



Dragon Hunters

Marc Turner

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The sequel to *When the Heavens Fall* features gritty characters, deadly magic, and meddlesome gods

Once a year on Dragon Day the fabled Dragon Gate is raised to let a sea dragon pass from the Southern Wastes into the Sabian Sea. There, it will be hunted by the Storm Lords, a fellowship of powerful water-mages who rule an empire called the Storm Isles. Alas, this year someone forgot to tell the dragon which is the hunter and which the hunted.

Emira Imerle Polivar is coming to the end of her tenure as leader of the Storm Lords. She has no intention of standing down graciously. She instructs an order of priests called the Chameleons to infiltrate a citadel housing the mechanism that controls the Dragon Gate to prevent the gate from being lowered after it has been raised on Dragon Day. Imerle hopes the dozens of dragons thus unleashed on the Sabian Sea will eliminate her rivals while she launches an attack on the Storm Lord capital, Olaire, to secure her grip on power.

But Imerle is not the only one intent on destroying the Storm Lord dynasty. As the Storm Lords assemble in Olaire in answer to a mysterious summons, they become the targets of assassins working for an unknown enemy. When Imerle initiates her coup, that enemy makes use of the chaos created to show its hand.

Dragon Hunters Details

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From Reader Review Dragon Hunters for online ebook

Marc Turner says

I have to admit I'm a fan of this book. Speaking impartially, of course. If you only read one book this year about Chameleon priests, dimension-hopping assassins, and sea dragons being hunted by powerful water-mages, then this is definitely the one for you.

Dragon Hunters takes place in a different part of the same story world as *When the Heavens Fall*, and features a new set of characters. You can therefore read it even if you haven't already read book one in the series (shame on you).

The first chapter is available on the Tor/Forge blog. Here are a few other snippets to whet your appetite:

"We're lucky," Farrell said as the dragon glided past. "The creature's little more than a baby. Any bigger, and it wouldn't have been able to keep to the shallow waters near the cliff."

Agenta grunted. Oddly, she didn't feel too lucky just now.

*

Mili's gaze had remained fixed on Senar, but now she glanced at something over his shoulder.

Her eyes widened.

The Guardian spun round, then realized he might have just fallen for the old look-out-he's-behind-you trick. If he got Mili's sword in his back after that, it would serve him right.

*

"What were you doing in the Shallows?" Kempis asked.

"I'd left the Round and was making my way to the Temple District when I must have, uh, lost my bearings."

"Temple District is up the hill from the Round. Strange you should find yourself all the way down here."

"Ah, yes." The noble paused. "There's a shortcut I sometimes use. Well, not a shortcut as such—"

"Keep digging, sir," Sniffer cut in. "I'm sure you'll be out of that hole in no time."

Greg (adds 2 TBR list daily) Hersom says

It's been a long time since I dove into a door-stopper epic fantasy series. Let alone, jump right into next book immediately after reading the first one -of course it helps that I'd won *Dragon Hunters* from a Goodreads Giveaway. Still, between a severely limited reading-time, being burned by the "years-between-books phenomenon" and, developing an old man's low tolerance for tom-foolery, I've just had too hard a time dealing with the big epics. So this in itself says a lot about how much I like *The Chronicle of the Exile*.

For my money, *Dragons Hunters*, was even more fun to read than *When the Heavens Fall* was, but what's awesome about this series is how Mr. Turner is structuring it. Each book is very much a self-contained story. A lot of authors make that claim about their series but Turner is for real. Each book has its own characters,

and the only continuity is the world with its cultures and history.

From what I understand, book three, *The Red Tide*, will tie the first two books together and have characters from them both. However, if one is so inclined, it would still work to read books one and two out of order, and that is just so freaking cool.

Matthew says

Have you ever read a debut novel from an author and thought to yourself, 'yeah, this writer has something special.'

Well that's how I felt when I first stumbled upon *When the Heavens Fall* by Marc Turner. It had everything that I loved about fantasy. Sprawling landscapes and cultures, intense magical combat and action, and intelligent and fascinating characters with agency. So when I heard that Turner's next book was coming I was extremely excited. I couldn't wait to dive back into the world that Turner had engineered in his debut.

And then I found out that *Dragon Hunters* would be focused on an entirely new set of characters and a new setting.

Huh?

Alarm bells began to ring in my head, and my high hopes for the sequel started to fall. However, after finally reading it (moral of the story... don't judge something you haven't read yet!) I came to the conclusion that I was wrong.

Very, very wrong.

This book not only equals *When the Heavens Fall*, it exceeds and eclipses it.

Dragon Hunters tells the story of the Storm Lords, a fellowship of water mages who rule the empire known the Storm Isles. Their leader, Emira Imerle Polivar, is coming to the end of her tenure as leader. But Polivar has no intention of standing down without a fight. Once a year, the fabled Dragon Gate is raised to let a sea dragon into the Sabian Sea, where it is hunted by Imerle and the Storm Lords. This year however Imerle plans to sabotage the Dragon Gate and destroy the Storm Lords dynasty. But Imerle is not the only one plotting and scheming, and when the sabotage of the gate is set in motion new enemies will appear amidst the chaos and destruction.

