



## Salute the Dark

*Adrian Tchaikovsky*

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Adrian Tchaikovsky

**Salute the Dark** Adrian Tchaikovsky

The fourth novel in the thrilling fantasy series: Shadows of the Apt. Following on from Empire in Black and Gold, Dragonfly Falling and Blood of the Mantis.

## Salute the Dark Details

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Author : Adrian Tchaikovsky

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## From Reader Review Salute the Dark for online ebook

### Patremagne says

Perhaps the single most devastating book I have ever read...

<http://abitterdraft.com/2013/09/salut...>

After I finished Blood of the Mantis, I immediately sent an email to Pyr asking after the rest of the series and they obliged. I soon found out that Pyr didn't have plans for anything after book 5, The Scarab Path, which is a shame because they format the books to be a bit taller, shortening the page count in exchange and making the books more feasible and less daunting. Not to mention having the beautiful covers designed by the very skilled Jon Sullivan. In the review, I also wrote about how quickly Shadows of the Apt was becoming my favorite series to date. After Salute, there can no longer be any doubt - Apt has taken the throne by force.

The world of the Apt and Inapt is in total war. The expansionist Wasp Empire is sweeping across the Lowlands and any outlying city that sparks a glint in Emperor Alvdan II's eye. War Master Stenwold Maker's agents are scattered everywhere in attempt to give the Lowlands any sort of advantage against the encroaching horde. Cities like Sarn and Myna are in open rebellion. Plots and twists are commonplace. Everything that has been building up over the first three books in the series culminate in Salute the Dark.

One of the highlights of the series is how Tchaikovsky manages to weave cultures of our world into the story and make them feel so real. The Solarnese feel genuinely like Renaissance Italians, the Wasps like the Romans or various other empires, as well as many others. Some of my favorite scenes from Blood of the Mantis took place in the sky – in orthopters, heliopters, fixed-wings, and even huge insects. The aerial aspect returns in Salute the Dark in much greater scale. To put the culture in perspective – just prior to World War I, some of the first stable propeller-driven aircraft began to be manufactured with the purpose of war in mind. People were drawn to these fascinating machines, and throughout the war the pilots styled themselves knights of the air. There was a distinct system of honor in the aerial part of the war, drawn from some branch of chivalry that medieval knights adhered to. Pilots would rarely aim to kill in their dogfights, their dances in the sky – they'd aim for wings, the rudder, anywhere but the cockpit. It was an almost unspoken rule – if you hit someone's engine and they could no longer fight, they'd glide to the ground in an attempt to land and, for the most part, would not be pursued – this counted as an aerial victory. Tchaikovsky implemented these same chivalrous ideals – the early tech of the vehicles, the aerial chivalry – into Blood and Salute, making the story feel that much more vivid.

Whereas Dragonfly Falling had some large battles and sieges in it, Salute truly felt like a total and utter world war. Sieges, rebellions, field battles, ambushes in the black of night, cavalry charges, aerial battles, flamethrowers, and even some horrific chemical warfare that felt all too real. Not only did the story include these traditional aspects of war, there was also an entire thread of gladiatorial combat with a huge culmination, again reminiscent of the Romans. People are reduced to savages in the audience, where skill is a non-factor for entertainment on the sands. The only thing that matters is that blood is spilled and in great quantity.

Salute the Dark is an incredibly apt name for the story. It is absolutely brutal. My heart was racing whenever I picked it up to read. Nobody is safe – you can feel the danger seeping from the pages. Aside from a few average characters of no outstanding martial quality, there is an abundance of characters in Shadows of the

Apt who are peerless in combat, able to cut down enemy after enemy without breaking a sweat. After finishing Salute, it almost seems like Tchaikovsky purposely used that trope of fantasy – the nigh-invincible swordsman or mage or rogue – just so he could turn it on its head and smack you in the face with it. This is real, visceral, brutal war.

