



Prince of Fools

Mark Lawrence

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The Red Queen is old but the kings of the Broken Empire dread her like no other. For all her reign, she has fought the long war, contested in secret, against the powers that stand behind nations, for higher stakes than land or gold. Her greatest weapon is The Silent Sister—unseen by most and unspoken of by all.

The Red Queen's grandson, Prince Jalan Kendeth—drinker, gambler, seducer of women—is one who can see The Silent Sister. Tenth in line for the throne and content with his role as a minor royal, he pretends that the hideous crone is not there. But war is coming. Witnesses claim an undead army is on the march, and the Red Queen has called on her family to defend the realm. Jal thinks it's all a rumor—nothing that will affect him—but he is wrong.

After escaping a death trap set by the Silent Sister, Jal finds his fate magically intertwined with a fierce Norse warrior. As the two undertake a journey across the Empire to undo the spell, encountering grave dangers, willing women, and an upstart prince named Jorg Ancrath along the way, Jalan gradually catches a glimmer of the truth: he and the Norseman are but pieces in a game, part of a series of moves in the long war—and the Red Queen controls the board.

Prince of Fools Details

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Author : Mark Lawrence

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From Reader Review Prince of Fools for online ebook

James Tivendale says

This review contains minor spoilers.

"I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play or bravery."

Prince of Fools, the first story in The Red Queen's War trilogy is set in The Broken Empire and introduces readers to Prince Jalan. He is the Red Queen's grandson, just out of his teenage years and his main interests are gambling, lying, drinking, whoring and running away from any form of confrontation, at high speed.

The start of the tale sees Jalan being chased by a disgruntled brother whose sister he has just been 'involved' with. After scampering away comically and finally finding solace, The Red Queen, to his exhausted dismay, calls an assembly in which she discusses the threat of recent sightings of the dead rising and wrecking havoc, perhaps controlled by the Dead King's necromancers and being raised in opposition against Red March and the whole empire. It is at this early scene that we are introduced to arguably, the novel's most important character, Norse warrior, Snorri ver Snagason.

Snorri, as he is known to his friends; at first seems like he is nothing more than a well-chiselled warrior brute. Magical circumstances make it so that Jalan and Snorri, an unlikely traveling duo, have to work together to achieved a prophecised goal they do not truly understand. Secondary to this in the grand scheme of things yet, Snorri's main focus is to rescue his wife and child from the notorious Sven Broke-Oar, and Snorri divulges information about his mission to Jalan as the story progresses through late night campfire stories of his past. Snorri is like an epic warrior hero straight out of a Norse or Icelandic saga. He reminded me a bit of Egill Skallagrímsson. Still relating to the similarities to the saga's, I have to applaud Lawrence's knowledge and research of this age which is present throughout the tale. Nice simple touches such as revering the God's Odin, Loki, Thor etc... but if you look a bit deeper, there are a few gems such as the fact that his namesake, Snorri Sturluson wrote the Poetic Edda which was a collection of Old Norse poems, and Snorri's horse is named Sleipnir. This just so happens to be the same name as Odin's legendary eight-legged steed in mythology.

The map of The Broken Empire is highly reminiscent of Europe. The tale takes our duo from Red March, which is approximately Greece, up to the Black Fort and The Bitter Ice which is the equivalent of Northern Sweden or Finland. It is quite a trek. A large amount of action happens across the journeying, such as hanging out with Circus entertainers, fighting Undead, running through a fiery forest that seems to be alive and also, chilling in an inn in Ancrith whilst some young Prince has returned to his homeland after many years absent.

This tale is set concurrently with Prince of Thorns. I won't say too much but, Jalan and Snorri do cross paths with a few of the Road Brothers, mostly drunken banter with Snorri, and we hear actions described that we know from the above-mentioned story such as Jorg's dual with Sir Gallan. This story definitely works as a stand-alone if someone had not read Lawrence's prior works, but layers are added if you have read Prince of Thorns.

Now bear with me here, the world of the Broken Empire is not as well envisaged as certain fantasy worlds created by some of the genre's heavyweights. The reason for this is that the world is so similar to our own

with the Gods, philosophers and map layout as already discussed. This adds to the charm of the world so actually works in the author's favour. Sometimes in fantasy, you lose yourself in a world, here, we always have one foot in our world and one foot within Lawrence's creation, The Broken Empire. I hope that makes sense, but it is definitely a positive. This story is littered with cool lines that relate to our world in this fantasy opus. My favourite was an Elephant called Nelly to which Jalan responds something along the lines of, what else would it be called?

Like the majority of first novels in an epic trilogy or more, flashback sections are frequent to add weight and depth to the characters. These are presented in two distinctive ways. Jalan, as our 1st person narrative, reminiscent of Jorg's internal monologue, talks about his past through his thoughts when an event makes him take a walk down memory lane. Snorri's backstory, as briefly mentioned is him spinning his tale of tribulation late at night to Jalan over the warmth of the campfire with the stars as the backdrop to his tragedy.

Jalan and Snorri are one of the finest duos I have had the pleasure of reading about. They are so different. Jalan, the majority of the time is scheming, thinking of a way to run away, however; against his self-centred better judgment, he and Snorri do become great friends. Their relationship is up there with Tehol and Bugg and Legolas and Gimli.

I was lucky enough to read Mark Lawrence's - Red Sister as an advanced review and rated it highly. This is different, but in my opinion, it is just as good for an opening to a trilogy. I thought this was stunning and cannot wait to read The Liar's Key.

James www.youandibooks.wordpress.com <<

Mark Lawrence says

STOP PRESS - the trilogy is complete! The Wheel of Osheim is out!

All the blog reviews so far:
<http://mark---lawrence.blogspot.co.uk...>

Well... I kinda liked it.

One thing I didn't want to do was give you Jorg again in new clothes - I didn't want to put the reader straight back through the emotional wringer and build another defiant young man. But I do enjoy writing in the first person and the Broken Empire feels as though it's big enough to host a few more tales yet. So I give you Jalan Kendeth, who owes his inspiration to George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman (of the eponymous Flashman (1969)) just as Jorg owed his to Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange (1962). MacDonald Fraser's Flashman character was of course inspired in turn by Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) by Thomas Hughes, so really I'm reaching back over 150 years!

The opening line is:

I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery.

Other picks include:

*

I've always viewed boats as a thin plank between me and drowning.