So what did I love about this book? Everything (seriously). From its scintillating action through to its intelligent and enthralling narrative and dialogue, *Dragon Hunters* is a roller coaster ride filled with intensity and glory (unlike *When the Heavens Fall*, which was more of a slow burn). Turner has really ramped it up with this book, deploying a bucket load of well crafted and intense nautical sequences (which I love) and insanely brilliant battles with great sea dragons.

And fuck me... those sea dragons. This book contains one of the best representations of dragons I've ever seen in a fantasy book. Period. They are brutal killing machines... alpha predators that give even the powerful Storm Lords a run for their money.

The characterisation was also amazing in this book. All of the players, from Imerle through to Webb and Flood had depth, charm, and agency. This is one of the areas that Turner has really shown improvement in since his debut, and it was great to see him control a large cast of characters with real skill and finesse.

The world building was, like in *When the Heavens Fall*, layered and filled with history and lore. I adored the nautical setting in a lot of the sequences, and was enthralled at how Turner linked this book back to his debut. Turner has a real skill when it comes to designing fantasy worlds, and I chewed up all of the tidbits that he planted throughout the plot.

The pacing was fast yet perfectly controlled and structured. This is the key difference between this book and *When the Heavens Fall*. *Dragon Hunters* is more reminiscent of an cracking sword and sorcery tale, filled with magic, monsters and mayhem. I loved the sense of adventure I got from reading this story, and the ending left me yearning for more from this world.

Dragon Hunters doesn't have any weaknesses in my opinion. It is a perfectly balanced and well told tale filled with carnage and brutal delight.

I am stoked that I read this book... and Turner has impressed me so much that he has now been added to the list of authors whose work I will always buy.

If you like fantasy then you have to read this book. Do yourself a favour and buy it now.

5 out of 5 stars.

Patremagne says

I'd put this aside for a while because it wasn't grabbing me, but I picked it back up in anticipation of the final book in the trilogy in September. Once the *Dragon Hunt* began around halfway through, though, I was thoroughly hooked.

<http://abitterdraft.com/2016/07/drago...>

Once a year, on Dragon Day, the Storm Lords hoist open the Dragon Gate to let one of the majestic, scaled beasts slip through into the Sabian Sea to be hunted by the water-mage Storm Lords. Emira Imerle Polivar, the current elected ruler of the Storm Lords, is nearing the end of her reign and naturally has no inclination to relinquish power any time soon. Dragon Day and the raising of the Dragon Gate proves to be the perfect chance to eliminate any chance for her fellow Storm Lords to succeed her. Karmel Flood is a priest of the Chameleon, whose acolytes are able to turn invisible while not moving, and she and a companion are tasked to sabotage the Dragon Gate by Karmel's brother Caval, the high priest. Septia Kempis Parr is hot on the trail of an assassin with seemingly unconnected targets. Senar Sol is a Guardian who finds himself on the wrong side of a prison cell after stepping through a portal at the behest of the emperor, and he's thrust headfirst into Imerle's court following a mysterious summons of all the Storm Lords to the seat of the emira in Olair. Agent Webb is the daughter of a noble daughter of a tradelord in the Gilgamarian Ruling Council, and when her father's ship laden with valuable gems is attacked and raided by pirates, she finds herself also drawn into the great gathering of power in Olair while attempting to find the perpetrating pirates. Unfortunately for all involved, the Storm Lords are not the only factions involved in plays for power and the game of thrones - gods do more than simply watch from above and races thought long-lost return with a vengeance.

There are several different types of novels when it comes to their similarity to the author's inspired work, but the two most often used are those that unapologetically use a huge chunk of (if not all) of the ideas in terms of plot and characters of the inspired work, like Terry Brooks's *The Sword of Shannara*, and then there are those that utilize the themes and *feel* of the inspiration but take it in a different way. Marc Turner's **Chronicle of the Exile** is far closer to the latter than the former when it comes to its inspiration in Steven Erikson's **Malazan**. *When the Heavens Fall* truly had a **Malazan** vibe to it in the way that the world, characters, and magic were described, but it sort of did its own thing with the plot. It wasn't anything new or groundbreaking, but it didn't need to be.

Turner continues on his own path in *Dragon Hunters* in giving us two things that are sorely lacking in much of modern fantasy: significant nautical action and dragons that aren't skybound. While the entire novel doesn't take place at sea, I have no reservations using the term nautical fantasy to describe it. The dragons are a great blend of majestic and vicious, and the Dragon Hunt is vividly depicted. There are of course varying opinions on the best way to describe magic, but I am all in favor of the way Erikson and Turner do it. Raw, powerful, and not necessarily specific in terms of its elemental charge. Magic in their worlds is often described as powerful waves of energy, utilizing words like coruscating to emphasize just what magic is: raw power. That's not to say that Turner doesn't have specific types of magic - there's a scene with death magic that is easily one of the most visceral depictions of magic I've encountered - but that he's versatile in his use of it.

