



## El imperio de las tormentas

*Jon Skovron , Miguel Antón (Translator)*

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Una chica sin nombre es la única superviviente después de que su aldea fuera destruida por los biomantes, los sirvientes místicos del emperador. Bautizada con el nombre de la aldea desaparecida, Hope será entrenada en secreto por un maestro guerrero Vinchen para buscar venganza.

En las sórdidas calles de Nueva Laven, un chico queda huérfano después de que las drogas y la enfermedad se lleven la vida de sus padres. Una de las mujeres con peor fama del mundo criminal lo adoptará. Ella le pondrá el nombre de Red y le enseñará a ser un ladrón y un estafador.

Las vidas de Hope y Red se cruzarán en esta historia de aventuras y venganza, y su increíble alianza los llevará más allá de lo que nadie habría podido imaginar.

### El imperio de las tormentas Details

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## From Reader Review El imperio de las tormentas for online ebook

### Xabi1990 says

Ponen PRETTY WOMAN en la tele y, lo sabéis, os vais a quedar pegados a la pantalla como mínimo un ratito. Fijo, no mintáis.

En una peli si las (y los) protagonistas son guapas, bien vestidas, encantadoras, buenas y con diálogos ingeniosos lo vemos con más agrado (la mayoría) que si las escenas son duras, con gente desagradable o vulgar, con desgracias y desamor.

Lo mismo vale para los héroes/espadaquines/mutantes de Marvel : son más atractivos si lo pueden todo o casi todo.

¿Qué es hacer trampas si metes todo lo positivo? ¿Que el viaje iniciático del héroe está muy visto? ¿Que los protas siempre tienen un pasado -o futuro- oculto de grandes poderes? ¿Que los buenos son nobles y guapos, con principios y honor? Pues podemos decir que sí, que es hacer “trampas”...pero suele funcionar.

Y eso pasa en esta novela, Y funciona. Y te engancha y lees página tras página. Y te intriga qué pasará (aunque intuyes que PRETTY WOMAN ronda en el futuro).

En resumen, que si nos ponemos estupefactos no aporta nada al género de la Fantasía...pero se lee de maravilla. Comienza el verano, hay que leer en la playa y con esta novelita de Fantasía aciertas casi fijo (si te va el género, claro)

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### Paige Bookdragon says

(Actual rating: 3.6 stars)

**NO SPOILER CAN BE FOUND IN THIS REVIEW BECAUSE I'M A CONSIDERATE BASTARD.**

When it comes to Hope and Red I don't know what to say in this review. Before I read this book, I expected an awesome duo as protagonists. I expected to be blown away by this new fantasy book the same way that I was dumbfounded by Graceling and other YA fantasy books. I expected no romance between the MCs (okay, a little romance wouldn't hurt but not to the point that it would be the focal point of the story). I expected to have my heart get pumped by the adrenaline with this action packed book.

I expected a lot of things in life and I just realized sometimes, expectations would be fulfilled, sometimes they would fall short.

I like Hope and Red. I finished it without even a single thought of DNFing it crossing my mind and I have here the reasons why I think you should read this book.

1. Badass female who bent on vengeance is my weakness. (*Guuurl, she slayed them all. The bloodier it gets in the story, the happier I get while reading it.*)
2. The world building is pretty decent. I got the gist within the first two chapters and there's no info dump

that usually makes me bored.

3. This book is so damn easy to read. There are some slang that the author uses but it's not something that confused me.

4. LOYALTY AWARD goes to some secondary characters that I won't name to avoid spoilers. Seriously, I love you dude.

5. No girl hate. Thank you Jon Skovron for avoiding that annoying cliché in your story.

But despite being entertained by the book, I still can't help but feel that it was lacking. This is the part where you have to forgive me for not being a decent reviewer because my English vocabulary sucks.

Take it this way. Other Young Adult fantasy book who is really good is like a giant 4 layered cake. You can easily take the splendor of it. It's big, the presentation is good and you can easily scrutinise every layer and every design.

The Hope and Red on the other hand is like having 4 one-layer cakes. It's good that you've got a lot of cakes but you can't appreciate the beauty of it the same way that you can appreciate a towering 4 layer cake.

The reason why I described this book like that is because there are some scenes in this book that has so much potential that wasn't expounded and instead was cut too short to give other scenes (that in my opinion could just be omitted) some space.

