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1634: The Bavarian Crisis Details

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Beth says

Good addition to the series.

If you aren't a history nut -- there's a lot of detail you can skim past -- but the info dumps are on such varied legal, logistical & ethical issue from back then -- you find something that catches your interest (or indignation) and you WILL appreciate being given the information.

Still can't believe that deserter showed up again, didn't die & had the presumption to call himself not cruel on purpose. >< Very "I was following orders" and then some.

Edward Tessier says

At times it is a nearly endless compendium of historic characters, economies, and religious politics. the "cast of thousands" consistently distracts from the dozen or so characters engaging enough to follow. I can't imagine the series changing at this point, but I so wish it would pare down on the world building and spend more time experiencing the era through a handful of compelling characters. Those characters ARE there, they are just buried deep under a Bavarian avalanche of words.

Henry says

This is the continuing saga in the 1632 Universe that was started (not surprisingly) with a book entitled 1632.

Now it is 1634 and there is a Crisis in Bavaria (hence, the current title).

If you aren't familiar with this series, it has a number of unusual characteristics. Quite notably, there are now about four books that take place in 1634. And there is a book that takes place in 1635. To keep fans on their toes, that book came out BEFORE the last two books that take place in 1634.

Confused?

The reason is that Eric Flint has delegated the writing of these latest books to other authors. Or perhaps he is collaborating with them. It is a little hard to tell.

Anyhow, the latest book is entertaining but is seriously flawed in that it requires a scorecard to keep all of the characters and political situations in the right order.

Quick history lesson for you: in the 17th Century, Germany was a crazy quilt of kingdoms, principalities, duchies,etc.

This book is about the political intrigue that is taking place among this crazy quilt of political entities.

The sheer mass of characters that are introduced in this book is staggering. Aside from the royalty, there are the servants, the soldiers, the diplomats, etc.

It doesn't help that many of the places have similar names. Nurnburg is not the same as Neuburg. (But they aren't too far away.) Amburg is different from Hamburg and Bamburg.

And just when you think that you are getting on top of things, the authors throw in an aside explaining the role of guild membership in Basel, Switzerland. Mind you, that never actually gets used for anything, but there is this explanation.

Frankly, it seemed that the authors would find something interesting in their research and then would go out of their way to weave it in.

The main plot revolves around a group of people moving across the countryside getting chased by bad guys. And then they get to safety. And then they leave the safety and get chased by bad guys again. It gets quite tiresome.

On the positive side, I feel like I learned something by reading this book, because I have a better feel for the intricacies of the relationship of the Holy Roman Empire (aka Austria/Hungary) with its immediate neighbors.

The writing is crisp and clear. The prose is not overly busy and most of the main characters in the book were interesting.

I just wish that I hadn't had to have my head spin as much as it did when I tried to follow the plot.

Howard Brazee says

I recommend reading this (1632) series in recommended order (Google it).

This book seemed at first to be almost a historical lecture - which I liked, the history is fascinating. Then the action got complicated. Very little of the book took place in Grantville, nor even needed Grantville to make it work.

It was heavy into religious issues of the time and place, along with political issues. It did mention Unitarianism for a moment, but I'm interested that I don't recall so far in the series - ever seeing atheism mentioned. Certainly Grantville would have had some atheists and agnostics.

I like that it did not make modern values dominate. It is easy to say that Grantville is us, therefore it must have the best values and will win all of the culture wars. But that didn't happen in this volume.

Leo says

I really tried to give this book a chance and although it improved after the first 200 pages, it never lived up to expectations. This is a book in the Ring of Fire series. The premise is that a small West Virginia town inexplicably gets transported back to 17th century Germany in the midst of the 30 years war. Taken as a whole this book does one thing quite well, it gives a great sense of what living in the new reality brought on by the phenomenon was like. The problem is that the same effect could have been achieved in a much shorter book. There were three things that bothered me about the book.

1. There is very little action (personal preference here perhaps) and a lot of people just sitting around talking. This slowed the pace down considerably. Also, most of the characters speak as if they are reciting encyclopedic articles.
2. I've read books before that have many characters and I was prepared for it in this one, especially when I saw the extensive list of characters in the appendix. However, I still got tripped up. Many of the characters have similar names and some are difficult to find in the appendix. For example there was a Don Francisco and another character (characters?) talking about Don Fernando, which made for a very confusing scene. When I looked up the names, I discovered that Don Francisco's surname was Nasi AND that the third character I thought was in the room (Nasi) was actually the same person as Don Francisco. The scene would have been much easier to follow had the character been referred to solely as Nasi.
3. The most annoying thing about it (and it developed into a pet peeve by the end) was the dialog tags. They were put, he said, into the middle of sentences. That not only introduces a pause where normal people do not pause (unless your James T Kirk) it kicks you as the reader out of the narrative. Please, please, please put the dialog tags in a more unobtrusive spot.

Daniel Bratell says

The world created by the 1632 book keeps expanding in time and space. With the ambition this project has I think it was inevitable, but maybe it also becomes less entertaining.