The characters proved to be well-drawn as well, with some falling into archetypes and others not so much. At the outset I was slightly put off that we were getting another grizzled veteran Guardian who dwells on the loss of his master (Senar felt very similar to Luker of *When the Heavens Fall*), although while Senar did still fill the same archetype throughout, he also became easier to empathize with and therefore more likable as he gets caught in the middle of a conflict far over his pay grade. Kempis and his fellow watchmen went full Tehol and Bugg with their witty banter throughout their investigative hunt for the assassin. There's a definite feeling that every single character in *Dragon Hunters* is in over their head, including Imerle. The sense of foreboding and convergence that was pervasive throughout *When the Heavens Fall* returns in its sequel, and from what I've read and heard of the third title, *Red Tide*, something truly huge is coming.

It takes some time for *Dragon Hunters* to get going, but it's well worth the ride. Turner has shown versatility in his first two outings, with the first being a far more serious, grimdark novel and the second much more in the vein of adventure with some very well-placed humor. Whatever Turner does next with *Red Tide*, I'm on board.

Samir says

Pssst! Reader! Yes, you! I know what you're thinking. You've read the first book and liked it but expected more out of it, so now you're wondering is it worth continuing with the series. I was in your shoes so I know the feeling but decided to continue anyway. Short story; I made the right call. Long story? Well, keep on reading.

I enjoyed *When the Heavens Fall*, the first novel of *The Chronicles of the Exile*. The structure and the flow of the story, along with the large cast of characters reminded me of Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen*, which is no wonder, because the author was influenced by the works of Erikson and Abercrombie. Couple of things I found lacking in WtHF, the emotional depth of the characters which made connecting with them a bit difficult. Don't get me wrong, they were an interesting bunch but it is my opinion that their inner thoughts

and emotions could have been more expressed, thus making me emotionally invested. It is a problem when you don't care if anyone lives or dies at the end of the book. The other issue I had was the pacing. According to Writer's Digest, narrative pace determines how quickly or how slowly the writer takes a reader through a story. The story itself determines the pace of the story. It relies on the combination of mood and emotion as these elements play out in the dialogue, setting and action. The key is to find the perfect balance and I'm afraid Turner failed to do so because the story was dragging a bit at certain points and lacking the forward momentum. But, it was a debut book and for a debut, it was pretty solid, considering the fact the aforementioned issues can be found in the (popular) books of more established authors today.

So, is *Dragon Hunters* a step up? Yes.

As much as I am tempted to end my review with that, I guess I owe you an explanation. Well, here goes...something.

Dragon Hunters is the second installment of *The Chronicles of the Exile*. I'm not using the term "sequel" for a simple reason, because it isn't. It does share the same world but the story is set in a different part of it, and also, there is a new cast of characters, which means you can enjoy this book without any previous knowledge of the world or the events unfolded in the previous book.

The plot structure is similar to the previous book, there is a big game afoot with a lot of players with their own personal agendas. It gradually builds up until the halfway point and then picks up significantly and continues upping the pace till the very end. The big difference regarding its predecessor is the flow of the narrative. It felt more cohesive and the main reason for it were the characters. I can't really say I got more emotionally invested than I did in the previous book, but I did find them equally intriguing and more fun. And the best way to capture my attention (when it comes to books), is to write at least a couple of fun characters. I think this is where Abercrombie's influence shows the most.

Crap! Almost forgot to mention the dragons. I'm a sucker for dragons, so if a book contains one, I'm sold. The ones in this book are not your everyday dragons (pfft..like there is such a thing as an everyday dragon). These are sea dragons and they pose a constant threat to ships and their occupants. There is an annual event called the Dragon Day where people gather round on the beach and make sand castles and play catch with the dragons. Sorry, wrong Dragon Day. What I meant to say is; they hunt them. This takes place in the Sabian Sea where the Dragon Gate is located. The gate is constructed to prevent the dragons from entering the waters and ravaging the shores of the aforementioned sea but once a year the gate is raised to let one pass in order to hunt it for no other reason than riches and glory. All of the narrative threads converge on the Dragon Day resulting in gripping and fast action sequences, making you turning the pages with eagerness.

I think this book has a lot to offer; an interesting plot, multi-layered with politicking, schemes, great number of twists and turns, mystery, and action aplenty. Combine that with a large scale worldbuilding and a simple, yet well executed magic system, which will appeal to the fans of the *Avatar: The Last Air Bender*, and you get a compelling package to satisfy your fantasy cravings.

