



# The King's Assassin

*Stephen Deas*

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## **The King's Assassin** Stephen Deas

Press-ganged as a sailor, Berren spots someone who might be his old master Syannis, who killed Berren's first love. Thought dead, Syannis is hard to kill. Berren is caught in a web of political machination and danger. Syannis is a deposed prince willing to go to any lengths - including dealing with the black-hearted sorcerer Saffran Kuy - to regain his throne.

## **The King's Assassin Details**

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# From Reader Review The King's Assassin for online ebook

## Scott says

This was a very enjoyable series. I enjoyed the progression of the characters and the ending was very cool.

The right characters leave us and a new story emerges for our young "thief taker" Berren. It was cool getting to know Tarn and Syannis' younger brother and the "idiot" brother. The story behind their idiot brother was a cool too.

A lot of items closed out that have led us to the point the series is now at. I was hoping for a little more on Taiteykai (spelling??) and how they relate to the other dragon books. Order of the scales, Black Mausoleum etc. There were some hints dropped and mentions, but no earth shaking revelations.

I hope there is another book coming from this series. Deas is a crafty writer and he keeps me engaged throughout the story. The emotional Berren and him coming to terms with who is is interesting and a little annoying at times. But nothing you cannot get past.

I would recommend this to anyone looking for a good read (no pun intended). Excellent world building, Deas really fills out the setting throughout the series and does a really good job of balancing world growth with character growth.

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## John says

I have no idea why I didn't give it a 5 star rating .. loved it.

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## Liviu says

The end of the original Thief Apprentice series though of course characters from here will continue to appear in the next volume (Dragon Queen or so); 2 years from the end of the last book and Berren escapes from his indenture as a "skag" on a ship somewhere far away from home because he sees his former master Syannis - presumed dead or imprisoned - on another ship

Later Berren joins a mercenary force, gets involved with the efforts of Syannis and his brother Talon to retake Tethis, meets the warlock Kuy again and much more...

"The Bloody Judge" with nine fingers off all things too, now Berren is very far in capabilities from the scared youth of the first two volumes, though inside he is as conflicted as ever; the book contains so much stuff that I really do not want to spoil it, but it moves very well and you cannot stop turning the pages.

There are some little logic miscues here and there - as Berren (and others) really should realize some stuff rather than act sullen and surprise at the bloody finale and the last third of the book covers a lot of time and events in a very condensed "one battle is as another" way, but the book works well and has narrative power with an ending that wraps things up while opening new avenues for the future

In some ways this book is so different from the first two to seem as being from another series, a much darker, bloodier and more adult ones; and in the author's noted style, the novel has almost no get out of jail cards, characters die and no one is safe...

Highly recommended, borderline top 25 of mine as the clear best of the 3 and arguably the author's best at least since his still awesome debut Adamantine Palace (have not yet read Black Mausoleum as of now)

FBC review (above plus a little but tidied considerably):

<http://fantasybookcritic.blogspot.com...>

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### **Mark L says**

A compelling, messy end to the series. The route Berren takes through the book is chaotic and, I feel, true to life.

Life isn't necessarily full of valour and honour. The author pays attention to the deals the protagonist makes in order to save himself and those he cares for. However, when his chance at revenge comes, he takes it. This does not resolve many of the personal and wider issues Berren has on his conscience. I enjoyed this aspect of the book.

I would like to see some more of this character.

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### **Shady Lubbad says**

nice ending, i really like it.. but now that this book is over, there is a continuation to the story, but the continuation is within the The Memory of Flames Saga. so this means you have to go back and read from the start the memory of flames saga till you get to the part where they both intersect... ohh well..

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### **Yami says**

sad about this one star,

I seriously don't remember why I liked the previous two books, starting with Berren a little thief with a harsh life, who was taken by Master Sy to be an apprentice, and what ever events got me to the king's assassin, now about this book.

NOTHING, really nothing, there is no real plot, no real anything, no one won , no one is happy, I know am not.

the book is all about killing, blood, and fights there is no glory no heroism , only the facts that wars and revenge are pointless, totally POINTLESS,

and going back and forth to do so, to kill for the wrong reasons, really there is no gain from behind it, it is like for the sake of "whoever" am going to kill "whoever"

and who is the middle of all this , our protagonist Berren, I think it was better for him if he stayed a thief,here I said it, I don't understand why, WHY he got stuck in all of this, but for one word "life"

Berren is a real victim of war and manipulation of people , there was no single happy moment for this boy who turned into a man with the worst road there is to manly-hood.

and still in the end the story wasn't happy, no real happy ending , to make up for him.

just dull and harsh. with no real meaning, as if the author got tired and didn't want to write this book, even the writing wasn't attracting. it feels no love was put into writing it. and I didn't feel any while reading it.