Thus ends the first arc of Shadows of the Apt. Ties are wrapped up, but there is a definite sense of foreboding that has me compelled to continue the series. Unique in culture and character, massive in scale in every sense of the word, Shadows of the Apt has become my favorite fantasy series of all time and Salute the Dark is one of the best books I have read this year. If you haven't even started the series, you are really, really missing out.

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### **Corey Frampton says**

From the very beginning, this series has been amazing. The characters are real, three dimensional people with loves and fears and concerns. The setting is diverse and EXPANSIVE - so much so, that at times, it's difficult to keep track of where everything is.

There are men of honor, there are men with no honor, with greed, some with integrity and principles...

The fourth book brings to a conclusion a huge number of plot lines that have run throughout the first three volumes. It could, possibly, end the series here and leave a reader feeling well satisfied. But there is an inevitability to the ending... war is inevitable. Always, inevitable.

I can't say enough good things about the book without giving more of it away. It is very fast paced, aggressive in its resolutions of each plot line without stagnating or ever leaving you wondering about events for too long.

Be forewarned - some of your favorite characters are going to die. Some of the worst villains will survive - if you can't handle character death as a part of the plot line, you won't like this book.

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### **Eric says**

4 Stars

Wow. That was something. After a slower paced third book in the Shadows of the Apt series, Salute the Dark made up for lost time with a frantic flurry of action, resulting in a surprising ending that sets the stage for a whole new chapter in the story.

At the end of Blood of the Mantis, the Wasp armies were marshaling their forces, preparing for another foray into the Lowlands. Meanwhile the Shadow Box had been lost, stolen away by the mosquito kinden Uctebri to further his own plans. Stenwold gathers his allies for the fight they know is coming, worried that even together they won't be able to stand against the Wasp Empire.

The action in this book is fast and furious, particularly in the last third. As in the previous books, the scope of the story continues to grow, with each new entry showing more of the vast and fascinating world the author

has created. This time a glimpse is given into the Dragonfly Commonweal and the Bee city of Szar. Even more so than before, this increased scope meant that the narration jumped from character and location over and over as the conflict unfolded on several fronts. One of the side effects was that fewer characters were given a chance to shine in this book. Tisamon was given perhaps the most page time. Thalric also had several standout moments, cementing him as one of the most interesting characters in the series. One scene in particular was very memorable.

In Salute the Dark we see the plot threads began in Blood of the Mantis come to fruition. The alliance with Sarn, Salma and his army of renegades, the sowing of discord in the Spider city of Solarno, the schemes of Uctebri and Princess Seda in the Wasp capital. All of these come to some kind of resolution, some of them in surprising ways. More so than any of the previous books, the events were bloody and brutal. People die, battles are won and lost, and everywhere the cost of war is steep.

While I think Dragonfly Falling remains my favorite book so far in the series, Salute the Dark was another excellent book that left me very interested to see what happens next.

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### **Chris Berko says**

Immensely entertaining read. This series rivals anything I've read in ambition and scope and entertainment value. If you have not read any of the Apt books, do yourself a favor and do so, these are as good as anything else out there.

Now for the emotions. This was a gut-punch. If you've read Deadhouse Gates in Erikson's Malazan series you'll be at a good starting point. No one is safe in this world. EVERYONE is expendable and the author does not shy away from killing off beloved characters. Four books in and these people have become my friends, and it is this connection that Tchaikovsky spends fostering that makes it that much more excruciating. And this world is not done evolving, there have been technologies introduced that need exploring, characters coming to power that are still unknown players in the grand scheme of things, and revenges yet to be handed out. This guy has an unbelievable imagination, nothing is cliched, and there are still six books left for me to read in all.

Five very enthusiastic stars and a strong recommendation to those yet to explore these pages. Enjoy!

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### **sologdin says**

Seven or so major strands to the narrative, all of which steam right along. A fit conclusion to the war & numinous object storylines from the first three volumes. Generates effective pathos through key character deaths--one in particular is badass in execution, but then cheapened by an ambiguous epilogue. That said, so many others are not presented ambiguously, so one person running around mostly dead might be alright.

