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Alex Archer (pseudonym) , Mel Odom

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A holy war. An ancient scroll lost in history...until now. During a dig in Morocco, archaeologist Annja Creed and her companions are nearly buried alive when the *khettara* ceiling collapses, revealing a 1,300-year-old corpse. But when Bedouin bandits raid the camp, Annja barely escapes with her life...and half of a scroll in ancient *Kufic* script. Her companions' survival now depends on her.

The scroll dates back to 656 AD, when Muslim raised sword against Muslim and the assassination of the third caliph left no clear heir to Muhammad's teachings. It's a coveted find. Annja quickly finds herself caught between a devious terrorist whose family honor depends on destroying what she possesses and a ruthless CIA team. Both believe the end justifies the means. And that Annja cannot allow.

The Third Caliph Details

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Author : Alex Archer (pseudonym) , Mel Odom

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From Reader Review The Third Caliph for online ebook

Cindy says

enjoyed it but it was difficult to pay attention to . Way to many fingers in the pie so to speak. Loved seeing Roux and Garin get involved again tho. Maybe I'm just tired of the series I'm not sure. Still have 10 books left in the series to read so I hope not.

Monika says

WARNING! CONTAINS SPOILERS!!

Wow, great book! Last few chapters were packed full of action, and really good all in all! I'm gonna give this a 4.3/5 starts, rounded to a 4, because I felt there were some loose ends left. What happened to the CIA and MI-6? Did MacKenzie and Yahya just leave? And MI-6 just gave up? I find this hard to believe. And what happened with Sophie, and Henricks? I know that Garin ransomed Thabit in the end, but there was no conclusion as to what happened with any of the organizations. The book ended with they getting beaten from behind by Qurturbi, and Yahya had an injury somewhere on his body. I felt Archer summed things up very good with Annja, Garin, and Roux, and showed that there could be a possible friendship between the three of them. Also had a really good reason behind why Thabit wanted to destroy Karam's scrolls. Had a lot of action, and a kick-butt heroine. Great book all in all!

Harlequin Books says

Category: Suspense

Jeff Powers says

Yet another fun and exciting adventure with Annja. These books have become a guilty pleasure of mine. I expect nothing more from them than to entertain me for a few hours. And they do no disappoint. They are often more intelligent than most summer action films. But the extent of brain power and logic needed for them is pretty minimal. And that is precisely what I want. They are like quick exciting episodes of a big budget tv show and often I find myself binge reading them like they are on Netflix. In this episode, Annja uncovers a scroll linked to early Muslim history but before she can find out much about it, others show up who want it. The history was interesting and the setting unique, but it lacked some of the magic and mysticism that the Rogue Angel series has come to use. I enjoy the more realistic spy thriller like stories, but not merely as much as I like the ones dealing with the bizarre, mythological, or unexplainable. Perhaps secretly I really do just want to see Annja out there searching for history's monsters.

Lianne Burwell says

The latest Rogue Angel book left me conflicted. On the one hand, the story was exciting (although the ending was kind of anti-climactic. That was it?), but Garin and Roux behaved nothing like I would expect from previous books, the whole CIA business was a little ridiculous (not to mention the brief appearance from MI6 to raise one fight scene to the ludicrous level), and I found Annja's thoughts concerning the kidnapped archaeology team a little weird (and what happened to the rest? And where did Smythe disappear to? It was never really clear)

So, fun book that desperately needed better plotting.

Magdelanye says

It was only after I got it home and did some research that I realized that this book is one of a mega-series I had never noticed. It didn't make too much difference as the premises are outlined, but perhaps I might have benefited from some familiarity with the main characters, if only to facilitate bonding, which did occur but not immediately: THESE CHARACTERS ARE A BIT OVER THE TOP, and they kill when they see the need.

The opening few chapters are clumsy, packing in a lot of information and intrigue, and if it weren't for some tantalizing references to early Muslim folklore, I might not have continued. The middle part does improve, and there were some corners of history that were made accessible as incidental to the plot. Sadly, the end of the book is less coherent, and the conclusion, spun out until the very end, seemed hasty.

Just in case it appears that this review suffers from the same kind of hasty conclusions, I will give away here what I have figured out fuels this series. This is the premise that the main character in this particular book, Annja Creed, archaeologist and pop-culture hero with her own tv show, has achieved her expertise by her possession of the mystical sword of Joan of Arc, which remains in another dimension until she calls for it. Her relationship with the two immortals connected with this secret, is, to be sure, complicated and I have a feeling that there might be some gems in the series that might focus more on this.

Jotsand Scribbles says

I liked that Roux, Garin, and Annja got along towards the end. I always have to read every Rogue Angel book that comes out.

Shelley says

3.5 stars

Kathy Davie says

Fortieth in the Rogue Angel urban fantasy series revolving around Annja Creed, independent archeologist and avenger of wrongs.

My Take

And again, a conflict and a separation in the faith caused by greed and a desire for power. It's the same thing today when Almodarresi confronts Thabit about his operations. This story is an elaborate set-up with lots of layers, just so the CIA can get the bad guys. I do love how surprised MacKenzie is with Annja when they get into their first kerfuffle.

