



The Legend of Eli Monpress

Rachel Aaron

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Eli Monpress is talented. He's charming. And he's a thief.

But not just any thief. He's the greatest thief of the age - and he's also a wizard. And with the help of his partners - a swordsman with the most powerful magic sword in the world but no magical ability of his own, and a demonseed who can step through shadows and punch through walls - he's going to put his plan into effect.

The first step is to increase the size of the bounty on his head, so he'll need to steal some big things. But he'll start small for now. He'll just steal something that no one will miss - at least for a while. Like a king.

The Legend of Eli Monpress includes the novels: *The Spirit Thief*, *The Sprit Rebellion*, and *The Spirit Eater*.

The Legend of Eli Monpress Details

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From Reader Review The Legend of Eli Monpress for online ebook

Michael says

I've finished the first book in the omnibus and is now moving onto the second. I must say I've not enjoyed reading a fantasy this much in some time. I love books that are fun and fantastical and I can definitely see why people compare it to my own Riyria books. Looking for more enjoyable nights reading the rest of this one.

Pauline Ross says

Whew. {Pauses to catch breath} Well, that was a roller-coaster ride and no mistake. Action heaped on action, the same frenetic scene fragmented into half a dozen different points of view, a bunch of wildly original characters, all with their own very different agendas, and a hapless king kidnapped by a wily thief while a usurper seizes his opportunity. Can the villain(s) be defeated and the rightful king restored to his throne? Oh dear, let me think about that for a moment... But just because a book is predictable in certain ways doesn't make it dull, and this one is anything but dull.

The world is, in many ways, much the usual pseudo-medieval affair, a place of small kingdoms ruled by the power of the sword. It's the magic that lifts this out of the ordinary. Everything, it seems, has a spirit, or soul, even rocks and trees and moss and small rodents. Some humans have the power to hear the spirits of other beings, and how they deal with that is the foundation of the story. Some have the power to enslave spirits and force them to bend to the enslaver's will, which generally drives them to madness. Some choose to enter into a cooperative and mutually beneficial arrangement: the spirit becomes a kind of servant to the human, whose own spirit nourishes them. And then there's Eli, who has a different way. Then there are seed-demons, which are very scary and bordering on uncontrollable. And then there are awakened swords. I don't know what it is about sentient weaponry, but I get shivers down my spine whenever an author is imaginative enough to throw some into the mix. Here there are two such swords, and very awesome they are too.

Now the characters cover the spectrum of possibilities raised by the magic, but at times they feel a bit like ciphers rather than characters. It's tempting to say: 'The seed-demon did such-and-such...', which tells me that they never quite worked as characters. Eli is the stand-out exception to this: he's a fascinating person, with his mischievous personality and good-humoured approach to life. I liked him very much. Miranda, on the other hand, feels like a token: a seemingly powerful and feisty female character, who is easily defeated at every turn by others more powerful, who is dragged along on the final rescue mission for no obvious reason other than to be fortuitously on hand to perform one significant plot task at the very end, using an object which she logically shouldn't have had with her in the first place. When a character says: right, I absolutely have to leave all these behind - but I'll just keep this itsy-bitsy tiny one, just because, my plot contrivance alarm cranks into action. Well, it's obvious that it's going to be important, isn't it?

The final dramatic confrontation, or rather, a whole series of confrontations, is gloriously over the top in an almost cartoonish way. In real life, real humans simply wouldn't survive this kind of punishment, but somehow you just know that most of these will, albeit with the odd scrape or sword wound in need of a little light stitching. But that's OK, this is fantasy, after all. Oh, and the first part of a trilogy, so yes, they're going to survive. For me this was almost a wonderful read, light-hearted, mostly logical, with an interesting magic system, some unusual characters and did I mention how much I like sentient swords? And laugh out loud

funny. But the lack of real depth or development in the characters and the relentless pace of the action were big negatives for me, and I probably won't finish the series. Three stars.

Kate says

Originally read these as three separate editions, but looking forward to the omnibus with its much prettier cover!

SPIRIT THIEF:

An EXCELLENT fantasy debut. I tore through this book in two nights, even while sick, and really couldn't put the book down once I'd gotten halfway.

The plot is, frankly, pretty formulaic - I found myself musing at several points that the author had clearly watched a lot of Trigun and had a thing for "mysterious gunslinger/swordsman face-offs," in addition to including plenty of standard fantasy elements like the Band of Misfits Causing Mischief and the various escalating Boss Fights - and certain elements that were supposed to be witty and cute grated on me (Marion the Librarian? REALLY?), but all in all, the book managed to be highly engaging and even fresh despite all that.