Love how the mosquito vision of the world is to turn back the clock to the bad old days when exsanguination of rivals was commonplace. Cool colloquy between engineers regarding the morality of chemical weapons deployment on non-combatants, and the implications of total war doctrine (235-37).

We see that "rich people love death" (220), so, yeah, a moment of realism.

Anyway, am thoroughly enjoying these now. Given the rate of technological development in the setting, I

can only assume that the eighth volume will feature nukes and the tenth volume will have phasers, quantum singularity cannons, and time-traveling cyborgs. Looking forward to that.

Recommended for those who watch single points disintegrate into nothing, readers who would tear themselves apart were they to run out of enemies, and persons whose prey is already dead.

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### **Paca Sad says**

Apt vs Inapt, wasp vs everyone!? friends vs friends, acrimonious alliances, dark magic, this series continues to impress, this edition sees some characters departure and others emerge.

As the list of characters and the world expands there were times when there was almost too much going on, but I think that is a natural progression in such an expanding world and all plots tie together nicely without too much disconnection

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### **Katy says**

A very good installment in the series. For a while, this one was "more of the same" with war and war; however, we start to see a turn of events and a few surprises.

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### **Tom Lloyd says**

Finishing *Dance with Dragons*, I'm reminded of something - just how hard it is to keep a long series going, to give the books a proper book shape and generally keep control of it all.

Tchaikovsky could teach George Martin a lesson or two, and Robert Jordan's meanderings pale hugely in comparison. Why are more people not reading this series? It baffles me. There's a focus and purpose to each novel that shows just how in control Tchaikovsky is - details worryingly absent from George Martin's books. In the *Shadows of the Apt*, despite the dizzying pace of technological change and evolving wars going on, you're always reassured the author knows what he's doing and where he's going - and you'll always have very human and sympathetic characters to read about too. This series is proving to be a remarkable achievement and while some people have had misgivings with the first book, it being a debut and all, every single one I know who's persisted has quickly been surprised and delighted with the world that unfolds before them.

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### **Milo (BOK) says**

This is rapidly turning into one of my favourite fantasy series that I've read. It's not quite a full five though, more like a 4.5 - but if you haven't already read the *Shadows of the Apt* series then you really should be.

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## **Swuun says**

Oh this was brilliant. And also heartbreaking. So many beloved (and also unloved and unmourned) characters meet their ends in this volume it's almost hard to process? I did a lot of going NOOO and then crying a bit - after a while it was so very much that I started skimming battle scenes because of all the death. So. Much. Death.

Also: this is the one where everyone gets captured! So much getting captured. So many characters in chains and cages and bonds and it's a very special kind of peril? (This is not an objection, BTW.)

I'm still incredibly engaged in the story, and still frustrated by the super straight romances - so many couples, and everyone falls in love at first sight and there's no SUBSTANCE to any of the relationships? In particular poor doomed Salma and his manic pixie dream butterfly pretty much single-handedly knocked a full star off the review. And also the old men falling for/lusting after much younger women (but no old women with young beaus because what are old women there are only young and/or gorgeous women and crones).

But! That aside holy damn what a ride! I did NOT see the twist at the end where Thalric is now a Regent-General coming?? His entire story has been absolutely gripping, and I am glad he at least isn't dead now.

So that's all developed in new and interesting directions, with the Wasps beaten back and in disarray, the Lowlands (kinda) united, a Tri-City union, and the technology of war continuing to evolve...

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## **Alytha says**

Finished volume 4 of the Shadows of the Apt series by Adrain Tchaikovski: Salute the Dark.

(First of all, many Thanks to williamjm for recommending to stick with the series beyond the rather disappointing third volume. :))

Contains spoilers for all other previous volumes of the series!

In this volume, the shit really hits the fan, and the impending Wasp invasion descends on the various city-states, and all our protagonists are right in the middle of it.