A firm interest in European history is a good base though nobody will be prepared for everything in this universe.

This book is a lot about the collision of catholicism and protestantism, illustrated by the conflicts surrounding Bavaria, though happening all the way between Amsterdam and Vienna, with a sprinkle of Basel.

It's interesting but the time line moves very slowly.

Debrac2014 says

I quite enjoyed it! Slow beginning, but then the multiple story lines moved quickly!

John says

It's like someone took a genealogy page and tried to write a story based on it. So much of the action happens "off screen", with so many 2d characters, and so many references to the seminal novel in the series and Grantville (where there's lots of novelty and action), that it's just not enjoyable to read.

Mike says

I had trouble with this book's rating - I liked the characters and the plot, but I really was not a fan of the writing style. Given my enjoyment of the previous books in this series, I'm left to conclude that Eric Flint was in charge of the overall story, while Virginia DeMarce got to handle the pacing and dialogue. The result is a fun story that takes forever to get going, and then suddenly skips over large periods of time. I don't really mind the Skyrim-style map hopping that occurs when nothing of interest happens, but it needs to be consistent. It's jarring to spend an entire chapter on the road between two towns, and then suddenly the characters are halfway across Germany.

And the dialogue. Oh, man, the dialogue! It's usually not too bad, but at one point or another, every single character starts talking in short sentences. Nobody talks like this. It's not natural. It's really not. One or two new characters might be okay. But not everyone. Especially not well-established characters who already have defined speech patterns.

Given that I gave up on "The Rudolstadt Colloquy" in the first Grantville Gazette, I'm thinking I just don't like DeMarce's writing style. Which certainly doesn't bode well for the other books she's co-authored in this series, but... we'll see.

Also, it's worth noting for those who might have gotten lost/confused by the various story lines and characters - I'd strongly recommend looking up the suggested reading order for books in the 1632 world. There's a lot more than just the "year" books, and they really give some background to the world and flesh out characters in earlier adventures so the "year" stories don't have to.

Dianna Shimizu says

I've really liked this series up until now. The first book was especially exciting with a West Virginia town being transplanted to 17th century Germany and how they adapted. But this book in the series was more like reading a history book with an endless and confusing cast of characters from history, when the reader really wanted to find out about the people in Grantville, so I was disappointed. I hope the rest of the books in the series are not like this one, and more like the first one.

Dan says

A bit slow in the beginning, but the last half is excellent. 2018 re-read: This series almost always satisfies.

David says

The Bavarian Crisis focus's on the Politics of the House of Habsburg and the effects of the Ring of Fire has had on that family in the 1632 Verse. New characters are introduced along with the continuing stories of all the characters both uptime and downtime. If you have not started this series I highly recommend getting started with the first book 1632. Otherwise keep reading, all of the books have been very enjoyable and I always learn a little more about this historical period.

Jim says

From Publishers Weekly

The intricacies of Habsburg family relations make surprisingly fascinating reading in the latest episode in Flint's saga of a 20th-century West Virginia town transported mysteriously to 17th-century Europe. The recently widowed Duke Maximilian of Bavaria reluctantly assents to a dynastic marriage with his niece, Archduchess Maria Anna of Austria, but her recent reading of an uptime encyclopedia and the American Constitution leads her to consider other, previously unimaginable options. Meanwhile, Don Fernando, the Spanish Cardinal-Infante, moves toward peace with the fledgling United States of Europe while laying siege to Amsterdam and searching for a suitable bride. Flint teams up once again with historian DeMarce (*1634: The Ram Rebellion*) to tell a complicated but coherent story. It is especially refreshing to read an alternate history that doesn't depend upon the clash of anachronistic arms, but rather on how modern ideas of human rights, education, sanitation and law might have affected the Europe of the 30 Years War. (Oct.)

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Mike Briggs says

Most of the books in this series are hard to get into, and that is both because of the massive cast of thousands over many different countries (not all of which are familiar), and because the books themselves are not written by the same authors. Other than the short story books, none of the stories (books) can be definitely linked to any sole author other than Eric Flint. The hope every time I crack open a book in this series, is that Flint actually was involved, and that the book has a similar enough "feel" to the prior works. That is very hard to do when you have many different co-authors, and many different characters. Really doesn't help if the book opens up before prior books. And then you notice that they are referring to events that might happen that have already occurred in previous books (this is a 1634 book, there already is a 1635 book).

With all that said, this specific book in the series finally picked up after many unknown number of pages and actually became rather enjoyable. Hard to put down even. Even so, I did end up reading another book at the very beginning as the early stages of this book were frustrating to get through.

Kay says

A very ambitious plotline with a lot of interwoven stories, so I am glad I had a physical copy of this book. The maps, genealogical charts and the list of characters came in quite handy. It would have been nice to have an additional family tree of the various Hapsburgs, but that was nothing a quick internet search couldn't fix.

I am still intrigued by this whole series and look forward to the rest.