The voices of the characters were really this book's redeeming factor - the plot may have been hackneyed, but the characters were fresh and new and captivating. Eli Monpress is, in essence, a wizardly Moist Von Lipwig (Terry Pratchett's Going Postal) - he's a confidence man, a thief, and a charming rogue who happens to be able to con spirits. And spirits are everywhere in this world - rather than working magic through spells, wizards here are animists, shamans almost, who either enslave spirits (that would be the bad guys) or bargain with them for service (the Spiritualists). There's a bit of discourse on ethics and morals regarding the use of spirits that I suspect is going to be fleshed out in the later installments...it's all certainly leading somewhere, this rhetoric about duty and ethical responsibility to spirits. But that's tangential to the fabulousness that is con-man Eli and tempestuous, powerful Miranda - both are very well-developed characters, with distinct personalities and foibles, and both are fascinating.

Eli was a bit less developed than I would've liked, especially for a book ostensibly about him, but Miranda was wonderful - a hot-tempered, but icy-calm woman in complete control of herself and the rapidly devolving situation around her, completely confident and completely in charge. She's powerful and makes no apologies for that power, or for using it. You don't see that often in fantasy, and I loved it.

All in all, Rachel Aaron has set up an intriguing world here, and I want to see what she does with it and the characters..

SPIRIT REBELLION:

Just like The Spirit Thief, this was a fast, fun, engrossing read.

If you like your adventures leavened with some humour and a whole lot of mayhem, you can't do better than reading Rachel Aaron's Eli Monpress books. Seriously. These are simply a "rollicking good time," to use an overburdened phrase that actually does apply in this situation.

Eli is in his usual good form, Miranda is caught between a rock, a West Wind, and a very hard place when it comes to keeping her vows as a Spiritualist and also protecting her spirits, and Josef and Nico are, as always,

badgering Eli and trying to deal with Nico's awakening Demonseed. We get to see more of the League of Storms, which is starting to fascinate me, and also hear about the Shaper Wizards, who Awaken objects and make the mundane do wonderful things. I'm really looking forward to finding out more about these other groups in later books.

I'm also looking forward to finding out more about Eli's past - we got a few tantalizing glimpses here, including an introduction to both his birth and adoptive fathers - and about Nico's little demon problem.

Can't wait to start the next book! There are cliches all over the place in *The Spirit Rebellion*, and the Duke of Gaol reminded me of no one more than Lord Farquhad from *Shrek* (which got a little annoying at times), but just as with *The Spirit Thief*, these little annoyances are easily overlooked in favour of a really well-executed romp through a nicely developed fantasy world.

My one real quibble is that it followed the Exact. Same. Format. as *The Spirit Thief* - oh look, Eli is doing stuff, Miranda is doing stuff, we have a climactic swordfight for Josef about 2/3 of the way through the book, Eli and Miranda do stuff together, and...wrap. But hey, the formula works. So I can't really complain too much, eh?

SPIRIT EATER:

In this installment of *The Legend of Eli Monpress*, we get to see much more of Nico and Josef, and learn more about demons and the metaphysics of this world. There's honestly not a whole lot of Eli going on, and even less Miranda - and that's a good thing, really, because Nico starts to really shine, and we get some tantalizing glimpses of things to come with Josef.

The metaphysics and world-building are really the point of this novel - we learn more about the Shepherdess/Benehime, the creation and ruling of the world and the various Powers, the trapping of the Master under the Dead Mountain, and the power of the League of Storms. It makes for a good bit of exposition, but it's all exposition done in the course of another rollicking adventure. The plot is less well-constructed than in earlier novels, and there are several phrases that occurred over and over and really set my teeth on edge ("...and then something extraordinary happened." Uh, how about just telling us what that thing was? The marker is unnecessary). But overall, it was still a romp, and still a great twist on the usual fantasy tropes.

Highly recommended, and I really can't wait for the omnibus edition and *The Spirit War* in the fall...time for Josef to take center stage!

TS Chan says

Rachel Aaron's debut fantasy series is so addictively entertaining and fun that I blasted through all three books in the first omnibus in four days.

It had been quite a while since I have so much fun reading a series, one which also keeps getting better as it progresses.

"Lady, if you are here to warn the king about Eli, then you're a little late."

"You mean he's already stolen the artifact?"

“No. He’s stolen the king”

Eli Monpress is an arrogant, mischievous and irrepressible thief. He is also a wizard. Aided by his companions, Josef Leichten - a talented swordsman with the world's most powerful sword - and Nico - a girl with an incubating demonseed within her and who can travel through shadows - Eli has a mission. And this is to create the largest bounty ever in history to be placed on his head. The culmination of Eli's high-profile heists has thus attracted the attention of the Spirit Court (a governing body of wizards) who sent its most promising protégé, Miranda Lyonette, to apprehend the infamous rogue.

These four form the main characters of the series, written in a third person perspective. Their characterisation is progressively developed and unveiled from one book to the next. Miranda was probably the one whom we get to know the most of in the first book, *Spirit Thief*, while Eli was initially given a more mysterious persona such that one wonders why this dude was so special.

Eli is indeed quite extraordinary, and that knowledge was not withheld for too long as the Prologue in the sequel, *The Spirit Rebellion*, provided a flashback of him as a young boy, which revealed as much as it teased. There is also a better balance between each of the main characters' POVs from here onwards. The third book, *The Spirit Eater*, then provided more focus on Nico and her inner struggles as the bearer of an unusually potent demonseed that is threatening to overpower her humanity.

