



Dragon Soul

Jaida Jones , Danielle Bennett

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During the war between the kingdoms of Volstov and Ke-Han, no fighter could match Rook for sheer arrogance and skill. Only Rook could ride the great dragon Havemercy, whose savagery and bloodlust matched his own. His brother, Thom, is bookish, diffident, and reserved, yet he yearns for Rook's approval—and fears he can never earn it. With the war over, and an uneasy truce between the two nations, Thom hopes the long-lost brothers can bond on a trip together.

But Rook cares only that Havemercy lies scattered in pieces across Ke-Han—and someone is buying up her parts, and those of other fallen dragons. The beasts are dead, but the magic that powered them is not. And now a Ke-Han agent, a Volstov sorceress, and a group of desert tribesmen are vying to possess that magic and control the future.

Dragon Soul Details

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From Reader Review Dragon Soul for online ebook

Lindsay says

I'm a huge fan of the authors, but I have to say that I was quite disappointed by this book. I feel as though they used up the bulk of their ideas on the previous books, and the characters in this one-- even Rook, whom I adore-- felt fairly lackluster. My main complaint, though, is Madoka, who made me want to pull my hair out after about a page and a half due to her unoriginality in design and general pointlessness. My guess is that the authors felt compelled, after having four narrators in each of the previous books, to do the same for this one, but they didn't have four characters up to the task. I'll still buy the next book in the hopes that it's better than this one, but I pray it will be back up to the usual standards (and that we won't see Madoka in it)!

Somedaysit'sharder says

After devouring the first two books in the series, I was, to my disappointment, more or less bored to tears by this one. It took me months to read whereas I finished the first two in mere days.

My main issue with this book was that simply nothing happens for large stretches of it and the rest of it is perfectly predictable. The set of characters isn't bad - I don't mind Rook as a narrator as much as other people seem to - and the story itself could be worse, but this book felt like it was droning on forever. Lots of people run around looking for pieces of dragon. This sounds like it could be exciting enough, but it isn't because for all the interesting characters (gosh, I loved Malahide from start to finish), most of their journeys are spent not talking to each other.

Whereas Havemercy and Shadow Magic come to life through the dynamics between their characters, in Dragon Soul Rook and Thom spend the majority of their search brooding in silence and contemplating each other and their situation. Except sometimes Rook says mean things and Thom takes it all in silence and doesn't say anything. The same basically applies to Malahide, Madoka and Badger. And when they finally all meet, which you know will happen from the start because it's clear they're all after the same thing, conversation is sort of inhibited by language barriers and the fact that they all don't trust each other. ...which amounts to "a bit meh" for me, personally.

On a plot level, I also didn't feel like much was a stake for me to care about. Rook's personal investment in the quest was leaving me rather cold because while I can stand him well enough, I don't actually like him to a point where I sympathize. Malahide's ambition was muted enough and she didn't seem invested in it beyond not wanting to fail her boss, and Madoka, in all fairness, didn't really seem to know what she was doing or why most of the time. As did Thom, who rarely and barely contributed. It left me wondering why any of them would bother and why I would even care what happens to the dragon soul. I wasn't given the impression that the fate of countries and their shaky peace was at stake, as was the case in the first two books, where you really felt like the characters were working to achieve something important.

The final showdown comes and goes without redeeming any of it because by the time things start to happen, I just want it to be over already.

So yeah. I'm sort of disappointed I didn't enjoy it more. Maybe I'll like the next one better.

Jennifer says

Wow, so first off I only managed about 50 pages or so before I just couldn't read anymore of this. I've seen this same issue with a lot of the other reviews for this book too. I'm not overly offended by strong language if I hear it in movies/tv, games, books, people talking... However the use of strong language in this book completely put me off reading it further than I did. There really was no reason to have that much included in the book. For example, on Page 11 of the paperback copy I have, there were exactly 11 'f' words on the entire page... I'm sorry, but that's just stupid. I thought the story idea sounded good (even after I picked this book up and found out it was actually the 3rd book in a series which I have never read), but the language in just that little bit at the start of the book is just too much. Again, I have no problem with the language itself, it's the use of it in the book. Did the author really need to have 11 'f' words on 1 single page? No. The page could have been easily written without a single one.

