



The Shadow at the Gate

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The second volume of the epic fantasy saga that began with *The Hawk and His Boy* takes us back to the story of the thief Jute. The emissaries of the Darkness have infiltrated the city of Hearne in search of him. Desperate to escape, the boy flees the city and heads into the wilderness of the north. But the ghosts of the past have other plans for him and, soon, Jute and his friends must choose between their own deaths or the destruction of the entire land. All the while, the mysterious lady Levoreth races against time in order to discover who is behind the schemes of the Darkness.

The Shadow at the Gate Details

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From Reader Review The Shadow at the Gate for online ebook

Amy says

What an amazing book. Now I'm dying for book 3. How could you end the book like that?! :-)

ReviewerLarissa says

Review for B.'s blog

Alright, I'm guilty. Upon receiving this second installment in the Tormay series, I settled myself in my comfy chair with tea and chocolate and read until it was finished. Then I got caught up in moving, job hunting (damn those jobs are elusive) and knights and the review for this splendid book got pushed to the background. Bad me, no cookie!

You sometimes hear how the middle book is usually the one that is the less fun in a trilogy because it either goes really bad good guys or nothing significant happens. Not true for The Shadow at the Gate. It immediately picks up where The Hawk and His Boy left off and to me brought matters into focus where it was building up in the first book.

It is quite the lengthy story and there is a lot happening, so you have to keep watch out so you don't miss anything important. There is a lot of action too, that will keep you on the edge of your seat and the plot thickens at every point.

The story is still about Jute who has destiny riding him hard with 'the Dark' (the great big evil) right behind it. Despite that he is still the street-smart boy we met in the first book, though you can see that Jute grows throughout this book. Ronan "The Knife" also carries a big part of the story. His 'secret' is an important part of the story and I liked learning more about this intriguing character. You tend to want to dislike him because of his role, but at the same time not everything is as black and white and you find yourself drawn to him.

Apart from the cast of characters that were introduced in the first part of the series, in the second part quite a few more are added. Some intriguing, some not. Some good, some bad. In this you can see that it's a fantasy novel. There is always quite an impressive cast of characters and while I always like meeting new characters in a story that have their own part to tell, it's also hard to keep track of them all and their moves. It's the trap of a good book: the more characters that are introduced, the more likely that the reader will get lost in a maze of characters. I found that this author handled it quite well. While there are too many characters for my liking, they are introduced well and are not cardboard characters. And the shifts in narratives are smoothly. Though Jute is still my favorite character!

As I mentioned, there is a lot happening in this book. There is a lot of growth and development in this book (okay that made me sound like a scientist!). It also grows increasingly darker. Like they say: "it's always darkest before the dawn." There are more villains apart from "The Dark" and they are sufficiently creepy.

The one thing I didn't like about this book was the ending. While it's not exactly a great big open end, it leaves things open for the third part and as many of you know: I'm not a patient person!

Overall The Shadow at the Gate is a good if not better than the first installment and it's a refreshing wind through the fantasy genre. I mean if it can pull me back into the genre it must be good, because y'all know how I love my boys! ;-) So go pick it up and find out what's happening in this second part!

Meredith says

This book was outstanding! I was hoping in the second book there would be more of the relationship with the Hawk and the boy and I was not disappointed. A wonderful story with all the elements that make a wonderful book. Characters you love and a story line that keeps you wanting to read for the moment you read the first page to the very last. One of those books you think about when you're not reading it and then can't wait to pick up again so you can meet up with Ronan, Jute and Master Hawk. I was sad that the book ended and can hardly wait for the third. Christopher Bunn...you are an incredible story teller!

Jesslyn says

Once this one got started, I enjoyed it more than the 1st installment. There were a few glaringly obvious plots, but they were balanced by one complete surprise.

I am really enjoying this trilogy and hope that Mr. Bunn keeps on writing fantasy.

Edit after finishing series

This review is for the entire trilogy.

I hope this doesn't sound snobbish, but this trilogy forever changes my mind about indie books. Up until now I've been either ho-hum or actively looked down on all the self-published Kindle books out there. In my defense, a lot of that was due to all those spam books in the Kindle store. On the other hand some was also due to the fact that I always figured that if a book was really good, someone would pick it up. Guess I was wrong!

