



Night of Knives

Ian C. Esslemont

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The empire is named for the tiny island and city of Malaz, now a sleepy, seedy backwater port. Tonight however, a once-in-a-generation Shadow Moon brings demon hounds and darker beings. Also, a prophecy promises the return of long missing Emperor Kellanved to the contended imperial throne. This night will determine the fate of the world.

Night of Knives Details

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From Reader Review Night of Knives for online ebook

Stefan Bach says

It is my opinion that long lasting debate when a person should read this book is finally coming to an end. As soon as Ian finishes his *Path to Ascendancy* trilogy, I see no reason why anyone shouldn't read this book before *Gardens of the Moon*.

That is, if you have already started *Malazan* journey with Path to Ascendancy series. Which I highly recommend for people to do.

Now, the main argument why readers are recommending that this book should be read in-between *Bonehunters* and *Toll the Hounds*, which are books 6 and 8, is to make sure you have avoided major spoilers. Even though, the story of this book is chronologically happening before first book of the MBoTF series.

But the thing is, if you have already started series with PtA trilogy, and you have read 6 books of the main series, I think it's quite futile to try dodging spoilers. Actually, I'm quite certain there won't be anything to spoil story for you at that point.

Night of Knives should work as a great introduction to the main series, while also serving as a continuation of the prequels. Which means it should be a connecting bridge between the two.

As for my impression of the novel: it's not a stellar piece of literature, for sure. You can actually see this is someone's first attempt at writing, but not yet knowing should this be a novella or a full grown novel, only to settle, in the end, somewhere in-between.

Although I had a lot of fun following two major POV characters – *Kiska*, desperate wannabe participant in any major plot out there in the world, be that as a spy, informant, thief, assassin or basically anything to make her life not just thrilling but also significant; and *Temper*, grizzly, retired Malazan veteran, troubled with nightmares of his past and not being able to find his place in future that Empire is set to provide for him – story itself and how the world works in it, are confusing at times.

(confusing as that paragraph there, one might say)

As I've said, if you have started Malazan read with Path to Ascendancy series, or if you are reading this in the middle of Malazan main series, you will have no problem following this story.

But, if for some reason you never heard of *Steven Erikson*, and you wanted to try Ian's first book, I think you'll end up confused.

And that's, of course, a big problem. This book doesn't work as a standalone. It's expected that you already know much of the characters that are taking their part in this story.

But, that's something where Ian, luckily, vastly improved in his most recent books.

All in all, entertaining and fun, with problems that aren't as big as to ruin anyone's enjoyment while reading.

2.33/5

Kharkanas Trilogy:
Forge of Darkness
Fall of Light

Path To Ascendancy Trilogy:
Dancer's Lament
Deadhouse Landing

Ultimate Malazan Chronological Reading Order

Kaitlin says

So this is the first book I've read by Ian Esslemont and it kind of acts as a prequel book for the Malazan book of the Fallen Series by Erikson. There were a few problems I had with the book, but overall I still liked the hints and messages which we were given in terms of adding to the Malazan books and world. This story focuses on two main characters, a young lady called Kiska, and a man called Temper. Both of these characters were just 'okay' characters in my opinion and so even though the book felt faster-paced and more full of action I wasn't as connected as I would have been had it been another Malazan character I already knew.

This story focuses in on a single night of blood, betrayal and chaos which involves ascension, murder, slaughter and warrens of magic. There's action, suspense and character development, all good things, but somehow this still feels clunky as a read. I am going to give Esslemont the benefit of the doubt and assume that because this is his debut book it will take him time to develop. I feel like some scenes were more rushed than I'd have liked whilst others that should have been gripping were more dull or slower paced for me.

All the above negatives still don't make this a bad book and as a standalone single book it may well have been a good read. The major issue from my pov was that whilst I enjoyed that we're still in the Malazan world and we are gaining new insight into some of the characters and plot threads already laid out by Erikson, it's just not up to the quality of Erikson's first book. This is a lot shorter, it's a very different vibe, and therefore it really is only worth reading from a 'fleshing out the story' point of view. It gives cool ideas and insight, but it's a little tedious in places, whilst being intriguing in others.

Overall I would say that this is a bit of a mixed bag. I didn't hate it or even strongly dislike it when I was reading it, but it was a hard one for me to find the motivation to pick up. I enjoyed moments, and I had issues with elements, all of this combines together to mean that this can only be a 2.5* read for me. Middle of the read, dead centre with just an ok-ish rating. Nothing too fancy or special, nothing particularly mind-blowing or terrifying, just an add on to the story which was, at times, interesting.

