



Always Forever

Mark Chadbourn

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The ancient gods of Celtic mythology have returned, and all that stands between them and complete domination are five flawed mortals

The Eternal Conflict between the Light and Dark once again blackens the skies and blights the land. On one side stand the Tuatha de Danaan, golden-skinned and beautiful, filled with all the might of angels. On the other are the Fomorii, monstrous devils hell-bent on destroying all human existence.

And in the middle are the Brothers and Sisters of Dragons, determined to use the strange power that binds them to the land in a last, desperate attempt to save the human race.

Church, Ruth, Ryan, Laura and Shavi have joined forces with Tom, a hero from the mists of time, to wage a guerrilla war against the iron rule of the gods. ALWAYS FOREVER is the stunning conclusion of a powerful fantasy saga by one of Britain's most acclaimed young writers.

Always Forever Details

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Author : Mark Chadbourn

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Briton says

Ah, a good finishing book to the series of the Age of Misrule. Perfect of wrapping up everything, explaining most of everything, but leaving it off where you can only imagine what happens afterwards. In fact, Mark ends the book in a way where he could begin another new series. I will be looking and waiting to see if he does.

Flora says

Wow! I didn't find this (or any of this trilogy) a quick or easy read but I did enjoy it. It kind of reminds me of those epic hero tales of old by which the reader experiences a shift towards their own personal journey to enlightenment by reading the tale....

Joel Flank says

A satisfying conclusion to the age of misrule series, all loose ends are addressed, and an opening is left for the follow up. Along the way, the chosen Brothers and Sisters of Dragons have one last desperate chance to save the world for destruction as they deal with two sets of mythological powers, both of which would rather see humanity killed or oppressed. Throughout their journey, they deal with the metaphysics of what's real or illusion, morality, and fate vs. free will.

Laura Jackson says

I did find it a bit difficult to find a good pace with this installment. As much as I know Church and Ruth are imperative to the story, I much preferred reading about the other characters and a good portion of this book is mainly focused on those two. However, once I reached about half way, the book really started to pick up and I was able to enjoy it a lot more. Thankfully Chadbourn has written other series connected to this universe as there is still a lot that can be explored. The character development is probably my favourite part of this book. Each of the Five have come to terms with what they need to do and it's fascinating to see how each of them react to the events around them. All in all, a good ending to a series.

Todd says

Maybe 3.5 stars for this, the concluding volume of the "Age of Misrule" trilogy. The strengths and weaknesses of the first two books are mostly on display here again, although I did feel this was the best of the three. In a way it seemed like Chadbourn was really just finding his voice as the trilogy wrapped up.

Nicole Acheson says

I loved reading this book. The only thing about this book that I really did not like was that some of the Gods were killed off. Gods are immortal and cannot die no matter what happens to them. I am not completely sure whether or not I liked how the story ended.

David says

The third book, it fulfills the need for closure and answers many questions, and leaves so many open. It's very serious, I so need another Chuck Palaniuk read, or a Vonnegut, or a Phil Dick. Recommendations welcome, thanks!

Two thumbs up!
Bye all.

Bobby Corry says

This book had me pulling my hair out. The longer the series went the more stupid the characters became. It was like a bad horror movie when you yell out "Don't open the door fool!" Also there was such a push to save the world yet towards the end they kept finding other thing to do before saving the world. I kept yelling "Save the world first then go back and do the other things to get your life in order." I would hate to be in that universe if the world ended just because the main character decided to do something for his lover before saving the world. Each book in the series got worse but all together they were a good read.

Christopher Bashforth says

Better than book 2 but still not enough end of the world content for me. The worst part is where one of the main characters goes to heaven and finds Jim Morrison who talks to him about the meaning of life. The best part is the journey through London for the end of the world battle. Would I read this again? Probably not!

Stef says

The last book in this first trilogy. Finally! I have to say that this series has really drained me. Admittedly this final book was much better than the first and second, but it is an emotional rollercoaster for all involved. All five of our main characters go through remarkable changes in character, often due to some terrible trauma, and appear transformed on the other side. There is a lot of Christian imagery in this book, not that this is a surprise as a lot of the folk-lore revolves around Christian interpretations of Celtic mythology. Church is without a doubt a Jesus figure, and for that matter so are Shavi and Laura, although Chadbourne sort of breaks the fourth wall by making his characters aware of this by starting the "Revived from the Dead Club". Even Veitch and Ruth fit into this club in more subtle ways.

