



Sword of the Archon

D.P. Prior

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Deacon Shader has dreamt of the Sword of the Archon since a child, and now, as a veteran warrior, he is finally within reach of winning the holy blade in a tournament at the heart of the Templum's empire.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, plague breaks out in the streets of Sarum, and a horde of undead rises from the sacred burial mounds of the Dreamers.

Prompted by a voice from the Abyss, the liche Dr. Cadman has discovered a piece of the mythical Statue of Eingana and corrupted its power, but worse than that, an ancient enemy has noticed and turns his eyes once more upon the Earth.

Those with understanding know all too well the threat that hangs over Creation and have taken great pains to ward against it.

Sword of the Archon Details

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Author : D.P. Prior

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From Reader Review Sword of the Archon for online ebook

Jeremy says

This book was admittedly difficult to read, at least, in the beginning.

Shader: Sword of the Archon is a book that doesn't hold back and doesn't spoon feed you details often. When it does, it leaves you even more confused. I began this book not really knowing what to expect. I waded into the pages lost and confused. I left this book wanting so much more.

Sword of the Archon is a tale much like Game of Thrones, telling the story from different characters' perspectives, only the background lore is extremely relevant. In Game of Thrones, you might hear a hundred different names of various knights across the kingdom, and maybe you'll see one or two of them without even realizing its the same name as you'd read earlier. In Shader, unfamiliar terms are used with high frequency, and throughout this book are proven to be key details. Imagine a caveman being told to walk down Broadway past the H&M, take a left at the Wafel stand, enter the subway, and take the 6 to 28th; that's the kind of confusion you will have entering this story.

However, if you stick through the confusion and take in as much information as possible, you will find yourself enveloped in this rich and fleshed out world. You will jump from one character to another and completely forget they were each written by the same author. You'll find yourself following an obese skeleton, a hipster bard, a technocrat, and more as their worlds collide. And at the center of this conflict is Shader and the sword of the Archon.

Rex Jameson says

This is the best full-length self-published fantasy I've yet to read. Not because it's perfect, but because it's bold and very well executed (though I do have some issues to bring up later).

If you're looking for a light read, you may be in for a frustrating venture. Luckily, I am not particularly fond of light reading and enjoy a book that was purposefully constructed to make me ponder about deeper themes. I may not completely agree with the perspectives or the seeming lessons on the search for immortality and religion in general, but I respect any author who is willing to venture down that path. For those worried about a canned sermon, these themes are presented from several, diametrically opposed viewpoints (though certainly biased in the form of Sektis, Cadman, and others who have tasted immortality in a less than pleasant form).

The book is dense and often times confusing as the perspective of the section can sometimes not come to light until the third paragraph as the setting is solidified. This confusion can be compounded by the varying locales (and worlds) but also when competing perspectives are available within the same setting. The last section of the last chapter was especially jarring to me because of the latter.

I was extremely confused about whether I was seeing the first two or three paragraphs from Shadrak, the Dweller, Shader, or Cadman, and I just kept rereading the paragraphs and this broke up a rather important moment in the book. And when I figured out whose perspective it really was, my mouth sort of dropped because even after rereading the previous three chapters multiple times, I had no idea when or how he got

there. One minute he's weak and determined to read an old book to figure out the implications of his actions while drinking a brandy, and the next he's literally transported into the pivotal scene (and he's not Aristodeus).

I'll admit that it is certainly possible that I missed something big here, and this was by no means enough for me to remove a star, but it may be useful for informing a potential reader about the type of work this is. The book is dense. There are a lot of settings, participants, technologies, new words, and intersecting plot lines. It's one of those novels that you could read five to ten times and find something new with each reading. That I am willing to do just that is a testament to the success of the author in writing this book. The author has put a lot of effort into constructing the worlds, settings and characters the story interacts with, and it comes through in the telling.

Definitely a recommended novel. Looking forward to reading the continuation of the series. 5 stars.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews

Sword of the Archon (Shader #1) by D.P. Prior is one of the best self-published fantasy that I've stumbled upon. Not to say that it is perfect, because nothing is ever without flaws. It is, however, a dynamic work of genre bending scifi, fantasy and horror that immediately brings to mind Stephen King's seminal work: *The Gunslinger*, with its post-apocalyptic world, mysterious ruins of an advanced civilization, its mystical elements, and a main character in Shader who is just as gruff, haunted, and jaded as Roland Deschain.