I noticed that in some YA fantasy books, there's either 2-3 highlights that the MC is preparing for. Either they're going to a battle, they're going to find a cure for someone who is sick or they're going to save some friend, that's going to be one of the highlights in the story and most of the time, the fewer the highlights, the better they can focus on it, the more we can learn about their character and all that shit.

But for book that has 400 pages, Hope and Red has so many things happening at once that I feel like this book alone could be turned into a series. At first I thought it's because this is a standalone (I found out it's going to be a trilogy) that's why I feel like a series has been crammed into one book and some things were cut too short for my liking.

Another thing that kinda bothers me, though not as much as the first one that I mentioned, is how convenient is everything for our MCs. Need a boat? Don't worry, here it is. Need someone that could save you from being outnumbered by some thugs? Yep, here's that person. Need a new set of clothes that can help you disguise? Here's a person that can help you.

I find it amusing that when it times to great need, the characters would just have to walk a few miles, talk to some people and voila! Here's the solution to your problem. It's funny. Really funny.

The last thing that kinda irks me is the way that the hero and the heroine is "sotted" with each other. It's really not a problem to some people but I was expecting a very platonic relationship that can still be badass and hilarious. I don't need every hero and heroine of the story to have a crush on each other. I want them to be friends and buddies!

Anyway, Hope and Red is still a decent read and I do hope you'll give this one a try. I want to know what you think. :)

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### **Petros Triantafyllou says**

As much as it pains me to say this, being such a huge fan of *The Wheel of Osheim* (Mark Lawrence) and *Red Tide* (Marc Turner), I have to admit that *Hope and Red* is the greatest read of 2016, and one of the best books I have read in my life.

The story, told from two different points of view, takes place in a dark and gritty Empire where the strong are ruthless and vicious and the weak don't survive. The story is about two children orphaned at the age of eight, and follows their path through adulthood. The boy, Red, intends to be the greatest thief the Empire has ever known. The girl, Hope, is trained from a group of elite warriors with the sole purpose of avenging her parents' deaths. But when fate brings them together, all hell breaks loose.

*"As youth and innocence give way to experience, doubt clouds the mind. Those who find renewed purpose in the complexity will thrive instead of falter."*

Jon Skovron's debut in adult fantasy is something to praise. The prose is smooth as silk and the story is flowing at its own pace without Skovron trying to rush or control it. The world building is constantly expanding and developing, the magic system is simply structured but intriguing and captivating, and the characters are sharp and refined.

*Hope and Red* is, simply told, a compelling story that explores issues of life and death, revenge and forgiveness, friendship and love. Self-loathing and inner-peace.

You can find more of my reviews over at <http://BookNest.eu/>

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### **Kaitlin says**

I'm SO GLAD I have finally found a book I really liked this month! This is a new release and I have to say I am so happy I picked this up, because it has ended the spree of not-so-great books I've recently been reading.

This book is by an author I'd not yet read, although it's not a debut. I believe Skovron has written some YA books before, but this was his first foray into adult Fantasy, and I think it worked out (although you can certainly see that there are some YA troupes here)! This is kind of a cross between *Pirates* and *Sword & Sorcery*. It's definitely a book which I found super quick to get through, super easy to read, and one which kept me engaged throughout.

In the story we follow two main characters (later three) called Hope and Red. Hope is a young orphan we meet at the start just after her whole island and family have been slaughtered and she's left by pure chance, alone but alive. Hope joins a crew and sails to a monastery where she learns a lot more than just housework. Red is another orphan child who is raised in a well off part of town, but when his family falls apart and gets sick and he's left alone he moves to the less desirable sections of town and sets up his new life there.

The third character we meet later on is called Brigga Linn and this character is definitely one of the more interesting ones in terms of magic. Brigga Linn is a Biomancer and has extraordinary powers, but when Brigga Linn decides to share the knowledge with the council the results are not what Brigga Linn wanted!

The story worked so well for me here because it's fun. There are some truly brutal moments, but there are also some really amusing moments and many of these are combined to make it an easy, bloody read. The pacing is fast and we do see the main two characters as young children and then young adults with some shifts in time happening so we skip over the stereotypical 'training' sequences. I really appreciated these shifts in time as it meant that the action got going a lot quicker and it was easy to enjoy.

