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The Wise Man's Fear: Kingkiller Chronicles, Day 2



Synopsis

"My name is Kvothe. I have stolen princesses back from sleeping barrow kings. I burned down the town of Trebon. I have spent the night with Felurian and left with both my sanity and my life. I was expelled from the University at a younger age than most people are allowed in. I tread paths by moonlight that others fear to speak of during day. I have talked to Gods, loved women, and written songs that make the minstrels weep. You may have heard of me." So begins the tale of a hero told from his own point of view - a story unequaled in fantasy literature. Now in *The Wise Man's Fear*, Day Two of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, an escalating rivalry with a powerful member of the nobility forces Kvothe to leave the University and seek his fortune abroad. Adrift, penniless, and alone, he travels to Vintas, where he quickly becomes entangled in the politics of courtly society. While attempting to curry favor with a powerful noble, Kvothe uncovers an assassination attempt, comes into conflict with a rival arcanist, and leads a group of mercenaries into the wild, in an attempt to solve the mystery of who (or what) is waylaying travelers on the King's Road. All the while, Kvothe searches for answers, attempting to uncover the truth about the mysterious Amyr, the Chandrian, and the death of his parents. Along the way, Kvothe is put on trial by the legendary Adem mercenaries, is forced to reclaim the honor of the Edema Ruh, and travels into the Fae realm. There he meets Felurian, the faerie woman no man can resist, and who no man has ever survived... until Kvothe. In *The Wise Man's Fear*, Kvothe takes his first steps on the path of the hero and learns how difficult life can be when a man becomes a legend in his own time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I love The Name of the Wind. In fact, I've been able to make myself a hero on oodles of occasions by recommending Name of the Wind to people "looking for a good book." The only person I've recommended it to who didn't really care for it was my wife. So figure that one out. I received Wise Man's Fear from early Tuesday morning and devoured it. I was never bored while reading it - the characters were sharp, Rothfuss is a ridiculously skilled writer, and there's plenty in this book to keep you engrossed and entertained. So why three stars? Why am I not falling all over myself to praise this one? Because it's kind of a mess. An engrossing, brilliant, hot and swanky mess, but a mess just the same. My biggest problem is that, with some minor, token exceptions, I know exactly as much about the Chandrian as I did before I read this book. Same goes for the Amyr and the Valeritas door in the archives. I actually feel like I know less about the framing story with the Scrael and Kvothe's slow-mo death wish. All the new things Rothfuss reveals in Book II are things that are kind of cool and groovy in their own right, but they seem fairly inconsequential to the overall story, and often they feel as if they've been dragged in from the Kvothe band's inferior opening act. It's like I've watched an entire season of a Kvothe TV series that is saving all the good bits for sweeps, which presumably doesn't arrive until Book III. And, to dangerously and alchemically mix metaphors, Book III is going to have to do a whole lot of heavy lifting to tie up all the loose ends. I would not be surprised if the Kingkiller Chronicles isn't really as trilological as Rothfuss initially intended. (No, trilological isn't really a word. Shut up.) And, to move from the trilological to the puritanical, I found it jarring that Kvothe shifted from Gentlemanly Prude to Sheenlike Horndog in about twenty pages. Lots more sex in this book than the recommended daily allowance. Kvothe also kills a lot of people in very gruesome and bloody ways, and, disconcertingly, he seems to enjoy it altogether more than he ought. He's a very interesting, compelling character, but I don't like him nearly as much as I did before this book started. But what do I know? He's on a drug called Kvothe, and if you took it, your children would weep over your exploded body. (For the record, I don't really like Charlie Sheen that much, either.) Oh, that leads me to a minor spoiler: Kvothe also, apparently, nibbles on some obscure birth control root on a regular basis to keep his Kvothified spermies in check. This was the only moment in the book that I thought was unqualifiedly ridiculous. Kvothe loses everything he owns multiple times in this book, but somehow, somehow, he holds onto his arboreal condoms? Please. To sum up: Wise Man's Fear is a mixed, messy bag. Still love Rothfuss; still love The Name of the Wind, and will buy and devour the third book on the first day of its release.

The first half of Wise Man's Fear is an improvement over the previous book in the Kingkiller

Chronicles. There is intrigue, mystery, complex interpersonal drama, great writing, and great pacing. Then halfway through the book, Rothfuss decides to let us in on the fantasies of his fifteen-year-old self, and the book goes downhill from there. The book picks up precisely when the previous book left off, sparing little time to catch people up or re-explain everything in case a reader started with book two. I'm glad about that. I hate it when a series is up and running and the author or publisher feels that they need to throw in some exposition for people who didn't read the earlier books.

Seriously...who starts a series at book two? Anyway...It goes great for a long while. I found the second half of the first book to be the best, and this seemed like a continuation of that. A lot happens, mostly having to do with Kvothe's adventures at the University and then on to a different land, where Kvothe gets some experience dealing with nobility and goes on an adventure with a ragtag group of adventurers. Then...just over halfway through the book, the plot comes to a grinding halt. Don't want to spoil anything. So I'll just say that something happens that is totally unrelated to what had been going on in the first two books. It is mentioned in book one (I think), but only as one of Kvothe's many legendary accomplishments. Funny thing is, what happens is very similar to one of the fantasies I used to dream up before bed when I was a nerdy, lonely, sex-crazed teenager. I don't mind the occasional bit of self-indulgence from an author, but this goes on way too long, further emphasizing just how juvenile it is. After it is finally over, we are then diverted again to another side-adventure in which Kvothe learns how to fight. Once again, the teenage fantasies kick-in, and not only does he learn to fight, but he gets to have sex with hot women while doing it. As I was reading this, I couldn't help but chuckle and shake my head at just how unbelievable and juvenile the whole thing is. And yet again it goes on way too long. After these two bits are over, we get a bit of the good from the first half again...then the book is over. I felt the author took too long with side-diversions and things left unresolved from book one were left hanging, especially his relationship with Denna. I'm not going to spoil anything, but I feel confident in advising anyone who hasn't read this yet to go ahead and skip the "romantic" scenes with Denna. Seriously. Just skip them. NOTHING is resolved. They are frustrating, and not in a *Pride and Prejudice* way, but in a "Yeah, yeah, dude...We get the picture...She's hard to get! Can we PLEASE move ON!!!" way. Also, Denna is the most uninteresting character in the series. Her only good qualities seem to be that she is pretty and witty. Given the many interesting women with whom Kvothe finds himself, Denna is the least exciting. My favorite of Kvothe's relationships is the one with loan-shark Devi, a fascinating character who practically leaps off of the page. When you read her scenes, it almost feels like Rothfuss realizes how much more interesting she is than Denna, and so stubbornly stops himself from letting her truly shine in the way she should. C'mon Patrick! Free Devi!

...Or else make Denna more interesting. We should be given a reason to fall in love her along with our protagonist. SO far, you have given us no reason for Kvothe's bizarre obsession with her, and given us every reason to fall in love with Devi. Can't blame us for that. The book is worth reading if you can tell yourself to go ahead and skip ahead a few pages when it feels like it is meandering. I will read the third installment when it comes out. Hopefully Rothfuss will keep it moving forward and spare us the adolescent fantasies the next time around.

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