



Archmage

R.A. Salvatore

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DRIZZT RETURNS TO THE UNDERDARK!

“After a quarter of a century, R.A. Salvatore just keeps getting better and better, and *The Companions* is another masterful leap forward for one of the greatest fantasy epics of all time.”

—Philip Athans, best-selling author of *Annihilation* and *Writing Monsters*

R.A. Salvatore

Archmage

The pall that had descended over the North is gone, and a new day has dawned on a victorious Mithral Hall, but no matter how bright things seem on the surface, Drizzt and his companions know that what lurks just under their feet remains steeped in evil and charged with unimaginable power.

The dark elves of Menzoberranzan, including the powerful Archmage Gromph, aren't done with Drizzt yet. And consumed by their own power struggles, feeling backed into a corner, the drow may just be desperate enough to call on demonic forces from the deepest reaches of the Abyss, and unleash a disaster even the Underdark could never have prepared for.

Archmage has everything Drizzt's fans crave: action, adventure, characters that resonate with equal measures of warrior spirit and deep compassion, and no shortage of wicked dark elves!

Archmage Details

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Author : R.A. Salvatore

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From Reader Review Archmage for online ebook

KostasAt says

6/10

First book in the Homecoming trilogy but I must say that I am disappointed by Salvatore as I expected something more after the weak conclusion of the Companions Codex trilogy.

I've been a long time fan of Drizzt and Salvatore's style in general but after Gauntlgrym I've been struggling in this series and, although I kinda liked the new version of the Companions, I feel that it should all have ended right there, at the end of Gauntlgrym. It was a somewhat perfect ending for me even if it was forced by Wizards.

Now, after eight books Salvatore seems to have lost his spark and making Drizzt more like a guest-star I could say, focusing more on other characters that even though some are interesting enough for a few chapters they can't really hold an entire story. And that happens with Archmage as more than 2/3 of the story doesn't have anything big or important but rather just talk and talk, making the book not only not interesting enough but rather boring and tiring with the chapters flying very quickly.

The only things that I can say that "saves" the book are the last few chapters, which have all the fighting, and Jarlaxle's parts as Salvatore leaves us with a taste of what's to come in the next book.

Overall, it is a mediocre book with only a few scenes really worth the time and I would consider it one of Salvatore's worst if I didn't love Drizzt and his Companions so much. I hope for something better in the rest of the trilogy, although my expectations now have fallen pretty low.

Kelly says

Archmage numbers twenty-eighth in 'The Legend of Drizzt'. As always, I'll preface my review with the caveat that you will get more out of these later books if you've read those that came before. At this point in the saga, a lot of foreknowledge of the world and the characters has to be assumed, or R.A. Salvatore would spend half the novel catching everyone up.

The war for the Silver Marches is over, a tentative truce declared between the orcs and the combined forces of the dwarves, elves and humans. The Darkening – a drow dweomer that darkened same region – has been dispelled. With the orcs banished to the Spine of the World and the stronghold of Many Arrows disassembled, efforts to rebuild Nesmé and refortify the rest of the Silver Marches are underway. Old alliances are reformed and strengthened. Peace is restored (for now), and Bruenor Battlehammer has turned his eye back to legendary dwarven city of Gauntlgrym.

For the drow, this should be a time of consolidation. Their plans were thrown into disarray with the orcs' defeat. The dark elves are among Salvatore's most inscrutable races, however. The only predictable thing about them is the fact they will do the unexpected. They thrive on chaos. So the many divisions in drow society feed beautifully in this, making their losses akin to a bad day on the stock market. Investors immediately alter their strategy, and key characters begin padding their retirement plans.

All of Menzoberranzan (the drow city, and Drizzt's birthplace) will be affected by the dwarves' resolve to

reclaim their own slice of the underdark. Gauntlgrym is currently operating as a satellite to Menzoberranzan. For Archmage Gromph and Jarlaxle's band of mercenaries, however, the dwarf intrusion presents the perfect opportunity to meddle with the status quo. When would Jarlaxle not take advantage of that?

Far below the Prime Material Plane, we have the true seeds of chaos. Lolth, Demon Queen of Spiders, has plans of her own concerning...well, everyone and everything.

