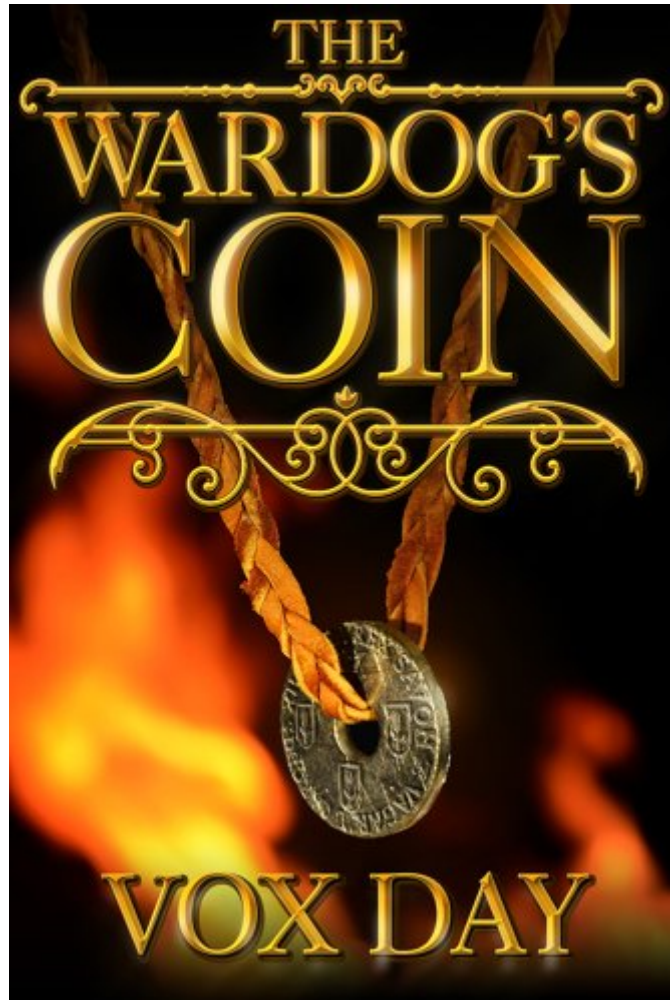


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The Wardog's Coin



Synopsis

The Wardog's Coin consists of two stories set in the epic fantasy world of A Throne of Bones. The title story is about a human mercenary company which finds itself in the employ of an elf king. Outnumbered and under attack from an army of orcs and goblins, the Company discovers it is no longer fighting for pay, but for survival. The second story, Qalabi Dawn, features a young tribal chieftain, Shabaka No-Tail, who seeks to find a way to unite the fractious tribes of The People before the implacable legions of the Dead God invade the desert to carry out their crusade of total extermination.

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Customer Reviews

Having read Summa Elvetica, A Magic Broken, and A Throne of Bones, I had been waiting expectantly for the next opportunity to re-enter the world of Selenoth, where Roman legions march through Orc-infested wilderness and the Holy Church sends theological delegations to the Elven lords. My (im)patience was amply rewarded by The Wardog's Coin, which contains two very different tales, each with a unique perspective into that world; windows through which we have not yet

peered. The first tale allows us a taste of battle through experienced and not-quite-hapless eyes. Vox is a master of the front line narrative, where tactics and strategy are funneled through the vicissitudes of chance and combat, and the best-laid plans can only rely on the judgment, morale, and sinews of those who carry them out. Without giving too much away, if you are interested in the fighting styles and tactics of more than one race of Selenoth, you will enjoy the juicy bits provided here. The second tale shifts territory literally and metaphorically, showing the might and reputation of Amorr's legions from a new outside perspective. Selenoth readers will not want to miss this brief but compelling tale which raises intriguing questions and possibilities pertaining to unstable developing situations within A Throne of Bones which suggest the next full novel may reveal some very interesting developments indeed. Though this installment in the series provides fresh and intriguing angles on what will (mostly, aha) be familiar to readers already well-versed in the world and races of Selenoth, as with A Magic Broken this book can stand alone as an introduction to that world as well.

I first entered the realm of Selenoth via A Magic Broken when it first came out. I quickly opted to purchase the two much longer volumes that are set in this world and thoroughly enjoyed them both. For that reason, I was quite eager to dive into more stories from that world. When the opportunity was given to get a review copy in advance was presented, I was happy to volunteer to both read and review The Wardog's Coin. Here is my review of the two stories. Vox has done a good job of adding depth to the overall world by introducing two story lines set in different places and different races as well. Both stories have some common themes and are heavily tactical at times. Either story stands on its own with little or no need for prior knowledge of other stories from this family of tales. I will say that the first story was much more engaging from the outset than the second one. Vox's way of telling the story without an "omniscient narrator" perspective makes for interesting speculation along the way and a more engrossing story in my opinion. The narrative perspective for the first story is provided by a sergent and thus leans toward some cruder expression and descriptions at times. This is part of Vox's style to remain true to the character telling the story and readers who are not familiar with his other works in this world might be taken off guard by the more gritty descriptions and language. The overall effect however is quite good and the story moves well and keeps your attention. I read it from start to finish in one setting. I found the second story a little more difficult to catch on with at first. Once I was able to get my bearings in the story as it were, I enjoyed it as well.

I'm a frequent reader of Vox Day's blog and political/economic writings, but I hadn't looked into his fantasy novels until now because I'm not a big fan of sci-fi and speculative fiction. While I won't

claim that the Wardog's Coin blew me away, it's worth a look even if you don't typically read fantasy novels. The book consists of two short stories: "The Wardog's Coin" and "Qalabi Dawn." The former concerns a human mercenary company that is hired by an elf king to fight against orcs; the latter is about a race of anthropomorphic cat-people resisting a human invasion into their homeland. Vox Day succeeds where most fantasy writers fail because he is an astute student of history, his writing informed by real-world events, peoples and nations. For example, the invading human empire depicted in "Qalabi Dawn" is clearly modeled on the Roman Empire. The Wardog's Coin is also well-done from a technical standpoint; Vox's depictions of battle and war are as realistic and believable as they get. Given that most fantasy writers are bespectacled dorks who've never thrown a punch in their lives, this is no small detail. He also excels at dialect writing, portraying the uneducated but smart mercenary captain protagonist of "The Wardog's Coin" in a subtle, intelligent manner. My biggest issue with The Wardog's Coin is the same problem that infects almost all post-Tolkien fantasy writing: an emphasis on world-building over character development. This is not as big a deal in Vox's writing--a big part of the reason why I liked it--but there's still enough of it, particularly in "Qalabi Dawn," to annoy me.

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