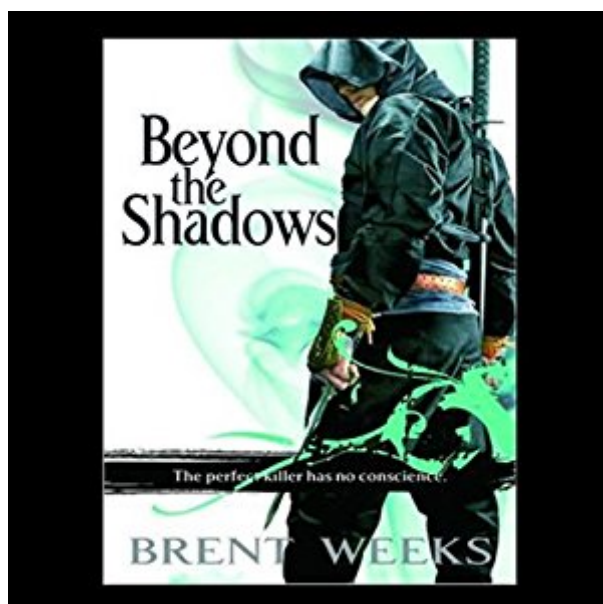


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Beyond The Shadows: Night Angel Trilogy, Book 3



Synopsis

Logan Gyre is king of Cenaria, a country under siege, with a threadbare army and little hope. He has one chance---a desperate gamble, but one that could destroy his kingdom. In the north, the new Godking has a plan. If it comes to fruition, no one will have the power to stop him. Kylar Stern has no choice. To save his friends---and perhaps his enemies---he must accomplish the impossible: assassinate a goddess.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Beyond the Shadows by Brent Weeks is the third and final novel in the Night Angel Trilogy. The first book in the trilogy is titled The Way of Shadows (The Night Angel Trilogy) and the second is titled Shadow's Edge (The Night Angel Trilogy). As I read this novel, I began to become more and more depressed; simply because I knew that with each page I turned I was that much closer to the end of such a wonderful trilogy. While Mr. Weeks may be a new author, there is nothing beginner about his writing or stories. Here are my thoughts on this novel. The plot of this novel feels different from the first two books. Where the first two books were more intimate in setting and scope, in this book the reader is really introduced to the world of Midcyru. Readers begin to understand the vast and storied history of the world and each region within the world. The one aspect that I liked above all others in regards to the plot was things that were hinted at, and briefly talked about during the first two novels rear their head and are explained in great detail in this book. Normally, in this section of my reviews I give a rather brief idea of what to expect in terms of plot. However, with this novel, I don't think that's really possible as so many things happen in this novel. What I can say is if

you have read the first two books in this trilogy and can think of a plot line that has yet to be resolved; it is resolved in this book. Yet, not all plot lines are resolved in ways that readers would want, or expect, them to be resolved. Mr. Weeks holds true to his ability to drag his characters through hell and back, and not all of them come back. I was very pleased to finish this book and not have any loose ends not tied up from the previous books, just for the sake of teasing the reader about possible future novels. The ending fit the feeling and theme of the first two books perfectly. If you like a novel with rich and detailed characters, you will most certainly enjoy this book. There are numerous characters that not only receive face time, but also have their own significant character development. I can not recall reading a novel with this many characters who all get this amount of development, and not lose track of the story or another character. All of the characters that readers would expect return in this novel; Kylar, Logan, Dorian, Solon, Vi, Neph Dada, Terah Graesin, Sister Ariell, and many more. One thing that may get overlooked by some readers is that while there are many characters, each one comes across as a unique and different character. They all have their own motivations, specific ways they talk, they all have flaws. It's simply amazing that this level of character development could occur with each of these characters and still keep the story moving. Each character has a specific purpose for the story, there are no fluff characters in this book. You can be sure that if a character is in a scene, there is a specific reason for that scene and character being there. The back stories of the character are varied and interesting. It is so rewarding to a reader when a great plot is mixed with great characters, and that is exactly what has occurred in this book and trilogy. One minor criticism about this novel: Through the first two books, and parts of this book as well, the story moves at a frenetic pace and it makes the events feel dire and important. However, there are a couple times in this book where the pace slows dramatically as certain plot points and decisions are explained in great detail. The only reason I list this as a criticism is because when this occurs it feels out of place with the rest of the storyline. Some things I liked about this novel:

- 1 - The depth of the story line. All of the sub plots, the main story arc, and how it all comes together at the end of the novel is fantastic. For a trilogy to cover as much as this trilogy does, and wrapping up most of it in the third book, is nice. It seems the growing trend in fantasy right now is to write multi-volume sagas. Here it is a simple trilogy that covers everything it takes other authors to cover in eight or nine books.
- 2 - The characters. I enjoyed how each character was a separate individual, there were very few clichés used in this novel and if they were they were not presented as the traditional cliché. Each character elicited some type of reaction, which is something I have rarely run into in a fantasy novel.
- 3 - The amount of world building that went into this novel, and trilogy. It is never more evident than in this book how much history the world has.