*

Humanity can be divided into madmen and cowards. My personal tragedy is in being born into a world where sanity is held to be a character flaw.

*

'Utter waste of time.' I nodded at the juggler.

'I love jugglers!' Snorri's grin showed white teeth in the cropped blackness of his beard.

'God! You're probably the sort that likes clowns!'

The grin broadened as if the mere mention of clowns was hilarious.

I hung my head. 'Come on.'

<http://thatthornguy.com/contests/prin...>

?Luna? says

3/5

"Bravery is just a different kind of broken."

I'm really confused and feeling pretty conflicted with this novel. Some things I loved most things I hated. There's something about Marks prose that irks me and I'm gonna put it down to him trying too hard to write beautiful and eloquent sentences. Yes you get less of it in this novel then you do with his 'Broken Empire trilogy' however for me his writing feels extremely forced, beautiful prose should be effortless. But this is just my opinion and I'm in a very small minority of disliking this authors style. His writing comes across as half arsed and choppy, I always feel confused while reading his novels and I don't enjoy them like everyone else does, I guess I'm just a massive first person perspective snob, I hate first person novels, I find it hard to connect with the story and yeah it's just not for me. So I'm gonna to say that this was another 'meh' novel for

me. Mark knows how to write awesome main characters but that's all I ever love about his novels, I hate his world building and dislike pretty much everything else. I'm gonna to keep this review short and do a dot point presentation of what I liked and didn't because, I'm conflicted.

“I was more ass than assassin.”

Likes:

- I loved his use of Norse Mythology, I don't know anyone who hates Vikings.
- I thought Jalan was an extremely loveable character and I found him to be very realistic. If I was in a fight with a bunch of guys with swords, I'd run for the hills aswell while screaming like a little bitch. Also, What is it about liars that us girls love so much? We sit around saying how we love honest men, but as soon as a handsome, confident, arrogant, lying son of a bitch walks into a room we are all swooning. This is why we all love Jalan.
- The fact that Jalan is a twin of David Beckham.. *cue drooling*
- I LOVE SNORRI. I'm prepared to finish this series just because, I LOVE SNORRI. I'm only here for him. My perfect badass protective Viking dad who is tough AF.
- The bromance that blossomed between my boys.
- I liked the idea of the plot but found the execution poor.
- I like the cameo appearance of the guys from the 'Broken Empire' series.
- The humour was okay.. Like I didn't laugh out loud, but it had me smiling from ear to ear.
- Umm...
- That's literally it..
- ?

Dislikes:

- Everything I didn't mention in my likes list.
- The writing.
- The execution.
- The confusing plot.
- The horrible pacing.
- The magic system.
- The middle was so boring, I hate when characters just travel for an entire novel.
- Jalans only badass moment in the whole entire novel was cut off.
- First person POV (matter of personal preference)

(I'll be writing these dot points into a proper review later but for now enjoy my mindless rant)

Snorri fanart by Peastri

“I’m a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery.”

The end.

Petrik says

4.5/5 Stars

This may be an unpopular opinion but for me, Prince of Fools is single handedly better than the entire 'Broken Empire' trilogy. Heck, it's even better than 'Red Sister', Mark's newest book and what most of his fans are calling his best work up to date.

Prince of Fools, the first book in The Red Queen's War trilogy took place within the same world and during the same period of time with Prince of Thorns (*Mark Lawrence's debut surrounding the infamous Jorg Ancrath*). The plot followed the journey of Jalan Kendeth and Snorri ver Snagason, both bound together by a curse spell from the supposedly invisible Silent Sister that cursed them to be infused with Light and Dark magic respectively and now, they can't be separated too far or have any physical contacts in order to avoid physical pain or maybe even death. Thus began their journey to end their curse together.

Similar to Prince of Thorns, most of the plot in the book revolves simply around them travelling but it was done in a very fun and unexpectedly poignant way at times. You can read this book without reading The Broken Empire trilogy first but I must say, reading this after Broken Empire increased my experience significantly. Don't get me wrong, The Broken Empire is an okay to good trilogy at best imo, I have mixed feelings about it but character appearances from any previous series I read will always fill me with joy, and this goes for any kind of story medium. The experience, knowledge and facts I gained from reading Jorg's story, made me glued to the page when Jalan and Snorri met with a lot of characters from Prince of Thorns. Jalan's encounter with Katherine was definitely one of the main highlight of this book for me.

However, the main strength of this book definitely lies within both the main characters unexpected blooming friendship.

Jalan Kendeth is one of the most realistic protagonists in a fantasy books out there. We all want to be heroes, brave in the face of danger but in reality, most of us would probably run and pee our pants shrieking at the top of our lungs. This is Jalan in a nutshell. He's a coward, womanizer and a drunkard. He'll run away from every danger he faced and for me, seeing a story done in 1st POV narrative from this kind of main character is a refreshing and unique experience.

"Battles are all about strategy, and strategy pivots on priorities. Since my priorities were Prince Jalan, Prince Jalan, and Prince Jalan, with "looking good" a distant fourth, I took the opportunity to resume running away."

Snorri on the other hand, is a polar opposite of Jalan. He's a Norseman, bent on revenge, brave, powerful, wise and virtuous.

"When you become a father, it changes you." Snorri spoke towards the fire's glow. "You see

the world in new ways. Those who are not changed were not properly men to begin with.”

Picture: Snorri ver Snagason hugging his daughter by Pen Astridge

Right from Snorri's first appearance in a Gladiator kind of fight, I'm already hooked on his character and it continues to do so until the end of the book. His background revelations told in 3rd POV were done greatly and provide depth to both his character and Jalan's sense of empathy. **This is one of the most unlikely starts to a friendship and yet it ended up being one of the best duos I ever read, just from the first book.**

One of the major problem I had with 'The Broken Empire' were the fact that the world took place in Earth that made me feel like I wasn't reading a high fantasy book. I prefer my high fantasy read to be done on a completely new world. This is still the same case because the story took place on the same setting with Broken Empire, Red March being North Italy and Bitter Ice being Northern Norway to say the least. However, it's more of a minor con for me now because of Snorri's Viking background. Norse mythology and Vikings cultures are something I'm a sucker for and to see Mark implement it here is something that I didn't expect at all, in a good way.

