



When the Heavens Fall

Marc Turner

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If you pick a fight with Shroud, Lord of the Dead, you had better ensure your victory, else death will mark only the beginning of your suffering.

A book giving its wielder power over the dead has been stolen from a fellowship of mages that has kept the powerful relic dormant for centuries. The thief, a crafty, power-hungry necromancer, intends to use the Book of Lost Souls to resurrect an ancient race and challenge Shroud for dominion of the underworld. Shroud counters by sending his most formidable servants to seize the artifact at all cost.

However, the god is not the only one interested in the Book, and a host of other forces converge, drawn by the powerful magic that has been unleashed. Among them is a reluctant Guardian who is commissioned by the Emperor to find the stolen Book, a troubled prince who battles enemies both personal and political, and a young girl of great power, whose past uniquely prepares her for an encounter with Shroud. The greatest threat to each of their quests lies not in the horror of an undead army but in the risk of betrayal from those closest to them. Each of their decisions comes at a personal cost and will not only affect them, but also determine the fate of their entire empire.

The first of an epic swords & sorcery fantasy trilogy for fans of Patrick Rothfuss, Marc Turner's *When the Heavens Fall* features gritty characters, deadly magic, and meddlesome gods

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When the Heavens Fall Details

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From Reader Review When the Heavens Fall for online ebook

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews.

I'm one of those readers who let this novel slip by when it was first released. A fact which seems odd, because – with its huge world, multi-thread narrative, and grimdark tinged story – it is exactly the sort of fantasy I tend to look for. And I never would have had a second thought about passing it up if I had not begun seeing reviews about it. Not all of those were five star reviews, truth be told, and some of the reviewers were not glowingly complimentary of the story, but I heard enough to know I had to get my hands on it and give it a try.

Out of the gate, *When the Heavens Fall* didn't seem different than many traditional quest stories I'd experienced. Maybe a bit more dark and brooding, but otherwise very familiar. Basically, we have a former Guardian (think kickass magical warrior-type) named Luker returning to a city he had left long ago. Once there he immediately finds that the reason he left (think political machinations of a ruler) have grown worse during his self-imposed exile, resulting in the Guardians' numbers and power waning dangerously. But that really doesn't concern Luker. What he has come back for is to head up a search party for his mentor (think father figure) who disappeared trying to apprehend a rogue mage named Mayot Mencada and retrieve a powerful artifact – a relic ominously dubbed the Book of Lost Souls.

Okay, I have to admit this sounded really interesting. Guess, I'm a sucker for quest fantasy. And as Mr. Turner began getting his quest group together and sending them out into this huge world I was really excited. Then Mr. Turner pulled the rug out from under me. The story shifting focus to three different characters, who have nothing to do with Luker's group, or its quest, as well as being in three totally different part of the world.

The first locale is a small kingdom on the edge of the Forest of Sighs. This land fights constantly against the intrusion of the ferocious forest tribes and the wood's haunted spirits, and as the heir to its throne, Ebon is on the front lines protecting his people – even as he waits for the reigns of rulership to pass into his hands. But though he presents a brave face to the world, our young lord is haunted by fear – a deep seated fear that the forest spirits will once again take over his mind, driving him back into the state of insanity that he only too recently emerged from. And this apprehension is beginning to grow as the realization sets in that there is a power stirring in the forest that might be even worse than the spirits themselves.

Across the continent, Parolla is a young woman driven by a seemingly impossible quest. Her dearest desire to uncover a portal to the Lord of Death's realm and pass through to confront Shroud himself. For this god took someone or something important to her, and she will not rest until she uncovers a way to get it back. And it is this desire that eventually draws her to the Forest of Sighs far to the east, where she senses that death magic itself is being released into the world, drawing with it Shroud's own servants from across the multiple dimensions.

Lastly, there is the rather pompous, pleasure loving priestess named Romany, follower of the Spider goddess. And when this crafty divinity shows up unexpectedly telling Romany she must go forth on an important and dangerous mission to the Forest of Sighs, the priestess is very unhappy, mainly because she will not be able to take her daily bubble bath and partake of her gourmet meals. But one cannot turn down a god, so off Romany goes to aid a rogue wizard who has a strange artifact that the Spider goddess does not want Shroud

to retrieve.