Each area has a different feeling to it as well as having its own separate history. I applaud Mr. Week's efforts in making this world come alive. There were several times where the world was almost another character. Rating this book as a single novel, it is a fantastic read. Rating this novel as part of a trilogy, it ranks up there as one of the best trilogies I have read in a very long time. Mr. weeks has not only made his mark on the fantasy genre, he has kicked in the doors and announced he is here to stay. The quality of these books, the world building, plot development, and character development makes reading Mr. Week's books a joy. Fans of the fantasy genre should not hesitate to pick up these books; there is something in these books that everyone will enjoy. People who are simply looking to dip their feet into the genre would also be well advised to dive into this trilogy. I will certainly be recommending this book, and trilogy, to anyone that will listen. I only hope that our wait to revisit Midcyru is short. I can not wait to see what Mr. Weeks has in store for readers. I have little doubt that he will have a long and successful career. This was simply a joy to read, well done Mr. Weeks!

This review is intended to cover the entire trilogy, although I will mention specific aspects of the final novel. Warning: spoilers within. I struggled as to whether to give the trilogy a 3 or 4 star rating. It is hugely entertaining to read. It never bogged down, the characters were engaging, and it was at least adequately original. I didn't hesitate to buy the second and third books after reading the first. But ultimately I'm not sure whether I will read more of Mr. Weeks' work. I had two complaints, both of which may seem like nit-picks... but in a fantasy genre with so many options available, I can be picky. 1. There are occasional, jarring shifts in the tone of the writing. I'm not talking about the liberal use of profanity - I find it quite realistic that criminals, soldiers, etc. in a fantasy world would swear just like contemporary criminals, soldiers, etc. However, outside of the profanity, Weeks generally uses the slightly anachronistic language common to fantasy novels. Except when he doesn't. And sometimes "except when he doesn't" comes at a sufficiently random time to knock me right out of his universe. 2. Spoiler... I objected to the deus ex machina ending. Dragging all the characters to the final battle felt forced and artificial. It seemed like Weeks himself felt that it was forced and artificial, with characters just showing up in the allies' command tent as if on cue. And it all wrapped up far too neatly, especially considering that the series was quite dark at inception. The picture-perfect ending also undermines the moral ambiguity that was one of the more compelling themes in the series. Throughout the series we were invited to question whether the ends justified the means. But in the final outcome, we see that Dorian's utilitarian attempt to do evil for the sake of good resulted in unmitigated disaster, while Logan's insistence on taking the high road produced no negative

consequences at all. Logan's principles compelled him to kill Kylar, his best friend, but his best friend was conveniently immortal. That immortality was paid for at the cost of Kylar's wife's life... but thanks to the deus ex machina ending, she needed to die for a higher purpose anyway. So there are no unpleasant consequences whatever to Logan's scruples - a cheap answer, it seems to me. And that cheap answer made the series merely entertaining, rather than thoughtful.

To Weeks's credit, this entire trilogy was extremely entertaining and difficult to put down. That said, it certainly had a few problems. The foremost of said problems is that, in several instances, things simply happen with no explanation whatsoever. Occurrences that have been built up to and leave a reader anxious to read on are simply resolved in a paragraph with no real explanation of the middleground between the onset of the problem and its resolution. While I understand it was probably a product of length guidelines, this came off as being resultant of Weeks writing himself into a conflict that he couldn't write himself out of, which makes for utterly disappointing reading. It seems to me that a few more months in the drafting stages could have fixed up these problems. I read a blog written by Brandon Sanderson in which he stresses the importance of an author having an intimate understanding of his magic systems, so as to make them more real to readers. While certain elements of Weeks's magic systems are concrete and understandable, too often they seem to have too few boundaries and too little explanation. Finally, the ending of the book -- of the trilogy -- is, frankly, pretty silly. Being an avid reader of fantasy, I don't use that term lightly, but here it is deserved. A solid conclusion is there, but a final twist is thrown in unnecessarily, and silliness ensues. Given all of that, some of the character development is fantastic, the world-building is outstanding, and Weeks is just plain fun to read. It's worth your time if you can see past its faults.

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