



Madwand

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Pol Detson, son of Lord Det of Rondoval, has come home. He is now a powerful sorceror of unsurpassed natural ability - in a world where the power of magic is the only kind that matters. But Pol is still an untrained talent, a 'MADWAND'. To take control of his powers, to rule in his father's place, he must survive arduous training and a fantastic initiation into the rites of sorcery. As friends, Pol has one dragon and one thief. As enemies he has the most powerful wizards of the land. And at least one of them wants him dead.

Madwand Details

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Jim says

This is the second & final book - although it leaves us hanging terribly - in the Changeling saga. The first book, 'The Changeling' is able to stand alone. This book is an excellent addition, but it certainly leaves us wanting at least one more book. Unfortunately, Zelazny died before writing the conclusion. Our loss.

If you don't mind getting hung up on a cliff hanger, by all means read this. It's interesting, well written & has a pretty neat view of magic; threads for spells, a newly create demon that doesn't know its name & an interesting rite of passage. If you like things wrapped up neat & tidy, stick with the Changeling only.

Alazzar says

Zelazny's fantasy books almost always offer something to separate them from pure fantasy: *Jack of Shadows* gave us a sword-and-sorcery thief living on a non-rotating planet whose dark side bred magic and light side fostered technology; *The Amber Series* introduced us to a scheming family with the ability to pass through universes of all sorts, be they primitive and marvelous or developed and scientific. And then there's *Lord of Light*, which, while generally considered a SF novel, definitely has elements of fantasy to it.

Changeling, the book preceding *Madwand* in this unfinished trilogy, is somewhat similar to *Jack of Shadows* in its meeting of scientific and magical worlds. But *Madwand* is something of a Zelazny anomaly (Zelnomalzy?) in that it's pretty much a straight-up fantasy book with plenty of the old tropes and cliches: you've got a thief named after a rodent, a wizard born into a strange and powerful destiny, a classic struggle between good and evil, and, of course, dragons.

In a way, this may seem to make *Madwand* a sub-par effort from Zelazny. But he's still got a few traits that set his book apart from the rest of the overdone fantasy stories out there: intrigue and imagination.

Yes, I know, these are two things that most fantasy books have to some degree. But Zelazny's version of these classic characteristics, I feel, puts him ahead of the crowd.

As far as intrigue goes, it's always fun to see how skillfully Zelazny planned things out in advance. He's got a lot of different moving parts to his stories, and they always seem to fit together in just the right way at just the right time.

And the imagination, well—let's just say that there are plenty of ways to do a sorcerous duel, but few are going to be as interesting as the ones in *Madwand*. Mind you, I did feel that the fights went a little too long in some cases, but I still had to respect the amount of thought that went into the magical system here. It's a beautiful, visually stimulating thing when protagonist Pol Detson finds himself locking horns with his various antagonists.

As far as Zelazny books go, this isn't one of his best—I'd much rather have the variety and trope-dodging found in some of his other works. But I did still enjoy *Madwand*, and I'm saddened the author never got around to finishing the trilogy; I'd have liked to have seen where things went from here.

Mike says

I love a certain something about fantasy written by guys who cut their teeth on hardboiled pulp. There's something low and comforting in their "high" fantasy. Whether it's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser or Zelazny's own Amber series... maybe it's something in the tone. You aren't so much transported to an alien world. There's a familiarity in the way men speak to one another, over drinks and cigarettes, that even if they are universe-bending Princes, they still seem like just some guys you'd meet on a train or in a dive bar. Or even if they are world-destroying sorcerers.

Madwand is apparently a sequel. I didn't know this until I saw the back flap of the dust jacket. I picked it up at a used bookstore as it was Zelazny, and something I'd never heard of. But really, it read just fine without knowing that.

The story's ok. It goes into that kind of dreamlike world of magic that seems mostly like an acid trip and you don't really understand it too much. As most Zelazny, the joy is in having fantastic creatures perform verbal repartee between one another, and there's plenty of that here, including a humorous inner dialogue of a silent witness to much of the plot.

Sorcerer duels don't translate as interestingly to text as sword duels but Zelazny writes them as well as can be. There are definitely some satisfying twists here and there as well. But all in all, I view it as an interesting art piece. A lot to take in but after you're no longer looking at it, not that much to retain and think about.

Warren Dunham says

this gets interesting but not really great. a story of a natural self taught wizard called a madwand his training his initiation as a full wizard capture and ultimate battle... the stories not terrible just not set up as to why we should care, the side quest with the demons not bad though. probably would have enjoyed it more if i had read the previous book first.

Randy says

The sequel to Changeling. Sometimes the books are published together as Wizard World (now there's an uninspired title!).

I wanted to like this book, but it falls into the category of Zelazny's "railroaded protagonist" books, where the hero, in spite of having considerable power (although inexperienced with it), has no idea about what's going on, and is constantly herded towards some final destination by a variety of other characters yet more powerful. It gets old, as it does in the second set of Amber books. The initiation scene in the middle goes on interminably, and I don't see the point of the first-person interludes, or at least the point of making them first person. Are we supposed to assume the narrator is actually the narrator of the entire story? And why does it matter? I just couldn't get entirely behind it.