From this multi-threaded story, Mr. Turner weaves an intricate plot which slowly brings Luker, Ebon, Parolla, and Romany to life, unveils more than a few behind-the-scenes power players, carefully molds a vivid world in which all the events take place, and eventually draws everyone together for a rousing conclusions. All of it done in a style that other reviewers have compared to Steven Erikson. Not having had the pleasure to sample Mr. Erickson (He is on my to-be-read list) I can't say with certainty if the comparisons are accurate, but from what I have heard about the *Malazan* series, it seems very similar to *When the Heavens Fall*, which might or might not be a good thing according to your perspective.

As for me, I have to admit finding the beginning of the novel slow; the constant shifts between characters halting any reading momentum I'd built up and keeping me from fully investing in each person's story. The fact that so much background, geography, and lore was also interwoven into those initial chapters really made me feel like I was drowning in a fantasy information ocean. But as the tale moved along and I became familiar with everyone and everything, those problems mostly disappeared — though, obviously, I did have my favorite characters and wished more of my time was spent with them as opposed to others.

All in all, I enjoyed *When the Heavens Fall*. Sure, it was a difficult story to get into, but the payoff for being patient was very rewarding. This is a dark, epic novel. One filled with complex necromancy, dark sorcery and more than a few monsters and gods. There are heroes and villains, intrigue and combat, mystery and magic; all of it set in a very intricately detailed world with a living history that springs to life before your eyes. And the four main characters who carry you through this initial foray into Mr. Turner's fantasy land each see this struggle in very different ways, forcing you to pay close attention to the narrative and make choices regarding who you believe is right and who you believe is wrong. Yes, the web Mr. Turner weaves here is large and complex, but if you have the patience to stay with it, everything slowly clicks into place like a huge jigsaw puzzle being solved and ends with a truly mesmerizing conclusion.

Tor provided this book to me for free in return for an honest review. The review above was not paid for or influenced in any way by any person, entity or organization, but is my own personal opinions.

Solseit says

I was completely drawn into this world, multiple stories of unrelated characters facing different issues and challenges, dealing with the gods meddling with human affairs.

It is a 4.5 stars book for me, reminiscent of the *Malazan Book of the Fallen* with interesting characters, magic systems and gods.

Veronica says

Well, this started out well enough...an interesting world and four POV characters to guide us through it...but by the midway point it just seemed to be all show and no real substance. There's a Prince, a Priestess, a

Guardian with Jedi-like powers (TM Star Wars), and a demi-goddess (?) who are all more or less on converging paths to defeat a crazy eeeet mage with his very own Precious (TM Lord of the Rings, JRR Tolkien). The problem is there is no real character development going on in 700 pages worth of story so what we're left with is a really long road trip tale that just moves from one fight scene to the next. Good news for fight scene aficionados but a bit lacking if you want more from your fantasy story than just action. It wasn't bad but some decent character development would have made this into something...more.

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

Although When the Heavens Fall didn't knock my socks off, I'm still glad I read it. The elements that didn't quite work for me were basic plot construction choices, which means the author had all of the world building, characterization, and writing skills, and even executed his vision to my satisfaction, he just didn't give me a satisfying journey on top of it all. Because of that, I am super excited to dive into his second book and see how a new plot structure with a new cast of characters unfolds. Plus the second book is called Dragon Hunters, which already has my immediate attention. :-)

The first third of When the Heavens Fall was stellar. Turner set a really cool atmosphere with his world building – a rather ominous overtone shrouded with secrets. I knew immediately there was going to be a lot of things to discover about this world, and I couldn't wait to find out more. He also introduced a handful of POV characters, all of whom I really enjoyed reading about (even the “unlikable” ones). He even hinted at several cool magics and gave us a glimpse into some fascinating nonhuman characters.

So, even though he set the stage brilliantly, where he took the story left a little to be desired. The multiple POV's were actually part of the problem. They were perspectives from each aspect of the mystery surrounding a magical book, and the reader learned very early on what was going on. So it was a case of dramatic irony as the characters slowly got onto the same page as the reader. The use of dramatic irony usually drives me crazy, but I will say at least its use here allowed the reader to dig into the motives of all aspects of the conflict, which in itself is entertaining, I just wish I hadn't known quite as much upfront.