Too many other reviews are attacking the other people who complained about the language and they really shouldn't have. I'm sorry to those that are offended by these other reviews, but you guys obviously need to read more variety or something. You don't need that sort of language painted all over each and every page of the book to make a good story.

I'm glad this is the only book by this author I ended up with and I have no intention of ever reading her books again. I plan to trade this book into a local store for credit and find something better to read.

Joanna says

First off I'd like to say a 2.5 star rating would have felt more accurate but 2 felt too low so I rounded up. I read it right after the first one since I was very intrigued by (this is spoiler-ish I guess if you haven't read Havemercy) Thom/Hilary and Rook/John but alas... I was mostly disappointed. I found myself skimming or skipping the chapters with the two new characters that I just didn't find engaging at all and was left wanting with the development (or rather lack of development) of the relationship between the two brothers. I felt sympathetic for Thom and increasingly frustrated with Rook, the latter I enjoyed immensely in the first book but in this one... not as much. Their quest felt rather convoluted and Rook's devotion to even pieces of his metal dragon rather than to his very devoted long lost but now returned brother felt... frustratingly more and more impossible to understand, relate to or even care about. He was such a bastard to Thom for practically the entirety of the book that the minuscule moments of not being a complete jackass didn't really pierce through as I think they were meant to. All in all, their relationship and the potential it had that grabbed me in Havemercy didn't turn out at all like I hoped it would, in that it really didn't change at all. Rook treating people they had only just stumbled into with more respect than he did his brother made me want to reach through the page and slap him. My conclusion is: Thom deserved better.

Kaje Harper says

3.5 stars. This series started strong, but for some reason this third book failed to grab me in the same way. Part of the problem is that the authors introduce 2 new female POV characters, both with 3-syllable fantasy names beginning with "Ma..." This is mildly confusing at first, and one of the two has a very cool emotional

style, which is totally fitting for her character but which made me feel less engaged in her story. I enjoyed Thom's sections a lot, but found a few of the plot details hard to follow. (view spoiler) There is still a lot of imagination here, but the way the emphasis shifts around between POVs pulled me out of the story more than I prefer. I may still read the next one - there is a fascinating world created here.

Val Freire says

I will say off the bat, that if you've read either prequel and decide, three books in, you have qualms with tones and profanity you're a fucking tit. Just a point of fact.

Like the books previous, this has a unique, rotating albeit jarring 1st-person POV that pushes the plot forward at a compelling pace. Tones of prejudices, close-mindedness, homophobia, political agendas, culture clash, magical mayhem run rampant in the series throughout. BUT these amazing things aren't even the plot, this series is never so impersonal as that.

It's the world building attention to detail that makes us choose to like these people, to want them to win, in this impossible quest, every time, despite whether we actually like the guy or not, that shows real magic!

Rook isn't ill-observant, dumb or lackluster because he's foul-mouthed. His culture is simply different, being that of a 'Mollyrat' and there we have the ugly caricature of classicism in the lovely anti-hero package. He isn't ignorant because he's ill-mannered and illiterate; he is in fact observant, calculating, determined and above all else reliable. Everyone he meets, like him or not, is quick to acknowledge that.

In the same respect, Malahide, refined, subtle, and structured Woman of the court, is equally off-putting, dangerous and admired for it.

As much as I love how Rook & Thom reflect/contrast one another, a common theme, I'm distinctly reminded this our author's first time having woman as leads throughout. Something in that craft brings across new and subtle unexplored tones of feminism and craftwork that is delicious, not over played and pays off in ways I hadn't foreseen. And frankly I'm glad I hadn't, because I find sci-fi & fantasy to be way to predictable. And while there are familiar tropes, there is also art in the telling, it feels familiar, not forced, like snuggling into a well-worn quilt only to find it smelling of daisies.

