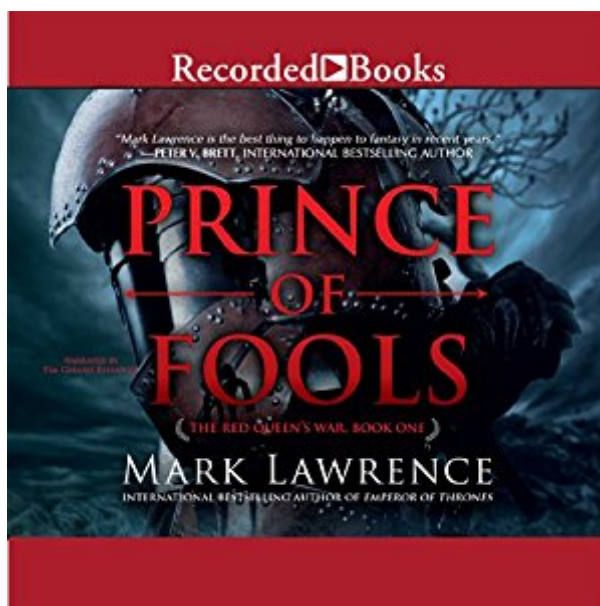


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Prince Of Fools: The Red Queen's War, Book 1



Synopsis

Hailed as "epic fantasy on a George R. R. Martin scale, but on speed" (Fixed on Fantasy), the Broken Empire trilogy introduced a bold new world of dark fantasy with the story of Jorg Ancrath's devastating rise to power. Now, Mark Lawrence returns to the Broken Empire with the tale of a less ambitious prince. The Red Queen is old but the kings of the Broken Empire dread her like no other. For all her reign, she has fought the long war, contested in secret, against the powers that stand behind nations, for higher stakes than land or gold. Her greatest weapon is The Silent Sister - unseen by most and unspoken of by all. The Red Queen's grandson, Prince Jalan Kendeth - drinker, gambler, seducer of women - is one who can see The Silent Sister. Tenth in line for the throne and content with his role as a minor royal, he pretends that the hideous crone is not there. But war is coming. Witnesses claim an undead army is on the march, and the Red Queen has called on her family to defend the realm. Jal thinks it's all a rumor - nothing that will affect him - but he is wrong. After escaping a death trap set by the Silent Sister, Jal finds his fate magically intertwined with a fierce Norse warrior. As the two undertake a journey across the Empire to undo the spell, encountering grave dangers, willing women, and an upstart prince named Jorg Ancrath along the way, Jalan gradually catches a glimmer of the truth: He and the Norseman are but pieces in a game, part of a series of moves in the long war - and the Red Queen controls the board.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this a couple of years ago and have decided it's time to uncouple my review

from my dogged fear of not doing it justice. The protagonist of *Prince of Fools*, Prince Jalan Kendeth, is a dissolute recreant who enjoys regaling himself and exhibiting rank disdain for those below him (including his bedmates). Faint of heart and a hearty master of the feint, Jalan lives a rudderless life full of dangers for him to run from. The continual endangerment is not surprising; the novel takes place in the same small world after all as Mark's other regal trilogy, *The Broken Empire*; fittingly, in a place where life exists randomly, so too Kendeth. He is a gambler, gamboing along at odds with good sense and as much control over his future as an ant at the front of a log being hurled downstream in a rapid current; so he's an anti-hero too. The plot in *Prince of Fools* is a precipitous one, with cliffhangers. What I read was a story that began violently in a semi-comical manner, but gradually gruesome events grew some in occurrence, and the novel took frequent plunges into disturbingly delightful horror, with creepy beings called Unborn given a wide berth. The enigmatic Silent Sister lent a quiet aura of the macabre with her unspeakable actions. There was slapstick humor and a superhero Viking partner, named Snorri ver Snagason, bonded to Jalan, offsetting the upsetting, but the sense of foreboding draped the book; menace was a constant burden not easily un-borne. This was a good bad-thing, as was the presence of darkling sorcery and spiritual possession. All very enchanting, as is the magic of Lawrence's writing. His prose is hypnotic and full-figured with robust similes, and there is a blending of narrative with character in which each aspect reinforces the other. This is a novel that will keep you on high alert in its unfolding, even during its dream sequences and the Snorri interludes. The book deserves five gold stars; this is not fool's gold, but rather a reflection of the aureate splendor of a stellar work refulgent with the genius shone by a torch-bearing writer of dark fantasy at his radiant best.

I give this book five out of five stars for its impeccable narrative, the unique hero in Jalan, and another fantastic journey through Lawrence's Broken Empire dystopian universe. This book takes you on an incredible journey with some laugh out loud funny moments and some heart wrenching sad ones. Since finishing the book, I've caught my mind wandering back Prince Jalan and Snorri's story. Lawrence has a writing talent that rises above fictional genre classifications; it's something that can be appreciated by any lover of a good story. What I loved about this book: 1) The characters. It was such a treat to be on a journey with Prince Jalan. He evolves from a shallow, self-centered, coward, living from present moment to present moment; to a man who realizes there is more he is capable of doing with

his life. He gets locked into a companionship turned friendship with Snorri who possesses many of the admiral characteristics Jalan should have. Despite Jalan's failings, Snorri views Jalan in the best way possible, even when he's presented with contrary evidence. It was easy to root for both Snorri and Jalan, and I eagerly look forward to seeing them again in the second book of this series.

2) The action. I was entrenched in the story from beginning to end. Lawrence kept me in a strangle hold; keeping me at the edge of my seat, captivated by the mystery of why Jalan and Snorri were thrown into this adventure. The battle scenes were great; even the ones Jalan admitted were sparked by his own cowardice.

3) A beautiful narrative. Lawrence makes writing first person fantasy narratives look easy. He's taken the already difficult task of educating the reader on this foreign world and parceled it into narrative exposition material that makes you learn and laugh at the same time; leveraging the comedic insights of his protagonist. I highly recommend this book. If you are new to Mark Lawrence or his Broken Empire, you can read this book and enjoy it without having read anything prior.

The Broken Empire trilogy was awesome. The Red Queen's War appears to be just as good. Lawrence knows how to create rich characters and great adventures. This is what I call medieval fantasy, and Lawrence is great at it!

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