In terms of prose, this is the first time that Mark Lawrence's prose worked greatly for me. Despite the elegance on the prose, reading too much of Broken Empire and Red Sister literally hurt my head, especially when it gets too philosophical. That problem is completely gone here. **Jalan's personality made the narrative fine balance of beautiful, philosophical and fun simplicity.**

Overall, Prince of Fools is a fantastic start to a trilogy. It's better than all my previous experience with all other Mark's books and I'm hoping the rest of the sequels continue to deliver at least similar or even better quality. If things goes well, who knows? maybe there will be a new addition to my 'favorites' shelf.

You can find this and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at BookNest

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Sale Alert 9/30/17: on Amazon for \$2.99

This is a tale of two heroes

”Two heroes, one led willy-nilly by his cock, the other northward by his heart. Neither bringing their brain into any decision of import.

Prince Jal has been pretty useless his entire life. He is really a prince of no importance and mainly uses his status as a prince to get laid. However, he is one of the most likable horrible cads I've ever read. **I loved his entire narrative and every messed up musing that he had throughout the book.** He tells you right away everything that you need to know about him.

I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery

You should read this book just for Prince Jal alone but then there is more. There is Snorri a man with a mission to save his family. Where Jal is everything selfish and self-serving Snorri is the honorable white knight with great strength and morals that you can really root for.

"An axe for me. Swords trick you into thinking you can defend. With an axe all you can do is attack. That's what my father named me. Snorri. It means 'attack'." He lifted the axe above his head. "Men think they can defend against me—but when I knock, they open."

They are so different from each other but are trapped together by some spell giving each of them half of a power. They will be stuck that way until they finish the spells intended task or die. Just one catch...well besides that other thing I just mention. They have to stay close to each other which Jal isn't exactly excited about since Snorri wants to travel north to save his family. But since the only option is travel with him or die Jal opts for door number one, at least until he can find a way out of it.

Jal makes this book. Every selfish, semi-horrible thing he says and does is just fantastic. I like most of the women around him totally swooned for his bullshit and loved every minute of it.

There is a lot of traveling in this book. A lot of times when that is the case I get really bored with the storyline and I might of here too except I really loved Jal. He was witty, funny and totally charismatic. The fact that he has an angel stuck in his head and preaches to him about all of his sins every morning trying to make him a better person...well it was hilarious.

Honestly I didn't think a lot actually happened in the book until the very end and they everything happened...all at once and huge. I was WOWed and horrified by it. I loved the developments at the end for the characters and really can't wait to see where their story takes them next. It was a crazy character driven ride for the most part but I really loved it all. Someone has a key to death's door and wants it open. Anything could happen now.

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

Actual Rating: 2.5 Stars

It's times like this I **really** wish Goodreads had half-star options because this one is a true 2.5 for me. I feel like this is a little bit of a *"it's me, not you"* situation, but not so much so that I can convince myself to round up my rating.

This is a quest story starring self-centered, uber-brat, Prince Jalan Kendeth & large, lovable father-figure Viking, Snorri. Now, one of my personal struggles with this set up was that it felt very similar to Disney's *The Emperor's New Groove* but with more Norse mythology. And more zombies. Or maybe the zombies canonically exist in Norse mythology, *I don't claim to be an expert in that realm*.

Anyway, for a lot of people I'm sure that comparison sounds encouraging. In some ways it is a good thing, but while reading I felt a **lot less engaged in this story** than I am every time I re-watch *The Emperor's New*

Groove.

On the positive side, the comedy aspect in this book is **S T E L L A R**. I completely enjoyed Jalan's egocentric sense of humor. His number one priority is himself, and it was **hilariously brilliant** to watch him navigate this incredibly inconvenient turn of events.

The story is cleverly written & that was definitely another high point for me. I appreciate Lawrence's ability create visuals without become too wordy & felt his style of description really fit the humorous nature of the story.

On the negative side, **I never felt myself become interested in the plot of the story whatsoever**. I consistently floated in and out of concentrating on what was happening, often only pulled back in when Jalan made a comedic observation.

The Norse mythology influence didn't strike me as particularly unique or remarkable; it seemed like the story relied too heavily on the audience's knowledge of the Norse tales to flesh out the world instead of actually presenting something **new**.

Something that was brought to my attention later that I didn't completely realize while reading is that the setting is actually Earth? Or post-apocalyptic Europe?

As a result some of the elements included, such as Jesus the religious figure & some modern idioms, ended up feeling **quite disjointed** from what I typically expect in my Fantasy. Kudos for trying something different, but this in combination with the Norse influence **didn't do much for me in the world building department**.

I kept waiting to fall in love with this but unfortunately I never fully connected to the book. I'm sure the next installment will be a riot, but I'm just not committed enough to the story itself to stick around for the amusement.

I've heard from a handful of people that this story is more enjoyable if you've read Lawrence's series *The Broken Empire* beforehand, so if you pick this up keep that in mind!

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

? **BR** with my MacHalo Freaks starting Oct. 1, 2015.

DNF at 35%. *And it took me two whole months to get there.*

I'm sorry. I can't do this. Even though I'm in love with Jal. Sigh. It was a beautiful thing, what Jal and I had. It was love at first page. **He said:**

I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery [...] I've always found

hitting a man from behind to be the best way to go about things.

And I said: "**you! Harem! Now!**" Ah, young love! So passionate, so romantic! **So full of crap!** ← *oops, sorry about that. Just a slight overreaction on my part due to the anger, disappointment and utter disenchantment I experienced at the hands of Mr Lawrence.*

Yes, I'm afraid this is all Mr Lawrence's fault. Had he not tried to turn this book into the perfect cure for insomnia I would still be naïve, young and in love. Now my life has no meaning. Excuse me while I sob for a minute {insert desperate crying and howling and wailing here} **How could you, Mr Lawrence?** This started out pretty well. The story was pretty good. Jal was Jal. And then...then...then...then..then...then...NOTHING...and...nothing... and...nothing... and...nothing... and...nothing... and...nothing...