I can feel Annja's pain when the raiders rip artifacts out of the ground. It's never been about the monetary value of what she finds, but always about what those artifacts and where they are found in the ground that can reveal the secrets about their past.

I love the images this line pulls up:

"Taken all together, the caravan looked as if it had marched through time and sucked in travelers from across the centuries."

I found it disconcerting that when Annja finally gets to a phone and gets through to Doug that she never once mentions the Bedouin. Although Doug's obsession with the skeleton being a zombie cracked me up. He is such a kid with a need for the sensational.

It's black ops action, tagine and baklava, along with history and Moroccan culture. Rescues, chases, and ambushes galore --- wait'll you get to Fes. I swear the population must have doubled with all the different covert ops teams in town! I don't blame Annja for not trusting either side! The sound of that vampire club in Berlin was pretty interesting as well.

Hmmm, good point about not trusting a man trying to buy you off *after* he's already tried to kill you.

And we get even more of Garin's back history.

Oh, too funny! With all the technology, satellites, etc. that the CIA and MI6 has, they find Annja through tweets and blog sightings, lol.

The Story

It's a cave-in that reveals an unexpected burial that leads to slavery and deaths. It also brings a troupe of Bedouin raiders into the camp and sends Annja fleeing with a grappling hook.

She's between a rock and a hard place with the police who won't go after the kidnappers, but won't allow anyone else to rescue them either.

The Characters

Annja Creed is an independent archeologist and a co-host for the television show *Chasing History's*

Monsters which gives her the freedom to join other people's expeditions. She also carries the reconstituted sword once carried by **Joan of Arc** --- and she's starting to think the sword has a mind of its own. **Bart** is a police friend of Annja's who is based in New York City.

Professor David Smythe is heading up a dig in Morocco. **Theresa Templeton** is a grad assistant from Harvard. **Cory Burcell** is a BBC cameraman filming the dig. There are a number of *muqannis*, Moroccan irrigation diggers, including the fifteen- or sixteen-year-old **Souad**, **Nadim's** son.

Doug Morrell is the producer of *Chasing History's Monsters*. **Samir** is the man who gives Annja a lift. **Inspector Khouri** is with the Moroccan police in Erfoud. **Dr. Ernest Woolcot** specializes in Middle Eastern history at Harvard. He's hoping to co-author a paper with Annja. **Miriam** is Woolcot's very patient wife. **Houssine** is an informer looking for the highest price. **Dr. Khadija Zayd** is an historian at Aligarh Muslim University's Centre of Advanced Study.

The CIA and associates

CIA Section Chief Brawley Hendricks has been after Thabit for years. **Craig Morley** is the CIA liaison reporting to Congress and the Joint Chiefs. **Swan Team** is a handpicked group sent after Thabit: **Special Agent Paul Gentry**, a bright kid with a wife, **Heather**, and their newborn baby, **Jenny**.

The **Curtain Bar** is where Hendricks finds **Sophie**, an off-the-books operator. **Rafe MacKenzie** is one of her people and a bit psychopathic (*please, people, read up on the "Word Confusion: Psychopath versus Sociopath"; I reckon Rafe is more sociopath..*). **Yahya** is a South African orphan MacKenzie took in and trained. **Felix Rallison** is MI6.

Garin Braden was one of Jeanne d'Arc's protectors along with **Roux**, the knight he served as a squire. When Joan was burned at the stake and her sword broken, the two became immortal. Both will do what they can to keep Annja safe. **Inga** is Garin's personal assistant. **Eniko** is an about-to-be ex-girlfriend. **Sepp Walker** is one of Garin's primary researchers. **Chandra** is a rhythm-and-blues singer who takes up with Garin. **Qurtubi** is his father's son in every respect. **DragonTech** is Garin's private security team.

Mustafa is the leader of the Bedouin raiders.

Habib ibn Thabit is a terrorist with an ulterior motive --- covering up a family mistake. He gets around in *Shabanna*, his yacht, which is captained by **Abu. Sanjay** is his driver. **Abdul Saidi** of the Polisario Front is a man with whom he's doing business. **Rachid** is a chief source of information. **Mirza Almodarresi** seems to be one of Thabit's backers. **Hamez** leads the team that is after Annja. **Rasool Bahanor** has been with Thabit the longest and tries to bring him to his senses.

Abdelilah Karam is the author of the scroll, a famed historian in the Ridda Wars, a.k.a., the Wars of Apostasy which had been headed up by **Abu Bakr**, Muhammad's father-in-law. It's said that Karam knows the secret that can reunite Islam.

Upon Muhammad's death, a battle arose for the caliphate: his third and favorite wife, **Aisha bint Abu Bakr**, wanted to appoint her choice, and many believed her claim to the true teachings of Muhammad were more legitimate than **Ali ibn Abd Munaf**, a cousin and son-in-law to Muhammad who becomes the fourth caliph. The battle between them, sparked by the assassination of **Uthman ibn Affan**, would be the first in which Muslims fought Muslims and would eventually give rise to the **Shiites** and **Sunnis**.