Another issue that perpetuated this problem was pacing. It's okay to have all of your characters focused around a single problem, but after the first third of the book, every time the character perspective switched, nothing significant had happened. Everybody just kind of maintained status quo for a good bulk of the book and so at times it felt like we were switching POVs just for the sake of and not because that perspective had something interesting and new to show us. So for that reason, I feel the book could have been stronger had the plot been tightened with a bit more focus within each POV. This is also likely the main reason why it took me a full two weeks to get through.

All that said, I still have an overall positive attitude towards the book and thought the things it did well, it did really well. I love the world and its dynamics and can't wait to explore more of it, I liked the characters and hope they get a little more depth in the future, and appreciated the writing style and overall voice. This was a buddy read with some friends at Fantasy Buddy Reads, and there were a lot of comments referencing similarities to Erikson's Malazan series, so chances are if you liked that one this one will give you some kicks.

Recommendations: this is a slow burn fantasy that built a great foundation to this cool world and had a cast of highly interesting characters (even if they were a tad flat). This wouldn't be the first book I handed to someone if they needed a recommendation for a good fantasy, but it's definitely one I would talk positively

about with someone who is well read in the genre. It's not perfect, but it's a great start and I can't wait to see more of what this author can do.

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at www.NikiHawkes.com.

Other books you might like:

Stefan Bach says

“Seek not beauty in battle. Seek not beauty in death. Consider not your own life. If you wish to protect that which must be protected, then strike while your opponent’s back is turned.”

I knew next to nothing about this book. I knew of its existence and I knew I didn't like the cover. And that's pretty much it.

Then, in a great anthology *Evil is a Matter of Perspective: An Anthology of Antagonists*, I have read a short story about water-mage pirate *Mazana Creed*. And, besides pirates and great female character in it, I was intrigued by this story in which world setting is such that mages are using their powers based on four elements; in essence an elemental magic system where earth power is dominant over air, where air rules water, water fire and fire earth.

It was quite enough for me, and because I really don't judge book by its cover, I decided to make this novel my immediate read.

And now when I have finished it I am overwhelmed by how much this book has to offer.

So, what this book is about?

Well, it all starts with a book itself. In the *Empire of Erin Elal* there's a *Dark Tower* which serves as a prison for a very dark and powerful *Book of Lost Souls*. Until one day that book is stolen and one of most powerful sorcerers of the Dark Tower, a veteran necromancer *Mayor Mencada*, is set to retrieve it.

After a time his regular reports became scarce and then nonexistent. Long silence was the only answer and after yet another retrieving mission failed, strange rumors are reaching the Empire; rumors of terrifying evil in *Forest of Sigh*, in ancient capitol *Estapharriol*, which is buried beneath the trees.

Luker Essendar is an ex-Guardian, an elite soldier, who has ability to use his power called Will in order to, for example, ever so slightly influence laws of physics and inanimate objects that abide by them. So it figures how such ability makes him master of swordsman and excellent tactician. While other mages, necromancers and Gods might succumb to their delusions of omnipotence, Luker had eyes only for task at hand.

But also, he is a broken man, returning to his homeland after losing whatever he ought so many years ago to find.

Finally and completely unexpectedly, it is in his homeland that he will find something to seek for. His former master, member of Guardian Council, **Kanon** who seems lost after he was sent to retrieve certain sorcerer.

Romany Elivar is a **High Priestess** and not so devoted worshiper of Goddess **Spider**. Actually, if it was up to her, she would be entirely devoted to peaceful baths and good vine.

But great power is stirring in Forest of Sigh, so great that even her Goddess can't ignore it, nor opportunities that arose with it.

But Spider's ways are a subtle business, so instead seizing that power for herself, she decides to guide it, safely and unknowingly tangle it in her webbing, so that she could trap it there, without anyone noticing. And for that task she sends her high priestess, a task from which Romany will learn just how much she resembles her Goddess.

