



The Red Duke

C.L. Werner

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Bloodthirsty vampire lord the Red Duke is resurrected from his ancient slumber to terrorise the lands of Bretonnia.

The Red Duke Details

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From Reader Review The Red Duke for online ebook

Corby H says

The chapters are written in two parts, the first being the tale of El Syf, and the later being the present-day story of the Red Duke. It was nice to have a break in the chapters and piece the two stories together. Overall the book was good; it began with intrigue and myth building, then it's pace, unfortunately, slowed down in the middle, but then sped up and became very entertaining in the last few chapters. I thoroughly enjoyed the duels and battle scenes, as they were written very well! Either way the book made for some very nice 'fluff' for the Vampire Counts in the Warhammer Fantasy universe.

Jack Volante says

I mistakenly bought this book thinking it was all about the mad vampire, Konrad von Carstein. Instead, it's an enjoyable read about another vampire who is mistakenly set free after hundreds of years of being imprisoned inside a statue.

This vampire was actually a former, glorious, Bretonnian duke who was turned by mysterious vampire in the deserts of Araby.

Each chapter begins with a flashback from the Red Duke as he recalls his former life as a gallant knight of Bretonnia. Then it continues the story of him wanting to cause havoc to all those in Bretonnia who imprisoned him.

Being a big fan of GW's now deceased, grim-dark, warhammer world, I thoroughly enjoyed this novel. If you're a fan of Vampire Counts and Necromancers, you'll relish this book too.

Johnathan VanMeter says

I was very satisfied with this book. Makes me wish it was the first of a series where he creates his kingdom of blood. But I knew it was over before it began.

Michael Alexander Henke says

So this book I found to be Warhammer at it's most pure essentially. It is fast paced, violent, and brutal dark fantasy. You don't have to be super familiar with the Warhammer universe to enjoy it, so it's quite good for new readers.

The book tells the story of the Red Duke, one of the most evil entities that Bretonnia has seen. 500 years after being vanquished the first time, the Red Duke has returned and intends to form his Kingdom of Blood. He has an army of skeletons, ghouls, wights, and other undead nasties to back him up and only the any knights of Bretonnia standing in his way. Well written with plenty of action.

Patt says

Awesome potential but nothing like why I hoped for but I appreciate the attention shown to this legendary character.

nick says

The red duke was a surprisingly fascinating read. The story of the red duke is fascinating with an eery feel to it that never let's go until the end of the story. The characters are interesting and all main ones get a decent character development. I have little to remark it is one of the best of the black library and I won't spoil any further.

Zach Peffer says

amazing!

DarkChaplain says

The Red Duke ended up being exactly the type of novel I was expecting to read. It pulled all the right strings for me, invoked the right feelings and thus leads me to recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys dark fantasy stories without any hint of hesitation. It might even be a fantastic novel to use for an in-depth character study.

If you like real vampire stories, chances are excellent that you'll enjoy this book. If you enjoy knightly honour and human flaws set in a gritty world full of dirty realism, you should pick this one up. If you're a fan of Warhammer Fantasy, this book should be mandatory to read anyway.

Full Review:

<http://darkchaplain-anotherstory.blog...>

Marc says

Overall the book was an entertaining read. The Red Duke makes for a powerful villain--so powerful that Werner made him "insane" to allow the "good" forces to stand a chance against him! Learning about the Red Duke's heritage was also intriguing; now if they'll only make official rules to field this vampire lord...

Dylan Murphy says

By Nagash I love the undead! C. L. Werner's 'The Red Duke' is a tale of knightly orders, monstrous

vampires, and patchwork fall from grace easily worthy of being some of Black Library's best works. From what I have read, Werner seems the perfect writer for not only Warhammer Fantasy, but also the Undead (or Vampire Counts, since the Tomb Kings still existed at this point. The story follows a few different plot-lines, and a handful of extremely well done characters. We get an extremely nice picture of a couple different huge pieces of Bretonnian history, from the crusades in Araby with 'El Syf', all along the path to the birth of the Red Duke, and the 2 battles of Ceren Field. The story starts off (well, the prologue is a nicely done bit of a story-teller being schooled by a monstrous creature of the night, but chapter 1 starts off;) building the world of Bretonnia right before the return of The Red Duke. We get to see the wonderful province of Aquitaine in glorious detail, and we got to meet a wonderful cast of characters with a potent history. While still at the beginning, we are thrown into the middle of a blood feud between the D'Elbiq and the Du Maisne, 2 of the oldest and most powerful of the noble families in Aquitaine. This feud directly leads to the second coming of the Red Duke, and that is when this novel really kicks into high gear.

