’t argue with the sheer epicness of this world and the amazing world-building that separates this series from the rest because those two things alone make the struggles worthwhile.

Witness!

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### **Choko says**

==== 4.65 ===

Better the second time around! This saga just keeps getting bigger and better!

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### **Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says**

I'm pissed that Ralph Lister isn't the narrator any more. Why? Did something happen to him? The other dude isn't bad but still.

Karsa can kiss my @ss.

I liked my old characters and Adjunct Tavore!

That's all I got. You can go read the million of long drawn out smart reviews on the book. I'm not caring for reviewing or reading really, not with this shit cancer going on. So don't mind me. I will always love the Malazan world! Well, until I get to the one I'm going to hate!!

Mel ??

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### **TS Chan says**

***There will be slaughter. Yet another apocalypse on Raraku's restless sands. It is as it should be.***

Retribution is at hand for the rise of the Seven Cities rebellion as the new Adjunct to the Empress arrives to lead the Malazan army to face Sha'ik and her Army of the Apocalypse. The Holy Desert of Raraku continues to emanate despair, even more so now than ever after the Chain of Dogs left in its trails the miasma of

vengeance and grief.

The House of Chains weighed like a ton of bricks on my psyche, which was the main reason it is one of my least favourite, albeit still a really good book. Aside from the depressing setting of the Raraku, the Army of the Apocalypse was rife with treachery within as power hungry men and mages vie to make use of the madness and rage of the Whirlwind Goddess and the ensuing chaos to further their ambitious goals. As much as I tried, I also failed to fully empathise with the Sha'ik.

In stark contrast, the Malazan army, as disciplined as it can be, was fraught with uncertainty over the ability of the new Adjunct, Tavore of House Paran, and its relatively fresh recruits. Erikson did a marvellous job at empathically portraying the thoughts and emotions that such regiments had to confront, particularly focusing upon the points-of-view of two vastly different individuals; a new Fist who was never more than just a soldier who became captain of a noble house and a wearied returning veteran of Raraku. Within the story of Adjunct Tavore and her army, there were touching moments as well as pretty hilarious ones which made it more endearing by far.

The numerous subplots and POVs in this instalment initially appeared to be tenuously linked at most. However, and undoubtedly, Erikson showed how masterful he was in weaving all these threads together into a staggering pattern that initially confounds but eventually makes sense as revelations come to the fore. I also appreciated some level of continuity from the life-changing events that took place in Memories of Ice which flowed well into the narrative.

As before, there are still tonnes of new characters to familiarise with. But regardless of the sheer size of the cast, character development was always superbly done. Taking a different direction from first three books, a full quarter of this volume was largely dedicated to introducing a major character to the series. Karsa Orlong of the Teblor, a tribal giant race that thrived on the notion of glory from domination and killing, wrought from distorted histories and false gods, started off as an arrogant, bloodthirsty and violent warrior that was extremely difficult to like. Through the development of his arc, Karsa became one of the most complex characters thus far. He is in equal measures brutal and badass as hell, still arrogant, but also possesses an almost unorthodox sense of compassion and honour. Even with all what we have seen so far in this book, we have yet to fully appreciate what he is truly capable of and his role in the larger overarching plot.

Witness? Yes, you are witness. Even so, what I, Karsa Orlong, shall shape, you cannot imagine. No one can.

By this fourth instalment, it will be difficult not to come to the realisation of just how deep and steeped in sorcery and magic this world truly is. There is just so much to learn about the pantheon of gods and the descendants, the ancient races and warrens and then.. there is light, dark and shadow.

Shadow is ever besieged, for that is its nature. Whilst darkness devours, and light steals. And so one sees shadow ever retreat to hidden places, only to return in the wake of the war between dark and light.

And this brings to one of my favourites, yet another complex and intriguing character that demonstrated a kindness and compassion that belies his ascendant stature. Cotillion, the Patron God of Assassins, otherwise also known as The Rope, is an enigma and though he appeared to be playing another mysterious game of thrones altogether, he does so with a certain sense of dignified reluctance and regret.