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### **PaleHorsemen says**

Have ambiguous feelings about this one. More like 3.5. but still I liked it though I could wish for a better ending. Especially for Syannis and Talon. And irritating and selfish as ever Berren in the last book is even worse. and his slavewoman love is just out of place. just a mess in the end.

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### **Manrix says**

Another compelling Deas novel, and a lot darker than its two prequels. I was quite sad to see Berren in such a dark place in this last installment of the series, but considering what he'd been through, it was to be expected.

Finally, we get to see the shitty kingdom master Syannis was from, and we learn about the disputes and arguments in that area. But there are also some glimpses of the bigger picture, which I really enjoy.

There were some unexpected plot points, and Saffran Kuy was, as always, a complete wild card in this story, which was very nice.

Still, some short passages of the novel describe a long time passing, and it felt like certain parts were just brushed over, giving the novel the feel that it was perhaps shorter than it could or should have been. Where in the first two novels, you were there with Berren nearly every day, and at every step, this novel spans several years, and some of it felt a bit too much like it was a step up to the integration into the other series that Deas is writing.

Still, the overlap between the series is a fascinating idea, especially since there are some ongoing mysteries building in that other series.

Still, character-wise, this was a satisfying conclusion to Berren's trilogy, and I can't wait to see more of him.

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### **Lance says**

*"People sometimes do very strange things once they get what they want. They turn out not to be quite the people they were pretending to be."*

This is by far Deas' best book yet. The narrative is gripping, compelling from the first until the final page of the book. This archetypal fantasy series has seamlessly become the best formation of an anti-hero book I have ever read, and every word pulled on my heartstrings. The plot is vibrant, powerful, cruel and the characters emotions cut like knives. Beautiful.

*"What did he have to look forwards to? Nothing. A short life, vicious and pointless."*

Berren's personal journey begins as an adolescent runaway full of shock and remorse and hope. Valliant, hopeless, he strives to keep to the standards of his lost love Tasahre in a world where all that is good is slowly crushed beneath capitalism's indifference. *"I loved her! She was everything that was right and god and you killed her! And why? She tried to stop you from murdering someone. She had you beaten! She tried to let you live! She gave you every chance!"* Finally, he excels at fighting. But he can't enjoy it. *"They'd both become murderers and now he had nothing left, nothing at all except a remembered pain deep and bitter enough to make him gasp and stagger."* He tries to hold onto the hate, the rage, the last vestiges of emotion that might bring him back to the vulnerable perceptive boy he had once been. *"Two years it had taken, but the sun was starting to shine again at last, and yet he barely even felt it. What he felt, when he looked, was numb."* But it's gone. Berren is empty on the inside and he has an agonising self-awareness of this.

*"So you'll be teaching him how to fight in a battle with real swords and armour and chaos and blood and chopped-off bits of people everywhere, as you so picturesquely put it."*

After two years a slave on a ship, Berren enters Kalda in pursuit of Syannis' shadow. Instead he finds mercenary captain Talon, Syannis' brother, who takes on Berren as a soldier. *"Syannis thinks you killed Radek for him, but you didn't, did you? I see no pride in you at all. Just shame and fear."* And he's good. The best. Cruel without understanding why, a genius in steel. *"Simple instinct, and his had been to kill, because that's what they'd all taught him: Master Syannis, Silvestre, even Tasahre, although she would have wept at what he'd done today."* It seems that at least his subconscious is at bay when he fights. *"In the fight he's felt Tasahre beside him, watching him, guiding him, moulding his shape and his movements as she'd used to do. Inside he'd felt at peace."*

*"I have spoken to you of the first principle of knowledge: that we are beings of two parts. Every man, from the lowest worm to the highest king, has two souls."*

But Berren is not free. The warlock Saffran Kuy who cut out part of his soul is still free and manipulating the fate of the tiny border waste-kingdom of Tethis. And now he has a creepy sociopathic princess as an apprentice. *"It fills a hole, you see. Like the Black Moon and the Dead Goddess fill the hole in the world. He showed it to me. You have to keep it closed otherwise something will come through. Not yet, but one day. He's making us ready. To let it in when the Ice Witch brings the Black Moon down."* The heir to Tethis. The home of exiled Prince Syannis.