I'd love to hear if you've read the two series and if so how you'd compare Erikson to Esslemont. For me, currently, they're very different writers and clearly Erikson got a big head start as an author so it's understandable that Esslemont's book wouldn't necessarily be up to par, but equally I have heard that Esslemont gets a lot better as he goes too. Let me know what you thought :)

Choko says

*** 4 ***

"...“The Malazan way,” he breathed. “The murderer’s touch. A brush of cloth. A sip of wine. The gleam of a blade as fine as a snake’s tooth. Your name whispered just as you fall into sleep.”...”

This is the world of Malazan, just as dark and bloody as ever, only told by a different bard. He is not either better or worse than the bard who tells us the story of the Malazan, Book of the Fallen, he just has his own voice and his own way of telling us a story, and I truly appreciate that. Just as I love the Flight of the Bumble Bee played by a heavy metal band, or played by a violinist, I can enjoy either not only for their similarity and basic theme, but because of their differences as well. The world would be a very dull and boring place if all artist, writers and musicians expressed themselves exactly the same way.

Unfortunately, in the case of the Malazan World, I feel the need to start with the previous paragraph, because the works of the two creators of this world, Steven Erikson and Ian C. Esslemont, are intricately connected and a comparison between the two is almost inevitable. They are different, no question about it, and I guess it is up to the personal preferences of the readers to decide which style fits their tastes better, but for me, and I hope most readers approach this series in the same way, the two compliment each-other perfectly. Where SE is edgy and at times heavy on the prose, ICE tends to go about telling a story in a more traditional way, softer around the edges and with more moody and spooky details in the world-building. SE overwhelms with his innate power of emotion he can bring out of the depths of your soul, while ICE sneaks up on you insidiously, but still potently.

"... 'Why are you killing us???'..."

I still get goose-bumps thinking about that sentence...

If you plan on taking on this series, I have to say that it would be a loss not to read the books written by ICE. Not only do they give a background and feel in gaps of the mythology, but they would be just as good if read as The Malazan Empire Series on its own. In this first book of the series, all the action takes place in the span of one Shadow Moon Night, when the Wahrens (something like magical dimensions) can coalesce, and creepy creatures of different worlds could roam the streets of the magically heavy Isle. The local residents know not to leave their homes and huddle in fear behind locked doors, only the uninformed or those who look for trouble dare step outside. This is the night we are introduced to the old, grizzled elite soldier Temper, who is hiding in plain sight, as just a veteran waiting to retire on a bedraggled post on Malaz Island. The other protagonist is Kiska, a young girl who fancies herself a spy, although she is not working for anyone, since the local Fist, which is like a General in the Empire Military, is refusing to give her a chance and higher her. She is naive and dreams of a future away from the Island, adventures and anything where she could get an adrenaline rush. Temper is not of the locals and Kiska is just looking for adventure, thus they both end up involved in the perilous activities strangling the life out of the Island on that fateful night.

It so happens that four of the familiar to us characters of the Book of the Fallen have major roles with their political and devious machinations. Emperor Kellved and his partner Dancer have been missing for the past year, leaving Surly to the Imperial Regency. Many think that this night will be the one Kellved returns to reclaim his throne, while Surly and her Claws are there to make that impossible. We also have the High Mage Tayschrenn and he is much more interesting here than in any of the books of the Fallen I have read up to now. We also get a good idea who Edgewalker is, and I love how all the pieces are falling into place of the overall picture!!!

"... 'Kiska fairly wailed: 'But what of Kell – the throne?'

'I am sorry. That is a minor concern given everything at stake this Conjunction.'

'Minor!'

Kiska believed she could hear the dried flesh at its neck creak as the head turned to her. 'Yes. In the larger picture. I am sorry. Now, you must go.'

'But wait! I have so many questions. I—.....'..."

So, if you are like me and just need to know all about the Malazan World, or are just looking for a good

darker Fantasy, this is a very good way to go! I know I just can't get enough:):):)

Now I wish you all Happy Reading and may you find what you Need in the pages of a Good Book!!!

Petrik says

Just like the main series, I was determined to finish the Malazan Empire this year but I may have to rethink that decision after my experience of reading this book.