While Stenwold travels to the Dragonfly Commonweal in order to gain allies, Che secretly takes her gravely wounded Achaeos to Tharn with the help of the turned Wasp secret agent Thalric. Tisamon also leaves the city, in conflict with himself and his heritage over his feelings for Felise. In order to escape all this emotional mess, he travels to Capitas to kill the Emperor or be killed in the attempt. His daughter Tynisa decides to follow him in order to save him from himself. In Capitas, several different plots to take over come to fruition. In the Bee city of Szar, Dreplos and his artificers plan a display of genocide without equal. In Solarno, Taki and her rag-tag bunch of pilots get ready for the coming invasion.

This book is really really intense, important things happening left, right and centre. In a lot of ways, it feels more like the end of a series than the fourth volume of a planned 10-book series. Many plotlines are resolved: the Wasp Empire's advance through the lowlands has been halted, at least for the moment. The Emperor is dead, Seda is Empress and will probably spend quite a lot of time consolidating her power before

trying to enlarge the Empire again. The Shadow Box has been destroyed (although the very last chapter raises some doubts as to that one). Many many main characters die... (curse you Mr Tchakovski! Salma. And Achaeos. And Nero. And Tisamon. And most of the characters near Sarn...) Although most issues were solved positively for the goodies, the costs are so high...

I wonder what will come next...I already have Scarab Path, but I'm saving that one for my holiday on Malta in mid-October. I do hope though that it won't cheapen the sacrifices made by the characters by bringing some of them back to life in dodgy ways.

I really appreciated the style in which this one was written. The sad, hopeless way in which some of the battles are described (and the almost-genocide at Szar) is truly heartbreaking, as well as how the deaths of the main characters are handled. In some cases, the battle description went a bit over the top though. Describing every single move of two duellists can get a bit long-winded.

9/10

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### **Madhurabharatula Pranav Rohit Kasinath says**

This is a review of the entire series - there are NO spoilers.

When I look back at the Shadows of the Apt, what strikes me at first might seem incongruous to most.

There are no unnecessary descriptions of food.

None at all.

10 books, each of them 400 to 700 pages in length - covering battles, history and multiple points of view - and not a single one of them had any descriptions of food.

Or sex, clothing, family crests, whores or incest.

And I loved it.

Not a single wasted line.

There may be many reasons why the Shadows of the Apt is a success, why you SHOULD read these books no matter how difficult it may get at times. If I had to choose one, however, its this - Tchaikovsky doesn't waste a single page, character or event in his storytelling - the march of story is relentless through thousands of pages, culminating in a satisfying finale.

The World in which the Shadows of the Apt (SOTA) is set is astonishing in its originality. There are no elves, trolls, orcs or dwarves - instead, Tchaikovsky populates this world with Insect Kinden - human beings of different races who derive their primary characteristics from insects. Beetle kinden are slow, plodding, hardworking and intelligent with a flair for statesmanship. The Ant Kinden are warlike and live in each other's heads, attempting to work towards the betterment of the Ant city - a frightening and at the same time amusing allegory for communism. The Mantis Kinden live in the woods, are excellent fighters and are generally rooted in arcane magic and rituals - individualists who are dying out due to adherence to traditions

which have lost all meaning. There are Spiders, Moths, Thorn Bugs and Flies each with their own definite characteristics that would require an encyclopedia to cover in entirety. At someone's last count there were close to thirty distinct kinden introduced in the series and I believe that must just be scratching the surface.

Another important differentiating factor amongst the people of this world is Aptitude. The Apt are those who are skilled in the art of artifice, and mechanics. They are scientists, using the laws of nature to change the world around them. Crossbows, artillery and even primitive air power all based on the principles of clockwork make their appearance in the early pages of the series. On the other end of the spectrum however, are the Inapt - the erstwhile rulers of the world to whom the apt were but slaves until a long ago revolution altered the power structure forever. The Inapt live in a world of magic, intuition and prophecy - incapable of so much as unlatching a door, their minds unable to comprehend the machine world in form or function.