***“Sometimes memories warm you, but more often they serve only to remind you of things lost.
To live with the past, you need to have a future too.”***

This quote perfectly sums up this series so far; the first installment is a reminder of what could have been, the second one is a confirmation that it has a future. And on that note, I'm off to explore that future in the next installment.

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

Dragon Hunters delivered all the elements that were missing from book one, with flare (and by flare I mean dragons). Sluggish plot progression wasn't a problem here. I wouldn't say Dragon Hunters was a particularly fast-paced book, but the things that happened within each perspective advanced the plot much more sufficiently than in the first book. Same with the plot-transparency – a lot of the devious plots remained shrouded in mystery until the end, which was not the case in book one (and a major component of my dissatisfaction). I said in my review of *When the Heavens Fall* that Turner had all of the components I look for in a storyteller, he just made some outlining decisions I wasn't thrilled about. His skill shows itself nicely in this sequel and confirmed my guess that with a different outline, he'd be awesome.

The only thing Dragon Hunters still lacked for me was sufficiently distinct characters. They were all interesting to read about (and had great backstories), Turner just never took the time to give them any introspection or depth (with maybe one exception). There are two main male POVs and two main female POVs, and I had a hard time telling them apart. With each switch I had to consciously wrap my mind around which one had the spotlight. I probably missed a few details early on due to character confusion. Even so, I still enjoyed their basic profiles. But I can also see how improving them would've taken this story to the next level.

Since every other aspect was done to my satisfaction, I still value the book highly. I especially loved the setting (costal/island nations centered around pirates, political intrigue, and powers) and the extra bit of subtle world building in the form of a stone-skinned race and people with gills (both of which I'm eager to learn more about). Oh! And the different religions (specifically the Chameleon one) really sparked my interest. So overall, I had a ton of positive takeaways from this book.

Recommendations: Dragon Hunters was a lot stronger than the first book, containing a good mix of action, world building, religion, politics, and sea dragons. The characters probably won't make you feel a lot of things, but they're still fun to read about. This series wouldn't be my pick for new fantasy readers, but is a good pick for Malazan fans looking for something slightly less intense.

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at www.NikiHawkes.com

Other books you might like:

Petros Triantafyllou says

I will start this review with a quote from a previous review of mine, dating back to 2014.

"If you regularly follow my reviews, you must have already noticed that nine out of ten times I don't get to

enjoy the next installments in a series as much as the first one (probably due to the fact that I'm already acquainted with the world & character building, as well as the magic system, so i am less impressed by the rest of the story). King of Thorns is the exception to the "rule". The one out of ten."

Marc's second book falls into the same category.

The second installment in The Chronicle of the Exile has nothing, yet everything to do with the first. Set in a different place, on the same time, this is a story of love and hate, revenge and forgiveness, survival and sacrifice. A story of ideals and values. Marc's ability to compose a realistic plot structure while maintaining the magic elements and exciting action sentences, is something to be praised.

"Sometimes memories warm you, but more often they serve only to remind you of things lost. To live with the past, you need to have a future too."

Dragon Hunters is a book like no other. A quality fiction with an intricate plot presented by a propulsive narrative with lovely & lavish descriptions, resulting in an intelligent and mesmerizing world-building. The depth of characterization brings in life the inner darkness of the protagonists, highlighting the injustice of a morbid society where bad things happen to good people, bad people, and everyone in general. A world where equality, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness is better left for another day.

Dragon Hunters is an excellent story of modern fantasy, and one of the best reads of 2016. Red Tide, The Chronicle of the Exile's third installment is due to be released on September 20th 2016. This is the perfect time for you to read the previous books. *Jedi hand gesture* *"You should buy these books. Like now."*

You can find more of my reviews over at <http://BookNest.eu/>

Stefan Bach says

I'll be honest. The reason why I started this series in the first place was to read more about badass pirate **Mazana Creed**, a character from a *short story* in anthology ***Evil is a Matter of Perspective: An Anthology of Antagonists***.

Now, in first book - ***When the Heavens Fall*** - her character doesn't even make an appearance. And to be *completely honest*, she wasn't missed.

The world setting, building of magic system, discovering history and lore, as well as variety of characters in it, did more than compensate for her absence. Actually, that book did so well, it made on top of my list of debut novels I have read this year.

So, obviously, getting into sequel, my expectations were really high.

Now, finishing this book, I have to say that this sequel is a slight setback to previous one. And for that disappointment I could only blame the feeling of my unmet expectations when it comes to Mazana Creed.

Not only that I didn't get her point of view in chapters - what ultimately drew me to this series - but I didn't even get that same character I have met in short story.

There, she is a confident water-mage, one of the few infamous Storm Lords, character which doesn't

necessarily needs to rely on her powers, nor her titles, to make people around her follow her. Hell, even some readers stormed headfast to read more about her.

Here however, it's not that she is a complete opposite of what I remember, but more toned down version that wasn't developed enough. Mostly due to denying her enough room to grow and giving that space to some other characters.