I've always loved the fullness of this world. I love revisiting this and in my own selfish head-space I feel like I wouldn't want to push it on my friends because I want to keep the magic all to myself. Which in itself speaks volumes.

Liviu says

Dragonsoul is the third series novel but a direct sequel to Havemercy and features Thom and Rook as pov's in addition to Madoka, a Ke-Han girl from an obscure village that becomes a hardened scavenger and when she finds a powerful magical object in the ruins of the capital, she attracts lots of unwelcome attention and will have to follow a long trek to survive and to Malahide a secret agent and magician of the Esar of Volstov who traded her voice for enhanced magical powers as a young orphan. While Thom and Rook hear rumors of pieces of Dragons sold on the black market and decide to follow them even in the dangerous desert where

Havemercy creator has been exiled by the Esar, Malahide is sent to follow the same rumors by her master

The four threads converge as expected and the novel is excellent though again the ending is slightly rushed; a great addition to the series and featuring again great prose and characters, Dragonsoul (strong A) is highly recommended

lostinabookbrb says

I think my frustration with this book was the authors' constant need to point out things that don't need to be.

-SOME SPOILERS; NOT REALLY BIG ONES-

Such as, when a character says something and it is followed up my "I explained the relationship between such and suchs." I know you explained it, you don't have to repeat yourself. It's like the author's don't really trust the readers to get it. This happened in Havemercy, too. I don't know why it bothered me even more here.

I also had a problem with liking most of the main characters (excluding Malahide). Madoka seemed to be a more female and not a jackass version of Rook. Thom was a complete pansy and I don't know exactly how that came to be the reader is constantly reminded that he is from the ghetto named Molly. You'd think that spending your life in a not-very-good-at-all neighborhood and being raised by working ladies, he'd have the know how to sleep with a knife on him. I get that he was at the University but surely there was something he took away from Molly.

And then there is Rook.

I think the reason I don't like Rook is because he seems to miss the bullseye of being a badass. Maybe I am missing something. He's written like he's supposed to be intimidating, a bit sociopathic, and with the capabilities to rip people limb from limb if he needs to. However, I don't think that was pulled off effectively.

There are characters I read where I completely believe that they could tell a King to kiss their ass and get away with it. Rook is not one of those people. I was half expecting him to get beat up by those more capable. In fact, I think it would have been more interesting.

Pros?

A female character who gets the interest of a prince and doesn't swoon. In fact, she wants to look after his safety and her interests which I think is awesome.

Plus, no full out romantic plot. I think there's a thing between Madoka and Badger. Then there's the weird fixation that Rook has with Havemercy: Much like he wants to have a love thing going on. BUT OVERALL, no real romance to go on. I know some people will think it's bad form not to have a couple in a story like this but I'm glad there wasn't one.

Andrea Brown Riley says

Just as good as the previous two! I really enjoyed watching the fleshing out of Rook and Thom's relationship, and the new characters in this was were nice to follow along with. I'd definitely say that Malahide was one of my favorites, and would love to read more about -- hopefully she'll make an appearance in the next one.

Kes says

This feels like a true, and better, sequel to the first book.

We follow Rook and Thom as they set out on their journey. Soon thereafter, they discover that someone is collecting and selling dragon parts. Rook's ire is roused and he drags Thom to find the culprit.

There is a much better character development in this book - both Rook and Thom rub each other the wrong way, and it's easy to see how Rook's callousness hurts Thom. But they stick together because of their birth, and we end with (view spoiler)

Other plotlines are Madoka - first female protagonist! She's a scavenger who gets roped in to hunt the dragon soul, and she's (view spoiler) I also loved Malahide - she has various layers, and (view spoiler)

It felt like a great ending for Rook - (view spoiler)

2.5 stars, rounded up to 3.