This status quo is under threat from the Wasp Kinden of the north - a ferocious warlike race which has come into its own and seeks to conquer the world. While this might sound like a cliche far too common to all fantasy fiction there is an important difference - the Wasps aren't inherently evil. The initial stand off is more one of culture and ideology than of good and evil. Two of my favourite characters are, in fact, Wasps. The only people who are aware of the threat the Wasps pose to the world are the beetle Stenwold Maker, a master in Collegium and his Mantis friend Tisamon. As the series begins Stenwold sends his niece Che, his adopted daughter Tynisa, a spider and his halfbreed student Totho and the dragonfly prince Salme Dien to the factory city of Helleron for espionage against the Wasp empire. Having turned its eyes towards the university city of Collegium, a beacon of enlightenment and artifice in the Lowlands, the Wasps are determined to stop Stenwold Maker at any cost.

Anymore would give away the joy of experiencing the plot for yourself. Rest assured, things get complicated very quickly, alliances shift and change, people die and before you know you might find yourself rooting for a villain. Over ten books we are treated to multiple detailed accounts of various battles, war movements and deaths. The narrative moves effortlessly between personal accounts of war and one on one battles. There is a very real sense of forward progression in the book with characters always changing, finding their ideals and comfort zone being challenged on a regular basis and reacting to the world in new ways. These interactions might not always be pleasant and not everyone might walk away from them alive - however, it is wonderful to see such attention to character progression. No one walks out of this book unscathed or unchanged. Some change for the better, some for the worse - but all changes seem normal, organic and make sense. This series capitalises on this characterisation to make things all the more gripping.

SOTA cannot be labelled as grimdark fantasy either. There is war, death, murder, rape and cruelty. There are slave camps, dying civilisations and loss. A large chunk of characters are dead towards the end of the book. However, there is a resilience to all the characters that makes it possible to believe they will eventually find a way out. It might be because the author is British but all the characters have a stoic, stiff upper lip approach to situations which makes even the darkest segments of the book immensely enjoyable. The dialogue is witty, snappy and fluid - more importantly, it's distinctive in a sense and tailor made to each character. Atrocities, when they are committed are mentioned but not described in detail. This seems to be a more effective method of conveying the horrors of war. I have seen fantasy where rape and murder are described to a distasteful degree under the excuse of realism. Tchaikovsky actually doesn't indulge in voyeurism which significantly increased the emotional impact when bad things eventually DID happen. (Basically books 4 and 10)

A standard fantasy talks about heroism in the face of darkness with a well demarcated line between good and evil. SOTA takes a different tack. While set in a fictional world the themes are often all too relevant. The novels are given over to varied themes - whether duty to oneself comes over and above duty to the city state,

are we willing to enslave others so that we may be free, the struggle between the old world and new, between science and superstition. There are also deeper questions about the creation of weapons of war and deterrents- does an inventor take pride in a weapon that has been created solely for killing, and if he is horrified what mental toll does this take? The stark contrast between killing a person yourself and ordering the deaths of hundreds in a mechanised attack is also touched upon. The question asked of a lot of the artificers in this series is whether they feel war has allowed them progress and innovation and whether, coming on the heel of the human cost, this innovation is worth it. A lot of the characters might answer yes. The beauty in Tchaikovsky's characters lies in how easy it is to understand if not exactly sympathise this point of view.

Over the course of the series, we are also treated to innovation and how it can change the face of war. Ranged weapons are deployed against an unarmed infantry, submersibles are invented out of necessity and there is an entire book devoted to an Air War that brings to mind the Battle of Britain and the RAF during World War II. This mechanical progress is a plot point which drives the book forward. The enemy improvising and modifying weapons while the defenders need to think on their feet to win the war and vice versa.

The only criticism I might want to level against this series is that it seems a little too dry at times. Tchaikovsky's prose is fluid, and wonderful on page. However, at times, it fails to convey the images necessary to visualise the world around. I am an extremely visual reader, by which I mean that I enjoy building the environment around me. Tchaikovsky was adequate to this task but I wanted more. However, I choose not to reduce any points for this - This is Tchaikovsky's first work. A ten volume series which serves as a nuanced account of the wages of war in a fantasy world. It is rare for anyone to get something **THIS RIGHT** on the first round and I am sure he will only get better as he continues to write more.

