



The Witch Doctor

Christopher Stasheff

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Bite from Spider King sends Saul 25, student of physics, philosophy and karate, after only friend Matthew, to world where rhymes are spells and Good always vanquishes Evil. He refuses to commit to either side, yet binds ghost Angelique, whose body screams from torture by evil Queen Suettay. Saving his love will free country of Allustria.

Saul heals 'doctors' witches, rescues helpers, calls guardian angel against devils. Elf prince tames troll Gruesome, offers aid. St Moncaire knight-monk adds squire Gilbert 18. Father Ignatius hears witches' confessions. Poet Frisson scribbles more spells. Jailed 'Rat Raiser' was top bureaucrat. Gremlin and Max are amoral demons of mischief and entropy. Matt adds gang from four years, while Saul questions morality.

The Witch Doctor Details

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From Reader Review The Witch Doctor for online ebook

Lori Akins says

I really liked this book, but again I would have re liked I if the author would have explained more of the Catholic or Christian aspects do those of us who didn't get a lot of the Church education.

Please explain more of the Christian views for those of us who didn't get to spend or were given much chance to be exposed to a Secular teachings. Thank You !

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in August 2000.

The third of Stasheff's Wizard in Rhyme series almost completely ignores the characters introduced in the first two novels. Indeed, it reprises a good deal of the plot of the first one, Her Majesty's Wizard, with a different central character, as Saul Bremener looks into the disappearance of his friend Matt Mantrell, finds the parchment Matt had been working on before he vanished, becomes obsessed with it in turn, and finds himself in a fantasy universe. He is meant to save the kingdom of Allustria from its usurping monarch, just as Matt was brought to the neighbouring country of Merovence to do the same thing there.

As in the other two novels, much of the interest in The Witch Doctor is derived from the way in which Stasheff takes medieval Catholic doctrine seriously. Here, it is much better integrated into the plot than it was before; the earlier novels tended to use it over frequently as an easy way out of a tight corner. Stasheff helps himself through Saul's attitude to it, formed by a rejected strict religious upbringing which leads him to initially be contemptuous of the idea that Christianity could have any meaning, and a strong determination to be his own man rather than doing the bidding of God or the Devil.

At the same time, however, the plotting is very formulaic, as characters move from one puzzle to the next as though they were taking part in a role playing game rather than a novel. The characters themselves are ciphers, even Saul being far too much like a replay of Matt. The novel is rather like the later part of the Xanth series by Piers Anthony in this respect, though it thankfully avoids most of the awful puns that are so important there.

Mike (the Paladin) says

We get to drop back to the time when Matt first changed worlds here and follow one of his friends as he ends up following. A lot of the same humor ground gets ployed from a different point of view with a change in view-point. Still fun still worth reading.

Brain candy, but good brain candy.

Lori says

I really enjoy this one as well, but it is getting one star knocked off for having the exact scene, word for word, from the second book in the series. If it were just the same idea, it wouldn't bother me, but the dialogue makes way less sense with this cast of characters than the last set.

Nathan Dehoff says

While the first two books of this series were focused on Matthew Mantrell, a graduate student who was transported to a more fantastic but less morally complicated world and became a wizard, this one mostly follows his friend Saul Bremener, who finds himself in the same world and is even more reluctant than Matt was to dedicate himself to either good or evil. He seeks to defeat Suettay, the witch queen of Allustria, and manages to save several of her hench-witches, hence the title. He teams up with his guardian angel, a poet whose rhymes come true, a troll who's enchanted not to eat people, a squire, and an attractive ghost. They also ally themselves with the Spider King, who has his own dimension that intersects the others. There's more discussion of the nature of alternate worlds, and of course a lot of moral philosophy. Saul isn't really as morally ambiguous as he makes himself out to be, and even the other characters notice this, so it's probably intentional. The thing is, the way this world is written, there doesn't seem to be any real reason NOT to choose good over evil, as they're both clearly and unambiguously defined. I've written before about the God of the Bible frequently doesn't follow His own moral code, but this series doesn't really get into that.

Cyn Bagley says

This is an interesting twist on the term witch doctor. It has some Christian themes that are well-done in a world where good and evil are fighting a huge battle. I enjoyed the writing style, the story, and the ending.

Deborah says

I loved the first two books. What happened? This was extremely tiresome, in part because it took large chunks from the first book. There was hardly anything original in it, and it got to be a real slog to get through.

Jammies says

While there are a number of good things about this book, I am disappointed and irritated by the fact that Mr. Stasheff felt it was necessary to repeat a scene from Her Majesty's Wizard, verbatim and in full. The only things which changed in this book were the characters' names.

An Odd1 says

Quest bogs down in philosophy blather, repetition, plagiarism from #1,2 in series; denial reputes hero. Saul, seeking his only pal Matt, wakes from spider bite to spectacular scenery "most glorious sunsets" p 43, a world where rhymes are spells, and Good always conquers Evil (no spoiler). Saving spirit and body of gorgeous Angelique (screams, cries, thus motivates) trapped by evil Queen Suettay also frees country of Allustria ('Allemagne' (en Français Germany) "combined with Austria" p 49). Deservedly forgot read before.