Night of Knives is the first book in the Malazan Empire series, a spin-off to the main series that's written by the other creator of the Malazan universe, Ian Esslemont. A lot of people mentioned that Esslemont is not Erikson (these four words must've haunted Esslemont for years by now) and usually, I'll say that it's really not really fair for everyone to endlessly compare these two; it's obvious that every author has a different style. But in this special situation, I must say that **the comparison is really well deserved** because both of them write canon stories in the same universe which they created together.

I won't lie, I didn't enjoy reading this small book; it left a bad taste in my mouth. I was honestly shocked by how bad the experience of reading this book was. It came down to how Esslemont's prose absolutely didn't work for me. No, it's not because the prose was simplistic; I loved a lot of simplistic prose. It's just that the prose was incapable of keeping me engaged or invested in the characters. Esslemont focused so much more on the never-ending barrage of action sequences rather than the crucially needed characterizations. Unlike the main series, we don't have a lot of POV to follow; only two, Temper and Kiska. Erikson is capable of making sure his giant cast of characters to be filled with unique, distinctive voice. In my opinion, Esslemont can't do that even though there's only two main POV to follow. The only parts of the book I enjoyed were the event surrounding Dassem Ultor, Dancer, Kellanved, and Sultry, and these were enjoyable to me only because I've read five books in the main series which overall has talked a bit about them. Don't even get me started on Kiska's POV. It was infuriating as hell to read a POV full of teenage angst in a Malazan universe. "I want to do something amazing, on the most dangerous of nights!" "What have I done I'm so dumb I'm gonna die" "Let me do that again!" "what nooo helpppp!!" Oh C'mon for fuck sake! I understand reading something like this in YA books but not in Malazan!

I've seen a lot of people saying something like "Please push through, Esslemont get better with each installment." Let's be honest here, we have given up on author just from reading their debut or one of their books and I'm pretty sure the majority of the people who told me to persevere has done the same thing; Esslemont get a pass only because he's writing in the Malazan world. I'm not even talking about Erikson's high standard here, but more on my experience with reading epic fantasy in general and I can say that I've read literally hundreds of book better than this. The next books in the series aren't small, they're significantly larger and I will give up on the series whenever I want to. If Malazan Book of the Fallen absolutely requires Malazan Empire to be fully enjoyed then might as well put Malazan Empire as part of the main series instead of it being a spin-off.

Night of Knives was a huge disappointment, I have no idea how this will benefit the main series and I will find out pretty soon. No matter how much I love the main series, I don't have enough patience while I'm drowning in a mountain of TBR to give a book I dislike a pass just because it's written in the same world as one of my favorite series. I will give the next book in the series a go after I'm done with Reaper's Gale before making my final decision on whether to continue or DNF this spin-off series, let's just say that right now I'm 90% leaning towards dropping it.

You can find [this](#) and the rest of my reviews at [Novel Notions](#)

Scott Hitchcock says

Going into this book I tried to clear my mind of any expectations. The reason being a lot of the reviews by other Book of the Fallen lovers were so varied.

The prologue was excellent and has that foreboding tone but is not the epic overtone that Erikson has in some of his works. Really Erikson is the king of the prologue in my opinion so NOK being good spoke well for this start.

Moving into the start of the book, and really throughout, I struggled with Esslemont's sentence structure. I'm hardly an English lit major but generally you pick up an author's cadence and once you have it figured out most stories flow from that point. His continued to be awkward and lacked Erikson's elegance. For better or worse there's no way to avoid the comparisons.

The story itself I really enjoyed. Still if you're looking for this to be Deadhouse Gates or Memories of Ice it isn't. It lacks that epic scale. But it's not meant to be either. Everything takes place in one earth shattering night. I loved guessing at who characters really were. I loved learning more about characters who aren't the main focus of the main series but are still important.

This book read more like an action, horror and war story all at once. The action was mostly fast and furious and I enjoyed it. I do wish there was more direct access to Dancer and Kellanved but the author went for more cloak and dagger action seen through the eyes of two characters on the peripheral edge of events and really it worked so I won't quibble.

If you love the main series you need to read this but don't think of it as the main series. The gaps it fills are invaluable and enjoyable.

Jenna Kathleen says

I had no expectations (seems to be a trend for me these days) from this installment of the Malazan series as it was the first ICE book I read and there are mixed reviews among my friends with 3 stars being the most common rating, but I really liked it. No, it's not on the same epic scale as the main series, but it's not supposed to be.

