



American Craftsmen

Tom Doyle

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In modern America, two soldiers will fight their way through the magical legacies of Poe and Hawthorne to destroy an undying evil—if they don't kill each other first.

US Army Captain Dale Morton is a magician soldier—a “craftsman.” After a black-ops mission gone wrong, Dale is cursed by a Persian sorcerer and haunted by his good and evil ancestors. Major Michael Endicott, a Puritan craftsman, finds gruesome evidence that the evil Mortons, formerly led by the twins Roderick and Madeline, have returned, and that Dale might be one of them.

Dale uncovers treason in the Pentagon's highest covert ranks. He hunts for his enemies before they can murder him and Scherie, a new friend who knows nothing of his magic.

Endicott pursues Dale, divided between his duty to capture a rogue soldier and his desire to protect Dale from his would-be assassins. They will discover that the demonic horrors that have corrupted American magic are not bound by family or even death itself.

In Tom Doyle's thrilling debut, *American Craftsmen*, Seal Team Six meets ancient magic--with the fate of the United States hanging in the balance . . .

American Craftsmen Details

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Author : Tom Doyle

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From Reader Review American Craftsmen for online ebook

Marian says

Really, I'd give this one two and a half, if I could.

This is one of those books, and you run into them a whole lot in SF and fantasy, where the author has done an excellent job with building a world and a magical system - enough to make them absorbing and intriguing in their own right - and then....not lived up to them when it came time for character and plot.

The alternate magical history, with wizard families interwoven into the great conflicts? Really cool. The actual plot....not so much. It comes off as an inspired but faltering mish-mash of Card's Alvin Maker series and Ludlum's original Bournes.

Characterization is....lacking. It's not often that I'd say a book, especially a thriller, needs to be longer. This one does. The female lead, in particular, comes off as a placeholder. She's there to be a love interest and a plot point, and not much else. The attraction and relationship between her and the narrator is one of those "sudden but inevitable" ones.

The prose needs a little work. Again, thrillers are supposed to be stripped down and terse, but I found myself having to go back and reread parts, sure I'd missed something in a previous paragraph. Nope. It gives it kind of a stuttering quality.

In short, I really do want to see more by this author. I am eager to see what else he does with this particular world, and debut flaws aside, it did draw me in enough that I tore through it pretty quickly.

Samuel Lubell says

This is modern military fantasy with a twist - all the things Hawthorne and Poe etc wrote were true, some names were changed, and a group of old Craft families in America have been helping fight its wars since the founding. While the plot is interesting and does eventually tie into the history, I found the historical background much more interesting than the characters. I am glad that Doyle chose not to follow the easy path of making all the middle eastern characters villains - one is actually the book's heroine.

Beth Cato says

This is a gritty urban fantasy that reminded me of other excellent books like Chuck Wendig's *Blackbirds* and *Zer0es* (though with less profanity). The world-building is really intriguing: old American families carry not only prestigious name but "craft," distinct types of magic. Two of those families are vital to American security in the modern military, though they are also intense rivals. Dale Morton's family is notorious for its "Left Hand Morton" branch that turned to dark magic centuries ago; Dale is still distrusted because of those dark tendencies. Therefore, when a mission goes sideways and he is psychologically damaged, it seems he is going Left Hand... but it's really an elaborate set-up.

One of the soldiers hunting him is Major Endicott, the youngest in another old family. He's pompous and self-righteous in what struck me as a paladin way. It was highly rewarding to see how his character changed through the course of events. However, my favorite character was Scherie Rezvani. She's strong, sassy, smart, and it's great to see a woman of Persian heritage with such a major role in a book like this.

I blazed through the book in two days. It was darker than I anticipated but didn't stay in those places for long (which is good, because I really wasn't in the mood for that kind of intensity). *American Craftsmen* is action-packed with loads of intrigue and magic, an urban fantasy that is well-tailored for guys but great for everyone.

Gökçe says

E?er ABD tarihini biliyorsan?z çok ba?ar?l?. Benim gibi az bilgiliyseniz o kadar da iyi de?il. Baz? bölümleri Mage oyunundan al?nma gibiydi. Casusluk ve ?ehir fantasti?i güzel bir kar???m olmu?. O yüzden 4 y?ld?z.