One other element which I liked is that the book uses a lot of slang words and many of them were old english phrases which I just enjoyed a lot. There's a lot of crude language within this one, because many of the characters grew up in the slums, but that just added to the feisty charm for me and I liked that. 4\* from me, and I will for sure continue this series when book #2 is out! Recommended :)

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### **Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says**

Try to imagine the most fabulous combination of the following movies: Gangs of New York, Kill Bill and Pirates of the Caribbean. Did your mind explode yet? If yes, well, join the club. If not, just give it another second or two. Hope and Red is, according to its author, the first book in his **swashbuckling kung fu gangster pirate romance trilogy**. Yes, you read that right and no, I didn't mistype. At this point, I believe none of you need any further convincing, but bear with me for just a moment longer. After all, gushing is what I do best.

Hope and Red is a bloody, filthy mess of sheer pirate awesomeness. The narration jumps back and forth between its two protagonists: a girl called Bleak Hope and a young highborn thief named Red. As the only survivor of a massacre committed by biomancers, Hope has known very little affection in her young life. She was trained against all rules to become a Vinchen warrior with her heart and mind set on honorable revenge. Red was also orphaned when his mother died from a horrible disease and his father succumbed to hard life and grief. Having nowhere to turn on the harsh streets, he was semi-adopted by Sally the Goat, a legend on the streets of New Laven. With her, Red embarked on many adventures, including piracy and theft.

Skovron's characters are crude and unpolished, each of them a reflection of their surroundings. His is a violent world, the law of the slum being that the most dangerous criminal rules. I loved the grimy feel of his prose, all the filth and the dialect his characters spoke. Hope and Red don't even meet until well into the book, but there are plenty other characters to discover until then. The book is fairly long, even for fantasy, but with so many tightly packed adventures and a wicked, dirty sense of humor, Skovron leaves us little time to breathe.

Skovron carefully threads messages about gender equality into his story. Women's rights have clearly been at the forefront of his mind while he was writing it. Hope and Red is a subtle and entertaining feminist manifesto with a diverse cast of characters and the first (I think) kickass transgender character in fantasy. Although the values were expressed clearly and were essential to this story, they were woven so skillfully and cleverly that they never took over or overshadowed the plot.

There is nothing I would change in this book, not a single detail I wish had been done differently. Hope and Red is complex, funny and flawlessly written. The only downside is that I'd pretty much sell my soul for the next one.

## Lisa says

Review from Tenacious Reader: <http://www.tenaciousreader.com/2016/0...>

Hope and Red could be the fun read you are looking for, especially if you love stories about thieves and vengeance, and warrior women. The two main characters are in quite different settings, each with intriguing elements. The story follows these two characters whose lives are both shattered from what they knew when they were young. Their paths after their tragedies are very different, yet similar in some ways. Here is the thing about this book. It is full of familiarity and predictability. These are not necessarily bad, depending on what you are looking for. I mean, there is a reason certain elements become familiar and predictable. It's because generally, people enjoy them! If you are craving an easy, fun read with adventure and ups and downs, this could be good.

I am always a sucker for stories of women who break the normal gender barriers. So, for this, I love that Hope is being trained to be a Vinchen warrior. This training is not easy, and she is certainly not accepted among the men of the order. But she powers through with dedication and becomes a fierce warrior. She becomes proof that, given the chance, there are some women who can accomplish the same levels (or greater) as men. Hope faces some interesting dilemmas as she is so driven by vengeance, she has to at some point evaluate that. At what point does vengeance cost you more than it will gain?

Now, another thing that I noticed was Hope's inconsistent adherence to a code of honor that she followed as part of her warrior training. This is a hard one to explain without an example, but I usually try to not go into too many concrete details in my reviews. So, while I don't really think this is a major spoiler, I will put it in spoiler tags just in case. View Spoiler » Maybe there are just some nuances to the warrior code that differentiates these scenarios and I just missed it.

Honestly, while the books characters go by "Hope" and "Red" they are really "Mary Sue" and "Gary Stu". These two characters accomplish amazing things through the greatest odds. Really, its kind of unbelievable what they can do, but I think that is also the point. This is a fantastical tale of two characters that are in many ways larger than life. This is one of those things that can come down to reader preference, because sometimes it is just plain fun reading about a character doing the impossible and somehow always managing to come out on top. There's a reason why you see that in books, it can be very fun! I think it is just better to know upfront, because I know that I, personally, have to be in the mood for that when I pick up a book.