Temper was a character who took awhile to grow on me, but I enjoyed his story and it was interesting to see two vastly different POVs as he is an old veteran and Kiska is a young...well, she's Kiska. Kiska had a fantastic story. Right from the beginning, meddling in the Warren of Shadow, I knew she would just be sticking her nose everywhere she shouldn't. Of course, she just had to get herself involved with (view spoiler).

Artan's identity wasn't all too surprising along with most of the plot reveals, but the action was well-paced and it was refreshing to have a major Malazan story in such a compact book. The two POVs (with the occasional POV from the fisherman) was a format that was well suited to the story and set Esslemont apart from Erikson as an author writing in the same universe.

As a note, it should be said that I am fascinated by the backstory of the Malazan throne and the

Shadowthrone. Seeing the history of such a well-developed world from a different perspective was just so cool and like I always say after reading something Malazan: I didn't believe this world could get bigger, but it just did.

Markus says

Well, this seems incredibly underrated...

Night of Knives, first volume in the Novels of the Malazan Empire by Ian C. Esslemont, is not a huge brick of equal parts amazement and confusion like the doorstoppers of his friend Steven Erikson. It's a decidedly more standard fantasy novel, and it doesn't distinguish itself in the way of the *Malazan Book of the Fallen*. That does not mean, however, that it is any less impressive.

Esslemont's style is more simple, both in language and in plot, and in many ways he appears to be less ambitious than his co-author. But this book gives off the Malazan vibe more strongly than anything since *Deadhouse Gates*, and unlike reading an Erikson book, you don't have to work for it. Some people would probably argue that's a bad thing, but I found this book more engaging than the main Malazan books, despite lacking in a few of the qualities which have made the series so outstanding.

Overall though, Esslemont lured me fully into the Malazan universe once again, and I'm very excited about continuing this epic.

James Tivendale says

This is a very good book!

Following two main character point of views. One being Temper - an old school elite yet uncredited serviceman for the Malazan empire and Kiska - a youth urchin spy with 'the talent' of magic somewhere within her. Kiska was very mysterious - a bit whiny and kept getting caught by people throughout her sneaking antics - but I think she was an omnipotent device to show the unfolding events. Temper was just a no fu*ks given veteran. The best parts for Temper was his lack of desire for recognition for the extraordinary feats that had been/ are accomplished by him - but also his flashback sections with Dassem Ultor (who people will know from the main series)

Some people do not rate this book compared to the Malazan: Book of the Fallen. I think if you miss this out then you are missing so many crucial layers that make the world the best envisaged in fantasy. I understand how it can knock Malazan die-hards off balance as they are used to going from 900+ page epics following 40+ point of views to a more linear story revolving around one chaotic night.

The mystique created by Dancer and Kellevand frequents throughout this novel and is truly fascinating. It is the story about one night, where magic, worlds, accession and races all discombobulate and at the same time collide. Hounds, warrens, zombies, storm-riders etc... This is a fast paced book. Well written. It might not showcase the linguistic acrobatics that Erikson sometimes presents - but does Erikson really know what all those complex synonyms and semantical equivalent words mean anyway?

I actually think if prior fans hadn't already ascertained the diamond tinted loving of, and egotistical disgust of anything that isn't Erikson Malazan - they may enjoy this story more as a new-comer.

Esslemont has recently released *Dancer's Lament* which is reveled by all Malazan fans and carries on with the structural devices initiated here. I think this is a great first book from Esslemont and can't wait to read the rest. He works the Malazan world well and creates wonder - let's hope it continues. Peace x
www.youandibooks.wordpress.com

Gavin says

I thought this was a worthy addition to the Malazan world. Esselmont's writing style is a bit different to Erikson's but his story did retain the feel of a Malazan book. The plot was suitably entertaining and complex and Esselmont also did a great job with the characters, both the new and familiar ones.

The whole story took place in one city over the course of a single night. The city was Malaz City. Once it was the heart of the Imperial Malazan Empire but in the present day it is little more than a backwater. Not this night! The night of the Shadow Moon. A night where worlds and realms converge. Also a night that will see the prophesied Return. Many expect the long absent Emperor Kellenved to return for his throne. Surly, the Imperial Regent, means to see that never occurs. Theirs is not the only battle that will take place on this night of magic as a Convergence draws in all sorts of powerful creatures to the city.