Amanda says

At the ripe old age of 36, the fact that I have purchased more books than I can read in this lifetime has begun to nag at me. There was a time when I would have persevered through anything I picked up because a younger me would have thought, "Oh, but I have all the time in the world to read all the books. Onward!" And like a dung beetle, I would have continued to tumble that turd to the finish line. But the older, wiser me is determined not to let the time suck that was The Age of Ra happen again.

So about a third of the way into *American Craftsmen* I began to get the distinct impression that the whole thing was going to go tits up. There were several early warning signs:

- *weak world building
- *sloppy attempt to intertwine history and fantasy
- *a plot that seems predicated on coincidence and happenstance
- *flat, one-dimensional characters
- *some awkward prose ("Scherie averted her skillful yet embarrassed eyes," comes to mind--and that's about the point I decided to leave this turd untumbled)

I'm leaving it at a 2 star because the premise is interesting though, at least at the point I left off, poorly executed.

Does the book get better? Maybe, but I doubt it. As previously stated, I didn't finish it because there are too many other books that deserve my attention before I shuffle off this mortal coil. A book that can't hook me in 90 pages? Ain't nobody got time for that.

Fantasy Literature says

Tom Doyle is a very creative author and his blending of historical fiction and urban fantasy is a really nice

combination. American Craftsmen is an exciting blend of two genres that kept me interested and excited for more.

The idea of magic having existed throughout history, just never openly exposed is a well used plotline, but Doyle is able to explain it in a new, interesting way that does not feel stale or repetitive. In American Craftsmen we are shown a picture of the United States and how the pilgrims and other immigrants carried their magical talents into the new world and how they became incorporated into the governance and defense of the nation. The gritty, sometimes dark aspects of how these elite, talented operatives are employed and the truly catastrophic ... Read More: <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

Lanko says

Never read a military fantasy, specially one set in the present day. The premise is really interesting: some of the oldest families that founded (?) the US were and are magic users and set up secret dynasties that serve the government. That are two rival families, the Mortons and Endicotts. Think of Gryffindor and Slytherin, but with soldiers, guns, secret ops and the like serving the British government.

I really liked the House here. It's the mansion where the Morton family lives, and it's actually a living house. Or a conscious ghost house. It has moods, traps, ghosts, etc. I think it was the most creative aspect of the book. And some other curious things like Gideon bibles used as trip wires.

I think characters could have used a little more polish as I felt I only got to know the surface. The Dale-Scherie love relationship also felt a bit wonky and awkward. Specially how they coincidentally stumble upon each other and inevitably fall in love almost right away (despite some doubts later). And also the fact she is an untrained civilian who Dale has no problems keeping around despite being against the US military magical department, no less. And then she just happens to have the right powers for the right situations at the right time.

The backstory of the antagonists was top notch. Imagine magic molding the outcomes of the Civil War, the Normandy landing, Hoover in the FBI and I can only imagine, of course, Richard Nixon. Their fall to dark magic, specially one for of the antagonists, was pretty impressive. Maybe seeing those historical events through the craftsmen magical approach would have been more cool or just my preference for darker stories, but at some point I wished that the antagonists were the protagonists.

Probably at some point the military theme of the story faded to the background as swords, staffs and magic became the main focus. I wished a bit more tactics, more guns (real guns) and technology involved and interacting with or boosted by the magic.

There are probably a lot of references to American culture or famous families inside. For example, Poe is often cited and his Red Death is actually a character in the story.

Overall, a creative approach and a combination of elements I haven't seen before.

Melliane says

Mon avis en Français

My English review

I did not know anything about Tom Doyle or his novels, and it's true that I usually avoid books that are more or less connected with the army, but the synopsis immediately intrigued me when I read it. I was therefore curious to see how the story would be. I must say that in the end I really had a good time with the novel.

Dale Morton went through many hardships in his life, and his last mission proved to be a total failure. Being cursed and hoping to leave the army, he finds himself with a large number of enemies at his heels. And while he did not know who wants him dead, he will have to embark on a quest to find the culprits. On his way he meets Scherie, a young woman out of the ordinary and who will be present for him in all circumstances. And it could also be that this woman turns out to be much more than what people thought, starting with Dale. As they try to survive together, an enemy approaches increasingly trying to eliminate all opposition.