Ebon Calidar is a Prince of **Galitia**, small Kingdom in the north, edging with ancient Forest of Sigh. He successfully defends his kingdom from local tribesmen and spirits of long lost nation that still dwells in the forest of their ultimate demise, while preparing himself to take the throne and negotiate truce with northern ruler of **Sartor, Consel Garat Hallon**.

Until one night, while hosting the peacetalks, his capitol is attacked by the people believed to be long extinct and their spirits trapped in the forest. But this people are far from spirits, because they are indeed banging at his door in flesh and blood. And when he hits them down, they get back up, refusing to die.

Parolla Morivan is a necromancer running from the zealots of the **Antlered God** and its worshiper **Lord of the Hunt**. She is also looking for a door to the **Underworld** and a God that usurp its throne, **Shroud**. This God gifted her with great powers, so vast and cruel in its core, that they make her one of the most powerful sorceress in the known world, but also loneliest, because none living creature could stand beside her, without her corrupting it, taking its life force from it, until it withers to ashes.

And she is looking forward expressing her gratitude for such gift in person.

And there's plethora of other characters in this novel but I'll let you discover them for yourselves.

Marc Turner did incredible work creating this world with deeply rooted history in it, astonishingly creative magic system and diverse characterization.

He didn't just take liberty with characters in making them diverse, he actually, like a child in sand, played with different ways to show us how he can deconstruct and build a character.

He didn't bother his readers by writing 300 pages of characters history just so he could, in another 300 pages, explain characters actions in present. Nor did he take reader by his hand to explain to him how grass is green, sky blue and water wet.

But above everything else, he used subtlety. Not just in characterization, but in worldbuilding, telling the story etc.

For example, there's a scene with Goddess Spider recruiting Romany, High Priestess of her temple. Romany is obviously not ready to jump to action, after years of spending secluded in a temple, in luxury and lazing while minions served her.

But she accepts, although grudgingly and because she has no choice in the matter. There's also part of her that is power-crazy as her Goddess, and this is a great opportunity to gain even more power.

So, in order for Spider to transport her to place where she needs her, she has to deconstruct Romany in atomic particles, for the sake of safeness, and more importantly - speed, and then she reassembles her upon their arrival at destination.

And in the light of the day, while catching her breath from roaming the forest, when Romany sees her body and sees effects of years of inactivity and gluttony, instead of rational assessment of reasons for her physical condition, she blames Spider for having such an awful taste in humor while reassembling her, by "adding a little bit on her side", choosing to completely deceive herself from the truth in the process.

In just few paragraphs author managed to establish and explain relationship of Goddess and High Priestess, while also showing to what extent would Romany go if truth doesn't fit her rationality.

This not just subtly adds more layers and builds a character without overwhelming the reader with characters history, convoluted plot or something else, but successfully leaves a space for a characters build up in more ways than few, while moving the plot and story forward.

And book is filled with many other examples such as this.

Regrettably I have to say that those who find *Steven Erikson's* books challenging will find this one to be that too.

Even I who somehow managed to complete a ten days marathon of *Malazan books* had to put down this novel a bit from time to time and rest my eyes and my brain.

Those who enjoy Malazan world should have this as priority.

Eric says

4.5 Stars

An excellent start to a fantasy series that I can't wait to read more of. When the Heavens Fall was one of the better fantasy books published in the last few years that I've read.

First, the plot. It was actually a very simple plot, and that was one of my very few issues with the book. Ultimately, the book is about a powerful object and the convergence of various other factions in an effort by each to seize control of the artifact and the power it brings. But Turner makes the story so much more interesting than just an attempt by rivals to gain power. Seeing how the various entities made and abandoned allegiances along the way was fascinating.

The story is told from the POV of 4 main characters, each with their own motivations for becoming involved in what quickly becomes a bloody contest. There is a member of a warrior order, a priestess, a noble, and a mysterious sorceress. Each POV is told in a fairly short section before switching to another POV. I appreciated the format, as they helped keep the pace moving .

The writing itself is excellent and does not feel like a debut novel. I was particularly impressed with how Turner managed to convey so much information about each of the 4 main characters simply by the circumstances of how we first encounter them. There are no info dumps in this book. I saw several comparisons to the style Steven Erikson uses in his Malazan books, and I would agree to an extent, though Turner's writing style is nowhere near as dense, and as a result I found it much more accessible.

