



Shadows of Doom

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The winter had begun.

At Gunnaring Gap, the valiant Riders of Valon began their charge. And though Challerain Keep lay in ruins and butchery had led to the capture of Princess Laurelin, heroes strode forth from the ranks of Men, Elves, Warrows and Dwarves to turn the tide of doom. And across the land ruled by unnatural dark, freedom flickered and burst into flame...

Shadows of Doom Details

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Max says

Well, this was certainly a book I read. It's not particularly better than the first one overall, though there are a few improvements, but I can't really say it's worse, either. The section about the Warrows fighting Ghouls was fun, and while it had obvious parallels to the Scouring of the Shire, I'm okay with that, since that's one of my favorite parts of Lord of the Rings. Seeing a bunch of normal people rise up and be awesome is always fun. Merilee was surprisingly cool in this section, as was the princess. I'm glad to see a few female characters with some degree of agency and action, since I honestly didn't expect that. Still would have been nice to have that from the start of the trilogy, though. A lot of the rest of the book was a bit of a let down, though. Both Modru and the Gargon are kinda lame once I actually got to see them, and the crawl through "this totally isn't Moria guys honest" was pretty boring. There were a few interesting concepts mentioned in some of the conversations about the world, like the elves consistently traveling between the middle and high worlds and only bearing children in the latter. And even if he is a bit generic, it was fun to see McKiernan's version of a dwarf. The writing remains competent, though I think the author's overuse of archaic or otherwise uncommon words started to bug me a bit more in this installment. I will say that while I was unsure whether to continue when I finished the previous book, after this one, I'm definitely going to go ahead and finish up this trilogy. Of course, that's probably as much inertia as anything else. This isn't the worst fantasy novel I've read, but I think even by the standards of Tolkien-derivatives, there isn't much to recommend here. I somehow still have hopes for the Silver Call sequel, though.

Stephen says

I enjoyed the series. It's no secret that McKiernan was inspired by Tolkien and I think he has done a decent job creating his own fantasy world. At times the homages / inspiration feels too much like copying, but overall it's well done. The writing itself is not as good as the overall creation of the world the story is set in. Often dialogue & hero exploits feels contrived.

East Bay J says

Alright, so, no noticeable change with book two of *The Iron Tower Trilogy*. McKiernan still rambles on, lots of words, more words than words, words, words. And all dramatic like. The Tolkien thing is still in full effect. I did consider that this may be McKiernan's idea of a *tribute* to Tolkien, but I've considered a lot of dumb stuff in my lifetime. My grandpa taught me about skimming when you read and I gotta' say, I found myself skimming just to save having to read all those *words*. Man, I *like* words! I think they're great! This guy, though. Sheesh! All the freakin' crazy *WORDS*! I did find myself at one point asking, "Is the writing actually getting *better*?" Then I realized the combination of skimming and familiarity was responsible and not any improvement on Dennis' part. Hey, I give credit where credit is due and none is due here. The repetition is still quite prominent. There is a lot of repetition. McKiernan often repeats himself. Dennis seems to have been incapable of shaking the poor habit of repeating himself. See? Pretty annoying, isn't it? Oh, and there's a goddamned *synopsis*. Really? Did I mention the repetition thing?

Starting book three. Can't wait!

Norman Howe says

I picked this up from a free-books shelf, and found it somewhat disappointing. Some of this may result from starting a trilogy in the middle, but that's not it.

This is a clone of "The Lord of the Rings." There are even scenes which reflect in detail chapters from Tolkien's epic. We have hobbits, under different names. We have Elves, Dwarfs, Men, an Evil One controlling undead armies, a Dark Shadow falling across the land, and so forth.

There are many tales like this, but this one skates much closer to the edge than I like. Oh, the writing is good. It's just the originality that's lacking.

Given the trilogy is the author's first fictional work, some of this can be excused, but not the plot plagiarism. As this is from the 1980s, I hope there is more, good stuff from this author.

Greg says

Lots of travelling in this novel, the second act of the Iron Tower series. It holds up pretty well, as the good guys gather their forces and chase around after the bad guys. Some quests seem needlessly prolonged, just an excuse to describe more of the world of Mithgar (one long boat ride comes to mind) but McKiernan is just following the example of his model, Tolkien.

The battles in the Bosky are interesting and my only complaint is the use of the term "the Struggles" which reminds one of Ireland's "Troubles," which is perhaps McKiernan's aim, but seems to come off tone-deaf to me. Nobody even seems to have a religion in Mithgar, which is interesting in itself, and I wish McKiernan had explained that a bit. Maybe he does in another book, I have only read the Iron Tower and Silver Call.

Ryan says

Way too much of the story was taken from LotR.

Chris Peters says

Look—these are silly. The dialog is not great, the characters are all mystified at everything, and the whole thing is basically a fan-written version of the Lord Of The Rings. For example, in this one we get the Mines of Moria and the Scourging Of The Shire.

BUT DESPITE ALL THAT—they really are fun. And McKiernan does get you emotionally engaged with the characters.