The story of our two heroes was really interesting and I loved the author's ideas about these Craftsmen, holding all these extraordinary gifts. The only thing that bothered me a bit is the sudden change of point of view for the characters. It was sometimes quite difficult to see the changes of people and to understand where we were heading. But this is just a detail and I enjoyed seeing all the characters. Dale and Scherie form a perfect duo together and they are desperate to complete their quest. They will also learn a lot about each other this way. But we also meet the ghosts of the Dale's father and grandfather, two really interesting characters. It was very funny to see them together arguing constantly, and yet in the end, they may well be that they are surprised by the evolution of their relationship.

This novel was a nice surprise and perfectly combines magic, conspiracies and investigation. A surprise a little different from the books I usually read.

Ernest says

American Craftsmen, Tom Doyle 's debut novel, is about occult operatives, known as "Craftsmen," and it's terrific work. Out from Tor Books in May as the first part of a three book deal, it's very, very good. I wish they'd toned down the Baen-ishness of the cover, which will no doubt put some folks off, because this fantasy/government conspiracy thriller has a lot of interesting stuff about powerful occult families woven through American history. Starting in the middle east in a classic op gone horribly wrong, it mines a number of spiritual, historical, literary, and political veins to create a very interesting thriller. SF of Fantasy? As the main character's grandfather (deceased, but loquacious nonetheless) says, "Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology." If you liked Neil Gaiman's American Gods, Charles Stross' Laundry series, or are a 24/Jack Bauer fan, you should definitely read American Craftsmen. Just don't be put off by the fact that besides being thoughtful and very well written that it's also a non-stop adrenaline rush you won't want to put down sort of read. It's all that, and more.

Anthony says

a very interesting world and a fun ride. I hope this grows into a series. Both prequel and sequels would be welcome to flesh this out. glad I was along for the ride.

Jasper says

originally posted at: <http://thebookplank.blogspot.com/2014...>

There are two elements that I find very cool to read about. Magic and soldiers. This is exactly what the synopsis of *American Craftsmen* offers. I have been searching for these types of books and luckily I came across this one. Though don't let the synopsis of the story take you in too much as this is only the tip of the iceberg of the story that Tom Doyle touches. The best thing is, *American Craftsmen* is only Tom Doyle's debut into the fantasy fiction and is he is able to dish out such a story already, I can only imagine what he will be able to devise later on.

American Craftsmen opens up just as such a book should, throwing you directly into the fray of it all. Getting directly acquainted with the main protagonist of the story Dale Morton, who currently serves in the US Army and has a special ability, able to conjure up magic. He and a few others are called "craftsmen" the term used for people able to use magic. Soon after a few specific terms are thrown at you, the action takes place between Dale and an evil Pursian wizard that he had to take down, this heated battle between two powerful forces does turn out to go horribly wrong, Dale gets cursed and after a short evaluation he is discharged from the Army. With the return of Dale to the Morton residence where he can pick up his life again, things just don't feel the same anymore. Coincidentally with Dale's mission, another craftsmen of the Army, Michael Endicott, known by the handle "Sword" also has a specific mission but during this mission Michael stumbles upon some weird things, not only some that he has to battle but also during a meeting with a someone... was this a misinformation or a setup? This is only just the beginning of the story of *American Craftsmen*, I can say that Tom, after the introduction threw the story into a rapid but from the beginning your already on the edge of your seat! After these introduction both Dale and Michael try to find out what exactly is going on. But the Mortons, have a dark history, in their past some of their craftsmen branched into an evil organization whereby they participated in some dark and gruesome rituals, this past haunts Dale daily and when you have a puritan like Michael working against you, it doesn't make Dale's job easier to proof his innocence. Dale now finds himself on the run against his former allies, and does find unlikely allies around several corners, but the what he and Michael uncover in the end... is something now one dared to think about... Tom Doyle's story is one action packer thrilling adventure.