"Because, I like the lad, too."  
"How brave do you think I am?"  
"As brave as necessary."  
"Again."  
"Aye. Again."  
"You don't seem much like a god at all, Cotillion."

Individual characterization aside, Erikson also excels at creating realistic and great relationships of the most unlikely pairings, which developed through chance and circumstance. Karsa Orlong and Torvald Nom. Onrack and Trull Sengar. These duos are amongst the more notable ones to date which show how love, compassion and loyalty through friendship can transcend differences in race, culture or one's own history; the connectivity that binds and brings people together.

Given the density of these books, it really is difficult to compose a review that can cover all aspects of the story, so I aim to highlight those which had an impact on me, without going into spoiler territory. The one thing which never fails to emerge from reading the Book of the Fallen is the sense of pathos from all the tragedy, despair and horrors that being alive can entail. While there are some outright despicable and vile characters, there is never a clear bad or good side; nothing is plainly black or white, just various shades of grey. Although not as heartbreaking as the past two books, the ending in House of Chains was nonetheless thoroughly tragic; even more so considering the utter unawareness of the surviving party of what truly happened.

***To grieve is a gift best shared. As a song is shared.***

*This review can also be found at Booknest*

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**Deborah Obida says**

***Shadow is ever besieged, for that is its nature. Whilst darkness devours, and light steals. And so one sees shadow ever retreat to hidden places, only to return in the wake of the war between dark and light.***

This series is far becoming one of my favourite series, there is absolutely nothing I don't like about this series, the world is amazing, the cultures, races, religion, gods etc. are so unique, I seriously have not seen anything like this before. Just like its predecessors this book has lots of well depicted battles, enough romance, friendship and betrayal, the worst I've seen in the series so far. We get to know the history of the Whirlwind goddess, a lot about the T'lan Imass, Tiste Edur, Tiste Liason and more.

[World building and Writing](#)

I adore the Malazan world, the author is a genius, the depictions are perfect, most of the book took place in Raruku desert, the other locations include Warrens, and cities and town we've yet to see in the previous books, still the author gave an in-depth descriptions of all. The writing also is perfect, third person multiple POVs as usual.

### Characters

Well its Malazan, lots of new characters mixed with the old ones, some of my favourites in this book are:

**Karsa Orlong** a very grey character, I was indifferent towards him at first but that changed, I don't agree with lots of his decisions but I totally understand. He started off as arrogant, brutal, bloodthirsty, ignorant among other things, but that changed, he made great friends and travelled a lot, that changed his world view for the better. His friendship with Torvald Nom is one of my favourite things about the book.

*'Shall we pay a visit?' Torvald asked.*

*'Yes,' Karsa replied, walking towards the footpath.*

*The Daru quickly moved up beside him. 'No trophies, though, right?'*

*Shrugging, the Teblor said, 'That depends on how we are received.'*

*'Strangers on a desolate beach, one of them a giant with a sword almost as tall as me. In the dead of night. Pounding on the door. If we're met with open arms, Karsa, it will be a miracle.'*

**Onrack the Broken** is a T'lan Imass, but lacks their indifferent attitude, he is instead sympathetic and kind, just like Tool, He befriended **Trull Sengur** a Tiste Edur, I really enjoyed their part in the book, and what they discovered, can't mention cause of spoilers.

**Crokus and Apsalar** have a weird relationship with Cotillion, mainly cause of what he did to Apsalar, his other reason are still unknown to me, so they went on another adventure that was filled with battles and near death situations, I love these two so much, the only teenagers in this whole Malazan series, apart from Felisin. I like that they act so mature.