She wasn't bad, mind you, she just wasn't what I expected.

So, now, I have a choice to make.

Should I rate this book by my disappointment because my expectations were unmet?

Or should I rate it by overall enjoyment I had reading this book; book where world, history and magic expanded; where characters were equally interesting to those I followed on the other side of this magnificent world?

Also, there's bloody pirates fighting dragons for more than half of the book.

Oh, you're more interested about that? Well, while you're there, let me bore you with a little bit of imaginary history and world setting, so that you could understand why they are fighting dragons (*which are technically more of a sea-serpents than dragons*).

The Storm Isles were a chain of islands ruled by a fellowship of water-mages - the **Storm Lords** - that held in its thrall a confederation of cities known as the **Sabian League**.

In return for the Storm Lords protecting the League's shipping from pirates, as well as from the supernatural storms that swept down from the **Broken Lands**, the League's members paid tribute to the Storm Lords.

But it wasn't always like that.

At the end of the **Sixth Age** the Storm Lords were just so many water-mages employed to protect Sabian shipping from dragons and pirates.

And as the cities of the League grew, those mages came to realize their value to trade. So they started banding together, elected leaders to bargain for higher fees.

The League had no choice but to pay. Pirates they could take their chances with, but only a ship with a water-mage on board could hope to outrun a dragon.

In the end the mages got greedy and began demanding a cut of the profits from the shipments they were transporting.

League decided it would be cheaper to build the **Dragon Gate** than keep paying. Thirty years for the League to build the gate meant thirty years for the mages to plan their response. They formalized their ties, took the Storm Isles for their own, started calling themselves the Storm Lords.

Once each year the gate was raised to allow a sea dragon to pass into the Sabian Sea. Awaiting it would be ships from the Storm Isles and the cities of the Sabian League, and they would hunt the creature for the honor and riches that came to the vessel that slew it.

Dragon Day.

Those who have read **Steven Erikson's Malazan Books**, know how he sets the stage for a climatic ending.

Well, imagine if those tense battles, revelations, twists and turns lasted for more than half of the book?

Imagine if **Moby Dick** was written as a summer blockbuster action movie.

Yeah, that doesn't make sense, right? *Right?*

Now, this book wasn't only about action and fighting, it actually balanced pretty well with politicking and trading.

There's also mysteries that are left to be solved by a *Septia* (detective) *Kempis Parr*, character so petulant, that he hates everything, his boss, his job, his life - probably even the fact that he is in this book. So, obviously, reading about him squirming around makes him one of the most interesting character to follow.

Hmm...

I think I have made my decision about the rating. Septia was a decider. No, not really, but I had too much fun reading about this world to be sour for one character not reaching its full potential.

Thomas Stacey says

Wow. What an impressive round off to the year. Dragon Hunters is exactly how I imagine Malazan would be if written by Abercrombie: chock full of violence, dark humour, great characters and epic world building, with each strand of the story being given time to develop and flourish before converging together for one epic climax. And Sea Dragons. Sea Dragons!

I think it's safe to say I'm definitely along for the ride and can't wait to see where this series takes us.

Scott Hitchcock says

Book 1: 3*

Book 2: 3.25*

The story was definitely better than the first book. Once again the writing is very good. The world and the action are both great.

The issue I have with this similar to the first is I don't connect with any of the characters. I think part of it is the author is going for the Erikson view where everybody (generalization) is the good guy from there own perspective. Erikson pulls it off and you end up liking opposing figures. Because there's no empathy build into these characters they all come off stale to me.

That's not to say you don't know what the characters are looking to accomplish. Their goals are clear. They just lack that depth I'm looking for.

Another example are the dragons. The dragon scenes are cool visuals but they are written from the 20,000 foot view. They lack the presence that Erikson, Martin and Abraham give their dragons. When a dragon shows up in Malazan, ASOIAF or Dagger & Coin you feel their impact. Their stare means something.

I'll still stick with the series and the author. He has a nice prose that flows. I hope he puts more into the inner workings of the characters.

James Schmidt says

My review today is for:

Dragon Hunters: The Chronicle of the Exile, Book Two

by Marc Turner

A copy of this book was provided to me in exchange for an honest review. My opinions are my own.

I absolutely loved the first book in this series When the Heavens Fall, I instantly fell in love with the complexed characters and vast universe they are set in. It took me a while to finally read the book after sitting in my TBR pile for ever it seemed, but when I did I was impressed. So I immediately started reading Dragon Hunters hungry for more. I was not disappointed, another outstanding book. Actually, I take that back, I was a little disappointed. I have to admit I did not like this book as well. Hard to pinpoint but I did not like this new cast of characters and setting as well as in the first book. Like I said still a fantastic read, just not as good as the first in my opinion.

