



The Alchemist's Secret

Scott Mariani

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THE #1 BESTSELLER

Ben Hope lives on the edge. A former élite member of the SAS, Ben is tortured by a tragedy from his past and now devotes his life to finding kidnapped children.

When Ben is recruited to locate an ancient manuscript which could save a dying child, he embarks on the deadliest quest of his life.

The document is alleged to contain the formula for the elixir of life, discovered by the brilliant alchemist Fulcanelli decades before. But it soon becomes apparent that others are hunting this most precious of treasures - for far more evil ends.

When the secrets of alchemy hidden within the pages remain impenetrable, Ben teams up with beautiful American scientist Dr Roberta Ryder to crack the code.

It seems that everyone - from the Nazis during WW2 and powerful Catholic organisation Gladius Domini - wants to unearth the secrets of immortality.

The trail leads Ben and Roberta from Paris to the ancient Cathar strongholds of the Languedoc, where an astonishing secret has lain hidden for centuries...

The Alchemist's Secret Details

Date : Published (first published March 31st 2007)

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Author : Scott Mariani

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From Reader Review The Alchemist's Secret for online ebook

Rumana Nasrin says

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Amy says

This book is terrible in a completely enjoyable way. Sure, it's populated by evil caricatures, an unstoppable lead man and a damsel in distress (with a PHD, at least) who falls in love with him but, all that what-not aside: I still thought it was ok.

This novel falls somewhere between Dan Brown (better written but similar themes) and Kate Mosse (more gory but again, similar themes) as it has a religious puzzle element with a Cathars plot line. If you enjoyed either of those writers previously (and I did, although definitely not all of their output) this might be worth a shot... especially as the ebook is 49p on Amazon. It was worth the money but it was not worth more than that.

Oh, and a lot of people die - some in quite gory ways. Just a small heads up!

Matt says

In this first full-length novel, Scott Mariani propels Ben Hope into the middle of an ancient mystery, some would rather have left in medieval times. Hope is enjoying his life as a former SAS operative, ensconced in the world of K&R (kidnap and ransom), particularly when the victims are children. When Hope is approached by a wealthy man to help him find a manuscript that purports to hold alchemical secrets, skepticism surfaces and the mission is declined. However, upon learning that this might be the only way to help the man's granddaughter, a crisis of conscience arises and Ben agrees to take the case and commences the search for the Fulcanelli Manuscript. Steered towards Paris, Hope begins searching for his manuscript that is said to hold keys the Elixir of Life. He encounters a controversial American scientist, Dr. Roberta Ryder, who has her own feelings about this document and seeks to come along, having always wanted to examine Fulcanelli's notations. However, someone is trying to steer her astray and keep Ryder on the radar of the police. Immortality being what it is, many others are searching for the Manuscript, including a dark organization, Gladius Domini. They will stop at nothing to uncover the secrets and have targeted Hope and Ryder for extinction, if that is what it will take. Headed by a powerful man within the Catholic Church, Gladius Domini purports to be acting in the name of God. As the search continues, a psychiatric patient who has read large portions of the Manuscript might hold some key aspects that Hope will require in his search. However, self-inflicted injuries and incoherent babble led to a deadly outcome. Could these rantings still be useful? Hope and Ryder do all they can to find the truths of the Fulcanelli Manuscript while trying to keep Gladius Domini at bay. As the story progresses, the reader travels with Hope and Ryder on a dangerous trail

from Paris to the ancient Cathar strongholds of the Languedoc, where an astonishing secret has lain hidden for centuries. Might Hope lose his life trying to extend that of a sick girl? Mariani storms onto the scene with this new series and keeps readers hooked from the opening paragraphs. An exciting adventure that mixes the devotion of Jack Reacher with the historical obsessions of Robert Langdon. Not to be missed by fans of either protagonist.