I found Red to be a very likable character. He did not grow up in the rough part of town he lives in now, and had a softer, kinder life for his first few years. This seemed to give him a little bit different perspective. But life can be unexpected, and he found himself a very unlikely mother figure. It was interesting seeing his determination to make a name for himself, and see his skill make it seem feasible. Like I said earlier, he is definitely a bit of a Gary Stu, but he is at least a fun Gary Stu. The kind I don't mind inviting into my books.

And lastly, I don't really want to make this a major point, but decided to bring it up. I am usually quite accepting of whatever lingo an author wants to use. I am far from easily offended or put off. But I have to be honest. The term "cunt-droppings" (which refers to foolish people) really started to annoy me. The first time, I confess, I actually chuckled a little. The second time I was ambivalent. But the third time I decided it irked me. And every instance of it after that bothered me more. I think part of it was I never liked the term "slice" that is used for women in this book. Its usually a derogatory term (depending on who is using it). That in and of itself is not the issue for me. I just didn't like it because it felt a little too visually representative of the female genitalia. Maybe that is a short coming on part, but it is my honest reaction. So, pair that with

referring to people as “cunt-droppings” (also a little too visual) and I just about had it. Maybe others won’t have these hang ups. I usually don’t, so I was surprised to struggle with these terms in this book.

Overall, this can be a fun read for the right reader. There is plenty of action and fun. I may have had a few issues, but I don’t think they will be universal problems for all readers. If it sounds interesting, I think it is worth giving a read.

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### **Lia Bonnibel (pidgey) says**

I finished this on the train. I almost missed my stop because I was on the last two pages and wouldn't - *couldn't!*- stop reading.

Reluctantly, I had to run and I tripped over someone's feet getting yelled over, but it was totally worth it. Oh, was it worth it.

WHAT...WHAT AN EPIC BOOK!

Give me Bane and Shadow. **NOW!**

[RTC soon because this books deserves it!]

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### **Emma says**

Really enjoyed this. It starts out as a fairly familiar story of 2 orphans raised in very different circumstances and destined to meet eventually. I enjoyed the salty language of the coastal regions and some of the vocabulary used: Lacies, imps, angel slice, wags. It's these kind of details that bring a world to life. Relationships between the characters are well developed and the story is character-led which is always my preference. But what makes this world and story stand out are the biomancers and their dark powers, some of which are pretty gruesome. The story is well set up for the next instalment which I will definitely be reading. Recommended.

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### **Terence says**

Bleak Hope is named after her village that was annihilated because of the Empire's biomancers. A legendary Vinchen warrior trains Hope in the Vinchen ways despite it being illegal to do so because she is a female. Rixdenteron is the son of a painter from a rich family and a male whore. He finds himself homeless when his parents die. He's taken in by a dangerous woman and renamed Red. Hope and Red come together to get vengeance on a ganglord and biomancers, but most specifically the biomancer who slaughtered Hope's village.

First I want to say I love warrior women. Perhaps it was because I watched a lot of Xena Warrior Princess as

a child and she was the embodiment of a warrior. She battled gods and men alike and beat them down. That was absolutely what drew me to this book because who doesn't love a good warrior woman.

Hope and Red feels very much like a young adult novel. All the standard tropes apply. Special orphans and chance meetings with great people who almost inexplicably care for and train these youths. The YA fantasy mold is not broken or even bent here. So imagine the standard YA fantasy heroes and you have Hope and Red.

The chapters with Red were challenging for me from the beginning because of the massive amounts of slang used. Leaky, tom, mollie, slice, old pot, leeward, wag, and many other slang terms are squished into the lines in Red's chapters. There is a glossary, but after a little while it's unnecessary. That being said I wasn't overly fond of their slang.

The biomancers did present themselves as something unique from the rest of the story. These people use a mixture of magic and science to create living things from living things. Unfortunately rather than using criminals to further their research they use towns and villages for their experiments which is the crux of Hope's revenge tale. The biomancers are basically mad scientists that feel as if nothing is more important than their research. They seem to have the Emperor's permission to use seemingly whoever they wish to make new weapons to protect the Empire.

All in all Hope and Red was just an average YA fantasy book.