Being a lover of Warhammer vampires, necromancers and general Undead, the story following the titular Red Duke and his marry band was my favourite. The Red Duke himself was extremely well done, seeing as how he was driven entirely mad by his confinement in his monument for several hundred years. The way the story was told mirrored this supremely, as the start of each chapter was a sort of 'flash-back' to a previous time in the Duke's life, and this really showed the foundation of his character, as well as gave a quick glance at the time the Red Duke was living in. The constant forward and backwards in time, along with the Red Duke not being able to tell which was which might lead to a bit of confusion for some readers, but I thought Herr Werner did a phenomal job of really making it flow well. From giving us a glimpse of the past, rushing us back to the present and sort of fumbling along with the Red Duke and his henchmen, it really did a great job of telling the story.

The novel was great, the action was perfectly fast-paced and bloody, the setting was perfect, the character progression and story pacing were perfectly executed, and Herr Werner's skill at taking us along on this adventure through Bretonnia was spot on. I think I would have liked to see a follow up of some kind, but it's in the past now.

Robert Johnson says

A mixed bag, The Red Duke is a solid enough story in many respects with good characterization and some really excellent horror moments, but suffers from a poor handling of the source material that repeatedly breaks suspension of disbelief.

Major points of the story rely on the workings of magic and the supernatural, however the Author seems to pick this tool up and set it down at his convenience, playing havoc with the readers understanding of what should be possible for who, who can do what, and how.

The villains possess vast magical powers which they use at every opportunity to terrifying effect. The protagonists, despite explicitly having even greater magical resources at their disposal make virtually no use of it for no discernible reason. In once scene the son of a high ranking Duke and one of the most important figures in the protagonists army is gravely wounded in battle and a good bit of drama is made over the fact that he must now go into battle the next day despite his injury.

This would work, except that only a page or so before it was made explicit that there are a number of magical healers in the camp with the power to cure wounds in a matter of minutes if not seconds. We are not given any reason as to why they either can't or won't heal the Duke's son (Again, one of the most important figures in the army) and all drama generated by the situation was lost as I read and reread looking for any given reason as to why all these magical healers had apparently just run off right when they were needed most.

Aside from healing these mages also possess considerable offensive power in the setting, but only one of the many in the camp the day before the final battle sees fit to attend said battle. Again a supernatural force on the side of the protagonists is set up, and is then never addressed while the villains continue to use magical means to achieve victory in virtually every scene.

The strange pattern continues as, during the final battle other vital sections of the protagonists' forces that would dramatically change the nature of the conflict are mysteriously missing with no explanation.

Despite a full muster of the Dukedom being called, no Grail Knights show up, no Pegasus Knights show up (the Duke has one), no Paladins show up, a load of Grail Damsels and various priests show up and then leave before fighting for no reason, they don't build any trebuchets or artillery of any kind, and not a single magical item is brought to the field. The one Prophetess on the side of the protagonists that bothers to show up is suddenly and without explanation incapable of using any magic except by harnessing a plot specific artifact which injures her whenever she uses it, effectively cutting her contribution to the battle down to a minimum.

The author seems intent that the heroes not have access to magic of their own. I don't have any problem with this idea by itself, but rather than simply come up with a plausible reason as to why no wizards show up, or are otherwise occupied the Author tells us that they exist and are present and then simply never mentions them again, apparently hoping the reader will just forget them.

In a perfectly mirrored opposite to this strange trend, the author could have easily explained the boundless magical powers of the antagonist with a few throw away lines about his own necromancers showing up in numbers to aid him. He makes no mention of this however and we are left with the image of one vampire and his small time necromancer accomplice raising a vast army of undead large enough to overthrow an entire major nation all on their lonesome in a matter of a week or so.

Later in the story more do show up, but by that time it's too late in the story for their presence to be felt and they add no discernible advantage to the enemy despite tripling or quadrupling the amount of magic he has at his disposal.