Asked by a friend if I would try this series, I decided to stop procrastinating once and for all. I thoroughly enjoy the premise of the Ben Hope series and found that the character, while similar in some regards to the two men mentioned above, also individualises himself nicely. Hope brings much baggage and fast-paced decision making from his time with the SAS, but also a penchant for dedication. He pulls on an ability to decipher codes and hidden messages, while peeling back historical understandings of items not known to many beforehand. It is still early in the series, but I can begin to see an interesting foundation for the Ben Hope character and Mariani offers up some interesting backstory about Ben and his reason for being involved in K&R, pieces that were not clear even with the three short stories that precede this novel. The story is by no means unique, but its development and content does have a degree of individuality, such that the reader will likely want to take a look. Without getting too weighed down with religious symbols, the Fulcanelli Manuscript offers up the one things many have sought for so long, the answer to eternal life. I'd surely use it to read and review all the books that teeter on my 'to be read' list. You?!

Kudos, Mr. Mariani for starting the series off with a bang! I am very curious and hope to read more about Ben Hope and his various adventures in the coming weeks.

Love/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Steve says

I am completely flummoxed as to why so many people have given this book and author such good reviews!!!! It is such a rip off of other authors stories, in particular Dan Brown, and is riddled with cliches!!! To top it all off it is very poorly written. I'm no literary snob, far from it as I will read trashy page turners like the rest of them

The cliches were to much and I struggled to finish it.....the handsome, rich, reclusive, troubled ex SAS soldier out to save the world against the evil Catholic Church with his side kick, who just happens to be a beautiful young intelligent woman!

The story was poor but it was all too much for me when the hero and heroine run into each other's arms on the beach at the end.....I couldn't bear to read another word by this comic book author! Go read some Jeffrey Archer Mr Mariani and learn how to write a novel!

Paul O'Neill says

It's like a cross between Dan Brown and Matthew Reilly. Awesome action packed, fast paced, tightly written (seriously, shortest paragraphs and chapters I've ever read, so you'll fly through it).

Also unpredictable, which is hard to pull off. All that, and it's historically accurate??? More please!

Pranta Ghosh Dastider says

Like a Hollywood movie it started, like a movie it ended. What's in between, is a story of suspense thriller, action adventure, conspiracy, love and hardcore killings and survival.

Ask me why I liked The Alchemist's Secret? And the answer is simple. Because it's good. From the first chapter its fast paced, and it rarely slow down. Of course there are loop-holes within the story, but those didn't bother me much to avoid fun. Often when a story can give me enough joy, I tend to ignore that tiny errors it beholds. Because, every story has errors if you really want to find them. But, the main goal should be to enjoy it while we can. That's why we read books to begin with, isn't it?

I liked how hero character developed with time, or rather it's more appropriate to say, how it got reveled. He was rough and tough to begin with, but also has a soft corner within. And we got to see throughout the journey that he can be as humane as a normal human being. He also makes mistake, ignore facts. But, with luck and skill he survives somehow. Our lady protagonist was also nice. The only thing bothered me that, she was supposed to know some martial-arts, but when situation demanded she failed to use it mostly. I wanted her to be more action packed.

There is puzzle, and throughout the whole book B. Hope discover the whole truth. The ending is not unpredictable, but it's fine. Whole journey made it worth a while. If you like an action adventure story, this book is for you. If you like spy thriller, you need to read this. If you like conspiracy, it might just satisfy you. Overall, read it if you want to go into a fast story-line with good characters. You will feel like playing a good old Tomb Raider game while reading it- if you know what I mean!

Ana says

Absolutely BRILLIANT! A real page turner with twists I certainly didn't expect. Highly recommended to everyone, not just thriller/mystery fans. Looking forward to reading the other books in the series.

Mark says

This is one of the plethora of novels that surfaced when Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code became such an international hit. indeed if you like Da Vinci Code then this is a book you should enjoy.

MC Ben Hope is an ex SAS member with a secretive past. In his 'new' life he has evolved into a secret agent, private detective type whose primary objective is to find lost and/or kidnapped children and return them to their parents. He has lost none of his SAS skills and is still a fit, healthy, vibrant man although he has formed a smoking and drinking habit. Still an expert with weapons and able to handle himself in all situations.

It is when Ben is contracted to find an ancient manuscript, to not rescue a child but save her from terminal illness, that his world is turned upside down. The manuscript is rumored to hold the secrets of Ancient alchemists, secrets that may be able to stop the child from dying.