Anyway, back to the books. This was a great installment of the standard boy meets wizard, goes on quest with band of trusty helpers, boy saves world trope in epic fantasy. When done correctly (as this one is), it will remain an oldie but a goodie.

There was a good mix of humor, magic, mystery and a few twists that I didn't see coming. In the end, not all evil was defeated and not all of the good guys got their HEA which surprised me, but made me wonder if it wasn't an opening for another book or two. I'm all for that!

Favorite Lines (All from Book #3. I tried a new quote system that failed miserably for books 1 & 2)

"though all agree that the painted caravans of the Farrow clan were never again seen trundling about the duchies of Tormay. Declan was the last of that blood."

Note: Awww. I was hoping the Farrows got their HEA. Not fair.

"They died, cursing and spitting and calling out defiance even as more and more ranks of the enemy marched over the ruins of the walls to join the fray."

Note: This part of epic fantasy stories always seems stupid to me.

"He is the fire that always burns. He was the eldest of the anbeorun."

Note: Didn't see that coming

"Your neck. Do you hear? I'll snap it like a twig." "Very well, my lord." The steward managed to look both alarmed and honored at the prospect of being strangled by the Lord Captain of the Guard."

Note: Haha. Try to manage that.

Book 1 - B

Book 2 - B-

Book 3 - B+

Sue CCCP says

My full review: <http://coffeecookiesandchilipeppers.b...>

I do not normally review more than one book in a series at the same time. However, I feel that this trilogy reads much more like one book in three volumes and that each of the titles cannot really be treated as a stand-alone book.

Disclaimer: I was given this trilogy free by the author via a Librarything Member Giveaway, in return for an honest review.

The world building is well done and we are rarely presented with piles of exposition. There is an interesting magic system based upon the use of words of power that can be used to take control of things. I especially liked the idea of the magical wards, which had a variety of uses varying from simple alarms when a door was opened to disguising a person's identity. We are also provided with a creation myth and a far portion of history relating the battle between the Anbeorun and the Darkness that seeks to destroy all life. Elements of this did seem a little similar to Tolkien's creation story, as outlined in The Silmarillion, but was sufficiently different to keep me interested. One aspect of this world that I particularly liked was the interaction with animals. Some, like the Hawk, were able to speak to all humans, but mostly we saw exchanges between Levoreth and the various animals that she encountered. There was one particularly delightful scene with her helping a squirrel by asking a tree to grow a branch towards another tree so that it could gather nuts without crossing the ground and being harassed by foxes.

On the whole this was a fantasy with some elements of epic scale, such as battles and whole nations plunged into conflict. However, in the great tradition of Tolkien, it kept a firm grounding in the actions of individuals and their connection to the homes and families.

Ed Napiorkowski says

A thoroughly enjoyable read. I like the development of the characters, they are believable and as such you want to experience more of what they are going through. A few sections where different people are expounding stories etc. do not add significantly to the actual plot but they were not too numerous and didn't detract from the flow too greatly. Also found the new "earth" seemed to so rapidly acquire new skills when compared with the new "wind". Not a show stopper to me but felt it was an inconsistency. Now looking forward to finishing the series in the third and final volume.

Ah,... Im into the third book and the difference in speed in acquisition of skills between Earth and Wind I mentioned in my review of "The Shadow at the Gate" is explained.

Jonathan says

I won this book in a First Reads contest.

The first book in the Tormay trilogy feels like it is setting up the plot. This can cause "The Hawk and His Boy" to feel somewhat disjointed. However, "The Shadow at the Gate" constantly advances the plot, and the characters interact a lot more than in the first book. The second book in the trilogy demonstrates that the author has a clear plan for the plot of the trilogy.

As in the first book, the author reveals a lot about the backstory and mythology of Tormay. The author gives hints about plot points, letting readers figure out details about characters' lives long before he directly states the details. Unlike the first book, where it felt like a minor climax was added in order to give "The Hawk and His Boy" a stopping point, "The Shadow at the Gate" has a climax that is much more relevant to the plot, and clearly sets the direction for the third book of the trilogy.

I feel that the chapter titles are somewhat too revealing. The plot would be more surprising if the titles were more vague.