Because I was so in love with Jal, I tried. I really tried. Put the book down. Picked it up again. Read 1 page. Fell asleep. Put the book down. Picked it up again. Read 1 page. Fell asleep. Put the book down. Picked it up again. Read 1 page. Fell asleep. **Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.** Last thing I read Jal and Snorri (no, I will not mention how ridiculous that name is. Then again, maybe I will. Snorri? Snoring? Haha. You're hilarious, Mr Lawrence) were on a boat. Actually, no. They were **still** on a boat. They'd been on that boat for ~~too long~~ some time. Come to think of it, these two must have been on that boat for the last 10 years. At least. **Fascinating stuff.** Wow. Super exciting. ~~I want more.~~ Most thrilling adventures I was ever given to read. Non-stop action and all that. Such a frantic, gripping pace I almost had a heart attack. And a seizure. At the same time. This book should come with a warning. **It's hazardous to the reader's health.**

I have DNFed quite a few books in the past. Either because they were pure crap or because I wanted to kill them with fire. But DNFing an otherwise enjoyable story **just because it's boring?** Now that's a first. Congratulations on this achievement, Mr Lawrence. **You outdid yourself here.**

Petros Triantafyllou says

I bought this book one and a half years ago. All this time it was resting in my special bookcase (I have 2 bookcases, the big one, and the special one for my favorite authors). I was looking at it, and it was staring back. We fell in love, but I consider myself a gentleman, so I never lay a hand, not until the wedding at least (publication of the 3rd & final book).

Four days ago I decided it was time. I said to myself "Let's start it today Peter, and read it in 15-20 days, to extend the pleasure."

It lasted 4 days.

Prince of Fools was simply marvelous. Mark Lawrence is perhaps the best in the art of marrying fantasy,

historical fiction & dystopian elements, all together in such harmony. The pace is fast yet relaxing, a hard combination to find. The events of this trilogy are taking place in the same place (and time) as with The Broken Empire, so the world is already established, but Mark doesn't stop there. He keeps expanding and enriching it with new elements. The characters are exceptionally developed, as Mark succeeds best in the details and fully-flavored characterizations. The general plot arc is plain, yet interesting at the same time. What seemed as a perfectly orchestrated scheme in The Broken Empire trilogy, is further developed here. In a scenario or two I thought I could see the strings being pulled in an obvious cliché of the genre, but I was proved wrong. As for the protagonist, Jalan manages to be both an everyday man and yet also a singular & highly individual motherfucker.

"I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery."

All in all, if you loved Mark's previous trilogy, you should definitely elevate this one to the top of your TBR list.

The Liar's Key, here I come!

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

Kainat ?HUFFLEPUFF & PROUD? says

*"Humanity can be divided into madmen and cowards.
My personal tragedy is being born into a world where sanity is held to be a character flaw."*

What a fun read this was! This reminded me when i first started reading for fun. No judgement, no criticism, just enjoyed the ride. Prince Jalan is indeed a prince of fools *says in the most affectionate tone*

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

Edit 10/15 : Rereading my fave parts before FINALLY starting The Liar's Key next week (yes, this book needed vacations time^^)

➡ **The day I give a 3 to Mark Lawrence's work isn't a good day in my book.** Now, if I refer to the GR scale, a 3 means that I liked it, so it's by no means a bad rating. Anyway, I wasn't blown away and couldn't give it more, sadly. Would I have loved *Prince of Fools* more if I wasn't such a fan of Jorg of Ancrath? **Maybe.**

The fact is, even though Jalan and Snorri's journey contains several sparks of awesomeness, **they were unfortunately too often drowned in a river of boredom.**

✍ As usual with Mark Lawrence, we get **a beautiful writing filled with gems full of wit and grit**, with

many quotable dialogues and thoughts and a wonderful power of evocation. It's rare enough to point, isn't it?

"Cold has its own taste. It tastes of a bitten tongue. It coils around you, a living thing, a beast that means to kill you, not with wrath, not with tooth nor claw, but with the mercy of surrender, with the kindness of letting you go gentle into the long night after such a burden of pain and misery."

If you read *Prince of Thorns*, you must know that Mark Lawrence's fantasy is **very character driven** and involves a lot of travelling, characteristics which didn't bother me at all in the trilogy devoted to my favorite little bastard, *aka* Jorg. But let's face it : from the beginning of *Prince of Thorns*, I was completely and utterly fascinated by this sick devil and I came through the three books under his spell. ~~God, I miss him.~~ While here, if by no means Jalan and Snorri are uninteresting characters, they often missed this little something which could pull me in completely, and sadly, I felt slightly underwhelmed most of the time.

Not that the plot isn't interesting : a spark of old magic, a bunch of dead men rising and a curse to counter, the whole thing wrapped in Nordic Mythology and served by a world that *The Broken Empire* trilogy's readers will easily recognize and enjoy rediscovering. For the Broken Empire noobs, a few words (yes, I can be nice like that) : Picture Europe. Now, add several explosions of atomic bombs. Yeah, not funny-funny. Jump in time, let's say, a few centuries or so. You've got the Broken Empire, a medieval setting where technologies have been banned and then, forgotten. Due to an *unfortunate* spell, Jalan and Snorri are bound by magic and so... stuck together, for better or for worst. Then follows a journey through the Empire's realms, each one fraught with danger and enemies.

I know, it looks fantastic. And more I write about it, more I can't understand why I didn't fall in love with this story, which seems on theory the kind that I would love - I just *didn't*. **Sadly I never felt enthralled nor captivated and as I said earlier, I was too often bored to enjoy my read as much as I wanted to.** The truth is, despite the fights and the meetings, the story sometimes seemed full of *nothing* to me, it struggled to keep me interested and above that, *involved*. Indeed I felt losing my attention at some point, my mind wandering until I had to reread sentences because I didn't focus enough. *Sigh*.

Same old, same old...

If I'm being frank, **the main problem I have with this book is the fact that it shares some of the same antagonists as *The Broken Empire* trilogy**, and, you know... *I know how it ends*. That's why even if I was eager to take a look at Jorg ~~no, I'm not creepy—okay, not too much, at least (I think)~~, and enjoyed being in *The Broken Empire* again, I think I would have preferred *Prince of Fools* if I didn't read *Emperor of Thorns* before. Because, the Dead King? Guys, I know who he is. In my opinion my experience would have been better if I had read this one between *King of Thorns* and *Emperor of Thorns*, because everything I learnt in Jorg's last book influenced my interest, reducing it for sure.

However, **I absolutely adored the Friendship slowly growing between Jalan and Snorri**. I know, *FRIENDSHIP!* Not romance! How refreshing is that? Look at it this way : if Snorri was a woman, their bond and their connection would be just... *oh my god so predictable and lame!* While here, it was a pleasure to witness their interactions and misunderstandings.