That brings the next point, and an area in which Turner truly shines. The worldbuilding is phenomenal. The scope of the world he's created is incredible and unique. There are gods, empires, kingdoms, fantastic creatures, warrior priests, and so much more. As a lifelong fantasy fan and lover of fantasy lore, it was amazing. So many creatures and warriors and powers were shown or mentioned in passing that it left me drooling and wanting more. Knights powered by death magic wielding invested weapons? Sorcerers controlling demons? Elemental Mages? An Everlord? I'm still not sure what that last one is, but I want to know. My inner geek was happy.

And the magic. This is not a book that has a touch of magic here and there. Magic is everywhere, with a wide range of powers. There is no meticulously designed magic system like you'd find in a Brandon Sanderson book, but in a way I enjoyed that. Turner struck a good balance between giving his magic genuine power without letting it become an easy way for his characters to get out of any situation. The magic felt grounded

and real, never veering into the absurd or overpowered.

Of the fantasy novels published in the last few years, John Gwynne, Brandon Sanderson, and James Islington have probably written my favorites. With When the Heavens Fall, Marc Turner has added his name to my list.

Matthew says

One of the best debut fantasies I've ever read. Turner is someone that will become a household name in the years to come.

4 out of 5 stars.

Petros Triantafyllou says

Turner's debut is sporting a departmental line of structure rarely seen in modern fiction.

Pick a random fantasy book from your bookshelf. Turn it upside down. Read the summary. Now tell me the plot. No, wait, let me do that for you. You have a story told either from one or from multiple points of view, by several main characters. You follow the Protagonists' personal stories, and in doing so you sometimes witness a greater plot arc that involves the fate of an empire, or even that of a world. Well, in When The Heavens Fall that's not the case at all, but exactly the opposite. The main theme is a possible destruction of the world and the enslavement of all people, and we get to see the circumstances that led to that event, as well as the events that follow, witnessing the final outcome. In doing so, we follow the paths carved by the people that directly influenced the story, but make no mistake; they are not the protagonists. The story itself is.

"Romany's gaze lingered on the coats of golden chain mail worn by the undead champions. Such an uncivilized use of gold, particularly since, as even the priestess knew, the metal was soft and therefore entirely unsuited for use as armor. Such wanton profligacy! Such vulgar exhibitionism! Perhaps when this was over she would find a better use for that gold..."

When the Heavens Fall is great in a lot of aspects. It is gritty, brooding and intimate, featuring a well-thought-out magic system that is the most important and integral part of the story. The world building is mesmerizing, and it's subtly implied that there is a lot more going on outside the story. The greatest part of it though, is the motives of the protagonists. Each and every character has it's own reasons to be part of the story, and yet every action -and inaction- is intertwined with some other character's path, creating a complex web of inter-colliding circumstances.

(view spoiler)

All in all, When the Heavens Fall is an interesting format, and one that you don't see very often, offering a break from ordinary fantasy. I recommend it for your next read.

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

Lisa says

Full Review at Tenacious Reader: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2015/0...>

When the Heavens Fall by Marc Turner is reminiscent of Steven Erikson and Glen Cook. I think for readers looking for something new but love some of the older fantasies, this could be a good pick.

When I began this book, I have to confess I expected to love it. But I just can't say that was the case. I still feel like I should have loved it, there are many great things about this book, but honestly I just didn't. It was still good, just not as good as I expected or hoped for.

My biggest issue with the book was that somehow I just never found myself fully invested in the story or the characters (with the exception of Parolla). I was interested the other characters and events, but I just never felt completely connected with them and I think this is what held me back from loving the story as much as I wish I could. I do better when I have some emotional investment in the characters I am reading about, and sadly, that just never happened. If this had been a single POV book focusing on Parolla, I think perhaps my reaction may have been more favorable. But, that would have limited the story, and narrowed the perspective of the reader, so it wouldn't be quite the same story. The frequent changes between POVs may have contributed to my lack of connection with the characters. But, honestly, I think there is little described in the way of emotions either. So it almost became dry, just reading action after action. I know many books are told this way, but the switching from character to character with little emotional attachment just left me, well, wanting a bit more.