Tim Schmelter says

Better than its predecessor, *Changeling*, Zelazny's follow-up story of Pol Detson leaves too much unfinished to be truly enjoyable. While *Madwand's* prose is far more fluid and engaging than the previous book, the story never quite gels. Pol's journey feels more like a walk through an (admittedly sketchy) neighborhood than a vast epic trip through the magical underworld. His rebellion against the various forces seeking to control him, arguably the most important theme of the novel, is undermined at every turn by reliance upon a ridiculous array of *dei ex machina*, swooping in to save the day. It's possible Zelazny would have tied all this together in a sequel, but since he never published one, we're left with an unsatisfactory conclusion to what could have been a compelling story of the temptations of power and the limits of self-reliance.

Maria says

Hmmm... Actually, I found out that fantasy still isn't really my thing. I gave it an honest shot, but I guess it just doesn't work for me. =)

Compared to 'Changeling' I did like 'Madwand' better, because the writing style was smoother, but it still was a story which I struggled to get through. This may be because I read the Dutch translation and I usually prefer the original language above a translation.

Besides the fantasy theme, there was also some comedy in it. At times the story made me chuckle and that eased my struggle to stay engaged (to be very honest). Especially the final comic note of the "MADE IN HONG KONG"-tag was hilarious! ;)

The story contained some fights as well. They aren't repetitive or gory, but I didn't really enjoy reading about fights. (I guess that's not my thing either ;))

The story was not bad, when I look at it from as objective a perspective as I can. The story was consistent, had a complex, yet well-thought of story line and interesting characters.

I give it three stars because of my own enjoyment.

Ghoule says

Moins intéressant que « L'Enfant de nulle part » (*Changeling*), « Franc-Sorcier » (belle traduction de « *Madwand* », chapeau) raconte la suite des aventures de Pol (arg, Pol avec un o...), un franc-sorcier constamment manipulé par des forces qui dépassent son entendement.

Le présent roman met en scène sa lutte pour connaître ses marionnettistes et comprendre leurs motifs, pour ensuite mieux les vaincre.

Le récit est intéressant, mais l'ajout d'un narrateur évanescent - un esprit qui tente d'aider Pol - s'avère agaçant. J'ai sauté plusieurs parties du récit où cet être immatériel décrit son outremonde, car je n'avais pas l'impression que ça faisait avancer l'histoire. C'est comme d'avoir un angle additionnel à une scène de cinéma... ça n'est pas passé à l'histoire comme le meilleur bonus sur un DVD. Enfin, passons.

Le récit est quand même assez intéressant. On veut connaître la fin. Et c'est là que ça se gâte. Les révélations de la fin m'ont plutôt laissé de glace, alors que la conclusion elle-même survient tout de suite après l'affrontement ultime. J'aurais aimé qu'il y ait moins de liens tirés par les cheveux et que l'auteur prenne le

temps de situer son personnage dans l'instant qui suit le dernier combat.

Bref, on quitte Pol et son monde avec le sentiment que nous avons manqué quelque chose...

Note : j'ai lu ce récit dans le livre-combo qui rassemble « L'enfant de nulle part » et « Franc-sorcier » chez Folio SF.

Joey Brockert says

Pol Detson is in a strange land where there is magic. He grew up in our world, but his parentage was from this other place. He has succeeded in acquiring his birthright, and now he has gotten it into his head to attend the congress of sorcerers. His friend Mouseglove will go with him, but feels it is not a good thing for Pol to do.

There is a creature who introduces the story who is very unknown, even to himself. This creature travels with the pair to this congress, though they do not know anything about him. But that happens to be true of Pol as well. At the congress he finds out that he is a madwand, one who wields power without the training of a master. He is just able to do magic.

Pol is visited on the trail by another magician who suggests Pol keep his identity secret, which Pol does, to no avail. At the congress there is an initiation of apprentices, and, as Pol has not been trained and would like to be accepted as a full fledged magician, he offers to go through with the initiation too. This turns out to be very trying and, in fact, dangerous because his disguise is worthless. Pol is spirited out of the congress, Mouseglove and the unknown creature do what they can to help, but in the end it is up to Pol to save the world and he does.

This is the second book of the 'Changeling Saga,' so there was a previous book about Anvil mountain, and there will be another one about the nemesis that we meet towards the end of this story.

blake says

"Z" is for "Zelazny" who never, uh, zisappoints.

This is the second in the "Changling" series of books, which series is a total of two. So I guess it's just a sequel but it seems like it could've played out for 2 or 3 more books. It's okay, though: Neither this, nor Changeling are written as cliffhangers so you don't feel ripped off. You could even read them in reverse order, I think, without diminishing your experience too much.

