



Sworn in Steel

Douglas Hulick

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DANGEROUS DAYS

It's been three months since Drothe killed a legend, burned down a portion of the imperial capital, and found himself unexpectedly elevated into the ranks of the criminal elite. As the newest Gray Prince in the underworld, he's not only gained friends, but also rivals—and some of them aren't bothered by his newfound title. A prince's blood, as the saying goes, flows just as red as a beggar's.

So when another Gray Prince is murdered and all signs point to Drothe as the hand behind the knife, he knows it's his blood that's in danger of being spilled. As former allies turn their backs and dark rumors begin to circulate, Drothe is approached by a man who says he can make everything right again. All he wants in exchange is a single favor.

Now Drothe finds himself traveling to the Despotate of Djan, the empire's long-standing enemy, to search for the friend he betrayed—and the only person who can get him out of this mess. But the grains of sand are running out fast, and even if Drothe can find his friend, he may not be able to persuade him to help in time...

Sworn in Steel Details

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Author : Douglas Hulick

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From Reader Review Sworn in Steel for online ebook

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosantum.blogspot.com/201...>

At last, Sworn in Steel is in my hands and the days of wondering when this book will be released have finally come to an end. And it was absolutely worth the wait! Three years ago, at a time when I was just starting to get back into the Fantasy genre, I decided to pick up a debut novel from a fresh new talent and really enjoyed his fun little yarn about a gang of thieves and scoundrels. With this book Douglas Hulick shows he has come a long way since *Among Thieves*, with a sequel that is even bigger, better and packed with more fun than the original.

How is that possible, you ask? I mean, in the first novel, the main character Drothe managed to kill a legend, rise to the top of the underworld to become the newest Gray Prince, and burned down a good portion of the imperial capital while he was at it. How on earth do you top that?

Well, if you've met Drothe, then you would know he's always up for a challenge. Even if it's just to outdo himself. "In way over your head" isn't even in his vocabulary; I seriously love this guy. Three months into his tenure of criminal overlord with barely a following to his name, Drothe is already the target of the other Gray Princes and has been framed for the murder of one of them. Someone obviously wants his attention. So Drothe finds himself traveling to the faraway land of Djan, where Imperials like him are less than welcome, all to find an old friend and seek redemption for the oaths he has broken. And who says thieves have no honor?

Drothe ends up doing quite a number on the Despotate of Djan. But Djan ends up doing quite a number on Drothe too. I've said this before with *Among Thieves* but I think it deserves saying again with *Sworn in Steel*: Douglas Hulick takes the idea of "something interesting must happen in every chapter" and takes that to the max. Drothe's life is a hectic roller coaster ride that simply does not stop, and the safety restraints are for suckers. Perhaps because of this, these novels put me in mind of the urban fantasy tone and writing style, despite their traditional high fantasy setting. If Drothe and Harry Dresden have one thing in common it's that neither of them gets anywhere near enough sleep.

Again, there will be twists and surprises aplenty, but I find the storytelling is a lot more refined and streamlined in *Sworn in Steel*. There was one ambitious plot twist in the first book that didn't particularly work for me (though, it was one of those classic "Oh Drothe you sneaky, glorious bastard you" moments) but there was none of that awkwardness here. All the different pieces of the plot came together beautifully, and I'm treated to a new world with new characters and new agendas, all of which made the mystery and intrigue in this book so delightfully compelling. I loved being introduced to the culture, peoples, and magic of Djan, and seeing Drothe out of his comfort zone and frantically coming up with his crazy schemes to regain the upper hand was just the cherry on top. There's also an assassin character making their first appearance in this that I would be very excited to see again! All in all, the book has done a stellar job expanding the world and the characters we know in the *Tales of the Kin*. Like I said: bigger and better.

Ask yourself, do you enjoy your fantasy with some kick? Do you like rich, twisty plots that always keep you guessing? Do you feel you need more scoundrels in your life? If you answer yes to these then you should definitely check these books out.