The story is set in post-apocalyptic Australia, where a terrible cataclysm ended the technological society of the ancients and ushered in a new millennium built upon medieval tools, religion, mythology and magic. But the world never stops changing, and old evils never seem to truly die. So when someone begins uncovering and using the pieces of an ancient relic of power, the wise immediately suspect the return of the Technocrat.

But who is this person?

Sketis Gandaw (a.k.a. The Technocrat) was the foremost scientist that ancient mankind ever produced; a brilliant man who conquered the world through the power of his technological wonders, the money of his worldwide corporations, and the desires of the population to believe in no power greater than their own human logic. Once, the Earth lay at his feet, however, Sektis realized that mankind and the universe itself were flawed – not fit to survive; the very haphazard evolution of life from a big bang beginning the cause of this imperfect nature. And since the universe was not “designed” by some higher power to be imperfect for a reason, Sektis logically decided that it was a mistake that he (the pinnacle of evolution) must correct by “uncreating” everything and unleashing a new creation of mathematical perfection.

In this endeavor, Sektis came tantalizing close before he was stopped. So close, in fact, that the resulting backlash of the Technocrats defeat destroyed the ancient world. But no one is sure that Sektis actually died in the chaos. There are myths that he used his technological prowess to escape to another world and is merely waiting for a future time to return to Earth. And so, a few of the “wise” have ever been vigilant in watching for signs of his return. They have planned for it and even reared heroes to confront Sektis if he ever returns.

Deacon Shader is the latest of these unknowing guardians of the world; he is a warrior monk, trained by

powers he didn't understand to wield the Sword of the Archon and bloodied in the horrible wars against the undead armies of the Liche Lord Blightey. The only problem is that Deacon is a man of mighty paradoxes; one who wishes to live a peaceful existence without a sword in his hand but finds himself always resorting to violence to protect his beliefs of love; a man of the cloth who readily acknowledges that he has grown to have doubts about his own faith. But with the Sword of the Archon in his hands and a desire for peace in his heart, Deacon Shader finds himself unwillingly placed upon a path to confront the Technocrat -- if he has indeed returned.

From this great setup, Mr. Prior weaves a story upon the richly varied post-apocalyptic world he has created. And what a world it is! Shader's Earth is a complex society, filled with interesting characters, a mix of both science and magic, and ripe for pulse-pounding adventure. Religion is a big part of everyday life, whether it is Shader's devotion to it or others ridicule for it. And mysteries abound. Who is the technocrat really? How was the ancient world destroyed? What are the hidden, metallic tunnels? Why does it seem that several people have lived for nearly a thousand years? How did magic spring to existence on the Earth? So many mysteries, in fact, that it drives a curious reader to delve deep into the narrative for small clues.

The only thing that did not work for me in this novel was the love story of Shader and Rhiannon. While the romantic relationship is in the past as the story begins, these two have zero chemistry -- which just didn't ring true. Even if their involvement was over, there would still be some lingering attachment or unfinished emotions, but here the majority of their interactions are so negative that you wonder how they could have ever spoken to one another, much less been in love -- or lust -- with one another. It just didn't work at all for me, which was a major setback since this romantic attraction drove a good bit of Shader's story.

All in all, I really enjoyed *Sword of the Archon*. It had fights, intriguing characters, humor, and a very believable religious character and his struggle with his own faith. When I said earlier that this novel was one of the best indie fantasy I've read, I meant it. Sure, there are times when the narrative drags or the characters' interaction do not work, but overall, this beginning novel of the Deacon Shader Saga was a fun ride. One that I enjoyed so much that I moved on to the second book in the series almost immediately, which isn't something I always do, and I encourage you to jump on this ride and see if the journey is to your liking as well.

