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Siege Perilous: The Mongoliad Cycle, Book 5



Synopsis

Ocyrhoe, a young, cunning fugitive from Rome, safeguards a chalice of subtle but great power. Finding herself in France, she allies with the persecuted, pacifist Cathar sect in their legendary mountaintop stronghold, Montségur. There she resists agents of the Roman Church and its Inquisition, fights off escalating, bloody besiegement by troops of the King of France, and shields the mysterious cup from the designs of many. Percival, the heroic Shield-Brethren knight from The Mongoliad, consumed by his mystical visions of the Holy Grail, is also drawn to Montségur - where the chalice holds the key to his destiny. Arrayed against Percival and Ocyrhoe are enemies both old and new who are determined to reveal the secrets of the Shield-Brethren with the hope of destroying the order once and for all. Alive with memorable characters, intense with action and intrigue, Siege Perilous conjures a medieval world where the forces of faith confront the forces of fear. Choices made by characters in The Mongoliad reach their ultimate conclusion in this fifth and concluding novel - and all of Christendom is at stake.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I got into the Mongoliad series because of Neil Stephenson and followed it as much out of curiousness as anything else. This last piece in the series however is mediocre and that is being charitable. It gets 2 stars because it had one or two good lines. But the plot and characters were pathetic. I kept thinking: who is she writing this for, an adolescent? I hope Neil Stephenson had nothing to do with this edition of the series. A sad ending to a series of books that had some very

good moments. In any case, it has cured me of ever reading this collaborative-effort sort of literature. A note on the editing or whatever digital nonsense transcribes books into Kindle format: please do something about this. The mistakes at times make the literature nearly unreadable. I really like my Kindle, however, its not just this book, many books I've bought lately through Kindle are a real mess.

I have to admit that I probably wouldn't have even reached this book if my Prime membership hadn't allowed me to read it and books two through four for free. But, while the others in the series at least had moments of decent writing, dialog and plot, this one read like an amateur banged it out over the course of a few weeks. Among other things: The dialog was often wooden. The fight scenes -- probably this series' greatest strength -- were weak. Characters seemed completely different from past appearances: When did Dietrich grow a pair, anyway? And the ending ... really ... all of this galavanting across Europe and Asia and whatnot for that? I will say it was unexpected. Then again, who could have expected it to be so anticlimactic. I realize this is a matter of taste and to those who found it great I'm truly happy for you. As for me, it was, in a way, a sort of fitting end to an often disappointing series.

If you've read through book 4.... You might as well get a little color on the history of the Cathars, and get a preview of this author's potential, especially if she spins off a little series starring our favorite little Binder for the young adult reader. Ultimately an unsatisfying finale to a series of books which lost even the original authors' attention. Even the characters sort of wander off...

I agree with other reviewers who found this disappointing. Instead of the large sweep of story lines we saw in the first four books this book finds five of the known characters somehow turning up in the Cathar hilltop fortress, which is under siege. That's about it. The story resolves very slowly and the end is a fizzle. I'm giving it three stars though because it's a lazy way to learn 13th century history. This siege really did happen, and the pope and Frederick the Holy Roman Emperor really were at odds. The Cathars are linked to the myth of the holy grail (see Dan Brown's stuff) but the cup in this story is not the one Jesus is supposed to have used, but another, given a spiritual power by some trick of book 3 in the series, AIR.

Knights have never been on my list, but the authors of the Mongoliad Cycle mined the era for fascinating characters and golden legends. All this history turned out to be a great place to get lost

-- tales of crusaders invading the middle east, Mongol warriors on horseback riding right up to the gates of the West, religious relics, saints and sinning popes. The infinite side tales and miles of loose ends was more of a commitment than I was prepared to make, but all the books and spin-offs basically boil down to a quest for the holy grail. (Never fear, not every word is required reading so you can pick and choose and come and go.) Siege Perilous may not have been the strongest installment in the series; some heroes did not live up to their promise, most saints had disappointing destinies and even the religious relics lacked the mystical power to be used as agents of change. The series had so many writers collaborating, perhaps the only way to keep order was to follow the recipe. When the final dish arrived no surprise jumped out of the cake but uniting the survivors of the cycle provided all the necessary ingredients for a conclusion and the author had the built-in advantage of momentum driving towards the finish line.

Well written book, historically quite precise, describes the Cathar situation in Southern France quite well as well as its geography, good language, I do not know however if Frederic II, the Staufer king really expressed himself in foul language. According to my admittedly limited understanding he was quite a cultured person.

As book 5 in the Mongoliad series, now being worked by a committee of authors, it's become predictable and somewhat tedious. Sure it's a good read for a day in airports (etc), but for a serious reader, there are drawbacks. The combat scenes seem well done, as by one who understands swordplay, and each of the primary characters has been developed to the point where we know and feel somewhat familiar with them, but the book never bursts out into something special. I was a bit disillusioned when I read through the climax of what I assumed was the final book in the series, but found instead, no conclusion at all, but a hint toward yet another in the Mongoliad series. It's become something like the Frank Herbert (and company) "Dune" series, e.g., "Grandchildren of Dune's Children Meet Shai Halud." Too much. The next installment of the Mongoliad will proceed without me.

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