But wait - Did I say that Jalan and Snorri were delightfully different? *Noooo?* OMG. Let's introduce them, shall we?

As usual with Mark Lawrence, **what makes the book its strength is the almost flawless characterization.** Indeed contrary to what we might think at first, every character is multi-layered and way more complicated than he appears. Moreover, as for Jorg, they evolve in a *believable* way, that is to say, really, really gradually. Because what is more annoying that characters who change in a heartbeat, I'm asking? None of this crap here, nope. In Mark Lawrence's books, no about-turn, but slow growth. **I can't express how much I love that.**

? First of all, let's meet **Prince Jalan.**

"I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting down requires honesty, fair play, or bravery."

Ah, Jalan. Remember Ezio at the beginning of *Assassin's Creed 2*? That's Jalan for you. **Womanizer. Coward. Selfish. Weak.** And yet, when we compare to the absolute asshole that was Jorg, he's kind of likeable. Astounding right? I'm going to repeat what I wrote in my review from *Prince of Thorns* : While I can't hate more all these crappy, controlling and sexist male-leads we get in many books, especially in romance, I can appreciate a character who shares their flaws **if nobody tells me that I'm supposed to drool over him, and if his behavior isn't pictured as normal and acceptable.** So, yes, I hate, I LOATHE casual sexism and this kind of comments makes me want to throw something. Yes. But as far as I'm concerned, **creating an unlikeable character as an anti-hero isn't the same thing as trying to convince people that it's okay to be an asshole.** Because, you know, it's not. And yes, I wanted to slap Jalan sometimes, especially when he dropped comments about women. But do I need to love him to read his story? Nope.

So, Jalan. Will he learn to care for somebody else than himself during their quest? I guess I'll let you discover it for yourself! ;)

? And then, there's **Snorri, the Nordic warrior** who respects his promises and whose courage is amazing. Could we find more different than Jalan? I'm not sure of it. His goal? To save his wife and his child who've been kidnapped by some enemy whose acquaintances are rather unsavoury (Dead King, anyone?). Nothing can hold his course, and there's some precious Prince who's going to learn it the hard way (yes, Jal', I'm *so* talking about you here). Now, he does have his own inner demons and isn't perfect either, as we slowly learn it.

✕ Now, I need to complain about something that bothered me : **Where are the women?** Seriously. It's almost frightening to see how this world lacks of women. Men, men, men, everywhere. So, yes. There's the Red Queen, Jalan's grand-mother, yes. But despite her position, her involvement in the story stays really thin, as for every single woman in this book. They always stay in the background, and rarely *talk* (except for the beginning), even when they are powerful (the Silent Sister, Chella...) That's why despite their apparitions, it gives the impression that men make the show and men only, and I didn't like that. *There*. I said it.

? If you read *Prince of Thorns* and didn't stand my favorite little cutthroat (seriously?), you might enjoy this one more for sure.

? If you read *Prince of Thorns* and were bored, I'm not sure that this one will be better for you, but, you know, I'm no fortune teller.

? If you read *Prince of Thorns* and absolutely adored it, you'll either like or love this one, so, yeah, **what are you waiting for?**

? If you never read *Prince of Thorns* , you... Wait - *WHAT?*

➡ As a conclusion, **take my rating as an average more than anything else**, because if I loved the flawed and complex characters, I can't deny that they weren't enough to hold my interest throughout the 500 pages of this book - even if meeting again with the characters from *Prince of Thorns* was wonderful (I need more Jorg, though). As it is, I'll read the sequel, because I trust Mark Lawrence to offer us some great twists and I hope that I'll reach the involvement that was mine in Jorg's story and that was sadly absent here. *Make me care, dammit!*

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

Battles are all about strategy, and strategy pivots on priorities. Since my priorities were Prince Jalan, Prince Jalan, and Prince Jalan, with "looking good" a distant fourth, I took the opportunity to resume running away.

Replace "Prince Jalan" with "Khanh" in those sentences, and you got me down to a Tee. Which might go a long way towards explaining why I loved the main character so much.

The thing is, **I don't like a knight in shining armor**. I like them tarnished, covered in mud, or better yet, camouflaged, so they observe in hiding, snickering, while the foolish heroes rush in first and die.

I'm a fucking wimp, ok? I talk big, but it's all on paper. Trust me, if you put a monster in front of me, I'm gonna fucking run. **I like a main character who is, well, like me!** Someone to whom I can relate. Imperfect, who is more wont to run and hide instead of facing a dragon, and consequently, end up in said dragon's digestive system.

We do taste good with ketchup.

Do you like **Norse mythology? Anti-heroes?**

Do you want to take all the **romance** in the world and **shove it up someone's anal sphincter?**

Does **necromancy** sound like the perfect Saturday night?

Want some **epic Bromance?**

If so, there's a pretty good probability you might enjoy this book. No, it's not a perfect book. If you've read

Prince of Thorns and absolutely hated the little shithead that is Jorg (hell, I consider it one of my favorites and even I think he's a little shithead) you will probably like this much more. **The main character in this book is a whole lot more likeable.**

I have to admit my bias. Lawrence has a tendency to write characters that I really, really like, and I happen to be a huge fan of this book's main character. **No, it's not a perfect book, but every other sentence from the main character had me shouting, YEAH, MAN!** And really, that's all I could ask for.

The Summary:

There's power in a name. "Prince" has served me very well—something to hide behind when trouble comes.

Prince Jalan is the equivalent of, not Prince William, or Prince Henry, but more like Prince Andrew. You know, Queen Elizabeth II's completely worthless son who spends his time womanizing, racking up debts, and being an embarrassment to the throne.

That's Jalan in a nutshell. It's not like Jalan even **WANTS** the throne in the first place, no sir! He's more than happy to use his parents' money, rack up a ton in debts, and worm his way between any woman's legs who will have him. And with a princely title, **you can bet he gets a lot of pussy.** It's a good life. He's, like, 10th in line to the throne, which means unless there's going to be a huge fucking assassin plot to eliminate the royal bloodline, he'll never come close enough to the throne to lick it. Not that he ever will, because his terrifying grandmother is the **Red Queen**, and isn't going to kick the bucket anytime soon despite being 70.