The magic of this world centres around the powers inherent in all things through its spirits. From the trees to rocks, doors and floors, fire, wind and water, and of course, humans – everything has a spirit and the larger the object or element, the greater its powers. Wizards are humans born with the ability to listen and commune with these spirits, and hence able to employ their powers through various means. This could either be a spiritual bonding for mutual benefit or through coercion or enslavement. Then we have Eli's *more charming* method, which is... something that I am not going to mention in this review. The spirit-based magic is both fascinating and fun. It can get quite hilarious especially when the spirits of various objects converse with the human wizards. I adore this concept and it is one of the main reasons why I find these books so enjoyable. As a side-note, it does seem that the author has a fondness for spirit magic because a somewhat different form of it also appears in the *Heartstrikers* series, another favourite of mine.

The plots across all three instalments can appear to be repetitive as somehow Eli and Miranda will always end up in the same place through some convenient twist of fate. And while the danger or trouble escalates, one does get the notion that our main characters will pull through somehow. However, these are minor issues for me because of the sheer entertainment value presented by these books.

Eli's friendship with Josef gave me vibes of the Riyria duo, except that the personalities are sort of reversed with the latter being the dour and serious one. The storytelling and narrative style also reminded me of Michael J Sullivan's Riyria series; a light-hearted fantasy that is easy and effortless to read with great characters, humour, page-turning action and sufficient gravity to keep it from being just a comedy of sorts. Don't pick this up if you are looking for deep, dark or complex plots. If, however, you need something more delightfully enjoyable, I do recommend this series wholeheartedly.

The ratings for the individual books are as follow.

The Spirit Thief: **4/5 stars**

The Spirit Rebellion: **4.5/5 stars**

The Spirit Eater: **4.5/5 stars**

This review can also be found at Booknest

Esmerelda Weatherwax says

I had trouble rating this because its 3 books in 1, and I felt differently about each book. Book 1 was the weakest and i thought it was about a 3.5. I think book 3 was the strongest....I dunno... 4.2? During the first book ai felt like Spirit Thief was a rough draft for Nice Dragons because there was so much in common, down to a water spirit being an asshole. it was different enough for me to enjoy it though.

Longer review to come.

Chip says

This is a review for this book as well as books 4 and 5 in the series, The Spirit War and Spirit's End. The series starts off pretty generically, and if I'd only had the first book, rather than 1 - 3 in an omnibus edition, I don't know that I'd have bothered to look for the second. That said, the series develops well, and in fact some of the presumably ancillary initial stock characters turn out to be of great significance and interest as the series continues. Not the best fantasy I've read recently, but certainly far better than average, and worth the read.

Robert Aldrich says

I gave this novel an honest run (I only began reading The Spirit Thief, which is book one in this omnibus version of the trilogy), but I just could not immerse myself in the writing or characters. I made it to page 50 out of 310 pages (16%) before deciding to put my reading time elsewhere.

I think that this would be a great book for early teen or YA reading, as the plot set-up is kind of dished up all in one serving without any real development. At 16%, I would have hoped for more in the way of world-building or character development, but the characters all seem to be at the height of their respective crafts and aside from a rather narcissistic goal of the main character Eli to have a huge bounty posted for his capture, I really had no understanding of the purpose or goal of the story. The magical system seems very whimsical but was not something I felt particularly drawn to either.

Celeste says

You can find this review and more at Novel Notions.

Actual rating: 4.5 stars

The Legend of Eli Monpress is such a classic romp of a fantasy tale. **The world building was solid, the magic system entertaining and fascinating.** I love the idea of every single thing on earth, from rocks to grass, from rivers to wind, having a consciousness of its own. But what made the story for me was the cast of

characters. There was a lot of character development here, especially in the form of the relationships between characters. Miranda and Gin, Josef and Nico, Eli and, well, everything, were all such fun relationships to read about. I'm a big fan of motley crews, and Eli's ragtag group is about as motley as they come.

The first book in the omnibus, *The Spirit Thief*, starts as almost a classic heist story mingled with a kidnapping. However, Eli attracts trouble and the straightforwardness doesn't last for long. He has a giant bounty on his head, and his main goal in life is to raise that bounty to an astronomical sum. This goal obviously attracts plenty of attention, and bounty hunters are always on his trail. But his main concern isn't the bounty hunters, but the Spiritualist closing in on him for crimes against wizardry. The tables turn again and again throughout the story and, while there were certain elements that were predictable, on the whole there were plenty of twists and turns to maintain my attention.

The second installment, *The Spirit Rebellion*, picks up where the first leaves off, with more focus on Miranda and the Spirit Court. She's suffering for her part in the events of the previous book, and those who hate her master are twisting events to use them against Miranda's mentor. Through a random string of events, Miranda meets up with Eli and the gang once again in the duchy of Gaol. All is not right in the seemingly perfect town, and the Duke of Gaol turns out to be a heinous villain, the like of whom I haven't come across often. So once again thief and Spiritualist much begrudgingly come together to save the day. My favorite side element of this story was getting to meet Slorn, a wonderful character who reminded me a bit of Beorn from *The Hobbit*, and learning more about Nico's magic coat.