There isn't a lot of Drizzt in this book. If I had a complaint about the last trilogy (The Companion Codex), it would have been that. The story has been growing wider for a while now, however, and many of the bit players have become important enough to have their own agendas which in turn affect the plot of the world – and every book. This latest trilogy, while perhaps a part of the Legend of Drizzt, feels less a part of his legend than part of the entire history of Toril. Drizzt is an important component of this story; we just don't get a lot of time with him. I suspect that will change as this story arc continues, however.

We also lose touch with a couple of other key characters here. My guess is that with such a huge cast, Salvatore obviously had to send some folks off on their own quests in order to stay focused. I've always appreciated the fact these books rarely stray over the 400 page mark. Longer books can be intimidating.

Now that I've covered my quibbles, I'll move on to what I liked about *Archmage*. Honestly – and I've said this before – I don't think Salvatore could write a story I didn't like. I've been reading his books for seventeen years with good reason. So the short answer is: I liked this one. I really liked it. *Archmage* is an emotional book, which shouldn't have surprised me. There are a couple of touchpoints here that will tug the heartstrings of devoted fans. Usually books that delve deep into Menzoberranzan and drow politics lose me a little, but I found myself quite invested this time 'round and that would be because of Gromph's weightier story arc. The Archmage has always been an interesting and conflicted character, if harder to like than Jarlaxle. Probably because he has no sense of humour. Very few drow do.

The rest of the book is concerned with the effort to reclaim Gauntlgrym. One of my favourite aspects of Vengeance of the Iron Dwarf was the coming together of the dwarven armies under one banner, for one purpose. This continued alliance in the name of retaking the Delzoun birthright makes a great story. As expected, they will not be able to walk in and set up camp. There will be blood, from skirmishes to epic battles, and the cost of Gauntlgrym may be more than any of us suspect.

Written for SFCrowsnest.

Sean Gibson says

Standard R.A. Salvatore Biased Review Caveat: Bob Salvatore is one of my favorite authors and has been for 20 years; he's also, amongst the writers I've had the good fortune to meet and/or interview, one of the nicest and most generous with his time. So, any book that has his name on the cover gets an extra bump up the review scale compared to if the same book had been written by someone not named Bob Salvatore.

With that said...3.5 Stars

(Note: this review assumes you've read previous books in the series...if you haven't, none of this will make any sense; if you have, it might make some semblance of sense, but probably not much, because that's just how I do. It also has SPOILERS.)

And so begins yet another saga featuring the Companions of the Hall, and it's got a lot going for it:

- The first book in quite some time where our beloved Companions begin the story healthy, happy, and together
- Lots of Jarlaxle and Kimmuriel
- Gromph—loads and loads o' Gromph
- Dwarves EVERYWHERE
- Minimal Dahlia appearances

Huzzah for all that promise! So, Sean, why “only” 3.5 stars? And why do birds suddenly appear EVERY SINGLE TIME you are near? Well, the answer to the former question is much easier, so let's tackle that one first:

- The reunited-and-it-feels-so-good status lasts for about 10 seconds before Regis and Wulfgar ride off for lusty adventures of their own, presumably to be detailed in coming books (I do kind of like that, in his reincarnated form, Wulfgar's pretty much down to clown with anything that moves...you go, you formerly repressed barbarian sulk monster; in this life, yetis are your playground).
- Remember how Jarlaxle was essentially deus ex machina in sexy drow form in Vengeance of the Iron Dwarf? More of the same here. Only with less dragon sister kasnorking (I feel like “kasnorking” is a classier word than “fornicating,” though I've been known to be wrong on rare occasions).
- Turns out watching Gromph sit around and think and cast spells is less interesting than you'd think...though he does unleash one dilly of a pickle at the end of the book (time to dust off those Fiend Folios, Gygaxians).
- There might be such a thing as too many dwarves. Especially when Bruenor starts going all Big Love.
- Minimal Dahlia, yes, but she's still there.