N.B. that I read "Changling" 20-30 years ago. But what stuck with me was Zelazny's magic system: Our hero is Pol Detson, a man who grew up on (non-magical, modern-day) earth who is transported to a magical world where wizards study for years to learn how to manipulate the threads of magic that flow and gather around object on the material plane. (I thought that was an way to approach magic.) While Pol never had the opportunity to study, he's what's known as a "madwand": Someone with a native ability to manipulate these threads.

In the hands of lesser writers, this can be an awful cheat. How powerful is Pol? Well, exactly as powerful as the narrative needs to be, right? Zelazny carefully maps out the growth in Pol's power, gives substance to his limitations, and to how easily he can be beaten by virtue of being more-or-less clueless about the world he's found himself thrust into. In fact, throughout the story, Pol is constantly being manipulated by forces he doesn't understand—though he does get to resent these guys.

There are three parts of this book that went on longer than I thought they should—thinking, basically, that Zelazny was indulging in a little writing-for-writing's-sake—but every one of them turns out to be important later on. (Given that I have a LOT of books to get through, I tend to be sensitive to authorial indulgence.)

I particularly loved the boldness of certain narrative choices: The book starts with a first person account by a non-corporeal entity that has no memory, and has only recently become aware. This consciousness gradually evolves through the book to a fairly satisfying conclusion (and maybe one supported by the previous book; I don't recall), but also serves as a fish-out-of-water to explain things that go on in the universe. This keeps our hero from having to have everything explained to him, and the main understanding he has to struggle with is the Big Picture: Given a world where the larger narrative is unknown to you, how do you know what actions to take?

There's a dream-as-prophecy device here which has a nice little twist at the end that plays into the whole thing, and also pleasantly recalls certain Lovecraftian tropes.

Anyway, good stuff. Since I'm about to go back to "A", I'll probably see if I can fill in the gaps in my Zelazny series' (Princess of Amber? Lords of Light?) for my next lap around.

Anthony Bracciante says

A worthy sequel to Changeling. This is an enjoyable read and could easily have been followed up by other books in the series had Roger Zelazny chosen to do so.

Dan says

An enjoyable story typical of Zelazny's style. I actually enjoyed it more than the predecessor, Changeling. My main negative on this book is that it screamed for a sequel (a pitched magical battle between the 'good guys' and the 'bad guy', ending in a draw, with the 'bad guy' making his getaway as he's about to be defeated. I quoted the terms because you will find it's not entirely clear who is good and who is bad. Anyway, for some reason, Zelazny never felt compelled to wind up the series, and died some years later, even after cranking out some crappy Amber follow-ons and such. Foey...

K T says

It was definitely an entertaining read, but nothing notable. Not Zelazny's best, but he always can write a rousing adventure.

Didn't realize till after the first chapter that it was a sequel to Changeling. I have read that: in middle school. Worked well-enough as a stand-alone book though, no worries.

The earlier segments with the mysterious nameless narrator were some of the more intriguing ones for me. Don't think I've seen a book switch between first and third person pov segments before.

Charles says

Enjoyed the writing and the imagery, but can't give it 5 stars as I didn't really care much about the main character.

William Leight says

This is nominally a sequel to “Changeling” but is better thought of as a reboot. In “Changeling”, Pol is an extremely powerful wizard, and quite possibly the only wizard in the world: at the very least, the only other wizards we meet in the book are members of his family. “Madwand”, on the other hand, opens with a strange wizard appearing from nowhere and almost killing Pol, who is saved only by the intervention of one of the mysterious figurines that are also in some way wizards that never really seemed to fit into the first book. This means, though nothing is ever said, that the titanic collision of science and magic that was the centerpiece of “Changeling” may not have been quite so earth-shakingly important after all, as none of the many powerful wizards we are to meet in “Madwand” could be bothered to show up and defend magic against its technological opponent. Which is fine, as that whole plot never really made much sense, and was overly rigid and schematic. (However, the quest that Pol goes in to retrieve his father’s scepter is now a pretty significant plot hole: apparently, none of the many wizards in the world were interested in picking up this quite powerful item.) Instead, Pol has a new identity as a powerful but untrained wizard, who goes off to meet some fellow wizards and gets caught up in a years-old plot the ramifications of which he never really understands. And neither, frankly, does the reader: if “Changeling” suffered from an overly structured plot, “Madwand” could use a bit more structure, with the ending in particular leaving loose ends dangling everywhere. (Maybe Zelazny was planning a sequel to tie everything together, but if so he never wrote it.) Instead, the book seems more like a loosely-connected series of experiments on Zelazny’s part: the first-person narration by the demon who begins the book not even knowing that it is a demon, the phantasmagorical interludes in the other world, and the magical battles in which Pol is basically figuring it out as he goes along could easily have come from three different books. As these are all enjoyable enough, even if the plot doesn’t so much as connect them as get the reader from one to the next, and Pol himself is basically a standard-issue Zelazny hero in this book — laconic, stubborn, independent-minded, cracking wise on a regular basis — it ends up being more readable than “Changeling”, but it’s still definitely not Zelazny’s best work.
