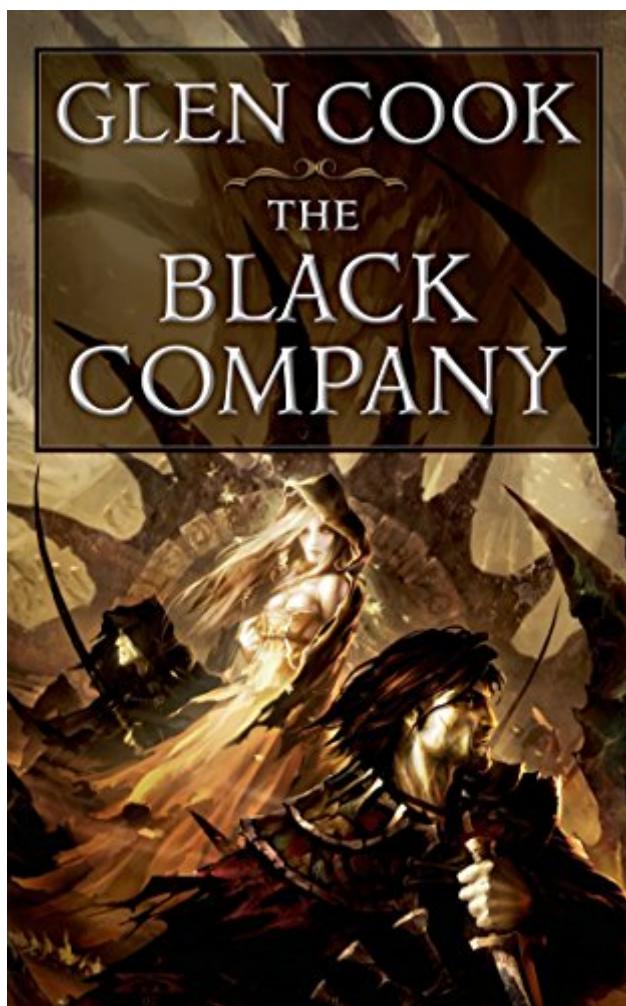


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The Black Company: The First Novel Of 'The Chronicles Of The Black Company'



Synopsis

Some feel the Lady, newly risen from centuries in thrall, stands between humankind and evil. Some feel she is evil itself. The hardbitten men of the Black Company take their pay and do what they must, burying their doubts with their dead.Until the prophesy: The White Rose has been reborn, somewhere, to embody good once more.There must be a way for the Black Company to find her...At the Publisher's request, this title is being sold without Digital Rights Management Software (DRM) applied.

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Customer Reviews

"It was a night for screams. A broiling, sticky night of the sort that abrades that last thin barrier between the civilized man and the monster crouched in his soul. The screams came from homes where fear, heat, and overcrowding had put too much strain on the monster's chains. "There are no self-proclaimed villains, only regiments of self-proclaimed saints. Victorious historians rule where good or evil lies. We adjure labels. We fight for money and indefinable pride. The politics, the ethics, the moralities, are irrelevant. "They sit around together like a couple of

rocks, talking about the same things boulders do. They are content just to share one another's company. "Consider little children. There are not many of them not cute and lovable and precious, sweet as whipped honey and butter. So where do all the wicked people come from?" "Little girls are twice as precious and innocent as little boys. I do not know a culture that does not make them that way." "There was always a breeze out around the Island, though it avoided the shore as if fearing leprosy. Closer at hand, the wheeling gulls were as surly and lackadaisical as the day promised to make most men." So this was a book that I should not have liked. It kinda ticked off a pet peeve. But I can't help myself. I enjoyed Croaker's (yes, that's the character's name) voice entirely too much. I mean, with names like One-eye, Silent, and Tom-Tom how could you not at least be swept away in the entertainment? And as you can see by the above, there were some great quotes in this book. Soooo, story? I'm not sure. I guess I can sum it up by saying that a mercenary group gets a contract to work for the bad guys and ends up going on a campaign to further their employer's advances. Because our protagonists are portrayed as neither good nor evil, it makes for some interesting observations. And my last sentence should warn those who love old school clearly good vs clearly bad that this might not be the book for them. While I consider Croaker to be inherently good, some of those in his company are not. And he works for the bad guys. He does stuff for the bad guys. So fair warning. What was my annoyance? Summaries. I can't believe I'm going to say this, but some of the scenes were just lumped into a summary paragraph. I mean, to the point where it was almost like, "We went north and fought and won." Nothing that simple, but it sure did feel like it. That happened a lot. Normally I wouldn't mind, I mean, I'm not a fan of descriptions, but I felt a bit cheated out of some action. Matter of fact, even the action scenes felt a bit summed up. If Croaker fought, it was pretty much lumped up as that, instead of giving us a play by play of his moves, or how many bad guys he took on. I found it as enjoyable as annoying. I will say, dialog mostly advanced the story. I like dialog, so this worked. Another thing that took me a bit to adjust to was Cook's writing style. Scenes could be a bit confusing at times, especially the beginning. You kinda feel tossed around. It's a lot to adjust to right from the get go. There were breathtaking sentences, but I'd say most of it read choppy. At first, I wasn't a fan, but as the story progressed I actually found it captivating. A few examples: "One-eye grunted, discarded. Candy picked up and spread. One-eye cursed." "The list was disappointing. I gave it to Elmo. He cursed, spat, cursed again. He kicked the planks we were using as a card table." As you can see, it's very short, abrupt, and choppy. Somehow it works, though. It fits with the characters, and I found myself not noticing it the farther I read. The world was fleshed out enough for me, but