The book sometimes suffers because it is part of a trilogy, instead of being stand-alone. For example, one or two characters who are relevant to the plot half-way through the book then disappear for the remainder of the book.

Like its predecessor, "The Shadow at the Gate" has a dense mythology, round characters, and an interesting plot. It is a very exciting read.

Francesco says

Vote: 3,75

Class: L-A3 (FP)

(second book of the Trilogy)

This is classic fantasy book, with a solid fantasy world and, a good magical system. Nothing exactly original (the mythology of the world is similar to Tolkien's) but the story is well told and the characters are well built. I'm definitely enjoying this series.

The world (3,75) is a classic fantasy world (medieval setting) with an interesting magical system. Consistent.

The characters (3,75) are many and in this second book they grow more real and interesting.

The story (3,75) becomes more dark and intriguing, with many thread and well told. It is however seldom surprising and sometimes slow.

The writing style (3,50) is good, maybe slow for the modern standards (standards that are not, in my opinion, always good ones!).

I'll read the sequel soon and while I don't think this is one of the greatest fantasy series of all time I liked this book and I hope the end will be good.

Dave says

I read the first book in this series more than a year ago, and I enjoyed that novel (*The Hawk and His Boy*). Only now, I got to the sequel. I read quite a few (indie and mainstream) fantasy series, and often the sequel fails to deliver the promise of the first installment. *The Shadow at the Gate* did not disappoint.

The story took some time to pick up momentum, but I believe that is partly because I forgot quite a few details about the boy Jute, Severan the scholar, Levoreth and Ronan the Knife. But the story gathers steam and reaches its climax at a showdown during a ball where all the important lords and ladies gather, and another climax during a tense escape by some central characters from the city.

The writing is mostly clean and crisp and even flowing poetically at a few spots. The plot thickens and there is plenty of tension. The worldbuilding gets more intricate and fantastic, in the most positive sense of the word. Importantly, some characters show depth, especially Jute, Levoreth and Ronan, although their development is a bit lacking, in my view. Also, without spoiling too much, I am happy that Christopher Bunn is not afraid to kill his darlings.

The Shadow at the Gate is not perfect, unfortunately. The pacing is good for two-third of the novel, but lags at places, especially towards the end. The antagonists seem quite one-dimensional, which is a pity. Although most of the magic is very well thought out and steeped in mythology, it at one point lapses into cliches like people turned into mice and annoying ghosts.

Overall, after reading two-third of the Tormay Trilogy, I am looking forward to read the final installment, and won't wait as long as between the first and second book. If you're looking for an affordable indie trilogy of high fantasy, the Tormay Trilogy is a good find.

Liviu says

Since I will (hopefully) post the full review tonight on FBC and c/p it here I will only mention that this book fulfills the promise of The hawk and His Boy in spades being a real pleasure to read and expanding the universe of the novel while bringing things into a clear focus for the next (last?) volume.

FBC Rv:

INTRODUCTION: Can a fantasy series based on generic tropes but with a very inventive approach continue being surprising in the second volume was the big question for me when I started this highly awaited sequel to *The Hawk and His Boy* by Christopher Bunn. I liked the author writing a lot in the first novel so I was pretty sure I would enjoy *The Shadow at the Gate* even if it turns ultra-predictable the way this one did, but I truly hoped he would manage to keep the story fresh and really entertaining too.

"The second volume of the epic fantasy saga that began with *The Hawk and His Boy* takes us back to the story of the thief Jute. The emissaries of the Darkness have infiltrated the city of Hearne in search of him. Desperate to escape, the boy flees the city and heads into the wilderness of the north. But the ghosts of the past have other plans for him and, soon, Jute and his friends must choose between their own deaths or the destruction of the entire land. All the while, the mysterious lady Levoreth races against time in order to discover who is behind the schemes of the Darkness."

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: "*The Shadow at the Gate*" picks up where *The Hawk and His Boy* ends and continues to roll. The storyline which expanded quite unexpectedly in the first book compacts here dramatically with events coming in clear focus, while new and partly predictable, partly surprising directions are opened. The universe of the series also expands geographically beyond Hearne and historically with recollections of long-ago events that influence today's big picture.