Apsalar to Cotillion

*'You don't seem much like a god at all, Cotillion.'*

*'I'm not a god in the traditional fashion, I am a patron. Patrons have responsibilities. Granted, I rarely have the opportunity to exercise them.'*

**Felisin** is now Sha'ik reborn, and not just by name, I suddenly miss the old her, I wish she didn't accept to be Sha'ik, the rebellion already had a bad foundation, due to what Korbolo Dom did in DhG, she still has her formal flaw, she never listens, but she is more likable here.

**L'oric** is one of the High Mages of the rebellion and the only one I like, (view spoiler) He is so kind and noble.

**Kalam Mekhar** my favourite assassin, well he can stay away from a fight can he? After the incidents of DhG, I thought he won't be involved again but no, he is back and more badass than ever.

**Strings** formally known as Fiddler, well he reenlisted as he said in DhG, his new Company and Squad are as crazy as the Bridge Burners, even though most are recruits, some old ones like Gesler, Stormy and Truth, the battle plan and the battle itself is always fun to read from his POV.

*'Then she'd spend half the night cleaning her pincers and licking her lips—'*

*'Lips?' Smiles asked from behind the three men. 'What lips? Scorpions don't have lips—'*  
*'What do you know?' Bottle shot back. 'You won't even get close—'*  
*'When I get close to a scorpion I kill it. Which is what any sane person would do.'*  
*'Sane?' the mage retorted. 'You pick them up and start pulling things off! Tail, pincers, legs – I ain't seen nothing so cruel in my life!'*  
*'Well, ain't that close enough to see if it's got lips?'*  
*'Where's it all go, I wonder?' Tarr muttered.*  
*Bottle nodded. 'I know, it's amazing. She's so tiny ...'*  
*'That's our secret,' Strings said quietly.*

**Cotillion** my favourite god, He is so kind for a god, also considerate, the rest gods are so selfish and indifferent to humans as long as they are not using them, but Cotillion is not like that, and for that I love him. Well he is a Patron god of Assassins, so being a badass is in the job description.

*And a fifth figure was among the four Edur sorcerers now, grey-clad, gloved, face hidden in a rough hood. In its hands, a rope, that seemed to writhe with a life of its own. Cutter saw it snap out to strike a sorcerer in one eye, and when the rope whipped back out, a stream of blood and minced brains followed. The sorcerer's magic winked out and the Edur toppled.*  
*The rope was too fast to follow, as its wielder moved among the three remaining mages, but in its twisting wake a head tumbled from shoulders, intestines spilled out from a gaping rip, and whatever felled the last sorcerer happened in a blur that left no obvious result, except that the Edur was dead before he hit the ground.*

In case you are still wondering, that was Cotillion.

Other characters I adore include Heboric, Pearl, Lastori, Keneb, Gamet, Temul, Nil and Nether, Felisin younger, the whole of Strings squad, Leoman and a host of others.

Pearl and Lastori

*'What do you make of that night sky, Pearl? I do not recognize the constellations... nor have I ever before seen those glowing swirls in any night sky I've looked at.'*  
*He grunted. 'That's a foreign sky – as foreign as can be. A hole leading into alien realms, countless strange worlds filled with creatures unimaginable—'*  
*'You really don't know, do you?'*  
*'Of course I don't!' he snapped.*  
*'Then why didn't you just say so?'*

Plot

The first third quarter of the book focus on Karsa Orlong and his backstory, after that the story continued from where it ended in DhG and MoI, so lots of battle and desert living. Tavore is now the new adjunct, before I forgot, I loathe her more than the soldiers, she is so annoying, Sha'ik and her people are leading the rebellion, The realm of shadows and its rulers interfere for very important reasons this time. The T'lan Imass are still on their hunt for tyrants, these time renegades, throw the Tiste Edur, Andii and Liason in the mix, oh they are jaghut in this also and the Eres an elder race, that basically sum up the whole book without spoilers.