Victor says

From the author's site

"This just in: SWORN IN STEEL is slated for a U.S. release date of May, 2014."

Chelsea says

Come oooooonnnnnnn

Yesssssss now I have it

Mario says

Great follow up to Among Thieves, taking Drothe's adventures to a greater level. The Nose is now a Grey Prince and this book is accordingly bigger in every sense, with a greater scope and detail to the world. There's a spectacular expansion of the lore, from the side of the Kin, to the Deagans, and the various schools of magic.

As for the shenanigans surrounding our intrepid hero(?), the book actually begins with all kinds of headaches already befalling him and the story and intrigue move on at a fast clip, taking us across the desert to the Despotate of Djan, with faces both familiar and new, more intrigue, magic, schemes, revelations, and then some more intrigue.

You'll find yourself at some point unable or unwilling to put the book down as the story ramps up. A great read, a magnificent sophomore effort, and the pain of no third book available.

OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/sw...>

Brought to you by OBS reviewer Heidi

Beware of possible Spoilers

sworn-in-steel-~~tales-of-the-kin-douglas-hulick~~The long awaited second novel of the Tales of the Kin series, Sworn in Steel ...

It's been three months since the end of Among Thieves (at least in the world of the characters) and Drothe is struggling with his rise to power as a Gray Prince. He's used to running the streets so having an organization to command below him is strange for our new prince. Not to mention he is still plagued with guilt on how he betrayed his former best friend, Degan.

Another Gray Prince has been murdered and all signs point to Drothe as the culprit. And, when he realizes the rumors of him dusting Crook Eye started before the prince was even murdered makes it clear that Drothe is being set up.

Silver Degan makes it clear that he's the one behind Crook Eye's demise and that more princes will wind up dead at Drothe's door if he doesn't do exactly what he wants; find Degan so that together Silver and he can go before the Order of the Degans and fix the fracture that has occurred and also possibly restore Degan's status in the process. Drothe doesn't like being manipulated by anyone, but agrees after what he's done to Degan that he must do this for his friend, to give him a chance to get his life back, even if Degan doesn't realize how bad he wants it for himself.

So Drothe, Silver, Fowler, and an acting troupe Drothe has picked up along the way head to the city of Djan to try to find Degan and convince him to come back to Ildrecca to set things right. But once in Djan, Drothe quickly realizes that things aren't what they seem and there is much more afoot here. He must dodge his way through assassins, politics, lies and even friendship to get to the bottom of things and to determine the correct path for all involved.

I was excited to see this book was finally being released. I read the first installment, *Among Thieves* back in 2012, and really enjoyed Drothe. He reminded me a lot of Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, in the sense that he was a bad guy you just couldn't help, but love! So, I was excited to see what author, Douglas Hulick, and Drothe himself had in store for us this time around!

But sadly this book was plagued with obstacles for me. First and foremost was the fact that it had been around two years since I read the first book so I felt a bit lost trying to catch up with what was going on in Drothe's life. I wasn't sure if I was forgetting things that happened in the first book, or if the things going on at the beginning of the book, were just occurrences that happened between novels. I think it may have been a combination of the two, and it just seemed as if I had a lot of catching up to do.

But I think my biggest complaint with this book was the fact that I felt the author really needed to 'cut the fat' in this installment. I got so bored with Drothe's day to day dealings in Djan as he was looking for Degan, and making his trips to see Heron. Yes, I admit there were some things important to the story, but there was even more that wasn't that could easily have been cut out to make the storyline more streamlined and flow easier. I struggled to keep reading this book because I just found myself disinterested in it. I also was able to figure out the revelations such as Ivory Degan long before Drothe figured them out, there were just too many clues hidden in all that mediocrity of his days on the streets of Djan to truly be surprised.

There was some humor in this book, but not nearly as much as there was in the previous installment. I've come to expect Drothe's sharp wit and tongue. There were some great lines, but I'd like to have seen more.