But it could have been soooo much better.

Kyle says

I wanted to rate this higher. Really, I did. But I can't. My low rating has nothing to do with the story and everything to do with McKiernan's constant language swapping. It makes the story hard to read when every character has his own words for freaking EVERYTHING, up to and including *other characters' races* and it's bloody annoying to read a conversation in which one character's race is being called 3 different things - none of which are the name of the damned race.

Rex Libris says

The second book in the Iron Tower trilogy, the story gets better because the action picks and you get some great wholesale slaughter of the baddies.

The book contains a very controversial section, where the protagonist et al go through the former dwarven tunnels now inhabited by a baddie of exceptional power and might. The author says it is homage to Tolkien, others say it is a rip-off.

The little inanity I see in the book is the epithet given to the main baddie. He is responsible for the deaths of 10,000s of people at a time. But he also kidnaps the princess, so he is know as kinstealer. Forget the field after field of dead people, he kidnapped the princess! An object lesson in what is wrong about monarchies.

Anne Gazzolo says

I loved this book just as much as the first one. And just as the first one, there are a lot of nods to Middle-earth, here under other guise is Sting, lembas bread, Khazad-dum, the Balrog (though in some ways this one is even scarier though not wreathed in flame the same way) and the Straight Road. But as the first one, this is also very much its own story of the terrible struggle of good vs evil. Another treasure found in a used book store. Yea!

Dave says

Book two of the Iron Tower trilogy mainly focuses on Tuck and Galen as they traverse the land of Mithgar eventually finding two more companions(an elf and a dwarf)and advancing towards the southern regions in an attempt to gather forces and communicate what is going on in the north.

The book begins with the plight of Laurelin who has been captured by the forces of Modru and held in the actual Iron Tower. McKiernan really puts the pedal to the metal in this first chapter detailing the long harrowing journey north that a battered, bruised, and defeated Laurelin takes in the company of literal monsters.

Danner and Patrel return home in another chapter to gather the remaining forces there.

But the highlight is the Tolkien-like journey of Tuck, Galen and their two companions through the underground while pursued by enemy forces as well as their leader, a Gargon, which puts the fright in all. A very solid read and onto book three!

Lindsey says

I really enjoyed the continuation but it was a little slow at times.

Dave says

The second book of the Iron Tower Trilogy is Shadows of Doom. McKiernan definitely likes his needlessly pretentious titles.

Just when I was beginning to think that the Iron Tower was merely heavily inspired by Tolkien, rather than being a complete clone, I have to backpedal a bit. The Dark Tide actually had some events and plot elements that, while not exactly the most original, did definitely differentiate this story from the Lord of the Rings. Shadows of Doom, on the other hand, is like reading sections of the Lord of the Rings, just in a different order so that we, um, will not notice. And while Tolkien is often very eloquently wordy in his prose, McKiernan is just plain wordy at times.

Hopefully the conclusion to the trilogy follows more in the footsteps of the first book, rather than this one, or it is going to be another long short book.

Tina says

Better than the first. The princess turns into kind of a bad ass - spitting into the face of pure evil and not once complaining or giving up when she's taken captive. Hell, I was expecting her to cry and sob and be a total wimp, but I was impressed with her ferocity and strength. And Merilee as well, of course. Merilee is all I remember about this book from when I read it at twelve or thirteen year old. These were one of the first fantasy novels that got me into the genre, and I think Merilee (as well as Kitiara from DragonLance) was one of the first female characters who was tough and challenged the patriarchy around her. But I digress. The other characters stayed pretty much the same. Galen is kind of boring as the white knight guy and Tuck seems to break into tears every five minutes, for some unknown reason. But none of them are so lame as to be unlikable - they're just highly forgettable. The Gargon was a cool monster, though it reminded me a lot of that one from LoTR that "shall not pass."

The writing has improved though. It's still drags a little and tries too hard to be LoTR, but the author seems to be developing his own voice. The strongest parts are with Laurelin and the Warrows (or whatever they're called).

We'll see about book 3. All I remember is someone breaks their leg and walks on it. Funny thing to remember from fifteen year ago!

Sam McManus says

I didn't find SoD quite as fast paced and exciting as the first book but overall it was still enjoyable. There was the same kind of 'hearth-tale' feel to the narrative that fit well with the more simplistic writing and it was nice to be able to pick this book up in between my other readings for the occasional break.

As with the first book, I also had fun with a lot of the old style fantasy styles and cliches. The fight with the Gorgon and facing off his Dread in particular brought up lots of good gaming memories.

I continued to enjoy the same characters from the first book and was saddened by Vanidor's death, despite how little time he was around. Laurelin is another well done female character and I always enjoy her strength and intelligence despite the horrors she is currently going through.

I also think the idea of using the eclipse as the 'darkest day' and Gyphon's possible return was pretty cool. I'm liking the whole concept of Adon's Ban and the creatures need to spread lasting darkness before they can even move or attack.

I'm looking forward to the next part and finding out who that army was that showed up right at the end!