The book spends so much time gaining approval from the Tuatha de Danaan and churning slowly towards

battle with the Formoii that the final battle seems rushed. The readers follow Shavi and Laura, Ruth and Veitch, Church, Tom and the Bone Collector as little separate stories while they are penetrating the forces around London. Surprisingly, they all get ambushed! Why am I telling you if its a surprise? Because it's not really a surprise at all. It was a bit like watching a Scooby Doo episode: "Let's split up, gang!" No, don't split up, splitting up is always a terrible idea. But as you expect mostly things go the way of the victors with a lot of bodies piling up around them until the end. Having read Jack of Ravens first, the ending is sort of anti-climatic. Not in the way that I knew what was going to happen, cause I didn't, but because I know there's more to come and everything they achieved in this series is almost completely destroyed. Where the characters were optimistic, I was like, "Enjoy it while it lasts, tomorrow you'll be doing it all over again."

There was one shining random moment in the book that I thoroughly enjoyed. Veitch holds up a cup with a dragon etched onto it and asks Church a question. His response is "isn't that the one with the pellet with the poison?" After which Shavi chimes in with, "No, that's in the chalice from the palace, this one has the brew that is true." If you don't know what I'm talking about or think I'm too young to understand this witty banter, go out and rent Danny Kaye's *The Court Jester*. This hilarious scene is only part of the ensuing hilarity that is appealing to more people than just those my parent's age.

Stefan says

World's End is the first book in British fantasy author's Mark Chadbourn AGE OF MISRULE trilogy. The novel was originally released in the UK in 1999, and has been re-released in the US by Pyr in 2009.

World's End can probably best be categorized as dark contemporary fantasy. The setting is England, in more or less the present day. Jack Churchill ("Church") lives in London and is trying to cope with the apparent suicide of his girlfriend Marianne. Returning home one night, he has a terrifying encounter under a bridge with a giant whose face seems to melt and change before his eyes. Ruth Gallagher, a lawyer, is also a witness. Both of them pass out, unable to deal with this terrifying vision, but in the next few days, they are drawn together to find out more about what happened.

Soon it becomes clear that life as we know it is changing: technology is starting to fail, creatures of myth and legend are returning to the world, and all the rules we rely on are changing. Church and Ruth embark on a journey to retrieve four magical items that may represent humanity's last hope at the end of the Age of Reason and the start of the Age of Misrule.

What I enjoyed most about *World's End* is its effective way of mixing regular life in the UK with the encroaching mythological elements. The protagonists travel across the country, staying in hotels, bed and breakfasts, or even their van, giving realistic descriptions of New Age tourism destinations like Stonehenge or Tintagel — while at the same time the country is falling apart because a dragon firebombs a highway or the Wild Hunt tears across the sky. Someone could probably retrace the characters' steps as a travel guide to major Celtic monuments and relics (though hopefully encountering less interference from various mythological monsters).

Another positive for me were the interactions between the main characters, who spend a lot of time bickering realistically and learning from each other. It's nothing new, but still refreshing to read a story in which a few of the main characters just simply don't like each other, while others slowly find common bonds. Some of the characters start out a bit flat, but they experience real growth throughout the novel and best of all, by the end of the novel I felt like I knew most of them.

It's also interesting that *World's End* can be appreciated on several levels. On the one hand, the novel can

simply be read as an entertaining, action-packed contemporary fantasy, but at the same time Mark Chadbourn displays an obviously deep knowledge of mythology, tying together myths on a more fundamental level and, especially in the later stages, giving this novel an additional layer of depth and a broader scope than you'd initially expect.

Maybe a minor point, but one I really appreciated: from the very beginning, the more-or-less normal people who become the heroes of this story find it hard to deal with the surreal and terrifying creatures they encounter. Even in the first scene, both Church and Ruth faint when confronted with the terrifying giant, and later on, spells are used to inoculate them and others against the terrifying visions. It's refreshing to read a novel in which the heroes don't emit a Keanu Reeves-like "whoa" when seeing something impossible, and then just move on.

Some negative points: I found some of the plot twists obvious to the point of transparency, while others were simply too predictable, especially towards the end of the novel. The story occasionally speeds up to the point where it reads like the script for an action movie, but on the plus side, at least it's a movie I'd want to see — especially if the special effects look anything like the gorgeous and somewhat terrifying cover illustration by John Picacio, which has the distinction of being the first cover to actually show up in one of my nightmares.

All in all, I felt that the positives outweighed the novel's few problems, because *World's End* served up enough excitement, mythological depth, and interesting characters to keep me reading to the end. I'm usually not a big reader of contemporary fantasy or dark fantasy, but I definitely look forward to reading the next book in the series, *Darkest Hour*.

(This review was also published over at Fantasy Literature - www.fantasyliterature.com)

Nate says

Not bad, though like the others in this series, it's a bit bland in its writing style. And using 'the creatures were too beautiful/hideous to describe' only works for so long. But still, if you like the idea of old Celtic gods and monsters coming back, and ending civilization as we know it, give this series a try.

Rob says

...Like in the first two books Chadbourn sets a brisk pace, in their race against time the Brothers and Sisters of Dragons can't really afford to lose any time. Being harassed by the Formorii every step of the way makes for plenty of action scenes. He also adds quite a bit to his already large set of mythical creatures and gods. If you enjoyed his approach in the first two books then *Always Forever* is going to be a fitting conclusion to the trilogy. I think the writing in the final part of the novel felt a bit rushed but it did suit the atmosphere of the book...