B. Throwsnaill says

Cadman's Gambit is an epic tale which follows the exploits of a hero (Deacon Shader) and a villain (Dr. Cadman). Both characters are significant point of view characters, and share the P.O.V. about equally. As I started reading, I struggled to grasp the terminology that was employed. The world(s) in which the story takes place are rich and lovingly detailed, but at times it felt like I was starting a series at Book Two rather than Book One. And I am simply not very good at tracking a lot of new terminology, so I found myself taken out of the story quote frequently in the beginning of this book, as I tried to figure out what the characters were referring to. I'm very glad I stuck with this book though, because the payoff was considerable in the second half. The story is extremely deep and imaginative. I was slightly disappointed by the mysterious ending, but it does serve as a powerful hook to draw the reader forward into the sequels to find out what is going to happen.

I was going to give this book four stars because of the issues I had with it; but, in the end, it's an example of the type of deep, complex, but fast-paced fantasy that I crave. Because of this, I simply can't bring myself to give it less than five stars. If you can handle the terminology, Cadman's Gambit is a fully immersive read that I highly recommend.

B. Barron says

Many apologies for taking so long to review this one. No excuses, but as a matter of explanation I got sidetracked by Christmas and Real Life.

This is a good book. I have a few minor issues with it in some areas, but all in all I liked it and I am looking forward to picking up the sequel.

My biggest problem is the main character is killed at the end of this one, yet he features in the next. I hate resurrection's in general and on principle. It cheapens death in a story, making it just another hill to be climbed over. I suspect the author will handle it well and I will enjoy it, but I do have my biases.

I wish there were a character list in the book. Frankly some of the people, especially in the middle of the book (when I was also distracted by Real Life) seemed to blur together. It could have been just me, but I cannot see how it would hurt to have such a listing.

I also wish there were a glossary of terms. I had to look up some words, which is no slam – its a good thing considering I have a damn good and expansive vocabulary (Humble, are I not?). Most I did know, but I needed to remind myself of them.

This book begs for a few illustrations! A better view of the Nousian Monas (the use of this John Dees glyph is inspired IMOP), Dr. Cadman and his undead army, the rows of Kryeh staring blindly into their monitors, and a swarm of wmag (also an inspired creation) - so much screams for a visual.

And lastly, as far as critiques go, the renaming of everything and everywhere on earth. Its unnecessary, distracting, and a little annoying. I could see names changing, and reverting to ancient names in some areas would make a lot of sense (such a Sahul for Australia) – but the Great West? Really?

Enough bitching. I loved the way Decon Shader was described in combat. It was almost casual, and it felt very real. I also liked the Good Doctor and his ghoulish needs – after a recent book where the bad guys said constantly and incessantly they were evil it was a real pleasure to see a more realistic depiction of a bad guy. Not evil, at least not in his decayed mind – simply pragmatic. Thank God!

And lastly you can feel forces moving behind and against everyone, even those with evil plans such as the great Technocrat. He believes he is master of reality, and as soon as he remakes the world it will all be perfection – but its apparent the world and the dream of it is more subtle and and more clever than this immortal Demigod.

My only real struggle here was to decide between a three and a four star rating. I am giving it a four because I am anxious for the sequel, but also because of the stinkers I have recently been subject too.

And yet again I am reminded how new Independent authors, who lack the great publishing houses to support them, are shining far more brightly than the supposed luminaries of the industry and the tired, trite, formula works the Publishers seem to want to excrete upon us. I know, a run-on sentence. Thank God for new, creative talent like Mr. Prior.

Scott says

Cadman's Gambit by D.P. Prior is the first book in the Shader series. Taking place about 1000 years in Earth's future only the general landscape of the planet remains unchanged. The story is woven in a complex arc that unwraps itself layer by layer to grant you a fuller understanding of who the characters are and what has happened to the world.

Deacon is the hero, a man of the church, who struggles with his own identity. One who believes in peace, but is himself capable of great violence to protect his beliefs.

Cadman is a predator who is afraid of being revealed for what he truly is. Hiding behind an illusory mask loathing the idea of what he has become, but unable to let go of his existence.

Sektsis Gandaw an otherwordly figure ruled by logic and technology. He wants to be able to return to the world and take what he sees as his rightful place at the top of it. Unable to take direct physical action he uses his tools to have his agents seek out something that can change everything.