The story was mainly told from the POV of two new characters. Kiska, a young would be spy who is determined to prove she deserves a place in the Imperial Army. Temper, a world weary war veteran. Once Temper served under the First Sword, but now he is keeping his head down and just trying to escape the notice of the Claw. We got a few others POV's and all served to give the story more depth.

I liked the story. It really did have the feel of Malazan story even if it did lack the witty dialogue that makes reading Erikson's books so much fun. I liked both Kiska and Temper. They were complete opposites but both were likeable and easy to root for. It was great to get a glimpse of the moment that Surly became Empress Laseen and to see both Dancer and Kellenved spin their own plots and seize another sort of power.

We got to meet the usual cool assortment of memorable human and non-human characters and I'm hoping we meet some again!

This was a good story that fell only slightly short of being as good as Erikson's own contributions to the Malazan world. All in all I was happy and impressed by Esselmont's first book and look forward to reading more of his books with the knowledge that he is a capable contributor to this great series.

Rating: 4 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by Jonathan Banks. He had large boots to fill as I think both Page and Lister were excellent in narrating Erikson's *Malazan Book of the Fallen*, but I thought he did a decent job with the audio of this one.

Terence says

As anyone who's looked at my "Read" bookshelf will be aware, I really, really like Steven Erikson's Malazan

series. I've had his collaborator's book on my shelf for a long time unread because I was afraid of disappointment.

I'm happy to say that I wasn't.

I wish we had half-stars or more stars to rate these books because this one is really a 3.5, an 8 on a scale of 10.

Esslemont doesn't write with the easy confidence or skill that Erikson exhibits but he does write well; and (unlike Erikson in his one arguable fault) he writes concisely -- Night of Knives comes in at less than 300 pages in the UK edition I have, and it's fairly large type.

The most interesting character, in my opinion, was Temper but considering the ending I don't know if we'll be seeing more of him. Hopefully, Esslemont will find a compelling character(s) to anchor future volumes.

I'm not so nervous about the appearance of The Return of the Crimson Guard this August.

TS Chan says

2.5 stars. As much as Kellanved and Dancer intrigue me, this is a prequel that didn't work for me. I was quite bored throughout the entire book, which thankfully is short. It also did not help that one of the two POVs in this book annoyed me. Temper is definitely the more interesting half of the book, especially with his backstory being connected to Dassem Ultor. As for Kiska, the annoying cocky young woman who is determined to prove herself, who then landed herself into trouble time and time again for not listening, I was not impressed.

Esslemont's prose is straight-forward compared to Erikson's more poetic, contemplative style. I noticed that the later Malazan Empire books are better rated so hopefully it gets better from here as I do enjoy geeking out in this world.

Lee says

As a re-read I am changing my original rating for this and giving it an extra star. On my first read of these, I had just finished reading Malazan Book of the Fallen for the first time and was amazed by Erikson's story telling. I constantly compared ICE to SE and whilst it is fair to compare the way they tell the story, you have to allow them to be different in writing style. They are two different blokes after all.

So 2 years after my second read of MbotF I am absolutely loving being back on the Isle of Malaz and seeing those names that are big part of my fondest reading memories.

Yes, it is a short book. Yes, it isn't as good as it could have been, but it is his first book and plenty of people complain about Gardens of the Moon. So the extra star is all about me loving being back in Malazan :)

Fener's hairy balls, its great to back!

Molly says

Everything could change in just one night...

“He stared out into the lazy wisps of mist and the strangely dull stars, and he remembered that other night. The night close to a year ago when he and Dasseem died.”

You know you are deep into the Malazan Book of the Fallen, when you buy all the books before reaching the series half point, add Forge of Darkness (because the new trilogy is sort of a prequel, duh), and then for good measure you make sure you have Esslemont's books too ...(Because, who knows, you might run out of Malaz material.) and of course you have to read them in order.

So here I am, reading Esslemont's Night of Knives (as advised by other readers) after Erikson's Midnight Tides. Does it belong here? Chronologically, no. If you want to read it that way you should start with Gardens of the Moon and then after the prologue read this one ... and then go back and read the rest of "Gardens". Don't do it this way though, or you'll go mad. It's impossible to read (at least Erikson's) books this way ... the books overlap chronologically as they often happen on different continents, often with a whole new set of characters and the crazy thing is, I don't mind. It's messy, but I love it that way.

So this is by almost everyone's opinion the weakest book in the combined series (Erikson + Esslemont). I didn't read all the books, (and I can't judge to that account) but it is the weakest one I've read. This isn't a bad book. It has its great moments (a fair number) On the other hand had I not read a few of Erikson's books first (getting into the world, history and characters of Malazan) this book wouldn't be as half as good for me.