She had to have seventy years on her, but no one would have called her more than fifty. Handsome or not, though, her eyes would turn any man's bowels to water. Flinty chips of dispassion.

Because she's fucking terrifying. And her unseen companion, the **Silent Sister** is even more so, because she has haunted Jalan, one of the few who can see her.

She turned that awful face towards me, one eye dark, the other milk and pearl. It had felt hot, suddenly, as if all the great hearths had roared into life with one scorching voice, sparked into fury on a fine summer's day, the flames leaping from iron grates as if they wanted nothing more than to be amongst us.

Sometimes he thinks he's crazy. Maybe he is.

Until the Viking shows up. Nothing good ever happens when a Viking shows up. Oh, come on. They come in all RAWR and hulking and huge, and the next thing you know, they're **spouting off stories about a Demon King who's raising an army of the dead.**

"Men of the Drowned Isles broke amongst us. Some living, others corpses preserved from rot, and other creatures still—half-men from the Brettan swamps, corpse-eaters, ghouls with venomous darts that steal a man's strength and leave him helpless as a newborn."

Seriously, what a fucking killjoy, that **Snorri**. If only his name didn't sound so cuddly. A few stories of monsters roaming the night, the doors of hell, or, rather, Hel, opening up.

You would **THINK** those were just stories, fuck, Jalan wishes that they were just stories, until the ground literally opened up in front of him. Now **Jalan just wants to get the fuck away. Unfortunately, it ain't happening.**

Because Snorri and Jalan are **LITERALLY tied to each other through magic**. They may not be physically tied together, but they are connected, somehow. There's a sensation of wrongness when they are separated. **And thus, we have a very reluctant partnership between an itinerant playboy prince, and an honor-bound Viking on a person rescue mission.**

They will face the shadows of darkness.

They will receive mysterious missives.

And maybe our playboy prince will finally learn there's more in him than he ever thought possible. That he's capable of more than just wining and womanizing. That there is a sense of honor and compassion in him, after all. Maybe a life seeking glory on the battlefield is the kind of life he needs, to make a man out of a prince.

Tenth in line to a throne will get you into a not-insignificant number of bedchambers, but if a man dons the scarlet cloak of the Red March riders and wraps his legs around a destrier, there are few ladies of quality who won't open theirs when he flashes a smile at them.

Well...baby steps.

The Setting:

I could see corpses and timbers, some black against the hot glow, others melting into it. Even the wind's strength couldn't keep the scent of roasting flesh from my nostrils. The walkway ran with hot fats, burning even as they spilled down the inner wall.

Truth be told, **it's a fairly generic high fantasy universe, but I liked it anyway**. It is the same world as that of *Prince of Thorns*, and it reminds me a lot of the **MMORPGs** that I have played, which is why it feels so familiar. There are mighty Nordic Viking men, a team of bluff, blunder-filled, brave, hardy souls who are filled with a sense of honor and pride. I can't remember much of *Prince of Thorns*, but the setting in this book feels a lot darker, with **elements of the undead, and a quest not for the throne, but into the bowels of hell itself**.

Jalan:

I've always found hitting a man from behind to be the best way to go about things. This can sometimes be accomplished by dint of a simple ruse. Classics such as, "What's that over there?" work surprisingly often.

That is the opening line of the book, and **right then and there, I knew Jalan and I were going to get along just fine**. Jalan is my favorite sort of character, an anti-hero who starts off taking the easy path, and is consequently dragged onto the hard path (and the only path), kicking and screaming all the while.

He's not the most honorable man in the world.

"You're a man of honour." Louder this time, looking right at me. Where the hell he got that idea, I had no notion.

"Yes," I lied.

"We should settle this like men." Absolutely the last words I wanted to hear.

He is a womanizer, he has a terrible, snarky sense of humor. His sense of honor is nonexistent, as is his sense

of loyalty and friendship.

“What’s his name?” A tall Nuban girl with copper loops through her ears and a mouth made for kissing. “How is he called?”

“Snorri,” I said. “It means wife-beater.”

He tends to avoid things, and memories, when they get unpleasant.

I have a bad habit of blanking unpleasantness from my mind—something I’ve done since I was a child. They often say the best liars half-believe their lies—which makes me the very best because if I repeat a lie often enough I can end up believing it entirely, no half measures involved!

But he is not without his complexity, throughout his escapades, he maintains a sense of loyalty, however he struggles against it. **Jalan is not without honor, not without conscience.** And he has depths and insights one would hardly expect from someone who is self-professedly "shallow."

Bravery is just a different kind of broken. Scared of being a coward, is that what bravery is? Am I brave because I don’t fear being afraid? You’re of the light; the light reveals. Shine a bright enough light on any kind of bravery and isn’t it just a more complex form of cowardice?”

Snorri:

Snorri cut me off. “I took the prince out of the palace, but the palace is still crammed firmly up the prince’s arse. You need to stop moaning about every hardship, stop chasing every woman you lay eyes on, and concentrate on surviving.

Snorri is Jalan's **perfect foil**. He is a warrior, through and through, with all the pride that is in his name and heritage. He is a hulking Viking brute to Jalan's sleek, sheltered princeliness. Snorri kills, but he kills with a purpose. He is not without mercy, but only to those who deserve it. Those who betray him will suffer the consequences.

“An axe for me. Swords trick you into thinking you can defend. With an axe all you can do is attack. That’s what my father named me. Snorri. It means ‘attack.’” He lifted the axe above his head. “Men think they can defend against me—but when I knock, they open.”

Snorri is a compassionate man, a loving man, **a family man** who will--and does--go to the ends of the earth to save his family. He is a man on a mission. Their bond is a tenuous one, but one that works to both their benefits.

The Bromance:

The air between Snorri and me spat and sparked as our hands shaped to grasp the other.

Nope! I didn't misspell that, because **THERE IS NO ROMANCE IN THIS BOOK**. There's just the joyous bromance of Snorri and Jalan. Ok, fine, so I may be stretching it a little, but come on, a **giant of a Viking and a golden-haired prince?** A girl can dream.

He brought his hand closer to mine and a pressure built against my skin, all pins and needles and fire.