Saul denies reality, allegiance, yet helpers flock. His everpresent guardian angel (dad?) combats devils, if called. Geas from "elfin prince" p 67 tames carnivorous troll Gruesome, promises aid on-call. Demons of entropy and mischief, Max and Gremlin, are amoral. To older Saul, "from the airy height of 25", squire Gilbert 18 seems "very young" p 70. Order of Saint Moncaire, patron of Merovence, trains monk-warriors, like Templars. (view spoiler).

Father Ignatius hears confessions of witches, so Saul can heal repentant sick (thus title) by spells from himself and prolific scribbler Frisson. Freed prisoner 'Rat Raiser' (commands rodents), former chief bureaucrat (government by desks), and Matt's team are vital in the final battle. Typo? "Parkinson's Laws" operate here, more familiar to me as Murphy's Law <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Huc56....>

Three days ago, Matt left behind a parchment he was translating, now spiders infest the empty rooms. An especially "big fat one" p 19 bites Saul on the neck while he translates runes on a brand-new parchment to "Hey Paul (nickname), get in touch" p 13. "Time moves at a different rate here" p 398, four years have passed in Merovence. Matt is Lord Wizard to wife Queen Alisande, rides on dragon Stegoman, aided by Black Knight Sir Guy and entropy demon Max.

Arachnids continue to inform "scampered straightaway back" p 339 the Spider King. Master manipulator weaves plots "at the nexus of the worlds" p 246, "between the universes" p 247, his "tendrils reaching where "my analog, one very like to me, was born", on Earth "Louis XI" p 238, sends unwanted companions to defeat evil Queen Suettay. Souhaite is wish en Français "French word for wishes, intentions, as in 'I wish you a good day' " p 31. Reason for villain name, maybe pun, is incomprehensible, like more boring blather skipped.

Philosopher by degree studying for physics Master *continually* argues the meaning of good and evil, refuses to commit to either, denies "hallucination" p 20, "raving delusions" p 35. Ad nauseum. He acts opposite of claim "determined not to be committed, you see - not to a woman, not to an idea, not even to myself, if I can help it - but especially not to good or evil" p 276. Presence is "here *because* of a friend" Matt p 300.

Passages from previous books repeat - #1 same *Greensleeves* song binds lovers, Max p 275. #2 talcum powder circle, monster Grendel from "wondrous tale of the hero Boewulf" p 167, "Seventy Simmery Axe" p 177, Bruitfort torture scene p 194. Suettay left unconfined like Bruitfort, but no argument against death sentence. Rather they know not how to kill her yet because her heart is elsewhere. Decision reversed "kill in cold blood .. selling our own souls to Satan .. true of slaying the peasant soldiers .. not true of their master .. murder us all" p 369. Skip all.

(view spoiler) "Eternity is a very long time" p 394.

Saul behaves well despite contrary refusal to 'commit', kind, rescues Frisson (view spoiler), again with Ignatius (view spoiler). Karate student since childhood bullies knows how to fight. Blow-by-blow is reminiscent of Louis L'Amour, especially boxing bouts <https://www.goodreads.com/review/list....>

Supernatural stretches to excess. Elfin prince sees "aura", Gilbert's commander dreams "this man is a hinge - upon him will turn great events, and if he can be held to the path of goodness" p 57. Yet not tested. Fleshly temptation is classic "where Circe beguiled the men of Odysseus dwells a nymph named Thyme" p 249, he ignores "more beautiful and seductive and sensuous" p 307, has to rescue succumbed Frisson again.

"Frisson" translates "thrill" en Français, used like 'shiver'. Again, do *you* see relevance?

Typo:

p 256 "hoped to witness the end of this sage that unwinds" is saga

p 309 "I? Be without mercy?" has no connection with poem above, yet

p 322 "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is the translation quoted 13 pages earlier

Dyanna says

Good book interesting philosophy. The action was good Saul/Paul was a reluctant hero. Who fought himself every step of the way and refuse to choose sides between God and the Devil as was the way of the people in the "world that he stumbles into searching for his friend Matt. Even when confronted with the obvious he insisted that it was all a hallucination unfortunately it was one that could hurt you or kill you. His lack of beliefs in magic was funny even as he was busy casting spells left and right with the help of a poet/wizard he befrinded he insisted that he didn't really believe in magic.

astral says

If I never read about another sleepy eyelid, it'll be too soon.

Lori says

While the series starts out as quite entertaining, it starts to fall off in plot quality after the first four titles.

Frank Taranto says

I like this series the best of the one's I've started.

Nicholas says

About the same as the first two books. Just basic, good fantasy.

Julie says

I thought this book stood well on its own. It is the first book I have read in this series and I would read others.

A multi-dimensional world, an unlikely hero, interesting characters, true love and yet not a love story... who could ask for more?