"You talk; I'll sleep. feel free to make up my side of the conversation in case you get bored. I recommend throwing in the occasional 'fuck you' on my behalf, just to keep things true to life."

I really hope that these issues are fixed in the next book so we get a more enjoyable easy to read story. I also hope there isn't such a long time between installments so I can remember all the things that happened! I do enjoy Drothe, but am looking for a stellar third installment that can make up for this outing. This series could go in many different directions after the way this one ended, so I'm curious to see what happens next. But please no more idle day to day drab that has no bearing on the story! I want to go back to the enjoyment I had in book one!

Anya says

Sworn in Steel by Douglas Hulick is the second book in *Tales of the Kin* and continues Drothe's adventures thieving and scheming, but this time in a new locale! If you haven't read *Among Thieves*, there will be some

spoilers below, but be sure to skip to the end and enter to win a copy of Sworn in Steel from Penguin! If you have read Among Thieves, you are in for a treat since Sworn in Steel continues not too long after the end of Among Thieves and pulls our favorite master swordsman back into the mix soon enough ;-).

Note: I received Sworn in Steel from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Some things may have changed in the final version.

This book has adult content.

Sworn in Steel by Douglas Hulick (Tales of the Kin #2)

Published by Roc on May 6th, 2014

Genres: Adult, Fantasy

How I got my copy: Publisher

It's been three months since Drothe killed a legend, burned down a portion of the imperial capital, and unexpectedly elevated himself into the ranks of the criminal elite. Now, as the newest Gray Prince in the underworld, he's learning just how good he used to have it.

With barely the beginnings of an organization to his name, Drothe is already being called out by other Gray Princes. And to make matters worse, when one dies, all signs point to Drothe as wielding the knife. As members of the Kin begin choosing sides – mostly against him – for what looks to be another impending war, Drothe is approached by a man who not only has the solution to Drothe's most pressing problem, but an offer of redemption. The only problem is the offer isn't for him.

Now Drothe finds himself on the way to the Despotate of Djan, the empire's long-standing enemy, with an offer to make and a price on his head. And the grains of sand in the hour glass are running out, fast...

Strengths:

Remember how Among Thieves had all those amazing plot twists? I thought I was prepared for Sworn in Steel, but omg there are even more awesome plot twists! You'd think that I would be more likely to see things coming since now I know how crafty Hulick is, but I was still completely surprised and so so happy about it.

One of the shortcomings I found with Among Thieves was that it didn't have much humor (which I for some reason expect with thieving shenanigans), but Sworn in Steel completely turned that around. I was chuckling quite often while reading Sworn in Steel, making me quite excited for the series' potential as a whole :D. Degan! So lots of tough stuff happens at the end of Among Thieves, yes? But really, what is the first thing that Drothe kind of has to do once things settle down? Go after Degan obviously! Without any spoilers, I'm just saying that Degan is awesome and we get to find out so much about the degan order too!

Sworn in Steel brings us to a new city as Drothe tries to figure things out: Djan! After hearing so much about djanese magic in Among Thieves, it was awesome to see how another major city in the world of the Kin operates and let me tell you that it is waaaaay different than the Empire.

It's been a while since Among Thieves came out, but you shouldn't worry too much about needing to remember details. Sworn in Steel includes lots of reminders about the important things that happened so you'll be all set to just jump into Sworn in Steel.

I feel like secondary characters really flesh out a book and Sworn in Steel has the advantage of adding several new characters as well as getting to know some of previous book's secondary characters better. I'm especially excited since it looks like my favorite secondary character (besides Degan obviously) is going to be sticking around for the third book!

I love it when multiple different plot lines weave beautifully together, especially when Drothe is the one doing the weaving :D. Clever MCs might be my favorite thing >.>.

Weaknesses:

As I said above, Sworn in Steel makes sure to include lots of reminders if it has been a while since you read book one. However, this got to be a bit inelegant and info-dumpy at times. Once we hit two solid pages of rehashing what happened previously, that's probably a bad sign.