There are many more characters that we are treated to a surprising amount of insight about. This book doesn't just have a few well formed characters and a cast of cardboard cutouts to fill the space and advance the plot. Each person has their own motivations for their actions and the majority of them are easy to understand.

This book requires a fair amount of attention to detail to understand all of the different philosophies and political ideologies that the different regions follow. Understanding them is important to really being able to submerge yourself in the complex state of the world. This book is highly recommended for people who enjoy complete characters, complex worlds, and intriguing plot lines. In other words if you like fantasy give the book a shot.

Review copy provided by the author.

Melinda says

Finally!!! Authors are writing books for people who are literate and have brains and vocabularies. This book is so entirely fabulous that I couldn't add it to my favorites list fast enough. I don't see what all the whining was about in the other reviews. The vocabulary isn't overly extensive and you don't need a character list to keep track of everyone. From the reviews I expected a cast of thousands and dense, rare vocabulary, not to mention confusion for at least the first 50 pages if not the first half of the book. None of this was true. This is an intelligently written story that does expect you to pay attention. At the same time, it was such a kick to read it that it took less than one day to finish.

The story takes place in post-apocalyptic Australia, where technology and science have been replaced by magic and religion and mythology have combined to create a kind of mythos. A big change is coming and everyone is becoming pulled in - men, Gods, dwarfs, dreamers and the undead. The story switches between first person POV of the different characters who all want something - whether it is to remake the universe in

their own image, do the right thing, or be simply left alone - you get to understand what drives these characters both good and bad. There are no absolutes here, there is a lot of gray area in each character just like real life. This makes the characterization outstanding.

The author also knows his way around the English language and uses it to great effect to craft sentences that add to the mood and the tone of the story. This is no junior wordsmith. On top of that the plot is tight, the pacing good, the ending sharp. What more could a girl ask for but a second book? And I get that too! The last time I read something this intelligent it was either ages ago by Dunnett or Whittemore or more recently by Conklin or Rhine. Thank God for indie authors. This one clearly hasn't sold out to commercialism.

I would recommend this book to anyone who appreciates a well crafted, intelligent story. This one has it in spades. You don't even have to like fantasy to love this book, the human interest stories alone are worth it.

Dave says

Such transparent parody of reality

This is like an effort at producing a religiously-intentional Shannara. And it is blatantly premised on obvious, existing structures and practices.

D.P. Prior says

Sword of the Archon has now been completely restructured and revised (04/13/2015). This 4th edition has much more action, fewer point of view characters, and fewer location changes. The plot is linear, and less dense.

In its original form, many readers found the first 80 or so pages too dense: there were a lot of point of view characters, lots of place names, and there are some difficulties getting a geographical bearing. Also, the introduction, with Shader as a child, which was meant to make things simpler, actually seems to have had the opposite effect.

So, the childhood scenes at the beginning have gone, along with some points of view.

My hope is this will make the series much more accessible to a wider range of readers.

I felt it was time to make the changes, especially because book 4, The Archon's Assassin, has exceeded my expectations. It would be a shame if readers don't make it that far due to the slow, difficult opening in book 1.

The Audible version will also be updated very soon, although it generally takes Audible about 6 weeks to set the modified files to live.

If anyone has bought the ebook version or the Audible version, you will be able to download the new edition for free.

Robert Duperre says

Rating: 5 out of 5

Oh, how much I love the melding of genres. To mix and match different aspects of specific literary tropes and use them to tell a truly original and captivating tale can be a wonderful thing to experience, when executed correctly. It then becomes nothing but a story, allowing the reader to concentrate on the strength of the tale being told rather than if they followed all the requisite “rules” ascribed to said genre – ala, in the case of fantasy, the use of magic, mystical beasts, and world-building.

This all brings us to Cadman’s Gambit: Shader Book I by D.P. Prior, a novel that now holds a place in my heart as the most perfect introductory novel to a series I’ve ever read, surpassing the previous champion, The Gunslinger.

In truth, there are quite a few similarities between Prior’s book and the seminal work of King. We follow a gruff, old, and cranky warrior (Roland and Shader), travel along a path in search of an object of untold power (the Rose and the statue of Eingana), and there are remnants of an advanced, ancient civilization lurking beneath the surface of both worlds.