Like all books of this ilk it is never an open and shut case. As Ben searches for the manuscript he is followed by an evil assassin working for an organisation calling themselves the Gladius Domini. This organisation has ties to the Catholic church and indeed the Nazis of WW2. Ben discovers a scientist in France who has been 'outed' for her experiments in alchemy and they soon form a partnership - he the braun, fighting skill and cunning, she the historical and alchemy knowledge and not too short on her own fighting skills.

There are some parallels to the Da Vinci Code - at times codes seem to be a bit too easily broken, to reveal points on maps that are a bit too easily found. There is the occasional symbol that is a bit too easily recognized. This book has more fighting, gunshots and imprisonment than Da Vinci Code and probably flows a bit quicker. Having said all of that, fans of Dan Brown will definitely enjoy this book.

This novel is written to be fast paced. The author starts new paragraphs with a space in the text to cut out any boring travel scenes. For example MC decides he needs to be somewhere two hours away (page break, new paragraph) MC is now searching for answers at the destination. The scene is set early and the action flows, there are a few minor twists along the way but generally a straight forward search and find. Enjoy!

Tea Jovanovi? says

This is one of those books you read in one go and can read 10 of them in a row... like you read James Patterson :) But for how long you will remember what you have read I can't tell... not for long probably :) You'll remember that you liked the book but not what the book was about... :)

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

Roberta is such a pain in the ass

Melly Kallon says

Wow, it was... different. I haven't read this type of thriller before. Ben Hope's not a historian, nor some kind of scientist or professor, yet he's on the trace of a historical mystery. He reminded me of Eddie Chase (Andy McDermott's series about Nina Wilde & Eddie Chase) as his ex-SAS soldier too. But I feel like most of the thrillers I've read are with main female character rather than male. On this issue, the Ben Hope series reminds me of Dan Brown's (and I both like them). The Alchemist's Secret has something in it that makes it so... distinct. At the same time, it has everything I like in this genre - action, fun, mystery, history... I like the writing of Scott Mariani and I'm continuing with the next book of the series - I'm so stunned I've almost read a whole book only on the bus! (I'm using the public transport to get to the university and that's about 20mins only one way and either way is a wasted time so I decided to make full use of it by reading.)

Neal Dench says

Every review I've read of Scott Mariani's Ben Hope series compares it to Dan Brown and his ilk. And you

know what? They're quite right. In making that comparison, you know exactly what you're getting. Of course, a hell of a lot of people can't stand Dan Brown, and those people should probably stay away from this book. But if you enjoy the occasional thriller with a bit of pseudo-scientific hocus-pocus thrown in, then this is probably worth a read. It's a nice easy read, with nice easy characters, and a story that's interesting enough to pull you along, and reasonably well written. All this sounds like I'm damning this book with faint praise. I'm not really - I enjoyed it quite a bit, but then I'm the sort of person that thinks not every book you read should be the best example of its craft, and not every film you see should be the finest film in the world. I'm happy reading a book or watching a film for sheer entertainment value, and not expecting a lot out of it. That's what you get with this book.

As to the plot - do you really care? It's some bunkum about an ex-SAS officer who goes around rescuing children and gets himself involved in a plot to steal the notebook of an alchemist who just might have found the secret to everlasting life. It's fun, light-hearted, and entertaining. Just don't expect it to stand up to close scrutiny.

Vilde says

After listening til *Origins* by Dan Brown, I felt for something similar. I've previously read a book by Mariani, which was ages ago, but I knew that this series would follow in the same niche as *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown.

I definitely enjoyed listening to *The Alchemist's Secret*, it was enjoyable. The information about alchemy and Languedoc and the Cathars - it made me think about the *Languedoc trilogy* by Kate Mosse - was particularly interesting.

Annalee says

From the back of the book:

A former elite member of the SAs, Ben Hope is tortured by a tragedy from his past and now devotes his time to rescuing kidnapped children.

But when Ben is recruited to locate an ancient manuscript which could save the life of a dying child, he embarks on the deadliest quest of his life.

The document is alleged to contain the formula for the elixir of life, discovered by the brilliant alchemist Fulcanelli decades before. But it soon becomes apparent that others are hunting this most precious of treasures - for far more evil ends....

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I thoroughly enjoyed this book by Mariani. Okay, in places it's a *little* far fetched, but it's gripping from beginning to end and the characterisation is good.

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## **Shahjahan Shourov says**

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