Mo says

The best way I can explain this book is that it bored me.

The first two of the series, I did not mind them. The first one, Havemercy, being the best for me of the 3 that I have read so far and the 2nd, Shadow Magic had its flaws but I enjoyed it none-the-less for it's little things.

Dragon Soul was hard for me to sit down and read continuously. Not only the characters have been boring, but any of the "exciting" fight scenes were not written well and I can only guess the writers never been in a fight or even watched one. All the things the characters said they couldn't do, they could have done. This might just be me nit-picking, but I like movement and fighting can be very beautiful sets of movements if you actually pay attention to them. I could go on but I'll stop there.

I could not picture the fights and some of them were too fast paced that I was confused that I had to back track.

But:

Even with 4 different mains characters talking, I am happy to say I was able to put the book down for a week in the middle of one of characters stories, pick it back up and not have to go to the beginning of the chapter

to figure out who was talking. I have read books with only two characters talking and their speech was so similar that I had to go back to see who it was talking.

Only once did I get confused near the end when Madoka was talking and for some reason I kept thinking it was Rook because of the way the cursing was written.

Although, the two woman characters could have been written better. I do not want to read women characters complaining about how different they are from other women. For more than half the book, I had to read through Malahide's whining about her not being as beautiful and what have you. The end didn't even surprise me, but that doesn't excuse her acting like that. No woman is like other women, so I don't want to read it like that is so special to be different. It annoys me because the descriptions the male characters give themselves is much shorter and not repeated every other page. We could talk about Rook's hair every other page but that didn't happen so why should Malahide repeat that she's not beautiful every time? And then the "tough for a lady" No, stop, don't care.

After the first few chapters, I started liking Madoka and I wished there was at least a bit more of her at the end. Her and Badger. Just a bit more of them would have been nice.

And how I wanted Sarah Fleet to be in the book forever. Her not taking any sass from Rook is the best. What did she call him? "Sissy-man Sal of Miss Petunia's Flower-Farting School for Pansies."

I had to give it two stars, because even through the boring, I can't bring myself to give it one star. I do, to some point, like this series and I am hoping the next book is better.

Also, I like the idea that I can hate Rook as much as I do and still like other characters in the story.

Cindy says

I love this series, but this is without a doubt the weakest book in the series. As I was reading them, I tried to figure out exactly why I wasn't as into the story. In the end, I came up with the following two reasons.

First of all, the characters in this book aren't as dynamic as they were in the past two books. I'm probably one of the only people who wasn't crazy about Rook's character. Thom I was quite fond of, but the change in dynamics and setting and all that just didn't quite work for me. As for the new characters, I have to admit I pretty much adored Madoka, and she has a lot to do with what I enjoyed about the book. I would love to see more of her and Badger. Malahide, on the other hand, was the complete opposite. I dreaded coming to the sections she narrated. So, all in all, it's not a good sign when only one quarter of characters are appealing.

The other thing that bothered me was a vague sense of inconsistency and contradiction. What makes it worse is that there really isn't anything I could point to and say "there: there's an example!". I feel as though it was a lot of smaller things that just left me off kilter and kept me from truly getting into the story. Thom saying for that for the first time he was thinking and not doing... and then proceeding to try to deconstruct Rook's character. Characters saying one thing on one page and another on the next. I don't know if it's a fair assessment, or if it's just me, but it did bother me a lot.

On other thing that bothered me slightly (while I'm ranting), is the simplicity of the antagonists. Only one of the two is even given a name, and we don't even get much of a backstory on the one who does beyond the fact that his loyalties lay with the Ke-Han, which is a shame, cause there was quite a bit to work with there. Their motives were really undefined. In the past two books, the stakes were simplistic but clear. Here (view spoiler)

Hilary says

With multiple plots and narrators, it is natural that the novel is long, but the writers' energy (and a reader's interest and patience) drop before the end. Gratuitous profanity and Rook's perpetual crudeness, violence, and surliness may repulse some readers. It seems the authors' followed Mark Twain's advice: "Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very;' your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be." However, instead of "damn" the team uses "fuck" -- and the editor failed to delete any of it. The story is set in violent times and there is also sexually graphic material.