The Spirit Eater, the middle novel in the five book series and the last in this omnibus, is really all about Nico. We learn so much about her history, and how she came to be a member of the gang. I love her relationship with Josef, and I find her lack of deeper relationship with Eli and interesting difference. While there was more to the story than just gaining a deeper understanding of Nico, that's what made the book for me.

A writing choice I've found very interesting in this series is the decision to sink all of the character development into side characters instead of the eponymous character. While Eli is compelling and fun, he hasn't developed much depth so far, but that actually works great for the story. In a way, it reminds me of *Oliver Twist*. Oliver has always seemed to me like the backdrop of his story, allowing characters like Fagan and Nancy to shine. Eli feels the same to me. He's the most charismatic backdrop ever, but for me he's definitely the backdrop.

While plot wise they have little in common, this series reminds me of Michael J. Sullivan's Riyria so far in that it feels like classic fantasy with modern vernacular. **It's fun and light, but it's not shallow**; there's enough depth here to keep me interested in the characters' well being. And once again, I really appreciate how *clean* Aaron's stories are. I could hand this book to a ten year old without feeling a shred of hesitation, although it's unquestionably written for adults. The more I read from Aaron, the more I adore her.

Now, to see how the series wraps up in the second omnibus...

Bastard says

<http://bastardbooks.blogspot.com/2013...>

The Legend of Eli Monpress is an omnibus that collects the first three novels of the epic fantasy series

bearing the same title by Rachel Aaron. It includes the debut effort of *The Spirit Thief*, *The Spirit Rebellion*, and *The Spirit Eater*, all of which were published back in 2010 in consecutive months one right after the other.

I was quite eager with my anticipation of *The Spirit Thief*. For some reason, it seemed to me to be heavily promoted in urban fantasy blogs, and I got the impression that many around thought it was going to be an urban fantasy novel, myself included. I wasn't a blogger back then, so don't think about pointing any fingers my way. There was a slight adjustment to be made to my expectations once I started reading, but after stumbling a bit, it was smooth sailing from there. But can you blame me? I mean they used a Paul Blackthorne look-a-like as a model for Eli Monpress in the cover, and we all know that he played Harry Dresden in the short lived tv-adaptation of *The Dresden Files* (can someone please do a new adaptation?), so it was obvious that this was going to be an urban fantasy. It's no wonder that they ended up changing the cover styles after the third book, and re-released them in an omnibus so that there would be no confusion that this is an epic fantasy. But truth be told, I liked those original covers, and my OCD hoarder side of me wishes the full series was released with the original style, my collection now feels a bit incomplete without them.

My first impression of this series was that it had a good mixture of both high fantasy and sword & sorcery plot threads, and it mixed attributes of some of my favorite reads in recent years, or it at least reminded me of some of them. If you'll excuse some of the name dropping I'm about to do, even when some would consider doing so bad form, but the character dynamic was excellent and fun resembling what is found in *Tales of the Ketty Jay* by Chris Wooding and *The Riyria Revelations* by Michael J. Sullivan, and also their sense of adventure. Some of the world building seemed to echo aspects found in *The First Law* by Joe Abercrombie, though even I can admit that I'm stretching it a bit. Also, considering the con-job aspect of some of the plot threads, *Ocean's Eleven* easily stood out, so by extension, *The Lies of Locke Lamora* by Scott Lynch. Lastly, we have one of my favorite anime/manga with *One Piece* with its combination of fun, funny, and serious portions to go with the adventure aspects as well as its main character's obsession with becoming the Pirate King and his bounty paralleling Eli Monpress's obsession with becoming the most wanted criminal with the highest bounty and be renown as the best thief in the world.

While I enjoyed *The Spirit Thief*, it wasn't as good as I was expecting it to be, ignoring the urban fantasy vs. epic fantasy shenanigans to the side. It was an extremely fun read and light-hearted, but it also bordered the line of silliness too close for my taste a few times, despite it being quite funny too. The plot in this book wasn't that strong either in my opinion. Also there were some moments of extreme deus ex machina, which I'm not fan of. Though keep in mind that much of these are impressions I got from my experience reading the first novel that first time around, and much of my perspective changed as I kept reading to the series, giving new insights to these events, in particular to some of the issues I found with the deus ex machina which had a hidden cost not apparent at the time, but I later came to appreciate it more as we learned more from Eli's circumstances.

Despite those issues, I was still anxious to continue reading the series, to the point that each book in the series was one of my more anticipated reads each time around because the novel was indeed fun and I loved the characters from Eli with his conning personality, to Josef's silent persona and deadly sword, to Nico's adolescent creepy demonic nature, to Miranda's overbearing self-righteous personality who wants to arrest all these three. The character dynamic was too good and the world full of possibilities for it not get better. I smelled the potential and Rachel Aaron made sure to reward me for hanging around.