The story of *American Craftsmen* is only 320 pages long but Tom Doyle manages to create a very rich atmosphere withing these pages. As I mentioned above Dale and Michael are a special kind of people. They are direct descendants from founding families and only in their bloodline runs the skill to be a craftsmen. I liked how in detail Tom Doyle described the lineage of the Morton family and how they went Left-Handed (to the evil side) where others of the family stayed Right-Handed (on the good side). Michael Endicott's lineage is described in less detail but does have a lot of detail of how things run in that puritan family. They are strongly christian and this collides heavily with the Morton family as the Endicott's see them as the root of all evil. From somethings you just can't escape. The part that I liked most about the depth of the history that Tom Doyle showed in his story is that is readily lifts the story to another level. To be honest I was expecting a sort of gunslinger, full out action story with magic wielding gun a-blazing scenes, well this is still partly the case (don't worry!) but with this history you get a much bigger picture of the politics involved, and readily weaves a feeling of doom and danger around certain events and makes you question the motives of several character twice before continuing.

But it doesn't stop there! Now comes the magic aspect, it's again not the type that I was expecting, it's subtle

but none the lesser powerful and cool! Also Tom Doyle doesn't let this magic aspect run rampant but directly shows that there are limitations to using the craft too much. Just to name a few examples of what Dale can do: control the elements not only using them in his advantage but also completely change the weather pattern like say I want a nice sunny day for a BBQ he just has to snap his fingers. He can also commune with the dead. His grandfather and father are both dead but he can still consult them for questions. Added to this is the fact that Dale is also able to "talk" to his family house, yes seriously, and it talks back! Though the craftsmen/magic aspect is important for the story, Tom Doyle strikes a nice balance between this and the rest of the story, building the world and characters, letting nothing overtake the other.

As for the characters of the book. The two most important ones, Dale Morton and Michael Endicott make up the forefront of the story and in particular Dale. I enjoyed reading Dale's story. In the beginning he comes over as this hardened big Army guy, a strong patriot. But when the mission goes sour and he is cursed and diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder, he really changes. He doesn't become this softy, moping every moment of the day, no it seems that he starts to realize different things, things that he hadn't had the time to think about when he was serving the army full time. Perhaps it's also the injustice being done to him and his family name where Dale's character gets his strength from, he is determined to get his justice. Also the relation between him and Scherie Rezvani also proves to give a lot for the development of Dale character and that of Scherie as well. Scherie is a Persian woman that Dale takes with him. In the beginning their relation is something that Dale only wanted, Scherie doesn't know that Dale is a craftsman and perhaps for the first time in his life he is being treated as a normal person. But you can keep such secrets only so long... Completely opposite the beliefs of Dale stands the Puritan Michael Endicott. Michael is a strong believer in the Christian church and this really comes to show in the hatred that he carries towards the Morton family, they have done stuff the devil only can devise and when he hears that Dale changed he suspects a new rise of the Left-Handed Mortons, they did it once, why not a second time? However Michael just as Dale stands before a dirty political game. I liked how Tom Doyle let Michael character react to these. Michael is a loyal follower to his father who gives him orders but when questionable things happen and certain numbers just don't add up he goes on a search for himself. This also in a similar way as Dale's character gave a much better grip on Michael's one.

The ending of the book is something that I hadn't seen coming. All along the way of the story you are confronted by many facts, Dale simultaneously on the run and trying to figure out just what the heck is going on. When he and Michael uncover the real truth it's like a bomb exploding and causes you to abandon any pretense of what you first had assumed of the direction the story would go into. This is just the ending that you want to see for such a story and plot that goes way and way back than just a few years...

I haven't seen whether American Craftsmen will be just a stand-alone book or that Tom Doyle is planning to write a sequel or turn it into a series but I hope he does. In this debut Tom Doyle clearly shows that he knows how to write one awesome story. It's full of action on one side and on the other it's a dirty game being played by some dangerous men. Tom Doyle makes the whole concept of bringing magic to the military work in full colors and balances it out nicely so that nothing overtakes the other, this also comes back to showing the world itself, building the characters and one part that I enjoyed a lot, the history of said characters and family lineages. From the first page American Craftsmen will put you directly on the edge of your seat and keep you there right until the last page. Next time when there is nothing on TV and you are looking for an thrilling non-stop adventure, be sure to have American Craftsmen ready!