In their earlier fantasy novels, "Shadow Magic" and "Havemercy," the writing team of Jones and Bennett describes a war in which the great dragons of Volstov (hybrids of magic and machinery) and their warrior riders keep the dark sorcery of Ke-Han at bay. The team returns to this world in "Dragon Soul," following the adventures of two brothers, Rook and Thom.

Rook is a war hero, a dragonrider without peer for skill and confidence. He flew the great dragon Havemercy, who perished defending the kingdom of Volstov. Rook's brother Thom could not be more different. Thom is bookish and diffident, yet he yearns to win his brother's approval. The war is over, with an uneasy truce between Volstov and Ke-Han. The brothers embark on a journey that is supposed to be an opportunity to become reacquainted and establish common ground. This is not a simple matter, since Rook is still reeling from Havemercy's demise and is indifferent to events and people around him -- including Thom.

But when Rook and Thom discover someone is buying up the remains of Volstov's dead dragons to harness their inherent magic, Rook snaps out of his lethargy to tackle the mystery and exact revenge on the desecrators. But other characters are tracking the same clues. Madoki, forced into international intrigue by a mad wizard, and Malahi, a spy for the Esar, are also attempting to discover the fate of Volstov's broken dragons.

Thom is swept along in the race that will end either by preserving the fragile peace between Ke-Han and Volstov or that will catapult the two factions back into war.

Zie Renea says

So this is the third book in a series that I have thoroughly enjoyed. The world is fascinating, while not being super fleshed out--this might be considered a bad thing by some, and I definitely would like a *little* more fleshing out, but the bits and pieces of worldbuilding that Jones and Bennett's characters drop in the course of their narration come out naturally and never qualify as infodumping, which is a definite plus (this applies to the first two books, *Havemercy* and *Shadow Magic*, as well).

In this book, two characters we know and two we don't explore the desert. Marking spoilers just in case: Rook and Thom's relationship (view spoiler) As for the new characters, Malahide--after the first couple sections from her point of view--really became fascinating to me. She was not like a female character I've seen written before, and I enjoyed her quirkiness. However, at the end, she goes on about (view spoiler)

Then there was Madoka. Madoka did not endear herself to me. I wanted to like her, and it wasn't so much as though I disliked her, so much as...she seemed almost like a female Rook. Or a female Dragon Corps member, in any case, with a dirty mouth that didn't quite match Rook's. Don't get me wrong, the language doesn't bother me (if it does you, don't even try these books, because Rook's mouth will horrify you), I just felt like her character could have been...different. Because we had characters like her, who were just...male.

Furthermore, the character of Badger, Madoka's companion for much of the book, ended up being...basically unnecessary. I actually didn't really think about that until I was writing this, so it wasn't as though the whole book I was like, "Why are you here?" but as I'm thinking back on it, he never actually became a character that impacted the story, like every other main and side character did. I didn't have a problem with his presence at all, but now I do wonder why he was there. It's possible he was just there for Madoka to have someone to talk to and spice up her sections of narration.

Now. As for the plot. It wasn't so much that it dragged the first half as that it only really picked up in the second half. The climax of the book is truly gripping. Jones and Bennett know how to write action, and how to manipulate their separate characters' viewpoints to keep that action flowing. I did feel that the villains could have been fleshed out more, but the Havemercy books are not books that have villains whose eyes you see through and who you sympathize with. But the flatness of the villains never really comes into play. You're too engrossed in their vivid protags' voices and stories to care about the villains - you just want to know how those villains are impacting the protags. That's not to say that this would be acceptable in every kind of book. Normally if someone told me a villain was flat I would sigh and tuck the book back in the shelf, feeling a loss that it seemed so interesting but must not be. But believe me when I say the villains are not the focus. The development of the protags' personalities and personal hardships are what drive these stories. Jones and Bennett have characters with *personality* and *attitude*. (Don't let Madoka put you off - being a damn near carbon copy of an airman in the first book is an unfortunate choice that has not recurred in the series.)