Sworn in Steel seemed a bit confused about where it wanted the plot to start, since it starts soon after Among Thieves, but then we go through a couple of time jumps without much exposition on what happened during that time. One of the jumps was a freaking month long! There was also then the odd habit of explaining in hindsight what happened during that jump, but in a very "report of what happened" way instead of storytelling.

Sworn in Steel has a rather slow start once you combine the info dumps about the previous book and the awkward way the timeline was handled. My advice though is to push through because it is worth it in the end!

Summary:

Sworn in Steel is an excellent sequel to Among Thieves and was definitely worth the wait. The intricacies of the plot lines, the depth of the relationships, and the level of consequences all top Among Thieves and Drothe somehow lives up to all his responsibilities. You'll love seeing old friends and new faces along with a new pocket of the world. While the start is a bit slow, it definitely picks up and you might just find yourself up at 2am determined to finish (not that I have any personal experience with this at all >.>).

Arushi says

Sworn in Steel starts off three months after Drothe became a Gray Prince. Three months of power struggle, of gaining a reputation and three months without Bronze Degan. But that is not his immediate problem, his problem is that another Gray Prince is dead and as far as the street is concerned, Drothe is to blame.

So starts a trip to Djan, to find Bronze Degan so that Drothe may clear his name, and maybe, just maybe, repay the debt that he owes Bronze.

Drothe is again his resourceful and yet blundering self. He does figure things out, even at a decent time, but he also makes his fair share of blunders. This book is also about Drothe finding himself, figuring out what he is and what he wants to be. His struggle to realize that he is no longer a Nose, but a Prince now makes him, at times, someone you can empathize with.

The plot is woven well, the setting in El-Quaddice, the capital of Djan, rather than Ildrecca, which we had become familiar with in the previous book. It took for Drothe to leave the false comfort of his reputation to actually realize just where he stands.

I enjoyed learning more about Djan and the Degans. It was good fun to see Drothe weave through the story, through the links that connected almost everything but were nearly invisible. Overall, it's a great book - a perfect mixture of fantasy and crime, plot and characters.

Definitely a book I'd recommend.

Ian Hall says

Very nearly 5* excellent intrigue and twists. I enjoyed how the storyline progressed and how we found out more secrets. I liked the new characters and the last 10% was fantastic.

Jack says

It was almost perfect timing as I went and had refresher on the first novel, (audio) Among thieve's, But holding on to the second (sworn in steel) and not dive right in was well worth the wait as I was fully immersed in the story.

Having just finished I would say 4.5 to 5 star (still trying to figure out my rating system, some books I enjoy and rate 5 stars that really are part fondness for the time when I read them and the book itself)

Douglas Hulick is going to be an author I watch for in the coming years, there were times reading I felt I was watching a movie and time disappeared as I was no longer here but in the created world by this author, One thing I did notice a similar feeling of watching a T.V. series and having to wait a week' for the next showing that ended on a "cliffhanger" until I could return to the novel, fast paced Very likable main character's and a brilliantly thought up new twist on the good ole' swords and sorcery, I feel like I have been here before, sad I need to wait until I can visit again'

Just a really well thought out and humorous story. A rise to a underground criminal organization that even the main character didn't see coming... Nor really wanted ,sometimes you can be a criminal genius mastermind' without using the " genius ... and mastermind part.

Fun Book another series I wish I could read them all in a row, waiting for the third now'

RuthAnn says

Totally worth the wait. Just awesome. Last quarter of the book was nonstop action. Loved it loved it.

Lucinda says

I have waited 3 years for this sequel and I was not disappointed.

I am a true fan of Rogue's Tales. Give me a clever, street-wise thief protagonist and a smart, well-crafted caper and I'm a happy reader. Throw in some memorable non-stereotypical sidekicks, great NOT one-dimensional female characters, and snarky/snappy dialogue and I'm a fan for life.

If you haven't read the first book, Among Thieves, go get it and read it too...Book 1 chronicles the rise of Drothe from "Nose" (information broker) to "Grey Prince" (underworld godfather).