I know Erikson is Erikson and Esslemont is Esslemont, and I went into it with that in mind, but it was a bumpy ride all the same.

What I liked:

*“Kiska nodded, glanced to the ceiling. ‘It’s quiet.’
Tayschrenn’s shoulders tightened at that. ‘The Malazan way,’ he breathed. ‘The murderer’s touch. A brush of cloth. A sip of wine. The gleam of a blade as fine as a snake’s tooth. Your name whispered just as you fall into sleep.’ He shook his head as if sad or regretful.”*

*There was more back story of past events and we met some characters we already know. Parts featuring Dasseem Ultor, (the return of) Kellanved and Dancer...

“No one could match Dancer. The man was an artist at murder. In fact, so subtle was he that many had forgotten that Kellanved had a partner. The worst kind of killer: the kind no one notices. And the slippery bastard was supposed to be dead, too.”

... Surly (and her Claws) and Tayschrenn were a treat. Who would know Tayschrenn could be an interesting character, with a different side to him.

*The descriptions of Malaz City before during and after the haunting night of the once-in-a-generation event, known as shadow Moon. Esslemont should try and write horror...I would read it. I could almost feel that mist and fog, and hear the howling of the hounds.

*Great descriptions of the ice and stormy seas ... and the dusty, desolate Shadow Realm.

*Loved some of the new characters (I've read just five Erikson's books, they are new for me) like Edgewalker, Agayla, Obo and Temper. I liked The Fisherman's scenes (and his wife).

*Liked the final part of the epilogue with the Stormrider.

*Loved that the the book begins with Mock's Vane (as in Gardens of the Moon)

“On it's pike at Temper's side, Mock's Vane, the winged demon-shaped weathervane, shook and hummed as if caught in a steady gale. Temper frowned at the old relic; the winds were calm this evening.”

and ends with it (and I hear it closes the Malazan Empire of the Fallen series too... I'll confirm it for myself ...just five 900+ pages books ...easy-peasy)...

“He rubbed his shoulder and flexed his leg, all the time grimacing. At least he was in no danger of falling asleep, what with half his body yammering its pain at him. Down the wall, Mock's Vane stood silent on its pike. Temper eyed it – the damn thing appeared frozen athwart the wind. He turned away from the day's glare to ease into what always got him through the day: watching the sea. Down below, the bay glimmered calmly. The Strait seemed to be holding its breath.”

It could have ended then and there. Great. (well, I admit the epilogue was pretty good, especially the closing part)

Favorite part.... probably the fateful encounter in Mock's Hold ... loved it. Heard (more guessed) but not witnessed. All there, and still a mystery.

“Tayschrenn raised a finger to his lips. ‘Listen.’

Kiska strained to penetrate the quiet. The subtle throb of the surf shuddered through the rock. Dust falling and the stones losing heat to the night brought ticks and trickled motes from the walls.

Then she heard it. A distinct tap and faint shush – tap-shush, tap-shush – crossing the ceiling, side to side. Kellanved.'”...

“The limestone blocks of the ceiling jerked then, like child's toys, and dust showered down. The soundless impact drove Kiska down into her chair and popped her eardrums. The candles snuffed out. Metal rang from the stones above. Weapons, Kiska imagined. A thumping and clatter as of bodies falling. A shout – a wordless roar of rage – that faded into silence. In the charged calm that followed, she barely breathed.”

Perfect!

What I liked a little less:

*I'll admit I love Erikson's convoluted way of storytelling more. He makes you work for it, and I love a challenge and the layers. Esslemont basically doesn't make scratch your head, he is more straightforward with his writing. This is not a bad thing, and someone else may prefer this style. **I like my "Ah-a" moments**, when everything falls in place (even if it takes three books to do so)

*The Stormriders didn't convince me much. They were described so grandly ... and then we learn they have... wands. Wands? Am I reading Harry Potter? The wands almost ruined them for me. Nice save in the

epilogue, and I hope I hear of no wands in this books anymore. They are so anticlimactic after all those great magic battles described in some of Ericson's books. I love my wands where they belong ... in the HP books (I like them there).