All that said, I did prefer Havemercy and Shadow Magic to this book, if only because the characters and story gripped me even more. All four narrators in Havemercy fascinated me, and same in Shadow Magic, especially Caius and Alcibiades. My only complaint with Kouje and Mamoru (and Caius and Alcibiades, for that matter) is that I was absolutely certain that (view spoiler). But that's for another review!

Clay Kallam says

If only one of the protagonists of "Dragon Soul" (Spectra, \$26, 400 pages) wasn't such a completely unattractive anti-hero - violent, irrational, angry, no human feelings (or feelings for humans, in any event) and so repellent you keep hoping someone will kill him - I'd urge readers to go back to the first in the series, "Havemercy" and enjoy both of the sequels.

In fact, even with the nasty, truly horrid Rook as one of the several narrators, "Dragon Soul" is still worth reading. Jaida Jones and Danielle Bennett base their world at the border between an altered China (Ke-Han) and Volstov (Russia), toss in powerful magicians and a society of the verge of industrialization, and have created a varied and interesting trilogy with a changing cast of characters.

Unfortunately, they decided to return to one of the protagonists of the first book in Rook, and his vicious, corroding presence somewhat offsets the authors' other, far more interesting, characters. Hopefully, we've seen the last of Rook and the future installments will build on the positives of the series, which are many.

Omi ai says

I adored the first book in this series, Havemercy, or at least, I loved the characters of Hal and Royston. When it came to the other characters, Rook and Thom, I tended to gloss over those parts, finding the characters a little uninteresting and the war element not so good. So when I got this book and realised that the main story was about those characters, I was a bit disappointed. But I didn't let it put me off, and read this book, desperate to continue the series.

Again I found the characters of Rook and Thom rather boring. Their story this time, however, was much more interesting, so I found that element an improvement. The other 2 new characters in this book, Madoka and Malahide, I also didn't find particularly interesting. The interaction between the two became more interesting as the book went on, but it was very near the end of the book when I started actually liking them.

This book was a real down point for me in this series. The first and second books (Havemercy, Shadow Magic) both had characters, stories and interactions that I found interesting and fascinating, but this book the characters just didn't do it for me, and character, as you can probably tell, is very important to me. But the storyline itself was really good. We mainly follow Rook and Thom on a journey to try and find Rook's dragon, Havemercy, and the brutal journey they endure in the process.

So although I didn't enjoy this book as much as the others, the writing style of Jones and Bennett is still fantastic, and don't let my review put you off reading the series, especially the first 2 books, because they are truly wonderful books with (mostly) wonderful, loveable characters.

Michi says

I never liked Rook. This book does nothing to change my opinion. He is a willful, destructive, unfeeling child who refuses to grow up because life was mean to him, boohoo, and adding in a character (Sarah Fleet) that sympathizes with him in any way only makes him (and her) more disgusting. Thom has gone from a 'Varsity student with a few skills of his own to a punching bag, a doormat willing to overlook any amount of verbal and emotional abuse just to be close to his brother. He even justifies the abuse, thinking "Maybe this gentle teasing was how Rook conveyed his feelings" or some such nonsense.

Madoka and Badger were pretty useless. I don't understand why the plot device was implanted in her hand other than out of the need to create a fourth POV character, and I don't understand the crazy, nameless bad guys whose motives were mostly unclear if not outright crazy.

Sarah Fleet existed as a reason to point Rook and Thom elsewhere in the desert, just like Geoffrey. This book was crowded with characters who just pushed our POV characters from locations A to B. On top of that, she disparaged Thom and his personality and reminded Rook-lovers that yes! Thom is useless! As if every other comment of Rook's did not contain the exact same information!