These repeated inconsistencies in the narrative take a severe toll on the otherwise high quality of the book, especially towards the end where they become more and more pronounced. Considering the amount and quality of other Warhammer fiction C.L. Werner has written these issues were all very unexpected.

I would recommend this book for those looking for a quick thrill or who enjoy vampire based fiction, for fans of the Warhammer however the story is not plausible within its own pre established setting and does not line up well with other books set in the same universe.

Stuart says

Werner does a workmanstyle job of telling a story of intrigue, honour, vampires and madness set across three time periods. Sadly the story feels restricted by the 300-page template that pervades game fiction but the Red Duke is possibly the best of CL Werner's books I've read. It is based on an old Warhammer Battle campaign called Circle of Blood but benefits from straying from the script of those battles. It focuses on two feuding knights who must put aside their hostility to defeat the Duke.

The titular Red Duke is a famed Bretonnian knight who returned from the crusades in Araby (subtle) as a vampire lord and laid waste to the Duchy of Aquitaine. He was eventually killed but his remains were interred. He regenerated as vampires are want to do but found himself entombed. This drove him quite mad and the author gets quite a lot of mileage by having the unstable vampire flash back to various parts of his past.

The story does follow Circle of Blood's outline to a certain extent. For instance the first part of the campaign is a battle in the village of Mercal between the undead and a rabble of peasants led by the Holy Knight, a respected knight of the realm. In the novel this still happens, but instead the Holy Knight is a failed questing knight who is now a templar of the death god Morr (Knights of Morr are something Werner seems to like, they crop up in his tales regularly) and his warnings to the arrogant nobility are ignored. This chap is get (the Warhammer term for siring a vampire, not a grammatical error) by the Red Duke and later becomes the titular Dark Knight who serves as his general later on in the story.

The 'shiny' Bretonnian honour system takes a bit of a bashing in this story. There are no heroic Grail Knights (except perhaps for the King Louis the Righteous of Bretonnia, the king during the Duke's first rampage). There is a significant amount of the novel devoted to Grail Prophetesses of a local landmark called the Tower of Wizardry. Knights of the Realm are content to quarrel amongst themselves. The three main knightly protagonists are divided by infighting and seem unable to unite to fight against this great evil, and it is this infighting that allows the Duke to escape his tomb. Even Louis the Righteous and his immediate vassals aren't quite as righteous as advertised!

One learns a lot about the Red Duke in this book, which is great considering he was a bit of a one-note villain in "Circle of Blood". There's little need for detailed motivations for villains in the battle game. We learn that he was the rightful Duke of Aquitaine and the king's brother, that he was get by one of the Old World's most powerful Blood Dragon vampires and that before he was turned he was such a frightening warrior he was named El Syf (in Araby literally the Sword). We learn of how certain parties tried to usurp him. It's all good stuff - the book does jump around from time period to time period though the thrust of the main narrative is the tale of "Circle of Blood".

There's some nags. It's too short in my view and I would love to have seen it carry on past the climactic battle. The nature of this story (having to leave the Duke alive) is that there is no real satisfying conclusion - though a sequel novel set in Warhammer's present could rectify this. I wouldn't hold your breath though, this is part of a series of one-off tales. The 'twist' conclusion to the main story regarding the Duke's bloodline came out of nowhere and left me utterly confused. Overall though well worth checking out.

Hawke Embers says

Both intriguing and slightly frustrating but ultimately fascinating.

The Red Duke, penned by C.L. Werner is told both in the present and the past, following the ancient history of the Duke before the Red came into his title and the present which is split by several characters including the Duke himself.

If you are a fan of Vampires, fantasy, the Undead or adventure then this book is worth your time. It is a great character piece that really enforces why the Duke is the way his, the ups and down of his insanity and what drives him and his need to conquer. Earlier I mentioned my frustration and that is due to some of the other protagonists, while usually fairly solid; still manage to make decision that are frustrating. I couldn't help but feel frustrated at how stubborn a couple of them were or how a very certain character acted in a very certain situation, but perhaps that is because of the way I read it. The story takes place predominately in Bretonnia, a land of harsh chivalry and peasantry; not our own, so I would not take that criticism into account too harshly.

Ultimately this is a solid fantasy/horror novel with the mostly decent characters, a great villain and epic and personal conflicts that put it ahead of many others in the genre.

A 4 out of 5.