Megan Baxter says

This is an interesting concept, and the execution is, well, it's not great. It's not execrable, either. It's the kind of book that you don't mind reading, but really wish that it was about 30% better, and then it could get an enthusiastic recommendation as a good pulp read. I like good pulpy fun, but those books really have to embrace that aspect of themselves. This comes so close to being rollicking, but not quite, and at times, it tries a little too hard to be serious, and it's not that either.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

Ryan Lawler says

Do not let the cover or synopsis put you off, *American Craftsmen* by Tom Doyle hits big where it counts. Cool magic, interesting political games, and great action scenes, *American Craftsmen* is like a cross between *Alvin Maker* and *24*.

Trike says

I found this to be thoroughly entertaining. This is everything I had hoped the execrable *Control Point* by Myke Cole would be. Wizards, warlocks, witches and weathermen working as black ops in the military, plenty of action and a cool Secret History angle utilizing magic. All of these magic-users are called "craftsmen" in Doyle's world, hence the title.

In the novel *Shoeless Joe* by W.P. Kinsella (which was turned into the excellent fantasy movie *Field of Dreams*), Kinsella seamlessly incorporated J.D. Salinger into the story because Salinger once named a character Kinsella. In the terrific book *Maplecroft*, Cherie Priest delves into the "real" reason why Lizzie Borden killed her parents: they were being possessed by ancient Lovecraftian horrors. Doyle uses Nathaniel Hawthorne in a similar fashion, incorporating his writing into the secret world he's created to parallel our own.

The main character here is Captain Dale Morton, the descendant of a long line of Native American-and-British magic-wielders who primarily specialize in weather control but who have other skills. His rival is Major Michael Endicott, the scion of a Puritan family who likewise serve the country through the military. The Mortons and Endicotts have been rivals since white men first came to the New World. The Mortons believe in nature-based magic while the Endicotts place their faith in God as the source of their abilities. Naturally their families have been enemies for centuries.

Secondary characters have similar ties to history or literature. Morton and Endicott's CO is Colonel Elizabeth Hutchinson, whose ancestor was the model for Hesther Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter*. Calvin Attucks is a relative of Crispus Attucks, the first person killed in the American Revolution.

By far my favorite parts of the story incorporated real-life events and places with a supernatural half-twist to make them part of the Secret History of the world. The weather clearing over Normandy for the D-Day invasion, the reason why the Pentagon is in the shape of a pentagram, the Salem witch trials, other things

major and minor.

One of the things I liked about the book was how Doyle shifted between first-person and third-person. It's an interesting stylistic choice that helps distinguish the infodumps, giving them distinct flavors. There are some passages which are slightly clunky, but it moves on to the next bit quickly enough that they didn't bother me.

Lots of action, a little romance, a deep-seated conspiracy in the US government, ghosts, zombies, and the undying struggle (in some cases literally undying) between the Mortons and Endicotts make for an entertaining adventure.

There's also a nice dollop of humor scattered throughout. Doyle employs the typical Fantasy trope of quotes to kick off sections of the book. Dale Morton and Mike Endicott are soldiers, each in their own way patriots, and they realize they've been used as pawns in a larger, older game and Doyle slyly adds the quote, "*There's a craftsman in all of us.* -- An advertisement for reliable American tools." I laughed out loud.

Yeah, I'm in for the sequel

Laura Montgomery says

I can easily see this as a movie. Doyle uses an interesting device to cut quickly between some scenes, just like a movie does, to show us the actions of bit players, villains, heroes and heroine. It gives the narrative real drive, and I had a hard time putting the book down once it got going.

Dale Morton is a craftsman, a member of one of the craft families with a covenant with the military. When his last mission ends in a disaster, complete with a curse, he seeks to find the person behind what happened to him. On the way, he must contend with a mysterious woman, the interference of the scion of a family with whom his own has engaged in a blood feud for centuries, not to mention the plots in and out of the Pentagon. It's a great read and really well done. Highly recommended.