The novel was a pleasure to read flowing on the page, while the shifts in narrative were quite smooth as in the first book. The main characters: Jute, Levoreth, Ronan, the Silentman, the hawk, Severan and several others I will let you discover have their own quirks: the hawk is occasionally snotty and arrogant, Jute is still a street-boy at heart despite his "new destiny", Severan is often annoyed by what he perceives as the disinterest of Jute in his teaching, rather than being the patient wise mentor etc, and these traits are extremely effective in giving depth to what would have otherwise been stock fantasy characters.

There is a lot of action from sword fights to daring escapes to high magic battles, while quite funny scenes alternate with tense and even heartbreaking ones, but the main strength of "*The Shadow at the Gate*" -besides the superb storytelling skill of the author - lies in mixing predictable fantasy tropes - ancient evil, elemental beings, talking animals, spells that change people into animals, darkness versus light - with an authorial take that is very unpredictable and even zany on occasion.

Simply put, you think you have a feel where the book goes and you think "oh, now that this happened, then that will be next" as per the usual manual of writing epic fantasy consulted by so many authors, and Christopher Bunn pulls a surprise and the story moves away from the standard expectations, maybe again towards something you've seen but in another context and then again, the track changes so to speak. For me this continual confounding of expectations has been very effective and it was probably the number one reason I have been enjoying the Tormay series so much.

"*The Shadow at the Gate*" (A+, but really close to a breakout A++ book for me) fulfills the promise of *A Hawk and His Boy* in spades, so the next series book is another huge asap for me while being curious if the author can keep this inventive approach going.

jD says

In for a penny, in for a pound. This is by far one of the best deals on Amazon for fantasy fans. It's amazing. This second book of the trilogy introduced another aspect of Christopher Bunn's skills...humor. The ghost is a hoot. The story has been dark and cryptic up to the point we meet the ghost with no name.

If you are considering reading the series, this is not a stand alone. I feel like the synopsis is too vague and should mention the main characters by name. Jute, the main character, is not the only primary character and is not the only reason to invest in this series. I love Jute and his journey is key but like Frodo Baggins (Lord of the Rings), he is not all of it.

Five stars and perhaps the best \$2.99 I have spent this year.

Linda says

This story is fantastic! Christopher has woven an engrossing tale that has thoroughly captivated me. Important characters that were introduced in The Hawk And His Boy (The Tormay Trilogy) are more fully developed in this book and their back stories more fully revealed. The flow of the story never slows down; it continues to be more and more intriguing and suspenseful. Christopher has brought these amazing characters to life. Even the ghosts, I love the ghosts, they do provide a little comic relief. I cannot wait to see how everything turns out. Christopher Bunn has cemented his spot as a must buy author for me.

Megan Baxter says

All right, decision time. I've now read the second book in a series that I am not enthralled with. The first book grabbed me just enough to make me go on to the second. This is where I decide if I finish the trilogy out, or let it lie right here.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Hollie says

This installment of the Tormay trilogy was definitely a more satisfying read for me than it's predecessor. The characters are developing, particularly Jute and Ronan; and there's more background and even a little bit of action in this one. It's also well edited and formatted (which I'm coming to appreciate more and take for granted less), and the prose is much clearer, without as much of the flowery "over-description" that bothered me a little about the first book.

My biggest misgiving about this book is how little the plot really advances in what is a fairly lengthy read. I haven't looked at how long the last one is, but it seems that it's going to have to be action packed or leave me

as a reader less than satisfied. This is not a typical trilogy wherein there are smaller climaxes in each book within the larger story. As the author states that this trilogy is really one long story, I suppose it makes sense we are not even building to the climax yet.

This is a well told fantasy story, and certainly a bargain. On to book three!

Scott says

The Shadow at the Gate is the second book of the Tormay trilogy by Christopher Bunn. The adventure continues to follow Jute, Severan, Levoreth, and Ronan as they deal with the coming Dark. There are some interesting moments detailing the creation of the world and the origin of the Dark. There is also an explanation on the magic system that works in his world. In Shadow at the Gate many of story lines from The Hawk and His Boy are coming together, building towards the climax that will be found in book 3. A few of the minor characters from the first book get to step up into more prominent roles and more is revealed about the thieves guild. The story continues to be well written and enjoyable with a solid flow. This book has an open ending that really helps build anticipation for the third book in the series.