"Sworn in Steel" begins several months after the events of book 1 and deals with how Drothe handles becoming a Grey Prince (not very well) and how he tries to repair the damage done to both his inherited organization and his personal relationships. I purposely did not re-read book 1 prior to reading this book in order to get a feel for how the story would stand on its own merit. Hulick does a very good job of integrating the important information in book 1 into the flow of this book - there are no large blocks of exposition or stilted back-fill dialogue. Everything needed is conveyed in the course of the present story. I think it helps that he has the main cast leave their home city of Ildrecca and travel to the exotic desert city of Djan. This way the minor loose story threads in Ildrecca can just remain "loose" as Drothe focuses on the immediate tasks at hand.

The plot is twisty-turny and I loved trying to figure out who was a player and who was being played. It was really wonderful to arrive at the "A-HA!" moments at the same time Drothe did. There is nothing quite as enjoyable as watching a group of amoral rogues pursuing a prize.

Other things I love about Hulick's books:

The Kin and their Cant. Hulick has successfully recreated a fantasy version of the late-Renaissance criminal underworld. Their linguistic short-hand (their "cant") has a historical basis and Hulick's effortless use of it adds color to Drothe's world. The colors may be the darker hues, and often accented with shades of blood red, but the underworld of Ildrecca is vivid.

Hulick writes GREAT fight sequences; it is easy to visualize the action in a sword fight or knife duel.

Hulick's female characters are intelligent, capable, and just as likely to be lethal as the men. Drothe's sister, Christiana, a former courtesan, now dowager Baroness, is a wonderful foil for Drothe and I really enjoy every encounter between them. Fowler Jess, Drothe's "Oak" (bodyguard), is a perceptive and astute henchman. I like that she gets to not only be right, but also gets to actually say "I told you so" to Drothe. Hulick doesn't seem to have any problem with women being in powerful or important positions. His Kin have female Grey Princes, there are female magic users, actors, assassins, and knights. None of them have to resort to disguising their sex to make it in a man's world nor are they objectified "toys"; they are characters with unique voices and unique motives.

I just hope it doesn't take Him another three years to write book 3...

Steve says

I found this incredibly easy to pick up and difficult to put down. Once I had managed to recall the broad strokes from the previous book, the action very quickly grabbed me and didn't let go. The chapters were a nice length, and it didn't feel like the book was dragging at any point. Unlike the previous book, the climax was rather delicious, and didn't include any overused tropes and managed to include some lovely short sharp shocks. The resolution was a nice touch, and I'm very much wondering if the author will continue this series.

Azuritebright says

Hulick apologized to his readers on his site, and explained the reason for the delay:

"As many (most?) of you have realized by now, "Sworn In Steel", Book 2 in the TotK series, didn't come out on June 5, 2012 as advertised on Amazon (or B&N, or...). Still other sites are listing the release date as being in September 2012, or even as far away as December 2025 (this last one seems to be mainly for ebooks, which either hints at one hell of a delay, or one sloooooow download).

So what's the story?

In a nut shell, I was late handing the book into my publisher. Way late. So late that they took it off the publishing schedule and are only now figuring out where it will fit in. Any date you see on the web is going

to be wrong. Furthermore, at this point, I don't want to even hazard a guess as to the release date, since I don't want to write a check I can't cash.

What I CAN tell you is that book is done, and that I am currently engaged in the first round of revisions. This is going to involve cutting huge swaths of words from the book in hopes of making the final product a leaner, meaner read. (What can I say? I went a little nuts... :) I can't say whether there will be a second round of revisions—neither I nor my editor will know about that until I get the current version beaten into shape. Rest assured, though, that work is being done, and I am making good progress.

All that aside, though, what I really want to do is apologize to all of you. You folks have been more than patient in waiting for word that I've been slow in getting out; and what's more, when some of you have contacted me to ask about the book, you've been unfailingly polite and supportive. That means a lot to me, and it hasn't gone unnoticed, especially in this age of instant gratification. It would have been easy to froth from the other side of a screen, but you all were better than that. You plain rock.