Ali ibn Abi Talid assumed the caliphate and was killed by **Abd-al-Rahman ibn Muljam**, a Kharijite

assassin. *I can't tell from the story what the timing is.* **Muawiya** had the first caliphate after Muhammad's death. **Adi ibn Musafir al-Umaw** was a descendant of **Marwan ibn al-Hakim**, the fourth Umayyad caliph.

The **University of Al-Karaouine** in Fes was built in 859 and is considered the oldest continually operating academic school in the world. **Professor Mahfoud Daoudi** is the librarian there and will assist Annja. **Ata ibn Wassaf** was a popular illustrator for Moroccan books, and his father illustrated the peacock angel. Wassaf's son, **Iskandar ibn Silahdar**, is a fan of Annja's show.

Philip Gardiner was an Englishman collecting Karam's works; for some reason he sailed (and died) with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Gardiner's work caught the eye of a Syrian historian, **Dr. Ulker Bozdog**, who is fascinated by the **Melek Taus**, the Order of the Peacock Angel, a.k.a., Shaytan, which was founded by Musafir. **Iblis** is a *jinn* who became the leader of the fallen angels, the Devil. He also has a scroll written by **Allal Khaldun**.

A *khettara* is an irrigation well or tunnel.

The Cover

The cover is composed of the golden browns of past covers with Annja standing amidst the ruins and wearing desert camouflage pants and a safari shirt, her hair flying in the wind, crouched with one booted foot up on a block, an ancient Arabic helmet at her feet, as she winds up with her sword.

The title is who Thabit's ancestor was supposed to kill, *The Third Caliph*.

Jessica Clayton says

Rogue Angel is my favorite series!!! Absolutely love it!! I listen to the audio book versions in my car especially on my 5 hour trips to drill every month. If you love action, adventure, and of course Super Bad Heroines, then you should check it out!!

Tara (box5angel) says

Probably my least favorite of the series so far. I've been reading the series off and since the first book, Destiny. It took me about three tries to get into it last summer and I finally finished it. Too many enemies, "good guys" and to me, I still didn't get some of the plot. I enjoyed other books in the series much more.

John Hanscom says

Actually, about 3 1/2, and unusually bloody, tough the story is OK.

Shelley says

Genre Urban Fantasy

Rating 3.0

My Thoughts

Annja Creed is a world-traveling archaeologist with a penchant for adventure, lost cities, mysterious codes and puzzles, and shadowy history that was never recorded. As heir to Joan of Arc's mystical broadsword, Annja has gained frenemies in Garin Braden, and former mentor Roux, and a desire to right wrongs. Annja finds herself almost always being drawn into the webs of darkest villainy with lives on the line; most of the time hers.

In the 40th Edition of the Rogue Angel series, Annja Creed once again finds herself in the middle of an adventure after nearly being buried alive in Morocco where she is on an archaeology dig with Professor David Smythe, colleagues Theresa Templeton, and Cory Burrell.

What starts out as the discovery of a lifetime in finding a body and scroll that both date back 1300 years, quickly becomes a race to see if she can stay alive long enough to enjoy the fruits of her labor. Chased by Bedouins who want to sell her into white slavery, hounded by Islamic terrorists who don't want the truth about the scrolls to come out, and used by the CIA and MI-6 in order to gain access to the elusive terrorist Habib ibn Thabt, Annja is forced to uncover the truth about the scrolls before she finds herself just another piece of History's puzzle.

I have SOME questions after finishing this book, but know that I won't get any answers since the series has moved on without me, and I have no clue who the actual writers of this series are. These writers have a tendency of creating a whole new adventure, vs allowing readers to understand how Annja got from one place to the next, or what happened to those she leaves behind.

Let's start out with the basic question in why Annja always ends up a dollar short and doesn't get a chance to enjoy the riches of her labor? Let's face it, she has faced 40 adventures to this point and has put her life on the line for others only to have Garin or Roux or someone else steal the thunder away from her. For once, I would love to see Annja get a piece or an acknowledgment that she was the reason this was discovered in the first place, and not just have her laugh, walk away, or dust herself off and move on to the next adventure.

The Third Caliph is an interesting story overall in that it doesn't slander the Islam faith but makes you think and research the facts laid out for you. You really do have to consider that Muslims have been at war with each other, and Christians for thousands of years and probably will be until the end of time itself.

This story touches on the prophet Muhammad and his successors which Muslims refuse to allow non Muslims to talk about or chastise him in any way. It touches on the break between Sunni and Shiite Muslims after The Third Caliph. Of course, it also touches on the fact that Terrorists like Thabt want to stop the scroll from being revealed, and takes a large chunk of the storyline along with it.

Once again, the story's conclusion abruptly ends, and readers really have no clue what is next for Annja, Garin, or Roux except for the fact that there are adventures 41 through 51 to get to.

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