I kid, I kid. There's no true romance in this book between Snorri and Jalan, **just an uneasy alliance that forces them together** through magic. But truly, Snorri brings out the best in Jalan, and I can totally ship them for that =)

Snorri's magic had reached into me again and made me brave. In that moment I wanted to be the one to stand between the child and her attackers. To keep her safe. And failing that, to hunt them to the ends of the earth.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"I'm a liar and a cheat and a coward, but I will never, ever, let a friend down. Unless of course not letting them down requires honesty, fair play or bravery."

Prince Jalan Kendeth is tenth in line for the throne. His grandmother, the spry 70 year old Red Queen, may have prudently dropped him down the list due to a whole host of his self inflicted bouts of poor conduct. He doesn't exactly stipulate his disgruntlement, but we get the idea that he believes he might be more deserving of, say, eighth in line. I think we can all agree though that several warm bodies between Jalan and the throne is an excellent idea.

As I've watched the Windsor boys grow up, one of the things that has always made me smile to think about is how much more fun Prince Harry can have being the spare rather than what Prince William can have being the heir presumptive. Prince Charles I always think of as the man who is still waiting. He is trying to live long enough to be king, but with each passing year he looks more and more fragile, while his mother, Queen Elizabeth, looks like she is good to go for decades yet.

Prince Jalan is even further removed from the throne than Prince Harry, though if William and Katherine keep having children, Harry might find himself someday in the double digits on the list of succession. Not a problem for Harry, and really, truth be known, Jalan doesn't want the responsibility of...well...anything. He drinks too much when funds allow him. He gambles too recklessly whenever someone will extend him credit. He has one sore finger, barely healed, from the last time he didn't pay his debts. He is glib of tongue and has hands that deftly survey the landscape of a woman's body well before she has even decided yes or no. Jalan often finds himself making a mad dashes for freedom from a woman's bed chamber, a half step ahead of her well armed and murderous relatives.

Jalan is not a very likeable person. He is not a very productive or useful person, and it isn't such a bad thing that he is a natural born coward, but it is annoying that he constantly reminds us about his lack of courage. **"Humanity can be divided into madmen and cowards. My personal tragedy is in being born into a world where sanity is held to be a character flaw."** After all, few of us know how we would react in the midst of a battle until we are actually in the middle of a conflict. I could see myself screaming and running as fast as I can in the other direction if I'm faced with a line of giant Vikings or even midget ninjas. Or I might be overcome with bloodlust and charge like a bloody fool with the intent of planting my battle axe into someone's skull. I don't know and frankly hope I never will, but if I proved cowardly, I would do my best to gloss over that detail.

My sneaking suspicion is that Jalan is not the coward he thinks he is. He just may not have encountered the proper motivation to be courageous.

His grandmother, the Red Queen, has a sister called the Silent Sister, who for whatever reason seems to have a special affinity for haunting Jalan. She gives him the heebie jeebies.

She turned that awful face towards me, one eye dark, the other milk and pearl. It had felt hot, suddenly, as if all the great hearths had roared into life with one scorching voice, sparked into fury on a fine summer's day, the flames leaping from iron grates as if they wanted nothing more than to be amongst us.

She curses him. Well, in the Broken Empire how is one to know if someone cares for them if they don't put a big, fat, nasty curse on them. This curse is a pairing curse, and Jalan finds himself with an albatross around his neck in the form of a Viking so large that he makes other Vikings look like underfed wastrels. His size is not the problem, but his desire to launch himself into the middle of every conflict he encounters is a huge problem. See, the curse doesn't allow Jalan to ever be very far away from the Viking, so whenever Snorri Ver Sagason decides to make a mess of blood and guts out of someone or a whole tribe of someones, Jalan is forced to be right in the middle with him.

They must break this curse before Snorri gets Jalan killed!

Now this story is running parallel to the Broken Empire trilogy starring Jorg Ancrath. Jorg and Jalan exist in the same world, but that is about as much as they have in common, and in this book they even breathe the same air for a very brief amount of time. The meeting that left me chortling was between Jalan and Katherine Ap Scorrion, who has a relationship with Jorg Ancrath that would be labelled complicated on Facebook. I was already wincing before there was an audible double crack. **"I've always felt that the placement of a man's testicles is an eloquent argument against intelligent design."** Jalan discovers that Katherine, despite how she looks, is not a hot house orchid waiting to be plucked by any random prince who happens to find her mildly attractive.

Despite his murderous tendencies, I warmed to Jorg rather quickly, but I found myself struggling to appreciate Jalan as much as I thought I should. He is honest about himself almost to a fault, but he lacks that ambitious drive that made me begrudgingly respect Jorg. The world that Mark Lawrence has created in the Broken Empire trilogy continues to be extended in Prince of Fools. I am certainly curious as to where Lawrence will take his characters next and what more he will reveal about this world forever altered by the explosions of thousands of suns.

I've officially called off the search and undisclosed reward I called for to find Mark Lawrence in my review of King of Thorns. My agents must have been getting close, despite the slippery cold warrior tactics of Mr. Lawrence because he finally capitulated and sent me a signed copy of Prince of Fools. Thank you, Mark, for your generosity, but really, was it the Nubian Nightmare or the Russian Wrecker who finally made the writing pen tremble in your hand?

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I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Robin Hobb says

I was very fortunate to receive this book as an ARC (Advance Reading Copy.) I've enjoyed Mark Lawrence's

work before, and I knew that he had a wry twist of humor that he can inject into the darkest of scenes. I was not prepared for 'laugh out loud' moments, especially not when our heroes are in danger up to their brows! There are special rewards in store here for readers of the The Broken Empire series. Highly recommended.

Kyle says

I really had a love/hate relationship with this one!

First, the hate: The main character, Prince Jalan Kendeth, was the type of character I really hated. The entire novel he spent trying to get “away” from what was happening. He was more likely to run away from conflict than anything else. If his new friends needed help he was probably the last one they could depend on. His main focus of the entire book? Find a way to get back home to his gambling, drinking, and women. Find a solution to the conflict that was plaguing the world? Not his problem.

The love? Snorri ver Snagason, the Viking! He was the exact opposite of Prince Jalan. If he saw something wrong, he was the first one there to make it right. If there was a conflict, he was the first one to rush in swing his great big ax. His fighting prowess was unequaled. He is the one throughout the book pushing forward toward the final conflict. Jalan is the main character of the book and the story is told through his eyes but Snorri is the driving force of the book. Without him, there would be no story, no plot, no conflict, nothing.