The Spirit Rebellion began a pattern that continued on for the rest of the series of each book improving over its predecessor. It meant that each book added to the momentum of the series and that was a big plus.

By the same token, each book became a bit darker, and I loved that aspect. It also introduced new plot threads, notably political intrigue and expanding the world and cast of characters. The book focused a bit more on Miranda, and through her we learned a bit more of what is a stake in their world and what they strive to protect concerning the spirits and other sorts of intrigues from a murderous and traitorous inclination. Of course, Eli and his band somehow find their way into the middle of it by pure chance and luck, or lack of it for that matter.

Finally we have *The Spirit Eater* with a higher focus on Nico and her demonic nature as we go about learning a bit more about how dangerous demons are and the threat they pose. There's also a higher focus on Nico's relationship with Eli, and more importantly on the nature of her relationship with Josef. We also start delving a bit into Eli's secrets, something Aaron has been careful not to reveal much of. Just like the previous novel, the world keeps expanding, new characters emerge, and adding new dimensions to the composition of the various powers of the world.

The Legend of Eli Monpress was a reminder of the very thing that makes me a fan of fantasy stories. Fun characters you don't mind spending the time with, a cool world full of possibilities, a sense of magic and wonder, and just like its main character, the series has plenty of charm. But more importantly, it's a story that at its core doesn't pretend to be more than it is, and no matter what the mood I was in, reading *The Legend of Eli Monpress* was always a good idea. I could've been reading a novel that could be considered the best by a landslide for the year, and I probably would've put it down in favor of reading the newest installment of this series. Can't explain it much, it's not a perfect series, other than I really enjoyed spending time in Eli's universe.

Don't want to get ahead of myself, but the sequel to this omnibus was my favorite read of last year. *The Legend of Eli Monpress* is a series that is appealing to a wide variety of ages, which is why I highly recommend this omnibus to just about anyone despite it maturing and going darker after each book, and this omnibus should be a safe bet for those interested in buying a gift for someone who's an avid reader. Also be aware that this series has been finished and completely published, so it's the perfect time to sit down and marathon the full series. Not a hard thing to do as this is an easy book to read, and a page turner to go with it. This debut effort by Rachel Aaron is responsible for one of my favorite series of recent memory (truth be told, all series to me are of recent memory, but why spoil the fun?). Do yourself a favor, and just find some time to sit back, relax, forget about nitpicking for a few hours in your day, and just have fun with a fantasy series that is capable of reminding us about some of the good things of reading in this genre. Whatever Rachel Aaron's next project is, she can be comforted that this Bastard will surely be eager to give it a read.

Joseph says

An omnibus collection of the first three (of five, so far) books about Eli Monpress, wizard thief who's adorably headstrong & cocky, very, very good at what he does, and whose ambition is to have the largest bounty ever recorded. Fast-paced and fun; as the first book opens, Eli (with his companions Josef Liechten the swordsman, and a mysterious girl called Nico) is stealing a king (much easier than trying to get into the royal treasury). But as the series progresses, things get darker and more complex, what with the pursuing wizards and insane swordsmen and demons and what-have-you.

Definitely I'll be continuing on to the next volumes.

Stefan says

The Legend of Eli Monpress is an omnibus containing Rachel Aaron's first three novels: The Spirit Thief, The Spirit Rebellion, and The Spirit Eater. The fourth novel in the series, entitled The Spirit War, is due out in June, so this book is a great way to catch up if you're unfamiliar with this light but entertaining fantasy series. I enjoyed these novels, back when they were first released within three months of each other in 2010, but the new omnibus edition is a nice improvement over the individual books. That's partly because the cover illustration by Sam Weber suits the series so much better than the original covers — and partly because the price tag is more attractive.

So, if you didn't catch these novels when they were originally released and if you enjoy light, action-packed (and often funny) fantasy, this is a great opportunity to check out Rachel Aaron's The Legend of Eli Monpress.

Please read the entire review here on my site Far Beyond Reality!

Steven Ackerley says

No real spoilers in here, but beware, I didn't enjoy this book.

I feel a little bad giving this book two stars, because if I was in my low-teens I would have loved it. However, it just annoyed older, more cynical me. First up: Eli is a dick, a really unlikeable dick. That's not always doom for a book, but it is when every other character is unlikeable also. Plus, each character appears to have one single motivation for the things they do, and the ways they act. They don't grow, they don't change, they just keep banging on.

Eli: Cares about his bounty for capture and how big it is. A bloody bounty. What a dick.

Josef: Wants to be the world's hardest man. Keeps getting battered.

Nico: Simpering demon/no-demon girl; wants a new coat.

Miranda: Curses! Must! Get! Eli!

Gin: /Growls, then eats a pig .

I quite liked Gin though. He almost had two motivations.

The world-building is nice, it has a good atmosphere and some of the places are interesting but are then filled with one-note characters. The dialogue is also funny in places, but Eli's smugness is very, very irritating.

