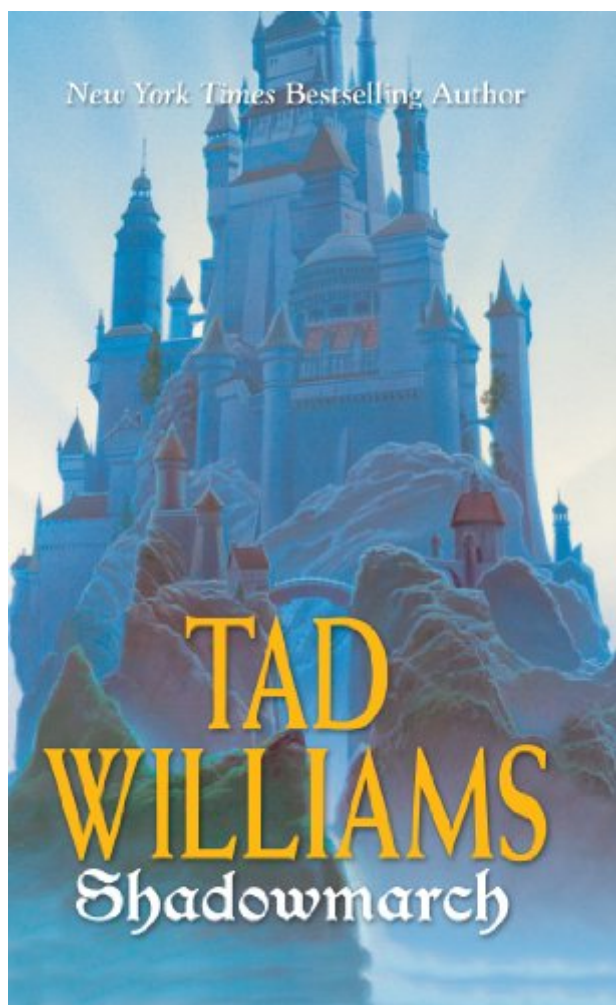


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Shadowmarch: Shadowmarch: Volume I



Synopsis

For generations the misty Shadowline has marked the boundary between the lands of men and the lost northern lands that are the lair of their inhuman enemies, the ageless Qar. but now that boundary line is moving outward, threatening to engulf the northernmost land in which humans still live--the kingdom of Southmarch. For centuries, the Eddon family has ruled in ancient, forbidding Southmarch Castle, guarding the border against the Qar's return, but now this powerful royal line has been dealt a devastating blow. The monarch, King Olin, is being held captive in a distant land, and it falls to his inexperienced heirs to lead their people in a time of growing danger and dread. It is on the two youngest Eddons that the heaviest burdens fall. The twins Barrick and Briony, who in such evil times have only each other, may lose even that bond as darkness closes over them. As the Qar's power reaches out across their land, will Southmarch Castle, the only home they've ever known, become in fact what it has long been called--Shadowmarch?

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Customer Reviews

I have read all the books of memory, sorrow and thorn of this author and I have enjoyed reading the

volumes although it took me a long while. Tad Williams books are thick and long. I bought this one Shadowmarch as I like his books. It is typical of Tad William to cluster the reader with too many characters and many names. At the begging, this book had not gripped me too much, but in my opinion it was necessary to get to know the characters well, before reading the next volumes. Then the adventure became to flourish but very slowly and became more interesting at the end. In my opinion it was necessary for Shadowmarch to be the cornerstone of the thrilling adventures that underscore the next volumes. I have formulated my own idea, because when I read shadow play I was lost in the epic adventures and the prolific imagination that is a unique talent of the author. In my opinion, as not to offend others, Tad Williams is the best writer of epic fantasy.