those crazy into world building might find it lacking. I didn't really get a good feel for it, but then again, I'm not one to usually notice an underdeveloped world. I like a story that moves. How about those characters? I can't say that I love one over another. There was a group—the main group the story focuses on—that I loved. All of them. They were each well built, flawed, unique, and interacted with each member differently. I liked that aspect. Most of all, I think I enjoyed Croaker's voice; how he spoke, how he observed, his morals and lack thereof. He wasn't my favorite character—I'd actually be challenged to name one—but he kept things moving along. Not only were the "good" guys entertaining, but some of the "bad" guys were equally developed. Cook did a great job at portraying some pretty dark characters and I found a few of them as captivating as some of the good guys. I will definitely be picking up the second book. I've heard it's better, and I'm curious to see where the story goes. We've got a peek towards the direction we'll be traveling, and I'm excited about it. But most of all, I look forward to hanging out with the gang again. The great banter and wide cast makes it delightfully entertaining. And now that I'm adjusted to Cook's style and know what to expect, I think I'll be able to sit back and enjoy the second one more. Overall, this book's got some great cussing, it moves along nicely, it's choppy and delightfully free of lengthy descriptions, it's got a great set of characters, and some deep thoughts. I'd recommend it to any fantasy lover.

I enjoyed this book so much that I'm now neck deep in the series. If you're a fan of the Malazan series, then you should really give this one a shot and see what you think. If you enjoyed following Fiddler and the Bonehunters, then you'll probably feel at home following the Black Company in their escapades. It has the same militaristic feel to it, along with secret plots, back stabbing, epic battles, magic, and all in a much smaller scope than the Malazan series. The story is told primarily from the perspective of Croaker, the company physician and annalist, and it appears that the story is essentially being told from the annals. Any time the story is being told in first person, you know it is from Croaker's point of view. Everyone else is referred to in third person, which I really appreciate because it helps you keep track of who you are following and what's currently going on. It's a somewhat simple story in scope, at least in comparison to other Epic Fantasy novels (Wheel of Time, Malazan Book of the Fallen) but I quickly came to appreciate the smaller scope of the story. The series is still deep enough to be enticing, but not so deep that you get lost at every turn trying to make sense of it all. You don't really get any of the "fluff" either that longer books have big chunks of (or in some cases, entire books filled with fluff.) I love the story, I love the characters, my only

complaint really is that I wish they were a bit longer. I'm chewing through these books so fast, but enjoying every minute of it.

Just discovered this great read. For any who are familiar with the manga series "Berserk" or ever played the Kingdom Under Fire old xbox games, will feel right at home in the Black Company. There is a good blend of drama, humor and fantasy intrigue. The setting and locations are standard dark fantasy stuff(very Lord of Rings-ish without the metahuman elements), but its the characters that sell the story. There is great use of personal perspective in experiencing how things play out, since the main protagonist is a surgeon/scribe in the morally ambiguous Black Company. Experiencing the story through the moral filter of a hired sword, allows the whole good vs. evil story to come through more eloquently, which is the strongest aspect of the writing. There is no clean cut motivations and all sides play for power no matter the intent. Having only read the first in the series, I am looking forward to the rest of my time dug in with the grizzled band of mercenaries.

The writing style was different than what I was used to. There could have been so much more detail about the battles and the relationships between people. I would have liked a bit more explanation about the powers the wizards had. It was hard for me to get through this book, but it ended in such a way that I think I'll continue the series. I might not pick up the second one for a while still, but I think I'll end up finishing the series. Disclaimer: I'm pretty used to the epic world and relationship building in the Wheel of Time series and Brandon Sanderson's work, so I'm a bit primed for a different storytelling style.

A story about a mercenary group working for the evil empire. A fun concept is what holds this book together. The fantasy aspect is interesting,as well as the characters interactions. The magic system and world is not as fleshed out as one would like. There were points that were confusing even after rereading. It was however an enjoyable read, and looking forward to the next installment of the series.

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