This is where the comparison ends, however. While The Dark Tower chronicles the journey of a single man and his quest for absolution, in Shader we’re presented with a much larger, more universal plight – the elevation of man into a place of honor within the universe. It’s a rather lofty goal that Prior has saddled himself with, and one he’s amazingly able to pull off.

In Cadman’s Gambit we’re introduced, in different flashbacks and wild, swashbuckling tales, to the main character, Deacon Shader. But in almost every way, Shader is overshadowed by the complexity, originality, and turmoil of the world he exists in. This is a version of Earth that has gone far beyond us – 900 years since the end of “civilization as we know it”, pretty much – and there are mystical, as well as scientific, wonders drifting about. There are individuals who have lived for centuries, galactic warlords on the quest for universal domination, and many questions pertaining to the nature of existence, including time, itself. Religion is widely discussed, and even ridiculed, in fact becoming the one uniting and divisive cog in the machine, echoing that fact that though society as we know it has moved on, humans remain humans, whether they ascribe to a Christian derivative, a pagan understanding, immerse themselves in Platonic doctrine, or a combination of all three.

But more than anything else, Cadman’s Gambit is the story of man’s quest for immortality. Every major character either desires it – in spirituality or actuality – or already has tasted a hint of it. It is one of the saddest theological plotlines I’ve come across, and each key player is, in their own way, selfish to a fault. In an existence where death is all around them, in the form of plague or warfare or strange, bio-engineered beasts, rather than trying to survive, they attempt to cheat death.

Which is why Deacon Shader, the warrior monk (and how great of a contradiction is that?), means so much to the story. He is flawed, cranky, violent, and stubborn, a man set in his ways who wants to change but can’t. Because of this, he reflects each and every person I’ve ever known...though he’s way cooler, and stronger, than the average man. Let’s just call him an “ideal human,” which is a fantastic description because of how imperfect he is. Prior has definitely created a conundrum of a story here, and he couldn’t have chosen

a better figurehead to anchor it.

The mystery in the tale abounds. What's up with the hidden, underground tunnels? What's a "technocracy?" Why do so many people, when exposed to the deity-like entities (or are they?) that save the world from itself, end up living pretty much forever? He also has the courage to introduce magic, only to pull back and suggest, in a brilliant piece of storytelling, that there's no such thing as magic at all. Just like the rest of the story, it's a grand negation, and one that can make a reader's head spin...in a good way, of course.

There is more than theory and world-building at work here. There is actual emotion and real, honest-to-goodness human relationships. Shader's love for the girl he can't have, his understudy's obsession with the same, a dwarf named Shadrach's fixation on the woman who would be his mother, the religious elite's love of Ain, their godhead, or Dr. Cadman's (the main antagonist) love of, well, himself. (I don't want to spoil anything here, but let's just say Cadman is a near-flawless villain. You'll love him.)

The fight scenes in this book are extremely well executed, even if they may be few and far between. Just like everything else at work here, this is a contradiction, for the action acts as a break in the dialogue and philosophic musings instead of the other way around, which is usually the case. Also, there are little Easter eggs thrown in for those of us who still exist in the 21st century, as some of the "immortal" characters reflect upon events and locales from their past, letting us the readers know that, yes, this strange land was once not only very much like ours, but was ours.

Oh, and I'd be remiss to say that, for the first time ever, the map at the beginning of the book was not only well-made, but necessary to the plot! Go figure. I've always been one to never look at them, thinking them superfluous. Not here, my friends. No, if it weren't for that map, I would've been lost.

In fact, I can say in all honesty that the only thing I think might hold this novel back is the fact it's almost too smart for its own good. The language is dense, the plot sometimes convoluted. You really have to read each and every word, to take in each minute detail presented, to truly understand what you're reading. I think there may be some folks who may not appreciate it, though there's nothing wrong with that.

I, on the other hand, loved it. Cadman's Gambit is a work of pure intellect, taking the best facets of fantasy, science fiction, and philosophy, and mixing it all together into a genus all its own. It's surprisingly humorous at times, and the Kantian undertones of consciousness as it relates to time and space resounded with me greatly. I couldn't put it down, though I took my time with it, wanting to bathe myself in every word, every turn of a phrase.