The SOTA is unlike any fantasy I have read in a long long time - nuanced, with wonderful characterisation, multiple plot threads and points of view and absolutely no narrative drag. It begins, builds to a crescendo and ends almost perfectly. I don't recommend this to just lovers of fantasy but to all lovers of good literature. Don't turn your nose down on this, you won't be disappointed.

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### **Jared Millet says**

OK, what was once a "maybe" is now a "hell yeah": the world in Adrian Tchaikovsky's "Shadows of the Apt" series is my favorite milieu in modern epic fantasy. I've waxed rhapsodic in the past about my love of the story's technology vs. magic aspects, and the way that the ongoing war in these novels fuels an industrial revolution. I've also praised the "insect-kindred" characters as a refreshing, original take on old elf/dwarf/human/orc tropes in a way that clicks with traditional fantasy while bringing something new.

I niggled way back in my review of volume one that Tchaikovsky wasn't mean enough to his main characters. Hah. If only I'd known. Things get bad in this book. Real bad, for every single protagonist. Unlike many of GRR Martin's "shock and awe" deaths, though, what happens in this book follows and fulfills each character's story in a meaningful way, no matter how tragic.

This book is all about war. Throughout the first three books in the series, Stenwold Maker (kind of a spymaster Gandalf) has been beating the drums of war all throughout the disparate nations of the Lowlands against the threat of the invading Wasp Empire in an effort to force the Empire into a war on too many

fronts. In doing so, though, he has spread his own resources so thin that he may have simply handed the Wasps a quick, easy victory. Everything hinges on a series of ambushes, rebellions, and valiant last stands being pulled off successfully and simultaneously, a nearly impossible trick to manage.

On the magic vs. technology front (although the heroes and the Wasps make use of both) things escalate to the point that both sides come up with and use a "nuclear option." What the consequences of those choices are will certainly play out in future volumes.

While there are ten books in this series, this one wraps up the first major arc and ties up most loose ends. Several are left deliberately dangling, and I look forward to seeing where the story goes next.

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### **Daniel says**

Books 1 and 3: Four stars.

Books 2 and 4: Three stars.

What does it all mean?! It means: I liked this series. It was fun. Swords and magic were wielded, and adventures were had. Peeps fought, bled, hurt, lost, died, and triumphed. Tchaikovsky proves himself to be adept (dare I say: apt) at combining his ideas with established fantasy fiction conventions and creating a story that is worth reading for entertainment that one has never before experienced--such as entertainment of the aerial-warfare-with-giant-bugs-and-flying-people-and-swords-and-magic-and-steampunk-aeroplanes-and-gatling-guns variety. And that is just one example of some of the crazy-talk that Tchaikovsky pours into the genre.

So, having read the first four books that comprise the first cycle of a projected 10 books (and guess what: Tchaikovsky has already finished the first draft of the final volume! The man works hard!), I want to say "Thank you for all of the fun" and "To be continued--some day." Hell, book five is sitting on my to-read shelf right now, leering at me with its big, fat spine. "Oh the secrets I hold!"

(view spoiler)

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### **Jason says**

This might have been my favorite of the series so far. As others have said this is the 4th book that completes the first part of the story arc in a longer tale. Instead of commenting on the story itself I will speak of this series that Adrian Tchaikovsky has created. He has crafted a truly unique and fresh world, where magic, technology, ghosts, and monsters live. If you are a fantasy fan and want to read something that is fresh and new, look no further than here. If you enjoy world building, and alternate universes that are quite similar to our own, than jump in to this series. If you enjoy dark magic, war, and awesome weapons, than these are for you. There is a bit of SteamPunk, Science Fiction, and even some Romance too. I cannot recommend these books enough to fiction readers that want something new, something fun, and something to cheer for. Be forewarned that like other reviewers have stated, all things, like in life itself do not always end well for the heroes or the good guys.

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