Two other points against Archmage being a stellar start to a new series:

- I think Cattie-brie is a divinely sanctioned racist now. I don't like that.
- Drizzt gets his ass handed to him, lingers near death, and may be permanently disabled...and then is up and around like nothing happened, and not only proceeds to pummel a marilith, he pummels THE Marilith. I mean, Drizzt is amazing, but this seems to defy even his exceptional ability to...wait, what's that? Jarlaxle had something to do with his miraculous recovery? Right. See note on Jarlaxle above.

It probably sounds like I'm being overly critical, and I probably am, because this story is still delightful good fun. I mean, come on—it's Drizzt, Cattie-brie, and a bunch of dwarves running around fighting demons underground. How can it NOT be awesome?

The rest of the series promises to be very interesting, and I'm looking forward to seeing what happens next. Needless to say, your intrepid reporter will keep you posted.

(Oh, and as for that bird thing...as near as I can tell, it's probably just because I carry a lot of birdseed in my pockets. I like how it feels betwixt my fingers. So what? That just makes me awesomer.)

Dave says

Another amazing read with quite a finish from Salvatore in the ongoing saga of Drztt and his pals. The focus this time out seems to be two-fold. One is Bruenor's quest to reclaim Gauntlgrym from the drow by uniting all the dwarf clans along with the Harpell's and the second revolves around the drow in Menzoberranzan having demons on their door step along with Gromph getting psionic training from Kimmuriel Oblodra who in turn has his own plans involving this training.

In between, Salvatore weaves various plans and plots for all the characters involved including Drztt himself. The number of characters from dwarves, elves, humans and even demons is extraordinary, but everything is kept together enough and leaving this reader wanting more.

I was surprised that no major drow character was killed in the novel, but some major dwarf players were though I think going forward there will be some major losses on the drow end of things.

Richard says

I received a free kindle edition of the book via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

WOW!

Salvatore is consistently good but this is something else!

The war in the Silver Marches is finally over and Bruenor has convened his fellow dwarf kings to convince them to re-take Gauntlgrym.

Along with the Companions of the Hall, or at least those who choose to remain, and some worthy replacements the dwarf army marches for the ancient Delzoun homeland and it's Fire Primordial powered forge.

But driving out the hated Drow will not be easy, especially when they summon an army of demons as backup and the evil spider goddess Lolth schemes...

This book absolutely flies by! Salvatore has really increased the pace of the tale and I had an overwhelming urge to read it in one sitting. As usual with Salvatore the battle scenes are written with graphic detail, one scene in particular had my heart in my mouth but I won't give any spoilers.

Truly one of my favourite of the many Driztt tales, particularly for its blistering pace and inclusion of some favourite side characters (and when have we ever seen so much of Kimmuriel's personality?).

I'm dreading the wait for the next chapter - I want it NOW!

Alissa says

Here be dwarves!!! This novel reads easily. Not much happens in the first 40% or so and the plot is very linear, building and anticipating the foregone conclusion.

There are many reminders about the current state of affairs which are useful if one has read the latest books some time ago, or not at all. The same goes for the story at hand just to make double sure there never is any tapping of intellectual energy involved.

At least there is an unexpected twist about Drizzt, who is always a superb character. Little of Dhalia, fortunately (can't say she is faring well anyhow, or that Salvatore has made up his mind about her) and a pinch of Doum'wille, whom I don't dislike, a glimpse of rapsallion Wulfgar and grave Regis (held in reserve), lots of dwarves, lots of demons and lots of drow elves (Kimmuriel is a favorite, then there is the confident titular character and finally Jarlaxle, ever the trump card and ubiquitous to boot!).

On top of that the story features this novel Catti-brie befriending questionable pets, Bleeding Heart scenes, a perplexing ending and a last-line promise.

Standard first-book-in-a-trilogy-of-this-new-Drizzt fare, it would seem, masterfully crafted out of thin air. My previous conclusion about the latest adventures is confirmed, nothing original around but...

Who cares? Dwarves!! Demons!! Matron mothers!! Battles!! Fireballs!!

"Bwahaha!"