*Kiska. What to say about Kiska. I get it she is a teenager, and so she acts accordingly. In that sense (of a no-sense teenager) she was well written. She doesn't really know what she want's (besides getting as far away from the forgotten place *Malaz Isle* has become), she is stubborn, reckless and doesn't know when and with whom to hold her tongue, be it a ghost, a great powerful mage or a creature from the Shadow Realm...

“Kiska fairly wailed: ‘But what of Kell – the throne?’

‘I am sorry. That is a minor concern given everything at stake this Conjunction.’

‘Minor!’

Kiska believed she could hear the dried flesh at its neck creak as the head turned to her. ‘Yes. In the larger picture. I am sorry. Now, you must go.’

‘But wait! I have so many questions. I—.....’

OK, she wasn't so bad... it's just ... even if in a way it was interesting to see the contrast between young Kiska and the chiseled veteran Temper (especially those few alternating POV), it felt somehow like I was reading two books. One epic fantasy ... the other YA fantasy with an annoying bratty heroine. Somehow they don't mix in my opinion, and that has made it a bumpy ride.

I thought to rate it 3 stars, but after thinking about it a few days I'll up it to 3.5 and round it on 4 (I'm a Malazan fan after all)

I'll be reading the Return of the Crimson Guard after The Bonehunters.

“Ware the cold, human. ‘Ware the ice that grips. The frost that silences.”

Emma says

The first few times I did a Malazan reread, I stuck with Erikson, thinking that the books by Esslemont were unnecessary. Plus, it felt a bit mean to be picking up a book, that someone has worked hard to produce, and being completely certain that it would be an average read, or worse. Though I suppose the fact that I consider me Erikson to be best there is in fantasy writing means everybody comes worse off in comparison.

It's a relatively short book, and easy to read. It only took me half a day. And no, Esslemont isn't Erikson (I'm pretty sure he's sick of people pointing this out). Of course I was aware that there would be differences in style, but the fact that Esslemont explains things was a serious shock to the system. There would be a comment about something mysterious like the Shadow Moon or the Return, and i'd stop reading, tip my head back, close my eyes and try to remember if it had come up before in this book, or in Erikson's. What connections could be made? What could it be? What does it mean? Maybe the TOR reread will pick up something I didn't. Once i'd thought it through, i'd return to the book. Then....next paragraph...the answer. WHAT IS THIS SORCERY? Are you telling me what's going on? Now, I realise it is a bizarre situation when a reader is complaining about their questions being answered. But it's precisely what I like about Erikson's work- I use it as a kind of brain training exercise.

Yet for all that, I enjoyed the book. There were some great characters. Temper reads very much like the quintessential Malazan soldier so vital to this world, and he made a welcome break from Kiska's teen angst. The representations of characters already well known from Erikson were handled well, they were part of the

action but still retained mystery.

While I didn't love it, it was good enough to make me read the next. Hardly an enthusiastic review, I know, but I see the potential for improvement. And next time, I'll know better what to expect.

Zayne says

After my second read, I decided to bump it up a star. It still didn't impress me, but I did like it more this time around. I still think that it reads like a Forgotten Realms book, but a better written one. Not to say that Esslemont's writing was flawless because it wasn't. At times, it was the structure was awkward and just didn't flow right.

There were two main povs: A veteran of the Malazan army named Temper and a wannabe assassin named Kiska. Temper's pov was great. His sections (especially the flashbacks to his soldier days) were fun and engaging with lots of combat and mystery. Kiska on the other hand was a very meh pov. The first read through I didn't like her one bit. I just wanted to get her sections over with and go back to temper. This second time, I still didn't like her, but I disliked her less. I took time to read her pov sections and try to understand her. She gets caught up in events way over her head. Why? Because her life is just boring. Simple as that. The first read through, I thought "Really? That's it?" But this time, I kinda understand her. An adventure would be fun after a dull life.

Kellanved and Dancer were there a bit, but more as a side characters. Even though the night this book revolved around was their most important night, Esslemont only teased us with their presence. The story was only told by Temper and Kiska. We saw the night through people unfamiliar with the events which lead to some interesting mysteries. I still would have liked to see more of Kellanved and Dancer though.

I really enjoyed this book the second time around. I was able to catch more thanks to the Malazan Fallen Group read (Sorry I didn't keep up with the group read guys. University classes and job interviews were sucking the life out of me) and I guess because I didn't expect Erikson or Rothfuss-level writing, I wasn't so disappointed. I do hear that Esslemont's writing gets better so I look forward to that, and I can't wait to read more Malazan. I loved being back in this world.