Malahide... you are the reason I myself do not write women. They turn into raging stereotypes who only think of themselves in terms of being women. How is this possible? BOTH authors are women! Rook does not feel the need to remind himself of his manliness or compare himself physically with another man or think

about his hair, take baths, get dressed, or any number of things that for some reason, we needed to see Malahide do. Thom doesn't do any of these things either. I have no idea what any of the men or Madoka wore for the entire book, but I know Malahide was wearing heels and a dress with lace along with a magical necklace that no one ever managed to see. In the desert? Are you seriously telling me Malahide, a trained spy, tracked a man through the desert for days on end in heels and a dress?

If you don't like introspection, this is not the book for you. The plot, what little there is, is positively drowned by how much the characters feel the need to tell readers about their personalities, their backstories, and what they think of every other character. This is juvenile, a huge hallmark of first drafts and bad fanfiction, and should not be the hallmark of authors published multiple times.

If I hadn't already purchased Steelhands, I would never bother to read more of this series.

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

I thought this was a fine followup to Havemercy. (It should be noted, I guess, that I tried to read the immediate sequel, Shadow Magic, and couldn't appreciate it at all.)

I'm going to say this now: the importance of imagination is a subtly developed theme here, and that was probably my favorite thing about this book. Because otherwise it would have to go at the end and that just wouldn't be right.

Readers of the first book will probably welcome the return of Rook and Thom; I know I did. Though I think that Thom gets the short end of the stick in this one a bit. Others may disagree.

Some new characters were introduced; most of them were well-drawn and enjoyable, though some were slightly underdeveloped. (Or maybe their backstory is simply intended to come in later books.)

The thing that squicked me a bit about Havemercy is absent from this book. That said, there is plenty of violence and a small amount of sexually graphic material. (What I'm trying to get at here is: this is not suitable for your young children, and even if you're a grownup you may be squicked by some things. Especially if you're a guy.)

Clia says

In the past I've praised JaiDani's construction of characters while criticising their sloppy plots, so it's interesting that, in the case of Dragonsoul, I'll be doing the opposite.

First, I'll talk about the plot: I liked it. The action started early and continued until the end, there was a clear goal established for ALL the viewpoint characters (except maybe Thom, but he has a default goal--"Get Rook to love me"--anyway, so I'll let it slide) and the viewpoints collided in a much more satisfying way than in previous instalments. I liked the pacing, I liked the way everything tied together and I liked the resolution for each character (excluding one, but I'll get to that).

Now, onto what I didn't like so much: the characters.

Rook, in my opinion, was the saving grace of Havemercy. When the plot was a shambles, when all the other viewpoint characters were irritating me, Rook kept me sane, for reasons I'll put in my Havemercy review if I ever get around to writing a proper one. The point is, Rook was an engaging character. There was an appealing edge to him that I think was severely dulled in Dragonsoul. He still swore a lot, yes, and he was still angry all the time, but his fire was gone. And sure, you could say that was a creative choice by JaiDani to illustrate how Havemercy's "death" had affected him, but that doesn't change the fact that my favourite thing about Havemercy was completely absent.

Wait, did I say my favourite thing? Scratch that. Rook was my second favourite thing about Havemercy. My favourite thing was the electrifying sexual chemistry between Rook and his brother Thom. Another thing that was sadly missing from Dragonsoul. I understand JaiDani changed their minds about the relationship between Rook and Thom after writing the first draft of Havemercy, but they weren't very successful in removing the sexual tension between them and it was one of the best things about Havemercy (for me at least, others may have been squicked out or even not noticed it at all). Obviously writing Dragonsoul with the brother dynamic included from the get-go meant no more sexual tension, but that made the book into just another story about brotherly love (literal bromance), just with added dragon parts. So yes, that was something I didn't like.