Shane Jardine says

Every year I find myself looking forward to the newest Drizzt book by R.A. Salvatore, and every year I finally get to read the book and I always find myself wondering why I was so excited. After the events that transpired in the Companions Codex I had high hopes that Salvatore would surprise me with his next series. Sadly going by how I felt after reading Archmage that is not going to be the case. I really need to stop getting my hopes so high for these books and maybe I will enjoy them more.

The war of the Silver Marches is over, the Orcs and Drow have been defeated, and the slow process of rebuilding has begun. Now that they are no longer needed defending the people of the Silver Marches the dwarf kings have decided that it is now time to retake the ancient dwarven city of Gauntlgrym. There is one problem however, it has been turned into the Drow city Q'Xorlarrin and they have no plans to let it go easily.

My main problem with the Drizzt books these days is that nothing ever seems to change. The Companions of the Hall have returned from the dead and they have a new chance at life, but do they make any drastic changes? No, they make the same choices and mistakes they have made before, do the exact same things they did in the early books. Drizzt, Bruenor and Cattie-brie fight some Drow and try to retake a long lost dwarven city. Regis and Wulgar have left the group to go do their own thing and left the rest of the Companions to once again fend for themselves. Salvatore can be such a good writer that it makes me a bit sad it feels like I'm reading a story I have read multiple times already.

Every new book in the series seems different on the surface, but when you really get into the story it is just a retelling of things that happened in the early books of the series. I pick up every book hoping to be shocked and amazed by the story and am disappointed every time. Yet I still pick up every new book in the series. Salvatore and WotC are obviously doing something right, even if I can't find what it is.

I received a free copy of this book in return for an honest exchange.

Originally posted at www.archeddoorway.com

Scott says

Here I am again! When's the next book going to be released? Oy!

If I could be reading it right now, I wouldn't be typing this review. At this point - after having read the last eight books - I'm completely in! That being said, this book was nicely crafted. The story rolled right along and before I knew it, I was caught in its torrent.

I have several D&D source books once again stacked on my night table! I enjoyed looking up the monsters and places as I read this. Anyone fancy a quick campaign? Paper, pencils, and dice...

Gary says

The title is Archmage the series is thought of as Drizzt's but this book belongs to Bruenor and the Dwarves. This isn't a book where you can complain that the plot isn't moving. Things of consequence happen and the status quo of the series has changed. A great installment of a long running series.

Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

This is the first book in a (yet-another) trilogy (Homecoming) in the seemingly endless Dark Elf series of books. It continues without pause from where we left off in the previous trilogy: Bruenor's quest to reclaim Gauntlgrym.

Story: Bruenor marches with an army of dwarves to reclaim Gauntlgrym from the dark elves that hold it. Wulfgar and Regis bow out toward their own adventures in the very early part of the book but the rest of the principal cast is all present - no new characters are introduced and the minor characters trudge along. There is a secondary plot of Lolth trying to fool the Archmage of Menzoberranzan to allow demons free access to the Realms, and the usual bickering among the drow noble houses.

The main plot is fairly enjoyable if nothing new - again I feel like I've read this same book before. I do enjoy the large scale battles, especially as this time both sides are smart about it. But other subplots do not fare nearly as well. The evil goddess loses all her allure when portrayed as just an extension of a dark elf noble with similarly lame schemes. The whole drow noble house squabbles I've lost interest ten books past - the whole bickering feels more and more like a daytime soap. The Doum'wielle seems to complete without any real payout, leaving me wondering why the whole plot has been carried through multiple books. Even the titular character of the Archmage himself loses his luster as we 'learn' more about him. Unfortunately as the cover text alludes to the new few books concentrating on Drizzt returning to Menzoberranzan, these weak side plots are to become the main plot.

Interestingly perhaps the most promising feature of the book may lay outside of it - where Wulfgar and Regis go off on their own. With any luck their book at least will go to whole new places and gives us entirely new plot lines. I have seen enough of Neverwinter, Luskan, the dwarf kingdoms and near regions and they no longer hold anything interesting. Way back when in Stream of Silver the world felt new and large - in fact, travelling took up the whole book. These days characters hop from place to place in a manner not unlike just getting on a plane.

Adam Fisher says

ARC from Netgalley. Obvious Spoilers ahead...