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**Petrik says**

## A huge downgrade after the masterpiece in *Memories of Ice*

Erikson started *House of Chains*, the fourth book in the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* series, in an unprecedented step. Unlike the previous three books, *House of Chains* started as a totally character-driven book that focuses solely on a completely new character, Karsa Orlong. This made for an awkward start because at first the story didn't feel like reading the same series and Karsa took a while to warm up to due to his primitive and savage culture. However, Karsa ended up being one of my favorite parts of the book because of his spectacular character development and how pivotal he became to the overall story.

### Picture: *Karsa Orlong* by Sam Burley

Other than Karsa, the great thing about this book to me was every time the book relates the story to what happened in *Memories of Ice*. These correlation didn't happen a lot of times but every time it did, the scenes were always golden quality. The other great stuff that happened in this book was the development that was put to the world-building and the returning characters that appeared in the first book.

Just like how the plot line in *Memories of Ice* serves as a direct sequel to *Gardens of the Moon*, *House of Chains* serves as a direct sequel to *Deadhouse Gates*. This means that a lot of familiar faces do make a return as the story continues in the Seven Cities after the end of *Deadhouse Gates*; at the same time connecting the story to what happened in *Memories of Ice* and beyond. However, this isn't a masterpiece like *Memories of Ice*. In fact, this was a struggle for me to finish. I don't have a lot of things to say here. My main issues with this book lie with the story being uninteresting and mostly boring to read. The majority of the characters were uninteresting and Erikson's prose here wasn't as engaging as the previous three books. Let's take Tavore. After all the mention of her name in *Deadhouse Gates*, turns out she's one of the weakest characters out of Erikson's gazillion characters. Not only that, the new POV, Onrack, is hands down one of the most boring POV I've ever had in my experience of reading a book. I fell asleep not once, not twice, but several times on his POV. I just can't seem to connect myself with the majority of the sub plot in this book; they didn't spark any emotions in me other than boredom.

For example, the silly and mock scorpions battle ended up becoming one of my favorite part of the book; even better than most of the real battle and serious plotline. I honestly don't know if that's a good or bad thing. All hail Joyful Union. The last 10% of the book was also great but it was too late to redeem the majority of the struggle I had with the book.

*"One day, perhaps, you will see for yourself that regrets are as nothing. The value lies in how they are answered."*

I'm genuinely surprised by the amount of 5 stars ratings for this book; this was okay at best, in my opinion it's barely a 3 stars read. It's boring and most of the time not memorable. *House of Chains* was a major step back from the bar that *Memories of Ice* has set. If I've waited a whole year for this book, I would've rated it even lower. I will continue to the next book, *Midnight Tides* after a week break; I have finished four books in the series within sixteen days and I need a little break after this disappointment. The good thing about this is that after asking my friends' opinion of this book, a lot of them do agree that it's easily the weakest installment of the series. I'm hoping that each book after this will only be awesome.

**You can order the book [HERE!](#)**

*You can find [this](#) and the rest of my reviews at [Novel Notions](#)*

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### **Scott Hitchcock says**

Re-Read:

The first time through this was the weakest of the ten books for me. Although the ending still lacked the convergence power in the endings of all the other books in the series I found so many hidden breadcrumbs I missed the first time around. So many poetic moments that had more power this time around. I had forgotten, missed or misinterpreted a lot that first times. These tomes are just so vast with so much going on the sensory overload the first time takes its toll. Being able to break apart the story and knowing what's important was so fulfilling.

This is also the book when you come to realize just how compassionate a character Cotillion is. The transformation of Karsa is even more amazing and that opening quarter of the book where it's all Karsa not nearly the slog it was the first time around. I remember the relief the first time around when I finally read the word Malazan in this book for the first time.

Looking forward to the rest of my re-read.

Original:

While still a tremendous book it wasn't in the realm of greatness that are DHG or MOI and not on par with GOTM. The first few chapters with Karsa probably could have been a bit shorter. The ending while another great convergence I had issues with how some of them went down. Still when compared with everything else out there this series stands alone as truly epic.

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