While I'm only on page 438 of 816 (and thus perhaps not totally qualified to make a comment on the book as of yet), I felt compelled to write one because I was so impressed by this novel that I'm almost to the point of being offended by the 3 star and below reviews. Trust me, if you like high fantasy with lots of character development and world building, you'll love this novel. In fact, I loved this novel so much that I would hold it to the same standard as Brandon Sanderson's "The Way of Kings," and I consider that fantasy novel to be the best one I've ever read. And yes, Shadowmarch really is THAT GOOD! The only complaint I might have had with it is that Barrick, one of the main POV characters, seemed a bit childish at times, but this is explained and justified later on with the happenstances of a certain plot point with his biological father, so that issue was completely resolved. Tad Williams has found a fan for life in this. Rock on Tad Williams! Greatly looking forward to your next high fantasy series... This guy was born to write it!

"Also, we enjoyed your generous gift and it has joined the Great Golden Piece and the Silver Thing in our collection of crown jewels." I laughed at "the Silver Thing" in the little people Queen's comment to Chert (their name for themselves is the Sni'sni'snik-soonah but they're called the Rooftoppers). Definitely a rare moment of levity in a Tad Williams book, which is one of the reasons I'm still not sure about him. He's surely a very accomplished author, it's just that there's so much exposition in his books, making them seem to progress at a snail's pace. But like George Martin, I can read Williams just for the prose, I just don't like it as much as action packed novels with good prose. If you like dark epic fantasy this is it. Nothing good ever happens to the protagonists, their lot just gets worse and worse.

This is a tough one to review. On the one hand it's quite formulaic and the pacing is uneven... but on

the other hand there is enough here to pique my interest about the world and some of the characters. I've had a similar mixed experience with Tad Williams's "Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn" trilogy, the last book of which is a volume screaming for an editorial scissor. It's all somewhat predictable here like I said - elves, dwarves, feudal lords, distant aggressive empires, a world with a long history and a time of darkness. Really very little avoid fantasy readers wouldn't have seen several times before. Shades here of Williams's prior work, as well as a strong flavor of Robin Hobb's Assassin's series. To be honest I likely would've abandoned this series if it hadn't been for some departures from the conventional fantasy frame and occasional flashes of brilliance in the plot/world building. Fine, I thought, I'll try the next volume in the quartet (Shadowplay). I was pleasantly surprised...

I have to admit that I was drawn to this book solely because of the cover art-and because I was under the mistaken impression that it was part one of a duology-and to be honest I'm a little sick of fantasy novels always coming in trilogies. I had read one other novel by Tad Williams ("The War of the Flowers") and came away dissatisfied, so I didn't have very high expectations for this book. Which made it all the more fun when it turned out to be so great. "Shadowmarch" is an impossibly complicated epic novel (in a good way) that has only slightly less going on in it than in one of George M. M. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire books. Adventure, action, mystery, magic and romance all feature heavily. The Kingdom of Southmarch-in fact most of the northern continent of Eion was once the homeland of the Quar-fairies and magical beings of all shapes and sizes. But as the humans pressed North and the relationship between the two races deteriorated The Quar pulled themselves to the far north of Eion, creating a line of shadow to mark the border. The Border has never moved. Until now. As the people of Southmarch battle through court intrigue, with 15 year old twins Barrick and Briony as regents for their kidnapped father and strange magical events begin to happen around them it becomes increasingly apparent-the Shadowline isn't the only thing moving-an army of fairies is coming as well. With storylines that take you from deep in the Earth to the highest rooftops, to the blazing southern continent where a god-king plots conquest this is a novel that is always moving, has an amazingly inventive cast of wonderful creatures never has a boring spot and instantly draws you in. It's even funny sometimes. Not only has my opinion of Tad Williams been transformed; I'm not delaying at all in heading onto "Shadowplay" and eagerly await the last novel in the trilogy. Five stars.

Excellent

Worth a read for any fantasy fan. Its not revolutionary or anything, and its a bit of a slow starter but the world Mr. Williams creates is definitely worth discovering. He writes really good character too. They all feel like individuals and you're able to understand their rational even if their actions seem nuts.

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