In the fall of 1992, me being 12 at the time, a friend of mine gave me *Homeland*, *Exile*, and *Sojourn*, the first three novels in what is now known as *The Legend of Drizzt*. In it, I met Drizzt himself, and started upon a journey that I am still taking, 23 years later and finishing *Book 28: Homecoming Vol 1: Archmage*.

Over time, the books have come to include a large cast of characters, all intersecting portions of Drizzt's life. Some of these characters we see clearly and relate to deeply, finding ourselves running through the full range of emotions, from the highest of joys at victory or renewal, to the lows of mourning and loss. This novel is no different, yet focuses more heavily on the Companions and enemies than on Drizzt himself.

After the end of the War of the Silver Marches (see *Companions Codex Vol 3: Vengeance of the Iron Dwarf*), a tentative peace is arranged with the orcs and rebuilding begins. 4 Dwarven kings (Connerad of Mithril Hall, Emerus of Citadel Felbarr, Harnoth of Citadel Adbar, and our friend Bruenor) come together and decide that it is time to reclaim Gauntlgrym, the original dwarven kingdom of the Delzoun clan, now held by drow elves as the city of Q'Xorlarrin. The other Companions of the Hall follow, but begin to see their lives going in possibly different directions, some towards love (Regis), others adventure (Wulfgar), and some to establish "home" (Drizzt and Catti-Brie).

The drow of Menzoberranzan continue to scheme, and in an effort to regain the upper hand, Matron Mother Quenthel Baenre begins to allow demons to enter the city once again, renewing the chaos that ruled in the time of its' origins. Combine that with Gromph Baenre having his own aspirations of power, Kimmuriel furthering his plans for the revenge of House Oblodra, the typical self-serving machinations of Jarlaxle, and the unending search for revenge filling the heart of Tiago Baenre, and you have the typical stew of evil that Salvatore has come to serve his readers so well... and that's not even including story lines involving Lolth and Errtu, as well as the return of the Harpell Family.

I'll not say more, as to not spoiler the emotional roller coaster for you readers who have yet to experience this excellent novel, but the ride is a chaotic one this time. Characters develop even more depth than before and the foreshadowing is thick for future installments. Hang on for a trip that can only be experienced in a Drizzt book. Not all will make it out alive, and the last 100 pages alone will make you consume it in one sitting, but the "Legend" continues on. Mr. Salvatore, I continue to salute you, and follow my friend Drizzt wherever his journey may take him.

Matthew Ciarvella says

Another Drizzt book, with all that implies (more on that in a second), but one that is redeemed by some genuinely cool moments.

Let's start with the "another Drizzt book" pieces. We're on another quest to reclaim a lost dwarven homeland (again). In fact, we've already been on a few quests to reclaim this dwarven homeland, because it's Gauntlgrym. But this time there's a dwarven army! So that's different. The dwarves continue to have intensely silly names to the point of distraction and I swear, it induced actual teeth gnashing that the narration itself (NOT THE CHARACTER) mentioned that she was "Amber Gristle O'Maul 'O the Adbar O'Mauls." Seriously. Stop doing that.

Cattie-brie continues to be the embodiment of the player character who wants to keep rerolling her class without just coming up with a new character. At this point, she's a wizard/cleric multiclass? Or does she have cleric powers because she has spellscars? But weren't those removed in fifth edition? Who knows?

The book is described as Drizzt returns to the Underdark, but that's... generous. Gauntlgrym doesn't really feel "Underdarky" so much as "dwarfy." The Rage of Demons storyline that WotC is pushing right now describes Drizzt returning to Menzoberrazan to fight the demonic horde, but that doesn't happen here. Maybe it's in the next book?

The focus on reincarnation is getting absurd. I can tell that Salvatore was really pleased with how well the reincarnation of the Companions went over a few books ago, but what was a novel idea there has been played out to the extreme. We have TWO reincarnations of Matron Yvonne Baenre (the old Matron Baenre who got killed in Siege of Darkness), including the memories Quentel carries with her which explain why she's suddenly so dangerous and an EVIL BABY also with those memories who despite being a baby is magically powerful and can talk and such. Seriously; evil baby. Sigh. That was a low point for me.