The idea of 'everything has a spirit' sounds interesting, but if you think about it for more than three seconds the logic just falls apart and is just an excuse for the one-notes to get out of scrapes Scooby Doo-style. I'm a sci-fi, fantasy and comic books fan so I can handle pretty much any old bollocks, but it has to be consistent bollocks, and the logic of the world has to stand up inside itself. This book failed for me.

I really tried to like this book, but gave up halfway through book three. I'm going to write a note inside it, and leave it on a bench somewhere for somebody to pick up and (hopefully) read. Every book has a fan, every book deserves love, but this one won't get it from me.

I hope Future Random Person loves it though.

Edit: And there were quite a few grammatical errors in this book, some of them on the level of a 'there/their' mix-up catastrophe. In fact I'm pretty sure there was one of those. Ugh.

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

The Spirit Thief

Rachel Aaron has a gift, you guys. It's amazing that *The Spirit Thief* was her debut. For so many authors, *The Spirit Thief* would be the lofty peak of their career, but Aaron/Bach basically does amazing things every time.

There's a lot that's familiar in Eli Monpress, but it's also something wholly original and Rachel Aaron. She excels at both world and character building, twisting archetypes into her own delightful mishmash of balls-to-the-wall awesome. At most points, I thought I knew where *The Spirit Thief* was headed, but then I didn't.

Also, I defy you not to fall in love with Eli and the rest of this kooky cast. Eli's one of those incredibly flirty guys who's super powerful but doesn't feel the need to posture. Sure, he makes jokes about his talent but he's mostly low key and let's you forget that he's a force to be reckoned with, which makes him more dangerous and way easier to respect.

The Spirit Rebellion

It wouldn't surprise me if *The Spirit Rebellion* were the weakest in the series. There's a lot of set up for coming books, with the plot seeming to come second to that maneuvering. As such, *The Spirit Rebellion* lacked that page-turning, can't-put-it-down thing.

That said, even the weakest Rachel Aaron novel is absurdly good and clever and funny and not to be missed. She writes great characters, sassy dialog, and fun action scenes. Once the plot did kick in, the last hundred pages were unputdownable. It's not the best showdown Aaron's written, but I will always love her unique flair for resolutions. There's something unpredictable in Aaron's works that I love, something that very much doesn't align with typical tropes. In most fantasy, it's about how the main character is the best and most powerful, but Aaron lets all of the characters shine.

The Spirit Eater

Things are really ramping up now. I'm hard-pressed to say whether *The Spirit Eater* is the best of the series so far or whether that's still the first. They're so different that it's sort of hard to judge. *The Spirit Thief* wins for humor and fun, but *The Spirit Eater* wins for intensity.

Up to now, each book has involved a difficult theft in which Eli and company faced a rogue wizard and emerged victorious. There was a formula, a good one, but a formula nonetheless. In *The Spirit Eater*, there's no heist, at least not be Eli (view spoiler).

I've praised the fact that Eli doesn't feel the need to upstage his compatriots, and that has never been more true. The series may center on lovable rogue Eli Monpress, but this volume of the series belongs to Nico and Josef. Eli's there, but he's honestly not that helpful most of the time. He's clearly going to have to face Benehime at some point, so it's not like Eli's pointless in his own series, but this book wasn't about him. I

really like that. Everyone has their own part to play, and they support one another as they take their turns. Eli is willing to take a turn as the sidekick and to trust in his companions for aid.

In *The Spirit Eater*, we get to learn way more about demonseeds, but there's so much more to know. They just get creepier tbh. I'm also very intrigued by Tasset and I'm hoping that we haven't seen the last of him. Plus, the ending had a couple of amazing revelations: (view spoiler)! Rachel Aaron is so good at plot things.

The last two books of the series are supposed to be super intense, but I'm going to take a brief break since I need to read some other things in the meantime.

Mike says

Five stars from me is pretty rare. But this deserves it.

It would almost be enough to create one great character: Eli Monpress, thief, wizard, trickster, plausible con man and beloved of a goddess. But here we have at least two, because we also have Miranda Lyonette, dedicated and principled Spiritualist, who divides her time between trying to catch Monpress, reluctantly aiding him in a good cause, and rescuing oppressed spirits.

Because this is a setting where animism has been taken to its logical extreme, and everything has a spirit, which wizards can wake up and talk to. Monpress cons them, Miranda and her group make deals with them and "enslavers" dominate them.

There's a great supporting cast, too: the swordsman Josef and his awakened sword with the weight of a mountain that nobody else can lift, the troubled demonseed Nico, the bear-headed shaper wizard Slorn, and numerous bit-players, some of whom, I'm sure, we'll see more of in future.

I'm a sucker for (fictional) tricksters, being a great fan of Locke Lamora, and Eli Monpress is a fine example of the type. The first two books, particularly, are wonderfully fun caper stories, in which nothing goes as planned and Monpress still manages to improvise his way out of trouble. But the tone starts to darken in the second book, and by Book 3 it's gone serious, the fate of the world is starting to be involved, and it's not nearly as amusing any more.