3 out of 5 stars

*I received this ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Mogsy (MMOGC) says**

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2016/07/07/...>

Meet Hope. At the tender age of eight, she became the lone survivor of a massacre on her small southern fishing village after watching everyone she has ever known and loved die horribly in an experiment by the emperor's biomancers. Rescued by a merchant ship, she was then taken in by the ancient order of Vinchen warriors and taught their ways by Hurlo, their grand master who went against his order's rules and trained the girl in secret.

Meet Red. Not long after being orphaned and left alone in the slums of New Laven, he woke up one fateful day to find himself held captive aboard a ship alongside the infamous Sadie the Goat. Together, the two of them made their daring escape, and Sadie was so impressed by the boy's talents that afterwards she named him her sidekick and protégé and the spot.

Under the tutelage of the female pirate/con-woman, Red grows up to become one of the greatest, most quick-fingered thieves in the criminal underworld. Hope, on the other hand, has dedicated her life to becoming an honorable and disciplined Vinchen warrior, dreaming of one day avenging her murdered village. Aside from losing their families at a young age, the two of them have very little in common. However, it appears that their separate paths have ultimately led them to a shared purpose and enemy, and it's not long before we see Hope and Red joining forces for the biggest fight of their lives.

From the very start, I was completely taken by both Hope and Red. While the two of them don't even meet

until nearly halfway through the novel (and that's when the fun really takes off) I nonetheless had a great time getting to know each of them on their own. The beginning of the book is mainly focused on their early lives, detailing the children's experiences growing up with the respective mentors. To me, this section almost reads like an in-depth character study for both Hope and Red, delineating their qualities and showing how their personalities were shaped by the different ways they were raised. Characters are one of the most important aspects of a story for me, so I was beyond pleased at such an intimate portrayal of our two protagonists.

Jon Skovron has also created a massive, fully-realized world filled with countless nations and cultures. We get to set sail with Hope to visit a great number of these locales after she departs from the Vinchen order and takes a bodyguard position on a ship's crew. In the north is a different dynamic, where society may be more built up and urbanized, but it is not without its problems like abject poverty and the disparity in living conditions between the rich and the poor. Red has always found himself caught between two worlds, disowned by the upper class but also not fully accepted by his fellow street gangsters and wags. Despite introducing his readers to a large number of sights and sounds, people and places, maritime slangs and street lingo, I thought the author did a marvelous job uniting Hope and Red's individual storylines into a tightly woven plot.

Speaking of which, there was never a dull moment. Mixing grit with light humor, the writing style was incredibly easy to get into, helped by the story's smooth flow and quick pacing. As well, Skovron's experience with writing in the Young Adult genre can be seen in some of the character actions and plot elements, giving Hope and Red some crossover appeal (albeit reader discretion is advised given the strong language and graphic violence).

Truly, the only criticism I have is the pacing in the last one hundred pages or so, where I felt the solution to Hope and Red's dilemma was presented too neatly, and the book was also wrapped up too quickly. Compared to the intro, where our protagonists' lives were so lovingly and painstakingly described in all their particulars, the ending felt somewhat scant and haphazard, almost like Skovron was in a rush to finish. Beyond this one gripe though, I can really find no other major faults.

If you prefer character-driven tales and world-building that gives you the full picture, then you should definitely check this out. Hope and Red is the perfect escape for fantasy fans looking for a fun, entertaining and action-packed adventure. I can't wait to read the next book in the trilogy.

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## Marc Aplin says

**The short version: Hope And Red is the most fun book I've read in 2016 and one of the first I will recommend to people, from now on, who ask for a book similar to that of Scott Lynch's Gentleman Bastards series or Brent Weeks's Night Angel trilogy.**

Are you missing the world of Brent Weeks's Night Angel Trilogy? Were you distraught upon hearing that Scott Lynch wouldn't be releasing his fourth Gentleman Bastards novel this year? Well, worry not because I have just the book for you, my friends!