Now let's talk about Malahide. She was confusing, monotonous, and reserved to the point of being unbearably boring. Her ending made no sense and didn't resolve her issues at all. On top of that, the two aspects of her character that I suppose were included to try and make her interesting were handled in a way that left me thinking they shouldn't have been included at all. She's mute (not psychologically, but physically), so what happens within 20 pages of her first appearance? Well, she's given a magical necklace that allows her to talk, of course! What the fuck? (pardon the language, this really irritated me). In my (admittedly limited) experience, the whole point of including a differently abled character is to challenge them in the way an abled character could not be challenged, so that it's all the more triumphant and satisfying when the differently abled character achieves their goal. By giving Malahide a disability but then making so it isn't an obstacle at all in her mission, JaiDani completely glossed over any difficulties faced by the mute community. I just--why? Why not just have her NOT be mute in the first place? This bothered me so much.

Know what else bothered me? The transsexual thing. Now don't get me wrong, I know there needs to be more trans characters in the media; I want there to be more trans characters in the media. I also understand that the world needs more trans characters (and gay characters and lesbian characters) whose sole character trait ISN'T the fact that they're trans (and/or gay or lesbian). And I respect that JaiDani MAY have been attempting that with Malahide--that is, attempting a trans character whose life didn't revolve around being trans. But there's a difference between not having it as the defining character trait and just plain not having it as a character trait at all, and that's what annoys me. If you're going to have a trans character (ESPECIALLY in a setting like Dragonsoul's), show them being trans (and no, one or two comments about not wanting to be seen naked do not count as showing anything other than that Malahide is shy), don't relegate their transsexuality to a one-paragraph "What a twist!" revelation. It's like announcing a prominent character was gay after the series is over. It's like including a bisexual character who is only ever seen to date/have sex with the opposite sex. IT'S LIKE HAVING A MUTE CHARACTER WHO USES MAGIC TO TALK. It's a complete and utter cop-out, and it was what I hated the most about Dragonsoul.

As for Madoka, well, I liked her. Even though she was passed out/inebriated for most of it (don't get me started on THAT), she was probably my favourite character. Her and Badger. And what's-his-name--the desert guy. I would have loved them as viewpoint characters.

Well, um, that's about it. I was going to rant a little about the Sarah Fleet inconsistency, but I feel that would

just be cruel at this point, so I'll settle with a "WHY DOES SHE EXIST??" and leave it at that.

So, to sum up: the plot was good, the characters blah, and the authors lazy. I enjoyed reading Dragonsoul, hence the 3 stars, but I won't be reading it again anytime soon.

Martine says

I can't be objective with these books anymore so I'll keep this short:

I loved reading how Thom and Rook were doing, the chemistry between the two boys was just amazing. I especially loved the fact that one could anticipate the improvement of Rook's mood by counting the "fuck"s on one page. (Less cursing = more content ex-airman.)

Best fictional brothers ever. Of course, that depends on whether one can accept Rook as the character that he is or not because he is one of those guys who show their affection by acting like a complete jerk - because acting like a real jerk is an improvement to his usual behavior.

With Malahide and Madoka the authors have created two female characters who could not possibly be more opposites, though I must confess that I liked Malahide more because the choices she made in the past are so... hardcore.

It was also interesting to find out more about the dragons, how they work and the process of her making. And, well, meeting Sarah Fleet was a real treat.

"Oh, my mistake," said Fleet. "I was under the impression that I was speaking to Airman Rook of the Esar's famous Dragon Corps, not Sissy-man Sal of Miss Petunia's Flower-Farting School for Pansies. You got a problem with that?"

I. LOVE. THAT. WOMAN.

So, I had fun reading this, as usual. And I'm absolutely looking forward to part 4 because I got a reading sample with my kindle edition, so I know there will be Adamo and the Margrave (though Royton will not be one of the narrators) and there will be Balfour and so the awesomeness is guaranteed. Actually, I wouldn't mind reading an entire novel about Royston and Adamo during their 'Versity days, plot or no.