I'll admit that I took a break about halfway through the third book, because with the departure of the lightheartedness it had started to lose me a little. But I picked it up again, and unlike many other books with less well-handled characterization, I could remember who everyone was and what they wanted within a few pages (and it moved excitingly to a great conclusion, though the big reveal at the end was something I'd guessed long before).

The characters are beautifully tied together, too. The prologue to Book 2 makes Monpress's odd desire to have a bounty of a million gold standards posted for his capture suddenly completely explicable (and believable), and does it by connecting him to another key character. This is excellent writing.

The setting and concept is completely original, the characters vivid and memorable, the plots just convoluted enough to be unpredictable without needing a diagram before you can follow them. Very well done, and I'll be waiting eagerly for the next volume.

Eliza Crewe says

Solid, fun read.

Sam says

The is one of the best series I've read in years. I've reviewed the other three books so first I'll say this is an amazing series that everyone should read. Here are my reviews of the first three books in the series (what you get in this wonderful omnibus.)

The Spirit Thief

Magic, mystery, and a little bit of good old thievery. All in all Rachel Aaron's first book in her The Legend of Eli Monpress series is a truly fantastic book.

I'm a little embarrassed to say I didn't initially recognize this book as the fantastic piece of literature it is. In fact I probably would have missed it, if not for the fact that Orbit produced it.

What I mean by this is that since starting this blog I've learned a lot more about the publishing industry, such as, who produces the best urban fantasy/ fantasy/science fiction, who releases books at a speed that can keep a reader happy, and who is the most consistent with the level of production they put out. And from all of this I have to say Orbit is one fine imprint. They release great books in time periods to keep readers happy, they are one of the most consistent imprints in the level of high quality material that they publish, and they're constantly trying to make things cheaper and more affordable for the reader. But anyway enough about how fantastic Orbit is, the real crux of the matter is that I would have passed by this fantastic book without even knowing it, and that would have been the real crime.

The Spirit Thief is fun, well written, and full of well developed characters. Aaron does a fantastic job creating a story around this first chapter of the Eli Monpress series. She introduces just enough mystery to reel the reader into the next book, while maintaining an engaging action packed plot that will keep you up late into the night.

Not only is the plot well developed and intricate enough to entice readers to the next in the series, but the characters are all interesting and robust. None of the characters are bland or black and white, and even the minor characters are given enough great dialog to keep the story moving and entertaining. My personal favorite characters thus far in the series are Josef and Gin who are both strong, slightly sarcastic, interesting characters, who like almost all the characters in this series are filled with just a little bit of suspense and mystery about their back stories.

Of course besides being a fun exciting book, The Spirit Thief also happens to be dirt cheap (\$7.99). So if you enjoy good books that are not expensive, then The Spirit Thief and the entire Legend of Eli Monpress series just might be for you. And if you've already read it then I'm sure it'll make the perfect stocking stuffer for the holidays.

RATING

9.5 out of 10

The Spirit Rebellion

It's often hard to keep the same level of action and mystery in the second book of a series. This has to do with the author having to create a new situation to capture the reader's attention while at the same time stringing the reader along in the central mystery to the series arc without giving away too much. It's hard and it's complicated, but if you can get it just right it can put the series just in the right spot to really take off.

In *The Spirit Rebellion*, Rachel Aaron does a terrific job of introducing readers to an exciting new situation that brings back all your favorite characters. Miranda gets put into a pickle when political action starts playing against her and she soon finds herself tossed out of the organization she's given her life to protect. Nico is forced to confront the realities of her situation as a demonseed. Josef must face his connection with the Heart of War. And Eli walks into a blatant trap he may not be able to get out of this time.

Like *The Spirit Thief*, Aaron does a great job maintaining both fun dialog and complex characters, but what I found most interesting about *The Spirit Rebellion* was the back story and cliffhanger like ending that Aaron introduces in this sensational sequel. Readers really get to see a new side to Eli, as we get a glimpse into his past, but most intriguing is the relationship with Benehime, who plays a fascinating yet small character in this book. It's obvious to readers she is going to play a much bigger role in books to come, but it's very exciting to watch her story and relationship with Eli unfold.

Of course, while I won't say what the cliffhanger like ending entails, I will say that it sets up an engaging plot for the next book in the series, *The Spirit Eater*, that I'm pretty sure I won't be able to put down.

All in all *The Spirit Rebellion* is a great book. The characters are witty and robust, the plot is intricate and just starting to bloom, and the book as a whole contains action, suspense, and magic in just the right proportions to allow the book to move at an exhilarating pace. Making *The Spirit Rebellion* a fantastic second book in the Legend of Eli Monpress series.

RATING

9.5 out of 10

The Spirit Eater

I've been watching *White Collar* lately and I have to say Eli Monpress is exactly like Neal Caffrey from the show. He is charismatic, driven, and the best thief in the world. And these are just a few of the reasons why the Legend of Eli Monpress series is now one of my favorite series out there.

