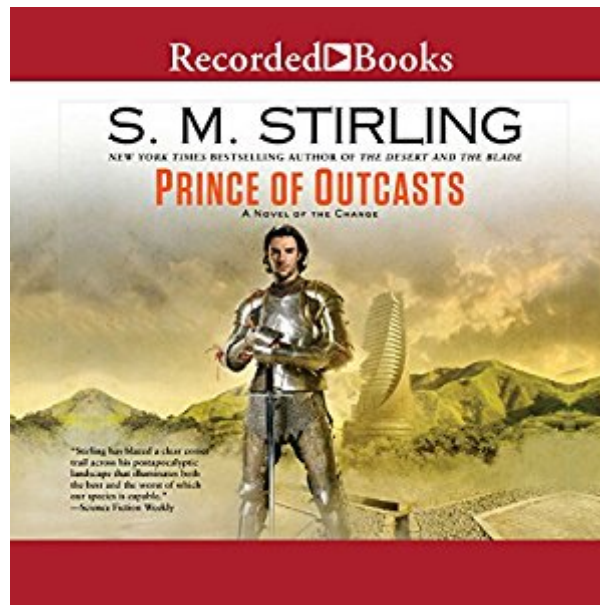


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Prince Of Outcasts: A Novel Of The Change



Synopsis

John Armingher Mackenzie wanted to be a troubadour, but fate made him the son of the king of Montival. His sister Princess Orlaith will deservedly inherit the throne of the High Kings, and it will only pass unto him in the event of her death, leaving the young prince on an unknown path to discover his true role in the family. The opportunity to prove his mettle comes when John's ship, the Tarshish Queen, is caught in the fierce storm raised against the enemies of the alliance. When the clouds recede and the skies clear, John and his crew find themselves on the other side of the Pacific, in the island chains of the Ceram Sea, fighting to survive against vicious pirates and monstrous creatures of the deep, meeting new allies and mysterious enemies of this world and another. Now, Prince John must seize his birthright and lead his people in battle against the darkest forces man and nature can conjure against them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stirling takes the long Changeverse series in a new direction with the oceanic adventures of Prince John. This is a VERY good entry novel for people who have not read the series from the beginning as it takes several secondary characters to a whole new geographic and mystical area to start an adventure that is not directly and immediately linked to the story of the Kingdom and dynasty. It's a rollicking adventure in the style of Mutiny on the Bounty only with high magicks, monsters and zestful young royalty. Without the uber Sword or his sister's giant fates, John is just a talented young royal coming of age in a world much wider and wilder than anything he ever

imagined. How and how much he copes with battle, near death encounters and two high octane designing females makes it a growing up adventure you will love.

This is not as good as a five-star standalone novel. Series novels are different. It also isn't a good entry-point into the series. At a minimum, read *The Golden Princess* and *The Desert and the Blade* first. For an even better appreciation of the societies that have grown up in the Embervers and how they became what they are, start with *Dies the Fire* and read them all. It will be worth it. Stirling's use of the language is stunning and he sprinkles the text with quotes from song lyrics and poems by others that are thrilling, at least to me. Also, at one point one of the characters is reading and enjoying *The Broken Sword* which is one of the best fantasy novels ever. Since Mr. Stirling leaves finding the author's name an exercise for the reader, I will respect his wishes. It ends with a cliffhanger. If the author were not reliably getting these books out every September, it would have cost him at least a star on this review.

S.M. Stirling continues to blend elements from classical adventure books (ranging from Jules Verne and Emilio Salgari to Robert E. Howard) with a richly-detailed setting, two generations after the Change that erased modern technology and forced the survivors to adopt old ways (and develop new ways) to deal with the new realities. After several books focusing mainly on North America (and glimpses of Europe), this latest series touches on the situation in Asia and Oceania. We have characters from a Japan beset by the demon-worshiping descendants of North Korea's dictatorship, a hilarious Australian kingdom ruled by (in our reality) science fiction author John Birmingham and an island city-state with positively Lovecraftian and darkest horror elements. I read the book in two sittings and greatly enjoyed it.

Having read all the Embervers as they came out...Stirling should have left it two books ago. His latest is literally comprised of 35-40% of excruciating detail about construction materials, clothing and meal details rivaling an Iron Chef episode. As for the plot itself...without the endless padding, MAYBE, 150 pages tops. Get an editor for God's sake. What was great is now merely mediocre...at best. And the Clockwork Orange fighting gear in a frontal assault thru sheets of arrows???? The less said the better...and written. Just asinine silliness squared.

S.M. Stirling is one of my favorite authors. I have bought everything he has ever written -- even some of the forgettable stuff. I've given it to friends. I've waxed rhapsodic about his characters, his

pacing, his ability to inject subjects seamlessly into the flow of a book -- military history, homages to Kipling and O'Brien, poetry (generally less successfully), food, terrain. (Want to know how a modern day Kipling would write about an alternative history of the Raj? Peshawar Lancers is for you.).

Above all his books are fun; the pleasure of action mixed with some of the deeper delights of real literature. The guy is just good. And the first 6 novels of The Change were superb -- run do not walk to buy them. So it pains me deeply to say this: The Desert and the Blade and the Prince of Outcasts are not up to his normal level of quality. Good news: The Prince of Outcasts is better than its immediate predecessor. John is an engaging character, the Stirling talent for literate action was not lost entirely. Several scenes are gems. Bad news: the completely incoherent portrayal of this generation with the last generation of characters -- the people who presumably got you interested enough to read this book -- continues. (One fears it is because this new generation is 2 dimensional and would suffer in the contrast.). Remember how every writing class tells you "show not tell?" Well, this is all tell not show. The book sets up a complex situation between Orlaith and her mother, personal conflict meets power politics, classic Stirling stuff, and then delivers (literally) a payoff that amounts to "it was complicated. But they loved each other. But it was complicated. And having the sword meant really knowing what the other one thought. Which was complicated." Ok, thanks for letting me know. In other news, I hear War and Peace is about Russia. Other bad news, this is half a book's content strung out into a full book. You get the feeling that the writer is killing time and words because of a contractual requirement with his publisher to get you to buy another 3 books. Large amounts of the book are about as engaging as planning for a summer holiday. Yes, we get it, Orlaith and the rest are going to go somewhere and it will be exciting and dangerous and important. Can we talk about that some more? Maybe hold a ceremony or two? Develop a new love interest, but not actually do anything about it? The plot line with John is actually really good -- let's stick to that. The imports from other authors (John Birmingham and Burgess's Clockwork Orange) have a freshness that Stirling's own characters do not. And, until the book ends with a ridiculously annoying and campy cliffhanger, I was feeling the old Stirling thrill. I could go on, but it would involve plot spoilers. Bottom line: a brilliant, genuinely brilliant author. A once fabulous series that seems like it is trudging along more to harvest those who just have to buy one more darn volume, even though the author has lost some interest. This book definitely marks an uptick -- it is better than the one before and there are great moments. It probably deserves 3.5 stars as a free standing book. Is that enough to warrant you buying it? Reasonable minds will differ. But Stirling can write great stuff. Maybe he will start doing so again. Love the guy. Hate what he did to the series.

At several times during this series I have been happy to be at the ending. Then happily surprised at the continuance with new characters and old. This book continues, leaving Westria at length and involving the world in its continuing struggle to heal and adapt to the change. The tale is consistent in the resulting cacophony of social structures and interplays of human attempts to survive and overcome challenges. I especially enjoy the frank treatment of the range of inter relations.

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