For readers that are looking for a more plot driven book or are fans of older fantasy, I do still think this is worth checking out.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2015/05/22/b...>

Marc Turner's When the Heavens Fall was a book that snuck quietly onto my radar earlier this year. I knew next to nothing about it beyond the official publisher's description, and so as with most things shrouded in mystery, I was instantly intrigued and hoping it would score a surprise hit. In retrospect, my first impressions might have been different if I had kept my expectations more in line, but even after they were tempered I knew I probably wouldn't be shelving this one under my favorites. That's not to say it's a bad book, because this is a very solid debut. However, some parts just didn't work for me as well as it probably would for other readers.

At first glance, this seemed like your classic quest narrative. All the characters and events appeared to be linked to the theft of an extremely powerful and dangerous magical artifact called the Book of Lost Souls. Hidden long ago by the death god Shroud, a rogue mage called Mayot Mencada has since uncovered the tome and spirited it away deep into the Forest of Sighs. This sparks the beginning of the story for four different characters, each with their own agendas. Luker is a former Guardian who embarks on this journey to search not for the book but for his mentor, who was the last person to go after Mayot. Tasked to keep an

eye on things is a priestess named Romany, whose patron goddess the Spider was the one who manipulated Mayot into stealing the book in the first place. Then there's Ebon, heir to a kingdom on the edge of the Forest of Sighs, who is also plagued by voices of spirits in his head. And finally, there's Parolla, a young woman who seeks entry into Shroud's realm to settle an old debt with the Lord of the Dead himself.

I think most epic fantasies I've read are structured in a way so that each chapter is given to a different character perspective in order to keep all the points-of-view straight. However, *When the Heavens Fall* does not follow this format, instead switching from viewpoint to viewpoint randomly within chapters, which is one reason why the first 100 pages gave me so much trouble. This constant jumping around – especially when the story is dealing with multiple characters in different locations – gives the introduction a sense of disorganization. This section also holds a lot of background information, and the fact that it's so densely packed slows down the pacing quite a bit.

To its credit, the book picks up by a lot after the first half. It's not a coincidence that this is also when the four different storylines begin to converge and when I finally started to spot the connections. Each plot thread does have its ups and downs, though. For example, Luker's story didn't capture my interest until the finale, since so much of his story about search for the book/his mentor felt like wheels spinning in place after losing much of its traction past the first few chapters. On the other hand, Parolla's story was just the opposite; so much about her was an unknown in the intro, but the more I learned about her and her quest, the more excited I became about her character. And because Romany so often dealt in the metaphysical realm and appeared in a spiritual form, that abstraction might have predisposed me against her chapters. Perhaps the only one whose story I consistently enjoyed was Ebon's, with his struggles to protect his kingdom in the face of undead attackers and dubious allies. When the four characters find themselves all together in the final showdown against Mayot though, that's when things get real. This is a very large and intricate web that Marc Turner has spun, and while it does take a little patience, I promise everything will eventually click into place. The ending is truly superb.

I see in Marc Turner's profile that he names Steven Erikson and Joe Abercrombie as his major influences. After reading *When the Heavens Fall*, I can definitely see that, though I would say his writing style leans more towards the former author than the latter. Certainly I feel it is closer to Erikson than Patrick Rothfuss, who is the one mentioned in the book's blurb. I've seen several reviewers compare this one to the Malazan books, and in fact I agree they are quite similar in style and tone with that dark, epic feel. Magic is a very complex and abstract concept here, and in a novel like this which is not immune to its fair share of common fantasy tropes, I have to say the system of necromancy and dark sorcery is its most unique and striking aspect.

All in all, this was a good book, though I won't deny there were many parts that presented a real struggle. The biggest obstacle was the pacing, which was uneven in parts and slowed the momentum. Furthermore, it's possible my enjoyment was impeded by the fact this might not even be the type of epic fantasy I would normally go for. It's interesting to note I couldn't get into Erikson's Malazan either, so the problem likely isn't with the book, it's with me. What this means is I can see *When the Heavens Fall* working extremely well for some readers, but I just wasn't swept off my feet. For you, this could end up one of your favorite reads this year. For me, it was an experience I wish I could have enjoyed more. Still, I don't regret reading this. It was a new and refreshing encounter with a very different kind of sword and sorcery.