Yup, that's right. My Year's Best list just had a new book jump to the top. D.P. Prior's book is that good. He has a lot to say, and one hell of a story to tell. In my opinion, you should take him up on that journey. Now.

Plot - 10

Characters - 10

Voice - 10

Execution - 10

Personal Enjoyment – 10

Overall – 50/50 (5.0/5)

Lisa says

I enjoyed this book far more than expected. I plan on reading the next two to complete the trilogy. The author has done a good job creating a post-apocalyptic world which remembers technology but magic has also appeared. The male characters are quite strongly portrayed and of the two female characters of note: One is rather one dimensional, the other, the "nun" is far more compelling and seems to fit better. I could be that the other female character will be developed more in the next books.

I enjoyed the conflict between being a soldier and being a spiritual man which is a conflict I believe many can relate to. How does one decide when it is murder and when it is a righteous defense of the innocent? Can you be preemptive to protect the innocent or would that be murder?

Timothy Cummings says

This book was just plain fabulous, well crafted characters presented in a well crafted story, that blends genres flawlessly. A tale written for adults who appreciate good writing

Jake Scholl says

NOTE: If you're a squeamish reader avoid this book. If you're a fan of George R.R Martin books and like watching "Braveheart", you'll love this book.

When searching Amazon for eBooks I am very careful. Especially when it comes to Fantasy & Sci-fi.

When I see a five star review, I take it with a grain of salt. Mainly because sometimes that reviewer is a friend of the writer. Or in some cases, it's actually the writer that wrote the review.

Also I'm very skeptical with eBooks on bestseller lists because sometimes the book is so horrible and just ended up on the list by random chance.

For these reasons, I always read the excerpt before downloading. Like with "Cadman's Gambit" by D.P Prior. The book had been on the bestseller list for awhile, so I was curious. I read the excerpt, and became an instant fan of the novel. I sent the book to my Kindle right away.

The story was very intriguing. It was a cross between "Mad Max" (Takes place mostly in a post-apocalyptic Australia. No joke.) and Sword & Sorcery Fantasy. The world has fallen into a new Dark Age.

The Church has also risen again, and like in medieval times, they keep the technology of the previous age hidden from everyone. (So now people use swords, lances, wagons, etc.) Magic also has come back.

There is no way I can tell you the plot without spoiling it. So I'm going to say the main plot is the classic badman wanting all power, world domination, etc. As you read, you will find that the story is about so much more than that.

Prior tackles Religion, True Love, Responsibility, and Sacrifice in such a way that makes it look like he's

been writing for decades. He is one of the best authors I've read this year.

The characters are just as good as the plot. The villains all have a spark of good, and are not long skinny men with thin mustachios that cackle with glee. You will become emotionally attached to every villain. As for the heroes, they are not perfect. They have their ups and downs. They make mistakes. They have feelings.

The dialogue is written with skill. No stiff awkward prose here that so many indie writers struggle with.

Verdict

I give the book 4 out of 5 stars! Prior is a very promising indie writer, and if you want to read amazing tales of Good vs. Evil, read one of his books!

Available in print and on the Kindle Store.

E.A. says

I won this book as a first reads on Goodreads. I was intrigued by the blurb and when the book actually arrived I was excited to get started. It took a little for me to get into it, not because it wasn't interesting, but because there were so many new terms and people. I had a hard time keeping track of everyone and their locations. The more I read, the more I enjoyed and by the end, I didn't get quite so lost and I found the maps incredibly useful.

At times I felt like there was a bit too much philosophizing and I wanted more action. For a book that has an awesome character on the front wielding dual swords, I was expecting more in the way of fight scenes. The information presented is good and I was glad all of the information wasn't dumped all at once. I also liked the fact that everyone has a different idea of what happened and what is going on.

The characters in this book are awesome. They are all unique and have different voices. I didn't feel like any of them were just thrown in to take up space or act as a straw man. I really grew attached to some of them and hated others, which was nice. Overall, I really enjoyed having the opportunity to read this and am curious to see what the next book brings.

Cheryl says

I loved 'The Nameless Dwarf' books & I loved this book even more!!! I will definitely be reading more Shader books.
