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A prequel novel about sorcerer Marla Mason, heroine of a series of novels by T.A. Pratt published by Bantam Spectra from 2007-2009, including *Blood Engines*, *Poison Sleep*, *Dead Reign*, and *Spell Games*. *Bone Shop* explores Marla's early days in the city of Felport and her rise to power. Originally serialized online from June-October 2009, available as an e-book for the first time.

## **Bone Shop Details**

Date : Published June 30th 2010 by Tropism Press (first published November 15th 2009)

ISBN :

Author : T.A. Pratt , Tim Pratt

Format : Paperback 244 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Magic, Paranormal, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Bone Shop for online ebook

### Runningrabbit says

This was really good, but I was disappointed with some of the predictability in the novel, which I seriously thought could have been avoided. I truly truly hate predictability in a book, what a waste of time and fiction.

The lead character was very likable, including the support characters. There were a couple of things that panned out which are often areas not moved into with a novel, and I was surprised they popped all these scenarios into a first book.

Definitely looking forward to see what happens next. Isn't it great when you don't have to wait for the next book in a series to come out! Yehhh.

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### Ungelic\_is\_us says

Structurally, this book is a bit of a mess, but--wow. It certainly explains a lot about Marla. I'm glad I read the first three books in the series (non-prequel) because the reveal is really nice. No wonder the woman is such a monster, sometimes. If you enjoyed the other Marla Mason books, I definitely recommend this one--it's especially interesting in the context of Dead Reign. (And it's available online for free!)

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### Baal Of says

Apparently it's been 4 years since I read any of the Marla Mason books, something I only know because goodreads is a part of my external memory, and I was also reminded of why I should write at least a couple sentences of review for everything I read, even when I don't feel like doing it. I couldn't remember what I liked about this series, beyond the vaguest sense that I had enjoyed them as fast, escapist urban fantasy. So coming back into this world via the first of the prequels was the correct choice, and on vacation even more so, as I was able to read the entire thing in essentially one day, spanning midnight thus marked as finished on the following day. I can confirm that these books are indeed candy, spiked with a bit of capsaicin, that can be consumed by the fistful. This book is a swarming whirlwind of activity, wild magic, and character deaths aplenty. I learned how Marla got her cloak, and how she had a hand in making Rondeau who he is, and how she became the protector of her city. This book was the perfect change of pace between the two more serious novels I've sandwiched it between on this vacation.

Note to my future self: keep writing these silly little reviews, you'll thank yourself later.

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### Reed says

A fun prequel to the Marla Mason series, I am all for supporting Mr. Pratt during his financial crisis. Sad that such an engaging urban fantasy writer, who actually writes a female character who doesn't feel it's necessary to sleep with every supernatural entity she encounters, was dropped by his publisher.

Having heard that he was writing serial novels in the Mason universe to raise money, I certainly wanted to support him. While not the best novel in the series, it does offer some interesting insights into Marla's

background. I believe the episodic nature of this writing project--one chapter a week--made the novel feel a bit punchy and lacking.

However, I enjoyed it enough to also snag the next novel he wrote in a similar fashion (Grim Tides). Hopefully that novel will feel a bit "meatier".

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## **Belen Schneider says**

It's always a tough choice...do you start a series with the first book the author wrote, or with the earliest prequel?

Katherine Kurtz's Deryni series taught me that choosing the prequel-first route gives you an added bonus: the author has their groove, the characters have their groove, and the depth you can get from their "backstory" can jumpstart your love for the series as a whole.

I suspect that Bone Shop is going to fit squarely in that category. I already have a pretty serious crush on Marla Mason, and I'm so excited that this is just the beginning of our journey together.

The series came recommended to me when I was looking for character-driven, good banter, fluffy-but-not-romance-novel-drivel reading to keep me on the elliptical and distracted from the torture. This was exactly the right formula.

The humor is irreverent. Marla is not for the faint of heart - she is gritty and tough and smart (even at 16), but the the book doesn't seem to take itself too seriously, which was nice. I laughed out loud more than once, and I also cringed at the backstory and baggage that Pratt revealed about this character. In many ways, Marla is pretty seriously damaged goods, but she's certainly not a victim. I like the depth of that, and I am looking forward to how this backstory manifests in her future years.