Full Random Comments review

Donna says

ALWAYS FOREVER redeemed AGE OF MISRULE in my eyes, making me love the series all over again

by the time I was done with it. By the time this particular section of the story starts everyone's come to grips with where they need to be in all of this and what their roles are. Of course there was still some introspection and pondering meanings and all of that but the plot took its hold back and gave me a damn good story to latch on to and keep reading until the very end.

The only thing that really annoyed me was how long it took me to read. The font is smaller than normal and the margins are smaller. I ended up timing myself and I was averaging about 18 minutes per 10 pages. I normally read between 50 and 120 pages per hour depending on the same formatting and general interest in the book. So to only being able to read little more than 30 pages an hour but still really liking what I was reading really chapped my ass. That's on me but it rubbed me the wrong way about the book. And they are all like this, despite how much I liked this one and book 1. They're just slow, dense reads. But when I like them, damn I like them.

Because everyone's finally come to terms with their places in the greater game of humanity everyone's finally come into their characters and I got to see who they really were. Church effectively became a broken messiah, becoming the spearhead of the fight. He did it because it was his destiny. There was a little bucking and fighting but he finally came to trust it all and it always played out in the end. Ruth finally embraced her powers and became the powerful nature warrior she was tasked with being. It wasn't without its consequences but she grabbed that power by the balls and made it her bitch. Shavi showed the least change, only because he accepted his path long before the others. Veitch teetered on acceptance and completely breaking down. His emotions swung wildly in ALWAYS FOREVER and he was the character that became the most unstable as the story went on. He seemed to fight back against what was happening while at the same time being accepting of it. Tom . . . Tom finally let the human in him show and it was heartbreaking. As for Laura, she finally got over her crap. And oh my god what a wonderful character she became. Seriously. She really is an awesome, snarky, strong character when she isn't being an abhorrent bitch. That piece of herself she left behind in book 2 and good riddance I say to that.

If you actually thought any character was lost at the end of book 2 then you weren't paying attention and therefore I don't care if I just spoiled things for you. Wake up. It has to be the five Brothers and Sisters of Dragons for them to have any chance of saving the world. Get on board the Duh train here, okay?

I wish a little more time was spent with the fairies once the greater scheme was revealed (and I won't spoil this one, I'm not ALL black heart). There was a lot of fairy interaction up until that point and then it just became little more than passing mentions so when the conflict came to being resolved it was rather anticlimactic in regard to that subplot. It just felt rather 'meh, done, move on' to me. I hope there's more of them in the companion novels (at least they look like companion novels and not technical sequels). There's a war going on there between the two fairy factions and I want more of it. I'm greedy. What can I say?

The darkness was actually kept to a minimum in this book, and rightly so. Time to end it all, right? Enough of the torture and pain and suffering and time to send the bastards back to hell, as Veitch would say. There was a real sense of accomplishment and hope in this book that the other two didn't have, for obvious reasons. It had its moments but the overwhelming feeling was positive. Even though the ending wasn't entirely upbeat, there was near-total resolution and a sense of calm over the land at last. And it wasn't just the ending; it was the entire story. A now or never feeling. Shit or get off the pot, if you will. It had a very different feel from the other books but one that I could appreciate. The foreboding was gone. Most of the apprehension was gone. It's just do or die and now lets get this over with.

ALWAYS FOREVER was a great, if not sad, ending to this trilogy. Everyone finally settled into being themselves and the world stopped being so dark. Finally the lights started coming back on. Despite my slowness in reading these books, I do look forward to the companion stories because Chadbourn left this book off in a rather interesting place. It plays with time travel which I have an inherent issue with because, really, no matter how it's described it'll always be nonsensical. But I liked the peek it gave me and I hope to

have a full look at it eventually.

4

Phil Leader says

All technology is all but dead and the ancient powers stalk the land. With civilization in ruins only the Brothers and Sisters of Dragons can stop the world sliding into chaos. But they are broken, a spent force after the many trials they have endured. All may be lost after all.

Carrying on the tone of the first two books of the trilogy this is a dark and edgy read, often difficult as the protagonists are pushed to breaking point and beyond. Chadbourn's writing is very evocative and descriptive of the locations and the characters - perhaps because they have every flaw exposed - seem very human.

The ending makes the trilogy worthwhile, but to an extent maybe this is half a book too far; some plot elements become a little repetitive as do the threat from the creatures of legend that are hunting for the heroes. Ultimately the story just about justifies this and it definitely doesn't let down the series but maybe there's just a bit of faerie fatigue.

If you like your fantasy dark and your heroes really put through the wringer this series will appeal but it is not for the faint hearted.