So thank you. And my sincere apologies for the delay, both in terms of Sworn In Steel and in letting you all know what was going on.

And lastly, as you can see I've tweaked the site a bit, and even added a more prominent blog. I'm hoping to post more regularly (okay, let's be honest, I'm hoping to post *at all*) as I work through my revisions. I'm also wanting to do a more serious overhaul of this joint, but that may be a bit further down the line. My time in summer is limited, but I plan to check in at least a couple times a week (and even get the other pages updated at some point...)

Once again, thanks for you patience and your support."

<http://www.douglashulick.com/?p=776>

Rhubarb says

I'll preface this review by stating upfront that the story feels hugely convenient at some points - with events happening for no apparent reason other than to progress the story in a way which suits the protagonist.

However after saying that I really really enjoyed this book and it's a definite improvement on the first book (which I also enjoyed greatly). The main character Drothe is quite unique in a lot of modern fantasy novels in that he's not the unbelievably gifted individual who can completely humiliate all of his adversaries. He struggles through a lot of the encounters in the book, getting outwitted at times but still manages to make the best of bad situations.

I also quite like that the author has stuck with a single narrative voice instead of going for multiple point of views which seems to be all the rage for authors at the moment.

Very much looking forward to the next book in the series, if the improvement continues then it will definitely be a 5 star affair.

Shari Kay says

I'll be the first to admit that I wasn't blown away by the first book in this series. I didn't like Drothe, very much and hadn't really planned to continue with his adventures. But for whatever reason I had this book downloaded on my kindle and 10 hours on a plane to fill. The time flew by!

It's been 3 months since Drothe betrayed Degan by breaking his oath and became a Gray Prince. Jess has returned to guard Drothe's back, though we're not told why she's forgiven him for deceiving her for so long when he was just a Nose. Their friendship appears intact, but nothing else. The sexual part of their previous relationship seems to be over as far as Jess is concerned.

Drothe is a miserable Prince. He's not good at it. In the short time he's held the post, he's been almost killed, betrayed by someone he thought was loyal, set-up for murder and is currently being blackmailed. Another degan needs to find *our* Degan and will stop at nothing to get Drothe to help. Drothe eventually agrees, but with the thought that maybe he can help his friend find his way back into the brotherhood. He's hoping to fix some of the harm he's done and leave the unwanted duty of being a Gray Prince to a failing organization behind him in the process. With that self justification, they are off to the enemy land of the Despot.

There are many machinations going on in this book. So many unknown factors you can't possibly figure anything out. And neither can Drothe. He thinks he's so smart, when really he's mostly just damn lucky. He's like a cat with nine lives, always landing on his feet.

Everyone is playing it close to the vest, everyone is running their own game, and everyone has completely opposing motives for what they are doing. It was delicious! There were times I thought something was too *deus ex machina* and then another revelation would present itself and it all made perfect sense as to how that certain something came to be.

Drothe was basically a piñata and a puppet in Sworn in Steel. I'll admit, I kind of reveled in his pain, he deserved it after everything he pulled in book one. But Hulick managed to change my opinion of Drothe while he was getting the shite beat out of him. He really wants to make things right, or as right as they can be. Though not the most sterling of characters, Drothe does have his own code of honor, bent and twisted as it might be, he goes through a lot to uphold it.

SiS takes place, for the most part, outside Ildrecca and we are introduced to a new character that may be taking on a bigger role in the next book. A role that i'm not sure how I feel about having a deep abiding hatred for love triangles. Though this series is by **no means** a romance, I would not like it if Drothe and Jess didn't somehow end up together in the end. That said, I really liked the direction Hulick went with SiS. The new oath at the end was awesome. As much as Drothe was redeemed in my eyes, I'm also just petty enough to relish and enjoy the irony!

Will I read the next one? Absolutely!