Another problem I struggled with was the lack of action throughout the first 80% of the book. There were bits and pieces here and there but it just was not enough to keep the book exciting for me. It seemed to be page after page of listening to Jalan bitch about his gambling debts, being chased by some girls older brother because he'd slept with his sister, the ground is too hard to sleep on, it's too hot, too cold, he wants to go home, or some other complaint. It just went on for page after page after page and continued throughout the novel. I get that was Jalan and it was his character but it got old for me after the first 25%. It just didn't add anything to the story and slowed everything down. Made it hard to want to come back to the book when I had time to read.

For me, the great thing about Mark Lawrence's writing are the descriptions. They are stunning in their detail and realism. He describes these vast frozen wastelands and it's like being there yourself. You can't help but shiver! Don't even get me started on the fights! For me, this is what really made the book worth reading.

I am hoping book two spends a lot less time with character building. I know Jalan is an ass. We can move on now. Let's just concentrate on the plot now.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

My rating is 3.5 stars.

The Broken Empire trilogy stands as a seminal work in the fantasy genre, a grimdark extravagance which turned many a head. Jorg Ancrath an unforgettable protagonist who changed the genre forever in my mind. Mark Lawrence's brilliance as a storyteller a revelation. But like all stories, no matter how great, Jorg's personal journey came to an end, and fans of the series cried out for more! This fascinating post-apocalyptic world too glorious, too rich with untold stories to leave just yet.

Well, thankfully, Mr. Lawrence himself wasn't ready to depart the Broken Empire. *The Red Queen's War* returning to this mesmerizing place, introducing a new, very different main character in Prince Jalan Kendeth, third son of the Red Queen's third son: a liar, gambler, womanizer, cheat, and — above all else — a coward!

No matter Prince Jalan's intentions of spending his life carousing the bars and gambling dens with his friends, leaping from ladies' windows while evading enraged brothers, and attempting to make the most of being the tenth in line to the throne, he cannot escape the dark sorcery and momentous machinations permeating the Broken Empire. His destiny to become an integral part of the Red Queen's War: the lifelong struggle his grandmother has been waging against hidden foes bent on the destruction of the whole world. The conflict now supposedly escalating into an undead army being raised by the Dead King. But Jalan finds it all incredibly boring and tedious. His grandmother's constant speeches about it all mind numbing. Rather he views it all as telltale signs the old crone is on her last leg, nearly ready to go ahead and graciously die already.

But then fate intervenes in the Prince's life. A boring evening at the opera turning into a near death experience, as Jalan barely escapes being caught in a devastating spell cast by the Red Queen's mysterious (and seemingly invisible) witch the Silent Sister. When the magic goes awry, it binds Jalan to a muscle-bound northman named Snorri ver Snagason, who is on a quest to the icy north to rescue his family and confront the minions of the Dead King. So, naturally, Jalan attempts to get the hell away from the lunatic as fast as possible — only to find the spell will kill him if he does not stay close to his new companion.

Forced to "volunteer" for Snorri's suicide mission, Jalan finds himself traveling across the Broken Empire, confronting many familiar faces from Mark Lawrence's previous trilogy and attempting to runaway from all the dangers he stumbles into. Each step into the north leading him closer to an epic confrontation with the most heinous foe. More importantly, each step means Jalan is running out of time to break the spell, get the hell away from Snorri, and return home to the inviting arms of the DeVeer sisters — all of them!

As much as I was enraptured by Jorg Ancrath's tale in *The Broken Empire*, I have to go ahead and confess that I much prefer reading about Jalan. A rakish playboy with an easy charm and a witty comment for any situation he instantaneously becomes the guy you'd like to hang out with and drink a few beers, go gambling with, or watch some fights. No, you would never trust him with your money or your honey, but the guy is damn likable. Even his penchant for getting the hell out of the way of danger is more a foible which is understandable and clever than a horrible character trait. (I mean, who wouldn't want to run the other way if you were facing certain death.) So while the book had a much different tone than *Prince of Thorns*, it worked amazingly well for me, because of Jalan.

For those more concerned with how Jalan's tale and the Red Queen's War fit into the Broken Empire saga, I have to assure you Mr. Lawrence does an outstanding job harmonizing the two: Jorg's personal journey meshing seamlessly with the Red Queen's War, separate and distinct yet part of the same overarching struggle. He is even able to find entertaining, fitting ways for Jalan and Jorg to nearly crossing paths on a few occasions without it impacting the previous trilogy. Our cowardly prince having some page turning encounters with prominent figures from *The Broken Empire*. Jalan's humor always front-and-center, turning

the bleakest, most depressing Ancrath moment into sheer comedic genius. This whole story line gifting readers with some of the best moments in the book by far.

Even with all that being said though, this isn't really a "happier" story than Jorg's tale. Here we have the fate of Snorri's family and the sense of impending doom from the Dead King's minions filling the majority of scenes. Sure, there is more humor and camaraderie between Jalan and Snorri than anyone in *Thorns*, but these are only brief interludes before shadows close back in, smothering the tale in grimdark gloom — which might or might not be a bad thing according to your perspective.

All of which is a perfect segue into my main criticism of *Prince of Fools*: the journey. As I mentioned, I loved Jalan, really warmed to his humor and his rakish ways, but once he leaves his homeland to journey north with Snorri, there were many times where I grew horribly bored with it all. Not the times where Jalan is crossing paths with Jorg or other *Thorns* alumni, but when the companions are traversing these seemingly endless, totally dull countries, sailing across oceans, or interacting with the Viking-esque northmen, nothing much happens other than Snorri and his tragic history being introduced. Yes, my heart wept for this man and his lost family, but I kept asking myself when were we going to get to see Jalan do something fun again. Maybe that is shallow of me, yet it is exactly what I was thinking up until the rousing ending, which saved the second half of the book for me.

On the whole, *Prince of Fools* is a great introduction to an amazing new character in Jalan. Mr. Lawrence having now created two, stellar protagonists who are absolutely nothing alike except in their ability to make readers fall in love with them. Definitely, new readers should probably start their journey through the Broken Empire with Jorg's tale in *Thorns*, but if the more bloodthirsty approach of my favorite Ancrath is too much, you could hop on Jalan's journey without missing too much. Just understand going in that Snorri might make you snore and that the journey does seem like it is to the ends of the earth.