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## **David Schwan says**

A rather strange novel at first. The early chapters read like a porn novel minus the the porn. Our main character starts as 16 year old girl who was left home and is living on the streets where she befriends a slightly older girl. Eventually both are working at a strip club which is operated by a rather sleazy person. Then suddenly our main character is invited to become a magicians apprentice by the sleazy strip club owner and the story settles down into a fun urban fantasy story. This book is the prequel to the series and was written after the first novel in the series. The book is quite uneven in places which is likely due to it being published as a serial. At the end there are lots of authors notes talking about each chapter. The notes were fun to read.

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## **Carien says**

I loved Blood Engines, the first book in the Marla Mason series, and I have the next two books in my TBR pile. But when I received this prequel novel I had to read it first, if only so I could stare lovingly at the

gorgeous cover from time to time.

And this is a great read.

Some of the things that happened in Bone Shop I knew about, because Marla mentioned them in Blood Engines. Other things were new to me, and gave me a better inside in the woman Marla is.

I loved seeing Marla grow into power. She has a difficult past, but she's resourceful and stubborn. I also liked reading how she and Rondeau met and how they came to work together. If I didn't already love Marla, I would have fallen in love with her in this book.

All in all this is a really cool prequel which could be read on its own, but as it's an 'origins' story it isn't one fluid story, but tends to hop and skip time wise.

I will most certainly pick up book two in the Marla Mason series soon.

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### **Caitlin says**

I really enjoyed this book. At first I disliked how the novel seemed to skip through chunks of Marla's life and then sum up interesting past events in a few paragraphs, but I've learned that that's partly the author's style, and partly because Marla (realistically) deals with so many incidents throughout this portion of her life that to go into depth about all of them would require many books, and this is just regarding her rise to power over Felport.

What I enjoy about Marla is that her rough personality isn't a clumsy writer's way of establishing that their character is "super badass" and then abandoned or contradicted completely. Marla remains consistent, and is merely blunt and straightforward, not idiotic or egotistical--she takes other characters' opinions into consideration, and the other characters are written as valuable members of the cast, not merely cardboard cutouts used to illustrate how badass Marla is.

It may seem like I'm downtalking the book by saying that its selling point is "not falling into overwritten cliché" but to be honest, that is EXTREMELY valuable in a book these days, especially in a book about a young woman. Marla isn't sexualized or romanticized, merely portrayed; her adventures are interesting; and her world is an eclectic mix of odd things that still follows the laws of its world, making the progression of Marla's adventures realistic.

I blew through this book on a 2-hr train trip to Tokyo, and I'm really glad I did, because it makes reading all the other books in Marla's series that much more interesting when I know the backstory. Definitely recommended.

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### **Sylvain Roy says**

I read the prequel without knowing it was a prequel. If you are already in love with the serie, I would say it is probably a good book for you to read. As a total newbie to this universe, this book is missing some meat on the bones.

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### **? Irena ? says**

### 3.5

I remember I read a short Marla Mason story in an anthology (don't remember which) and liked it a lot. The world seemed interesting enough to read the series. I forgot about it though. I stumbled upon this one by accident and when I checked the Goodreads, I saw there are four prequels, this being the first. I could have read the books in order they were published, but I prefer chronological one.

*Bone Shop* doesn't have one main thread that follows from the beginning to its end unless you count Marla's development as one. It is more of a summary of her teenage years, from the moment she meets her first mentor in all things magic to the moment she becomes as important as other sorcerers in Felport. The book is like a collection of short stories all being connected by the same character.

I don't care much for teenage girl protagonists, but a teenage Marla Mason is truly a special case. She is practical even when in love. She is tough even when she is hurting. There is zero whining in this story. She even comes very close in being an anti-hero.

This would have been an ordinary urban fantasy if not for many unpredictable twists and turns that make this story even better than I expected.

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### Steven says

Bone Shop is an origin story for Marla mason, and so shares both the wonder and problems of all origin stories when you already know part of how things end up. Just like the latest remaginations of Batman or Spiderman can't completely ignore what's come before, Pratt can't ignore where his character must end up, and this is the only real flaw in the work. The last quarter (or less) seems a little rushed, almost as if Pratt realized that his character wasn't headed where she was supposed to go.