In conclusion I highly recommend this book, and series. I have very high hopes for the next book as I have heard it keeps getting better. I have seen where this series is a throw back to 80's – 90's Fantasy and even compared to Malazan! I can see both points but this book was unique in it's own right even with these favorable comparisons. I can't wait to read and review the next book of this series. Marc Turner has provided a stunning new fantasy series, and I am a big fan.

As you know if you have read my reviews before I am not about long reviews with synopsis and spoilers. I just give my opinion on my experience with this book and you can take it from there. Now on to the next book.

4/5 STARS

You can check out all of my reviews here: <https://mightythorjrs.wordpress.com/>

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2016/03/08/b...>

Sometimes a second book is required for me to get a feel for a series, and this is certainly one of those cases. When the Heavens Fall was a novel that gave me mixed feelings, because while it didn't exactly sweep me off my feet, I did genuinely enjoy it for the new and refreshing sword-and-sorcery fantasy that it was. In any event, it made me curious to tackle the sequel, Dragon Hunters, to see how the chronicle will continue.

What I found caught me by surprise. As it turned out, this novel is rather unlike the first one; not only do the stories differ in tone and style, Dragon Hunters also follows a brand new cast of characters and takes place in a different setting. But in spite, or perhaps because, of this huge departure, I liked the book. I liked it a lot.

One does not often find that subsequent volumes in an epic fantasy series can be read as standalones, but I believe this can be done here. Lore-wise, the plot of Dragon Hunters has strong ties to When the Heavens Fall, but other than that, we're looking at a whole new ballgame. The story first begins in the period leading up to Dragon Day, an annual event celebrated by the raising of the Dragon Gate. A sea dragon would be allowed to pass into the Sabian Sea, where it will be subsequently hunted by the gathered water-mages who collectively make up a ruling body called the Storm Lords.

One of them, the powerful Emira Imerle Polivar is being pressured to relinquish her reign, though she is not about to step down quietly. Conspiring with the Chameleon priesthood, she arranges for two of their members to infiltrate the heavily guarded citadel and sabotage the Dragon Gate. Ruining the ceremony would deal a humiliating blow to the Storm Lords, which is exactly what Imerle wants. However, it appears that others have been targeting the Storm Lords too, as evidenced by the deadly assassins on the hunt, using the confusion sowed by the conspiracies and chaos to their mysterious benefactor's advantage.

Considering my reading preferences, it's probably no surprise that I found getting into this second volume was much easier and faster compared to the first. After all, I love my maritime fantasy, and I also love dragons. In *Dragon Hunters*, Marc Turner masterfully spins an exciting and cohesive tale of nautical adventure featuring these majestic leviathans, and it captured my imagination from the start. Unlike the first book, which saw four disparate characters come together in their shared quest to find a stolen object, the unifying theme of this sequel is not of a search, but of a hunt. That little difference alone gives this story a much more animated and thrilling sense of urgency.

For one thing, all the characters here are working against the clock. Karmel and Veran, the two Chameleon agents tasked to sabotage the Dragon Gate, are on a heist-like mission trying to complete their objective while struggling with mistrust and hidden agendas within their priesthood. Then there's Kempis Parr, a city watchman hot on the trail of an assassin who has always managed to stay one step ahead of him, slipping from his grasp each time he draws close. And finally, there's the grand dragon hunt itself. The plot to ruin Dragon Day notwithstanding, you didn't think we'd get a book called *Dragon Hunters* without some dragon hunting action, did you? If dragons are what you want, then you definitely won't be disappointed. Turner's dragons are marine monsters, vicious predators that will give the Storm Lord ships a run for their money. While I found *When the Heavens Fall* to be a slower novel that took nearly until the midway point to pick up speed, clearly I had none of those problems here.

Compared to its predecessor, *Dragon Hunters* isn't just like a whole different book, it IS a whole different book. For this reason, I have a feeling that opinions on it will vary wildly. For me personally though, it is an example of a sequel that beats out the previous book when it comes to pacing and scope. Overall, I feel that the story has a more "blockbuster" vibe to it, by which I mean its reach is considerably more epic, encompassing the lives of a greater number of characters and resulting in far more serious ramifications for the world—in other words, not a bad deal at all.

All told, *Dragon Hunters* was a great book and hooked me where the first one didn't. I'm glad I gave this sequel a go, because in terms of my excitement level for this series, I know that I'm no longer sitting on the fence: I desperately need to get my hands on the next installment! Marc Turner has completely sold me on his excellent world building and characters, and I can't wait to see what's next in *Red Tide*, *The Chronicle of the Exile* part three.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

My rating is 3.5 stars.

Dragon Hunters is the second installment of Marc Turner's epic *The Chronicle of the Exile* series, and, as promised by said author, it is a tale set in the same world as *When the Heavens Fall* but focused on a whole

pantheon of new characters, filled with unique lands, cultures, and magic, and unveils an original story having no direct connection to its predecessor. All of which means anyone can read this book and enjoy without having to do any catch-up regarding book one.