There's also a drow warrior who fashions himself as the reincarnation of Uthegental, a drow weapons master from Siege of Darkness who has the notable achievement of, as far as I can remember, never actually facing Drizzt in battle and was actually killed by a werewolf. But he's important enough that someone a century later wants to wear his armor and carry his weapon and try to be him! Sigh.

So, despite all that, why did I give this book a higher rating than the previous couple of Drizzt novels? Well, there were some genuinely great moments here and some surprising character development for Gromph Baenre, a background character who's been sadly underemployed since his role in the early 2000s with the War of the Spider Queen series. In particular...

(view spoiler)

Thus, while the core of the book is still more of the same scimitars, more of the same questing, more of the same formula, this book sets up what could be a really interesting plot. Here's hoping the next book develops this potential in a satisfying way. The book did manage to recapture some of that 'can't-put-it-down' quality that used to make Drizzt books so endearing and I finished it in a single night, so I think there's still hope and life. Fingers crossed.

Kristie says

Archmage, like many of Salvatore's books, is the beginning of yet another series kicking off what is promising to be a grand adventure. While I'd taken a break from these books over the last few years, picking this one up was almost seamless. I've missed the last series and frankly, thought I'd have a harder time figuring out what was going on, where Drizzt had been, and where in the timeline of Farun we were. Establishing what's been happening in the world, not to mention Drizzt's life was surprisingly easy to figure out. Salvatore helped the way with that style he's always had. Giving enough of a back story while telling the now, without feeling like I was getting a lesson in Forgotten Realms 101. Anything I was unclear about, I hit the interwebz for info. All of this makes me want to go back and read everything I've skipped over.

This, like many of the books in The Legend of Drizzt, sets us up for something major. With the Drow ever interested in chaos, plots within plots happening in the Underdark, Demons conspiring with Gods, those on the surface are in for a major bit of battle. The Dwarves are not going to be able to just walk into Gauntlgrym without the Drow getting pretty pissed off. I've always loved Drow politics. They're an interesting bunch of elves, never trusting anyone, always looking out for themselves. What will happen, I can only guess.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The story is rich, the characters wonderful. Those we tend to love, and those we tend to hate, to those who are in the middle, they're all here and make this book what it is. I'm excited for the books that will follow. This promises to be epic in scope, and none but Salvatore would be able to do this. He's a master in this world and I'm signed on for the ride.

Kyla says

My beautiful work of art! Signed, hardcover, everything.

Zayne says

Now *that* is a Drizzt book! Absolutely amazing. This is a huge improvement compared to the last Drizzt trilogy The Companions Codex. I had initially started reading this book instead of another because it was relatively short and I wanted to meet my reading goal for the first time. I didn't expect much. I was excited of course because the Drizzt books are really special to me. I've been reading them since middle school, but I

didn't think I would be so entranced in the book. Whenever I picked it up, I had trouble putting it down.

The Companions and a huge army of Delzoun dwarves march forth to reclaim the ancient dwarven homeland Gauntlgrym, the place currently home to the drow of House Xorlarrin. But to dwarves' surprise, it's not an army of drow that greet them but a horde of demons. Meanwhile in Menzoberranzan, the same old stuff is going on: politics, backstabbing, punishing males, and a whole lot of spiders. But now, demons walk among the drow, summoned by Matron Mother Quenthel Baenre. She and Lolth are up to something and could bring the end of the world as they know it.

This book is filled with intrigue, buttload of fighting, and of course annoying matron mothers. It felt reminiscent of the old Drizzt books. No more brooding Dhalia or Drizzt leading a group of companions that only care about themselves. Drizzt and the rest of the Companions are back...for the most part.

I just have one complaint: Drizzt was not in this as much as I wanted. A lot of the focus was on the happenings of Menzoberranzan and the army of dwarves. Drizzt was there (for the most part), but not the huge focus of the story. It wasn't until near the end that we saw a lot of Drizzt.

If you enjoy reading about a large army of dwarves kicking some ass, Drizzt having some awesome duels with monsters and drow, and a lot of drow politics, this is definitely the book for you. Longtime Drizzt fans will enjoy this.