An 8 year old girl has no choice but to watch her entire village get massacred by biomancers – dark, mysterious mages who can alter the biology of a living being. Peeping from the shadows, the girl sees the only people she has ever known forced to endure a fate worse than death. We can only guess whether this experience birthed something into the girl or whether it was already there, but when a ship comes across her alone on the island a few weeks later, the captain can't help but notice an eerie darkness to her. Because a ship is no place for a young girl, the captain drops her at a monastery. That monastery turns out to belong to

the Vinchen warriors, an order of elite male fighters whose skills are worth at least 10 of any other soldier. The problem is, they've grown up valuing only strength and masculinity and the girl ends up treated as a servant and someone to bully. Taking pity on her or perhaps sensing what lies beneath the surface, a renowned Master takes it upon himself to train the girl, now named Bleak Hope (or Hope, for short), in secret. Hope quickly takes to everything that is taught to her, spurred on by the desire to enact revenge on the mystical biomancers who killed everyone she ever loved...

In a different corner of the world, Red – a nickname given to him due to his Red Eyes, the result of his mother's drug addiction during pregnancy – is enjoying life as one of the middle-ranking men in the criminal underworld: Paradise Circle. Very much like Locke Lamora, Red has made himself relatively wealthy by his natural ability to charm, con or thief whatever it is he needs from someone. The problem Red has is that he is incredibly ambitious and has promised himself that one day he will become the Circle's finest thief. To do that, however, he needs to steal from those who have the most money and, therefore, the highest status and security in the area; something that's very difficult to do without attracting attention. Things get easier, but more complicated, for Red when a beautiful, incredibly combat-abled woman named Nettles arrives (yep: another one!). With her chained weapon, she is able to protect Red and help him force his way past any kind of guard. The complicated bit? Well, naturally, Red quickly falls for her and she's not the kind of girl who wants anything more than a 'toss' from time to time.

The worldbuilding really is brilliant throughout. Although we don't spend a great deal of time at the Vinchen monastery, the time we do spend there feels very claustrophobic and dangerous. We worry for Hope and what could happen to her, but enjoy every moment of her strengthening. What Skovron really needs to be applauded for though is the creation of Paradise Circle, where we spend most of our time. Whether we're visiting a rundown bar with a terrifying bouncer who takes the ears of any who misbehave, trekking through secret tunnels to escape a gang, or experiencing the amusing (often vulgar) language, this really does that *Oliver Twist* kind of setting that is just fun to hang around in. Something else I found very interesting about Paradise Circle was the contrast between its treatment of women compared to that of the outside world. Women enjoy equal or even elevated status in Paradise Circle, whether pirate captains, mystics, warriors, bouncers, etc – you'd not mess with them. Outside of the Circle, women are suppressed and kept from wielding any kind of power.

Although the blurb does it, I don't want to go too deep into how Red and Hope's paths collide. It doesn't happen until a significant way through the book and I'm somewhat surprised that the Goodreads / Amazon descriptions tell you what it is that brings them together and how – I thought the build up and eventual reveal was very well executed by the author and it seems a shame to give away such a huge part of the story. Certainly, I'd advise you to just pick up the book and start reading (after finishing this review, of course!).

Where I'd say this book stands out above *The Lies of Locke Lamora* is with its supporting cast. Whereas *TLoLL* was very much about Locke and Jean, especially from book 2 onwards, *Hope And Red* has an array of characters you will enjoy getting to know. Perhaps my favourite is Sadie The Goat (who is not a goat, btw). She is probably the most foul mouthed character I have ever met in a Fantasy novel (and I've met some vile characters!), but despite her liberal use of the C word (yes – that one!) and willingness to go through anyone who gets in her way, she has a real love for Red and a sense of honour for anyone who stands by her. This code of 'honour' is a really strong theme within the book and brings me nicely onto my next point...

Whilst *Hope And Red* is not a Young Adult novel, the fact that Jon Skovron has written in this genre adds a number of important strengths to the book. Sadly, a lot of people see Young Adult as a lesser genre, but as Sebastien De Castell recently said on a *Nine Worlds* panel, Young Adult novels contain some of our genre's very best works. What tends to be very strong in Young Adult novels are the relationships between friends. They are pure, strong and typically the most important things in our characters' worlds. Yes, the characters of *Abercrombie's First Law* world have a relationship, yes Peter V. Brett's *Demon Cycle* characters fall in and out of love with each other, but it doesn't match-up to the almost magical bond between children and

young adults. The love, care, respect and awe that all of Jon Skovron's characters have for one another is truly beautiful and it is what takes this novel from being flat out fun to something deeper and more meaningful. As much as I will remember the characters: Red, Hope, Nettles, Filler, Alash, Missing Finn and Sadie, it is the interaction and growth of their relationships that will stick in my mind.