*"The heady mix of fear and awe Berren remembered as his apprentice were gone, not a trace of it left. What he saw now both made him feel pity and repulsion."*

Talon's loyalty to his brother brings Berren to Tethis. The petty rubble of this kingdom of peasants makes Syannis' bloody grudge seem even more petty. *"Long ago, someone had built a solid stone house here. Other people had added to it. Someone had started to turn it into a palace and then stopped. Someone else had aimed for a castle instead."* Syannis needs Berren as a Bloody Judge, to kill the usurper king Meridian. He has become shrivelled by vengeance, devoid of conscience. *"He couldn't look at the thief-taker. So fallen from what he'd been. An idol almost. Everything he'd aspired to be once."* It's heart-breaking.

*"Was it the thought of death that made them so full of life?"*

And Berren wins a kingdom for him

*"Life is cheaper than gold and silver and worth more than both. Nothing changes, wherever I go."*

The final section of the book is the most beautiful. Syannis is regent for his learning disabled brother and exiles Berren in disgust. But with the last of his virtue, Berren makes a symbolic request, if he can free one slave in payment for all his service perhaps he can do a final deed in the memory of Tasahre. He is denied. This has a haunting parallel of Achilles' demand for the slave-woman Briseis which tears the Greek army apart in the Illiad and eventually leads to the deaths of both Achilles and Patroclus. Berren leaves his soul behind and does all he can to earn this one woman's freedom. He is one of the most successful soldiers in history, and this is all the power left to him to do good. *"He was afraid. After three years of fighting, a score of battles, after killing more men than he could count, he was afraid that something inside him had changed and was lost and would never be found again."* He comes back. That mote of goodness is still intact.

The ending is perfect. It is revealed that Syannis has been ensorcelled to deny Berren by the princess, but

there is one strand of nobility left in the crippled thief-taker that leaves him loyal to his disabled brother even against the strength of magic. "*I love you more than life, but not more than my brother.*" It is a really tragic redemption. Berren is denied again by the princess Gelisya, Helen pulling the strings of Agamemnon, who sets the warlocks on him. But Berren takes back his soul and defies destiny in a heart-stopping final sequence. "*The knife could do almost anything, almost anything at all. It had the power of a god inside it, lurking just out of reach.*" He is so lost, so desperate, he fights fully expecting to die and wins. Everything behind him is destroyed. But he did the right thing in the end. I'm welling up ...

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### **Shane Kiely says**

Big shift in direction from the previous instalments whereby the urban fantasy is pretty much abandoned. The City of Deeptaven & the Empire are abandoned as Berren gets completely caught up in Master Sy's quest for revenge hinted at in the first 2 books. This feels a lot more epic in terms of scale as compared to the previous instalments, despite actually being the shortest so far in terms of page length. The action involves long journeys & takes place over the course of years. This also marks a change in Berren as a character, he's no longer the wide eyed apprentice, exposure to the true brutality of war have hardened him & there's a real tangible sense of the loss of hope & ambition. The ending is a tiny bit anti climactic but it hints at more to come in the related Memory of Flames/Silver Kings narratives. The book like the series as a whole feels like a genuine account of a journey taken & part of a life lived.

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### **lucus a. tyus says**

#### **Worth a buck.**

A quick read. It just never seems to get any where, and then twenty pages later it covers four years and ends.

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### **Susanne says**

Ack. Great series, lovely concept, awesome worldbuilding, but I hated the direction the characters went in this last book. Very, very disappointing ending. Sadface!

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### **Curtis says**

Although the story kept pulling away from where I thought it should have gone, its not over completely and I respect his skill in world building and hopefully foreshadowing. If you like the the Night Angel Trilogy or Among Thieves, this trilogy is like a banquet lunch. Eat too much at once and your miserable but its delicious all the same.

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## Raymond Just says

Another strong entry and gripping read by Mr. Deas, who has quietly joined the ranks of the best fantasy writers working today. In my opinion, he's right up there with Rothfuss and Redick (too bad his last name doesn't start with a "D"). "The King's Assassin" exhibits the same engaging prose and rich characterizations I've come to expect from the author, and I thoroughly enjoyed the relatively fast pace of the read.

I'm at three stars on "King's Assassin," though, not because of any lack in the writing or the story, but because I found protagonist Berren's precipitous fall from the relatively innocent and wide-eyed youth coming of age and kindling romantic feelings for his sword-monk tutor to a jaded, disaffected, disillusioned and battle-hardened veteran, a/k/a "The Bloody Judge," rather jarring. And the lack of a proper resolution with his mentor, the Thief-Taker, is somewhat disappointing as well. It feels like we've skipped a book or two here, and I wonder if Mr. Deas originally had plans for a longer and more elaborate series, but was for some reason forced to compact the telling of the tale into a trilogy instead.

Still, "The King's Assassin" is a very engaging, well-crafted story, which stands heads (if not heads and shoulders this time around), above the general rabble of fantasy fiction found on bookshelves today.

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