Now, for those unfamiliar with Mr. Turner, he has a penchant for throwing readers head first into the action, demanding them to quickly grasp and decipher the multiple viewpoint narrative as it rushes onward fast and furiously; a style which continues here, as the shadows fade away to show the Spider goddess in the thick of things, setting in motion a set of events which she promises will sweep the length of the Sabian League. What her plan is or her goal is left to a reader's imagination.

Quickly, the view changes to a prison cell somewhere. Where, Senar Sol, Guardian of Erin Elal, doesn't even know. Ten months of his life (or close to it) spent in isolation; his only crime being forced through a gateway by Emperor Avallon and ending up in this strange place. But now things have suddenly changed, as he is led forth from his entombment to meet his captor and set forth on an unexpected path.

Meanwhile, Karmel Flood of the Chameleon priesthood struggles with her skills being unappreciated by her brother the high priest. Once, Karmel and Caval had bravely shared the abuse of their father together; the perpetual torment causing them to rely on one another for love and support. Now, though, their relationship is one of mistrust and growing distance. But an opportunity has arisen; one which Karmel has been handpicked for by her brother, a mission of extreme secrecy and utmost importance to the Chameleon God. Perhaps a way to prove herself and earn her brother's confidence back. The only drawback is it involves sabotaging Dragon Day!

For those unfamiliar with this most momentous of occasions, Dragon Day is when the mighty Dragon Gate (which bars dragons from entering the Sabian Sea) is raised to allow a single (or handful) of the vicious sea monsters entry. Awaiting said dragon(s) will be the mighty of the land; their flotilla of warships armed for a sporting dragon hunt, where the prize is both the precious dragon blood as well as the famed heaped upon the dragon slayer. This spectacle both entertainment for and a lesson to the masses, reinforcing annually why the Storm Lords hold sway over the Sabian Sea.

This year's Dragon Day is even more monumental, however, as it heralds the end of Imerle Polivar time as Emir of the Storm Council. But she does not intend to relinquish power quietly. At least, all the rumors whisper such. These people say she is plotting to keep her position against the will of the other Storm Lords — no matter the cost. Calista Agenta Webb and her father becoming unwittingly involved in the whole affair when all they had come to court for was the payment of reparation, but instead find themselves attempting to unravel an intricate web of deceit, which might lead back to the Emir.

And if that was not enough, mysterious earthquakes continue to slowly sink the city of Olaire into the sea, even as the other Storm Lords begin to appear unlooked-for at court and an assassin begins to kill water-mages. Septia Kempis Parr (think detective) put in charge of tracking down the killer and discovering why it is occurring. All of it heralding that a violent storm is about to erupt over the Sabian League on Dragon Day.

There are many, many things to love about *Dragon Hunters*: a detailed narrative, crisp writing, interconnecting plot lines, unique characters, and a mesmerizing world. This makes it difficult to isolate one element and point to it as the shining example of Mr. Turner's writing craftsmanship and hold up as the reason why you should read this novel. Instead of trying, I will simply favorably compare Mr. Turner to epic fantasy authors such as Steven Erikson, Joe Abercrombie, and others of the like whose fantasy worlds transcend fiction and become living, breathing places, which you the reader might believe is actually alternate history, because there is no way a world so complex, so realistic could have come from the

imagination of a writer. And if that is the type of fantasy you adore, then *Dragon Hunters* is exactly what you have been waiting for.

If there is any criticism to be leveled at this book, it is the complexity, interconnectivity, and details of the story which might drive some readers to madness. Simply put, this is a narrative which challenges a person to stay focused, not overlook any event, and constantly seek hidden meaning in even the most trivial of circumstances. Only by maintaining such concentration can one see and appreciate the way Mr. Turner weaves all the narratives into a seamless tale. That isn't what every fantasy fan is looking for in their reading, and for that reason, *Dragon Hunters* might not be to everyone's tastes.

Sweeping, complex, and exciting, *Dragon Hunters* takes its readers from the water domed halls of the Emir to the nerve-wrecking guardrooms of the Dragon Gate, from the drowned streets of Olair to the ocean sprayed decks of dragon hunting ships, from the confused, desperate mind of prisoner Senar Sol to the logical, methodical investigation of Septia Kempis Parr. Each scene, each revelation, each plot building upon the others, slowly erecting a grand story which spirals out wide only to steadily contract back to an explosive conclusion where Mr. Turner unveils a grand finale which takes several chapters to wrap up. The ending satisfying (A fitting reward for staying the course.), but one which leaves several important questions unanswered, elegantly preparing the path for book three — which I personally can't wait to read!

Tor and Marc Turner provided this book to me for free in return for an honest review. The review above was not paid for or influenced in any way by any person, entity or organization, but is my own personal opinions.