Margret says

Can't quite put my finger on why this book wasn't a hit with me. It's a weak 3 stars

- The world building was good, not great.
- good premise, exciting battle scenes
- The magic system was unique and well explained
- Pacing at times left something to be desired
- most of all the characters I feel weren't well developed.

Could be my mood, or the books I have read lately have well developed characters and I don't feel this one has been up to par on that end

Tracey the Lizard Queen says

Originally reviewed at: <http://thequeenofblades.blogspot.co.u...>

Shamefully, I didn't pick this up immediately when it was released. I had noticed it on Goodreads, but I had many, many books to read. It was shelved, and joined the back of the line. Yes, I am an awful person. It wasn't until I met Marc Turner that I figured I better get to it.

When the Heavens Fall was compared to Malazan by another reviewer. This set off alarm bells in my head. I love Malazan, no not just love. When I'm reading any of TMBotF, I live in them. I eat, sleep, breathe Malazan. It's my favourite series. So I went into this praying that I would like it.

Turns out, there is quite a Malazanish feel to it. But not so much that people put off by the scale of Erikson's work would be alienated. It had just the right balance of epic scope, well-formed characters, and of course, a few meddling immortals.

The use of only four PoV characters keeps the pace flowing nicely. It quite ingenious actually (even a Malazan superfan like myself has to admit that it's tough to keep up at times), by keeping the PoV cast pretty small, Turner keeps the reader engaged and prevents the sometimes occurring problem in epic fantasy of the reader getting bored/overwhelmed/confused. It works very well here.

The characters are fantastic, each one is lovingly crafted. Some are led by a sense of duty, others vengeance, and others pushed by unseen or seen forces. Parolla was immediately a favourite of mine, and Romany's ridiculous sense of entitlement had me hating her at first, and then that gradually evolved into admiration, and then love.

The plot revolves around a mystical book, stolen by a rather nasty old mage, and carried off to an ancient dead city. Various forces conspire to manipulate the mage for their own gains, leading to a convergence of power at the climax. This is everything I love.

I had always thought male authors cannot write female characters, not really. Yeah, they give it a go, and it kind of works. But readers can always tell. I'm happy to be proven wrong here. Authors quite often approach the differences between male and female characters in very stilted ways. 'Men do this' and 'women do that',

however the beauty here is that every character is treated as an individual. Their choices are not defined by whether they have breasts or balls. Gender tropes don't normally bother me that much, I grew up with them. I came to accept them as part of reading, always lurking in the background no matter how much you ignore them. But when an author shows the reader it is possible to step beyond these stereotypes its just so, refreshing.

I think this series will be one of my new favourites.

Bob Milne says

While I hesitate to call this a throwback or reactionary fantasy, there's no question that *When the Heavens Fall* has a very late-80s/early-90s feel to it. From the characters, to the world-building, to the story, to the narration, Marc Turner's debut just feels like something I'd almost swear I read 25 years ago. That's not necessarily a bad thing - many of my favorite epics are from that era - but it will certainly present a challenge to readers who've become accustomed to something more polished and more complex.

I've already seen some readers complain about the world-building, but I appreciated both the world itself and the way it's built. What you have to understand is that Turner's style is about as far away from info-dumping as you can get. He throws us head-first into the story, drags us along, and simply expects us to catch up. The politics, mythology, and magic are revealed in sporadic dribs and drabs, often through conversation or internal monologues. You have to pay attention, and you have to make some connections on your own to have the story come together, and I liked that.

As for the characters, I liked them, and was certainly invested in their fates, but I'll be the first to admit they could have benefited from a little more emotional depth. The Lurker and Jenna were an interesting pair, playing off one another nicely, but neither one grabbed me and screamed HERO! Ebon was a legitimate hero, but a little too good to be interesting - he really needed a just a few darker, selfish aspects to round him out. Romany was pretty much his polar opposite, a legitimate villain, but a little too bad to be truly interesting, although I loved her interactions with Spider. Parolla, on the other hand, was a character about whom I constantly wanted to see, hear, and know more. I loved her as much as I loved her story arc, and I actually got frustrated when the story moved away from her. Had Turner invested as much effort in building out the other characters as he did her, I think this would have been a much stronger tale.