I'm going on a bit of a tangent here, so feel free to skip this paragraph, but what I feel makes this novel 'not a YA' is that the characters don't experience much 'for the first time'. The majority of YA novels tend to deal with emotions and experiences that are occurring within the individual for the first time and they are having to come up with ways to deal with them. The first time a character gets into a big fight, a character going from being a student to a special agent who investigates the supernatural, falling in love or being besotted for the very first time. Although Hope And Red does deal with love and sex in that kind of manner, the book's focus is on the characters using their already perfected skills of thievery (Red) and violence (Hope and Nettles) to accomplish their individual goals. Oh... and whereas I don't feel YA has to limit sex, swearing or violence necessarily, even I have to admit there's probably too much of it for Hope And Red to find its way onto a YA shelf.

Finally, I'd like to comment on the action. I'm often asked to recommend a book full of fight scenes and it's hard to name many that feature the kind of comic book / computer game action scenes that I think some people are looking for. Sure, I can point to realistic battles and good depictions of medieval style duels, but if you're looking for KickAss style violence with people really going at each other with throwing knives, chain blades and Samurai swords then it's difficult to find in modern novels, where realism is generally praised and seen as the way to go. Hope And Red is full of the aforementioned though. Hope is a master with a Samurai Blade – literally the most deadly person you could ever meet; Red is handy with a throwing blade; and Nettles is happy to go hand to hand or sling a chain blade into your gut.

Hope And Red is the most fun I've had with a novel this year and it could very well end up being the best book I read in 2016 – period. So few books are able to balance the gritty and the deep, and even those that do don't do it in the same way that Skovron does. Action, Violence, Vulgar Language and yet moving relationships and a captivating world that you won't want to leave. If book 2 was out, I'd read it right now (heck, if book 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 were out I'd read them now too!).

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### **Scott Hitchcock says**

A steampunk setting on the wrong side of the tracks combining social elements of both England and the Far East along with a little D&D thrown in for good measure. I think you could consider this book dark but I'd consider it more gritty. I loved the circle and all its toughs, the evil biomancers, Hope the blond clandestinely trained ninja and Red the uptown born thief of the circle. In some ways Hope and Red reminded me of Apsalar and Krokus.

I love it and will definitely be continuing the series.

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### **Margret says**

4.5 stars, loved it. It was funny, great premise and storyline and really enjoyed the characters

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## Aristea says

I had so much fun with this book - simple yet rich of details and feelings. Hope and Red are awesome characters to fall in love with.

The setting is interesting, I love the extensive use of necromancers (biomancers) which felt extremely refreshing (possibly because I have not been reading of necromancers in quite some time).

There is a ton of mystery still around the world itself and how the characters are going to develop and work with each other.

Also, I love the fact that the audiobook is read by the author himself. It is just priceless!

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## Helen 2.0 says

DNF - too cliché and the word "piss" was used literally 100 times. I counted.

There are two main characters:

**HOPE:** her small remote village is decimated by an imperial force specializing in biological warfare. She vows revenge and joins the elite all-male "Vinchen" warrior order. She emerges as the *only* female Vinchen warrior of all time, and of course the best in the order. This is less a feminist statement and more a turn into Mary Sue country. Hope goes out into the world and proceeds to do stuff like this:

*She spun, bringing her sword around as the shot was fired, and slapped the bullet from the air.*

**RED:** A Kaz Brekker style street thief and part-time Robin Hood. His parents came from the rich quarter of the city, so Red spends a lot of time convincing his fellow low-lives that he's really one of them and not privileged. His biggest hobby is falling in love on sight.

According to the blurb, Hope and Red are supposed to take down an empire together, but I was already 60% in when they'd barely even met. All those pages were taken up by backstory and relationship establishment and sailing.

(I will admit I enjoyed the sailing part because of the sailor songs! Here's one:

No matter which way the wind goes,  
It never blows for me.  
A sailor's life is never fair,  
But for the beauty of the sea.

No matter who I love or hate,  
Or if I married be.  
None of it can hold my heart,  
Like the freedom of the sea.

Even a non-sailor can understand that sentiment.)

Overall a disappointment, I had high hopes for Hope and Red but it turned out to be boring and unoriginal for me.