The Spirit Eater opens with Nico's past as the Daughter of the Demon Mountain a few years before, and then quickly turns to the present with Nico focused on fighting back against the demon inside of her as it's suddenly grown more powerful in the last few months.

Of course like *The Spirit Rebellion*, *The Spirit Eater* seems to focus on pieces of the characters' pasts as it revolves around the present. In this case it happens to revolve around Nico's past. Readers learn more about demons in this book and Eli's mysterious powers, but most interesting is that readers will get a taste of the greater mystery of the book, the overarching plot point that will become the motivation for books to come.

All in all, like the rest of the Legend of Eli Monpress series The Spirit Eater is not a book to be missed. The characters are fun and well written, the plot is exciting and full of surprises and action, and the mystery only gets deeper and darker as readers are sucked into the deeper questions surrounding the series. While some of the issues such as some of the new characters introduced seem a little less developed, the older more reliable characters more than make up for the flaws. All in all a great book and I personally can't wait for the next book, The Spirit War, to come out.

RATING

9 out of 10

Nathan says

Fantasy Review Barn

Obviously this is a collection of three books, but I can honestly say I had never heard of them before the collection was announced. It is a real shame, I sure would like to have enjoyed these earlier.

The first book is the weakest by far. It sets up the series nicely, gives us the facts of the world(and our three lead characters), and is a quick read. But it reads like a Saturday morning cartoon and has no depth. Main lead Eli is cocky, he runs with the greatest swordsman around, and he wants to be famous. Nico is an enigma, a young lady with more power than she shows, but doesn't come into her own in the first story.

While the first story is an interesting diversion, the second two books are actually really good. The series builds, back stories are added,and villains become less cartoonist(though never leave the pure evil standard).

The over all arc concludes at a nice place, though some loose ends were left to continue the series. The four main characters(three in Eli's party, and their main pursuer) all develop nicely, and all get their own piece of the story.

Not the deepest fantasy series, but it picks up after the first book, so I would recommend this series to anyone who likes the thieves in fantasy angle, but wants a small break from the horrible darkness so many Locke Lamora knock offs use as a crutch.

Recommended, and I will be picking up the forth book in the future.

K.J. Charles says

This is one review to cover a five-book series because I'm lazy.

I absolutely loved the first book of this, glommed it and the next two in short order. Cocky charming thief, grumpy swordsman, mysterious girl with mega fighting skills, all of them superpowered in one way or another. It's classic pre-grimdarker fantasy, without too much edge--bad things happen but not in detail, we're never really in doubt that our heroes will survive and come out on top. Fun.

The world building is ingenious--and built up over five books in a way that makes it clear the author always had her plan in mind. It's cleverly woven. The world reminds me a bit of Xanth (as the early books felt when I read them at 12 ie without all the gross stuff)--rather simple and pastoral, a lot of fun.

Having glommed the first three, through, the next two were less engaging. We moved into a world-in-peril, treachery-of-gods, human-betrayal-cruelty plot that for me just didn't work with the basically sunny qualities of the characters and writing. I kept reading because after 4.5 books it felt impossible not to finish, but in some ways I wish I'd stopped at 3 when it was fun.

Also, and herewith the main problem: The age of these books is **really** showing in terms of diversity, or the lack thereof. Everyone is white. Everyone is straight, except for one single queer relationship which is, wait for it, between two of the chief villains and ends tragically, **of course**. There are two great strong heroines against the two heroes, but **all** the key ongoing series villains are female and the two main ones are very firmly put in their place by loyal decent men. (I am bang alongside female villains but really, the female villainy here is pretty notable.) And there is a pretty unfortunate ongoing imagery thing with a contrast between the abhuman forces (powers and demons) who are entirely monochrome (black or white) against the vibrant colour of the human/spirit world. Which sounds fine, but in practice means endless repetition of how very black the demons are, while the good demon-possessed human is shown as resisting evil possession by the repeated imagery of her pale skin coming out of blackness. Yeeesh. The main villain is pure white throughout so I am positive the authorial intent was to do with monochrome, but intent isn't everything, and the effect is still highly uncomfortable.

If I'd reviewed at book 1 I'd probably have been raving about it. If I'd read the whole thing as a teenager I probably wouldn't have noticed any of this. But the whole effect...well, it was less than it could have been--especially for a book which says a lot about kindness and responsibility and seeing other people's points of view and right to exist. Unexamined tropes aren't a bad thing in some abstract "SJW" way: they make books less good and writing less rich and readers less engaged, and often turned off. So there you go.

Monica says

This is a face paced, fun read. I loves the characters, and the magic system is very unique. I can't wait to read more Eli books!

Vicki says

I love this author's science fiction novels under the name Rachel Bach, so I decided to try her fantasy novels. I am not disappointed! She has such original ideas and captivating characters! I love Eli and Miranda! I've been reading the whole series back to back and haven't tired of it a single bit. Highly recommend!