Bob Milne says

If you were a fan of *When the Heavens Fall*, then be prepared for an abrupt change with *Dragon Hunters*. For the second book of *The Chronicle of the Exile*, Marc Turner shifts location, characters, and story line. It's still the same recognizable narrative voice, and the mythology ties the two books together, but it makes for a very different read . . . one that takes on an entirely new flavor. Having said that, if you've yet to encounter Turner's work, then that same shift means this second book is just as accessible to new readers as the first.

Personally, I found this second volume a little more difficult to get into than the first. Call me old-fashioned, but I like my darkened alleys, haunted forests, and subterranean lairs. It's classic (perhaps even clichéd) epic fantasy, but those elements were largely responsible for me celebrating the first as something of a throwback fantasy. That's not to say there's anything wrong with this second volume, or that it doesn't grow on you, it just the sunny seaside setting didn't have the same initial impact - although it does prove to have some very cool, very dark, very underwater secrets.

Senar Sol, Guardian, is our first real POV character in the novel. He's as much a challenge as he is a mystery, trapped far from home, with rather murky loyalties. In terms of narrative, he allows us to view the events surrounding the Storm Lords with a critical eye, and in terms of character, he slowly emerges to reveal himself as a hero of note. Karmel Flood, Chameleon, is probably the most intriguing character in the novel, a woman who is both a thief and an assassin, with her loyalties divided rather than murky. She has a magical ninja-like quality to her, but she's also intelligent and witty. Agent Webb, Gilgamarian sailor, is a bit more of a mystery, but she's strong-willed, independent, and more powerful than appearances would suggest.

Kempis Parr, Watchman, serves as the moral center of the novel, a good man who is perhaps too aware of his

place in the world. He's self-assured and sarcastic, but he's also a good leader and an even better investigator. I'm not sure what it is about the kinds of city guards, but they often make for the best, most reliable, most admirable characters. Mazana Creed, Storm Lord, is the exact opposite, but far-and-away the most entertaining character in the book. She struck a chord in me from her first verbal sparring with Imerle Polivar, and I found myself hoping she'd have a significant role to play as the story progressed. She's also the character who grows and evolves the most, although there were moments I doubted her motives (as I suspect we're meant to). As was the case in the first novel, it takes a while for their individual stories to merge, but that's part of the charm.

The sea dragons are, of course, the main attraction here, and it's well worth the wait for them to appear on the scene. They're brutal killing machines, water-borne monsters who are fully prepared to amass a massive body count. Turner crafts the geography almost as carefully as he does the plot, ensuring that the dragons aren't just something on which to hinge the story, but a legitimate part of a very water-borne story. Their presence has mythological as well as political implications, and in a book where political schemes are almost as serpentine as the dragons themselves, that leaves them a large role to play.

All in all, *Dragon Hunters* feels a bit more grounded than the first book, and swaps some of its almost-Gothic horror for pulp-adventure, but it still maintains the same dark sense of humor and epic scope of imagination that made it so enjoyable.

Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins

Disclaimer: I received a complimentary ARC of this title from the publisher in exchange for review consideration. This does not in any way affect the honesty or sincerity of my review.

Tracey the Lizard Queen says

Originally reviewed here: <http://thequeenofblades.blogspot.co.uk...>

Copy won in a Facebook giveaway, thanks to Marc's wife

4.25 Stars

Ah, dragons. Now I know what some of you must be thinking. 'I'm kinda sick of effing dragons'. Well let me put you at ease, this book is not, I repeat NOT, about dragons. WHAT!? Yes, there are dragons aplenty, and not the intelligent talking ones, and no, not the pet ones that love only one character either. They are wild, ferocious, dangerous, man-eaters. They will tear you limb from limb, they're predators, the people are food. And yet this book is not about dragons.

What it's really about is a powerful watermage trying to hold onto her position. And a lost former Guardian, with nowhere else to go, a priestess of the Chameleon who is far too naive, and a work-shy sergeant searching for an assassin. Politics and murder.

Lets start with some basic background: In When the Heavens Fall Luker discovers that several of his former colleagues were sent through some mysterious portals by the (bastard) emperor. One of these Guardians finds himself in the Storm Ilse. Left in cell to rot for a few months, Senar Sol is later recruited by the power hungry Storm Lord Imerle Polivar. Once a year the Storm Lords open the Dragon Gate and let a dragon through to hunt and keep the masses entertained. What could possibly go wrong?

Things very quickly become clear that the Emira is not the only one with plans on Dragon Day, and all our poor characters get caught up in a rather cruel game played by higher powers. On top of the awesome dragon action (which will make you NOT want a pet dragon), we are also treated to some glimpses into the history if the Guardians. And just a slight hint as who was Exiled where. *rubs hands together* I love it when the series plot is revealed.

Once again, Turner uses a rather small cast of Pov's, which once again works a treat. Keeps the reader engaged, the plot moving along, and we get to know each character inside and out. I have to say, he really understands people. Even ones that live in a fantastical, dragon infested world.