But when I say that is the only problem I had with the work, I meant it. This really is two or three novels packed into a short space, introducing both an entire world, many rich characters, and several major story arcs. It is a fantastic introduction to Marla mason, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Let me clarify: Even the last bit - where it seemed a bit rushed and forced - was *good*. It is only in comparison to the rest of the masterful plotting and pacing that *good* pales in comparison to *great*.

This is not your lighthearted wisecracking urban fantasy - though there's lots of smartaleckness and humor throughout. It's a dark, gritty story, where weird and dark things exist without reason, where people are flawed, and sometimes you have no recourse but to choose the lesser of two evils.

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### Yolanda Sfetsos says

After reading Blood Engines last week, I was looking forward to getting stuck into more *Marla Mason* stories. I've already ordered the paperbacks of the next three books, but found this prequel for free at the author's website and got hooked right away.

This is an excellent origin story.

It starts when Marla is sixteen and has recently arrived in the city of Felport after escaping a rough

childhood. In this city she meets Jenny and they become friends, which soon leads her to the seemingly pervy Artie. But Artie isn't what he seems, and before long Marla gets swept away in a hidden world of magic, sorcerers, and mayhem. It also covers her rise to the top and why she seems so detached when it comes to relationships. Oh, and we find out why she was so close to Lao Tsung, which was very cool!

I found her love story with Daniel touching, and heartbreaking. Not to mention how cool it was to read about when she found the cloak (or did the cloak find her?) and first discovered what it could do when she met a young *boy* called Rondeau.

Yeah, this is an excellent short novel that just makes me want to read more and more Marla stories. She's an interesting and mysterious character, so it was awesome to read about some of the things that shape the tough woman she becomes.

I loved it!

BTW, if you're interested in checking it out, you can [HERE](#).

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### **Melissa Levine says**

I was a big fan of this story. I'm not really sure what it was that called to me but it was really hard to put it down. Definitely makes me want to read more by this author.

I wasn't really a fan of the jumping years ahead. Usually I have no problem when an author does that, but with this story I did. I also did like how Daniel reappears years later to die just a few days afterwards. What was the point of bringing him back at all?

Questions/Comments:

"This is a place where we can practice our magic without drawing too much attention." That's what Jenny had said when they were in Artie's London. I'm just wondering why the author chose to say it that? Wouldn't they be getting NO attention there?

When Marla moves into Artie's place, she's going through the dresser drawers looking at the clothes. Why did they give her men's shirts?

When Marla meets Lao she says "Usually nobody likes me. Usually everybody likes Daniel." I didn't understand why she said that? She hadn't even really met anyone new.

There were several errors I found throughout the story:

"...Daniel gasped and stepped back, shaking his head in confusion, in DIBELIEF..."

"Even a pinch there hurts pretty had."

When Marla is hunting Somerset, she tells Hamil this: "First, get Langford. I need something from him. Then tell Sauvage okay, he can be chief sorcerer." Didn't the author mean Somerset could be chief?

When Marla is talking to Daniel about bringing Artie back from the dead: "...lurching through it like some kind of half-assed zombie demanding cigars instead of brains..." If he was a zombie he'd rather have the brains than a cigar, right?

After Juliana dies, why did Marla ask Rondeau if they had been lovers?

### **Adam O'Grady says**

I've never read any of T.A. Pratt's other work but as a first introduction this is fantastic.

It introduces a lovable, charming, scamp of a main character in Marla, someone who has had a rough life and treats the world with a strong dose of cynicism and wariness. It slowly introduces a world of magic that feels believable and with reasonable limitations and even discusses how they keep it hidden from non-magical users.

The characters are nicely fleshed out even if they fit within some simple tropes and the main setting has enough of a "gritty metropolis" to complement the story. The secondary setting of a pocket universe is fun but feels underdeveloped and unexplored despite it's importance in Marla's training.

Some of the uncomfortable topics such as the sexual relationship between Marla and Daniel and the main character working as a skimpie before she turns 18 are tackled in a non-sexualised way, avoiding gross or unnecessary description and being mentioned only for plot advancement and character development. For approaching such topics in this manner I have to applaud the author

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### **Samantha wickedshizuku Tolleson says**

This was an impressive plot, and the settings were equally gritty. The leading lady is a fantastic character!

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