The narration itself was serviceable, but nothing special. Again, like I said, it has that feel of a late-80s/early-90s epic fantasy, when plot came before characters, and characters came before storytelling. It flows well, is nicely paced, and doesn't fall into any of the debut author traps of overused words or phrases, but the switch between POVs is a little harsh at times. There were times I felt like Turner was simply changing POV to give himself time to think, time to figure out what to do with a character next, without advancing too far towards the climactic convergence of magical forces and supernatural powers.

With all of that said, I really enjoyed the story. It not only developed well, but it resolved itself nicely. It's increasingly rare that an epic fantasy can manage to sustain my interest through the climax, and keep me reading closely, enjoying the details and nuances, as opposed to skimming ahead to find out how it all ends. The darkness, the magic, and the very idea of power really appealed to me here, and I felt Turner did a masterful job of building the story towards that climax. It's a story that just got bigger, deeper, and more intriguing with each new revelation.

I'm really curious to see how fans of the genre respond to *When the Heavens Fall*. I suspect that will largely depend on how long they've been fans, and how wide their reading experience has been. If it comes across like nothing they've ever read before, that might be a challenge. If it seems at all familiar, however, and evokes any feelings of nostalgia, then I think it's those readers who will be clamoring the loudest for a sequel. Either way, I enjoyed it, and I'm anxious to see what Turner does next.

Originally reviewed at Beauty in Ruins

Nathan says

Fantasy Review Barn

All roads lead to Rome.

Mayot gets his hands on an object that gives him power to rival the gods. And it is quickly apparent he plans on using it. His presence turns into a magnet for everything to follow; a focal point for the entire cast to converge on for differing reasons. Some know exactly why they are heading to this man while some are driven there by factors beyond their control. But each soul that heads in his direction is drawn in completely; one way or another their fate will be decided in his new magnetism.

I will let you know that this book didn't hook me right away. There was a D&D feel to some of it, starting with the naming conventions of things like the Forest of Sighs and The Book of Lost Souls. Characters felt wooden and early scene of powers in negotiations didn't work at all. Toss in a night attack by what can only be described as ninjas and a character speaking in a faux old English accent and my eyes found themselves rolled completely into the back of the head.

But patience in this case was absolutely rewarded. The consistent build up, chapter after chapter, was handled superbly. Power growing and building; Mayot extends his reach a little more with each fight, small or large. And as his power grows the ripples are felt from farther away, leading to even more of the players in this magical world wanting the book he holds for their own. And Mayot's plans are truly ambitious; it wasn't until late in the book that I realized just how far he was willing to take this.

This is not a subtle book, it is a book of magic. Mayot will take on wizards, titans and gods. Some try to take, some try to manipulate (my favorite character's favorite tactic) and some try to negotiate. And did I mention that Mayot's methods are truly horrible? No? Some are trying to stop him only because his success will lead to things worse than death. *When the Heavens Fall* is completely about the buildup and the payoff; characters, history of the world, deep themes is not the game here. If you are willing to play along, which I eventually was, then there is little room for disappointment by the end.

Every so often a book does something that catches your eye that maybe isn't central to the plot, or character, but still seems worth remembering. Turner wrote a book with a cast with a fairly mixed gender representation. Women and men both act with strong agency. But what caught my eye was a completely lack of gender notice by the narrator. There is a standard practice (made fun of early by Terry Pratchett) that when a female mercenary is introduced a reader is immediately clued in to if this one is a possible love interest based on physical characteristics or not. But the men and women of this world are given the same treatment. Unless a specific character makes note of a physical detail a movie casting could truly be put

together with a blank slate. A bit of tangent I know, but the realization hit me and I couldn't help but mention it.

This was a book I started slow on and had some innate silliness in its set up. But I cannot ignore the buildup that eventually hooked me, nor the fact that the payoff didn't disappoint. Mark Turner wrote a damn fine book.

4 Stars

Michael Fletcher says

Truly epic magical battles.

Highly recommended for anyone into epic fantasy with a dark edge.
