



## First Watch

*Dale Lucas*

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**First Watch** Dale Lucas

**Humans, orcs, mages, elves, and dwarves all jostle for success and survival in the cramped quarters of Yenara, while understaffed Watch Wardens struggle to keep its citizens in line.**

Enter Rem: new to Yenara and hungover in the city dungeons with no money for bail. When offered a position with the Watch to compensate for his crimes, Rem jumps at the chance.

His new partner is less eager. Torval, a dwarf who's handy with a maul and known for hitting first and asking questions later, is highly unimpressed with the untrained and weaponless Rem.

But when Torval's former partner goes missing, the two must consort with the usual suspects -- drug dealing orcs, mind-controlling elves, uncooperative mages, and humans being typical humans -- to uncover the truth and catch a murderer loose in their fair city.

## First Watch Details

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Author : Dale Lucas

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# From Reader Review First Watch for online ebook

## ?Tara Sheehan? says

First Watch is one of those Sci Fi / Fantasy novels that really knows how to hit all the sweet spots in creating an adventure that will keep you entertained. Lucas has managed to figure out how to write a decent novel that keeps you curious as to what is going to happen next without getting bogged down in the details.

The political turmoil of survival, who has power over who, and the balance of keeping it all together provided the perfect recipe for conflict that pushes the story forward at a decent pace.

The characters are actually interesting even the fantasy elements of orcs and dwarves. Though the author developed this story quite well within these pages there is definitely room to add more books by exploring other characters and areas of this fantastical realm.

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## Wortmagie says

Eine Mischung aus „*Herr der Ringe*“ und „*Lethal Weapon*“ – so beschreibt Dale Lucas seinen Roman „*First Watch*“. Der Auftakt der Reihe „*The Fifth Ward*“ vereint die Action eines *Cop Buddy* – Films mit den klassisch-epischen Elementen eines High Fantasy – Schmökers. Ich verrate euch ein Geheimnis: ich liebe die „*Lethal Weapon*“-Filme. Riggs und Murtaugh sind für mich der Inbegriff des cineastischen Ermittler-Duos, das ich seit meiner Kindheit feiere. Ich konnte nicht widerstehen, ihre HF-Äquivalente kennenzulernen und stürzte mich mit Freuden auf „*First Watch*“.

Sich der Stadtwache Yenaras anzuschließen, um aus dem Gefängnis freizukommen, schien Rem eine brillante Idee zu sein. Schließlich wollte er keinesfalls noch länger hinter Gittern versauern und brauchte dringend einen Job. Doch als er seinen Partner kennenlernt, beschleicht ihn das Gefühl, dass seine spontane Entscheidung vielleicht nicht ganz so raffiniert war. Der polternde, übellaunige Zwerg Torvald ist alles andere als begeistert, sich um den Frischling kümmern zu müssen. Widerwillig schleppt er Rem in die Straßen der multikulturellen Metropole, in der Orks mit Drogen dealen, Magier\_innen ihren dubiosen Geschäften nachgehen und die Präfekten der Bezirke offen ihre Feindseligkeit für einander ausleben. Unter der grimmigen Führung Torvalds erlebt Rem einen turbulenten ersten Tag, dessen trauriger Höhepunkt ihn am Ende ihrer Schicht erwartet. Unter einer Brücke wird eine Leiche entdeckt. Torvald genügt ein Blick, um festzustellen, dass es sich bei dem Toten um seinen Stammpartner Freygaf handelt. Er wurde ermordet. Wer würde ein Mitglied der Stadtwache heimtückisch umbringen und warum? In welche schmutzigen Geheimnisse war Freygaf verwickelt? Hängt sein Tod mit dem Verschwinden mehrerer Töchter und Söhne aus wohlhabenden Familien zusammen? Torvald schwört, Freygafs Mörder aufzuspüren und Rache zu nehmen. Rem hat keine andere Wahl, als seinen Partner bei seiner Jagd zu unterstützen. Mitgehangen, mitgefangen.

Meiner Meinung nach hat „*First Watch*“ eindeutig mehr mit „*Lethal Weapon*“ gemeinsam als mit „*Herr der Ringe*“. Mal davon abgesehen, dass ich nicht glaube, dass J.R.R. Tolkien diese Entwicklung der von ihm mitbegründeten High Fantasy vorausgesehen hätte, ist „episch“ nicht die Formulierung, die ich nutzen würde, um den Reihenauftritt zu beschreiben. Für dieses Attribut ist der Horizont der Geschichte meinem

Empfinden nach zu eng. Ich meine das nicht negativ, denn heutzutage muss High Fantasy nicht zwangsläufig gigantische Dimensionen abbilden oder gewaltige Geschichten von Heldenmut erzählen. Ein kleinerer Rahmen ist für mich völlig in Ordnung und wie ich in der Einleitung bereits erwähnte, liebe ich „*Lethal Weapon*“, sodass es mich überhaupt nicht stört, dass die Parallelen zwischen der Filmreihe und diesem Buch prägnanter sind als die Gemeinsamkeiten mit Tolkiens weltberühmtem Epos. Natürlich greift „*First Watch*“ gewisse klassische Elemente des Genres auf; der multikulturelle, brodelnde Schmelztiegel Yenara wird von den üblichen Verdächtigen bevölkert. Orks, Elfen, Zwerge, Magier\_innen und Menschen, die in jedem Kontext ein besonderes Talent für kriminelle Energie aufweisen – sie alle sind in den aufregenden, bis zum Bersten mit Leben gefüllten Straßen zu finden. Ich hatte das Gefühl, erfreulich viel von der Stadt zu sehen, weil unsere beiden sympathischen Helden Rem und Torvald ausschließlich zu Fuß unterwegs sind und dadurch beiläufig ein verlässliches Gesamtbild des Settings vermitteln. Trotz dessen hätte ich mir eine Karte gewünscht, um Aufbau, Organisation und Aufteilung der Metropole in Bezirke besser visualisieren zu können. Die Idee, ein High Fantasy – Setting bürokratisch aufzuziehen und umfangreiche Regeln und Gesetze zum Zusammenleben der einzelnen Völker zu formulieren, fand ich sowohl naheliegend als auch amüsant. Dale Lucas scheint sich genau überlegt zu haben, wie er die Dynamik der Stadt gestalten möchte und das beeindruckte mich definitiv. Die Handlung hingegen überzeugte mich nur mäßig. Ich fand „*First Watch*“ inhaltlich wenig substanziell, weil die Ermittlungen des ungleichen Duos zu lange feststecken und kaum Fortschritte verzeichnen. Stattdessen erlebte ich zahlreiche Prügeleien, die meist von Torvald provoziert werden. Der wehrhafte Zwerg wirkt im ersten Band von „*The Fifth Ward*“ plump konstruiert, ihm fehlt wahre Tiefe und daher auch Individualität. Eine tragische Vorgeschichte soll seine übertriebene Gewaltbereitschaft relativieren und bei den Leser\_innen Mitgefühl wecken. Ich kann ihn mit vier Worten charakterisieren: harte Schale, weicher Kern. Dem gegenüber steht der unerfahrene Rem, dessen Biografie Dale Lucas bisher nur andeutet. Ihre oberflächliche Gegensätzlichkeit erschien mir affektiert und stereotyp, wodurch sie den Verlauf ihrer Beziehung bereits vorzeichnet. Insgesamt fand ich „*First Watch*“ recht vorhersehbar. Lediglich das Ende entpuppte sich als echte Überraschung, weil die Auflösung des Falls wesentlich komplexer und intelligenter geriet, als ich der Geschichte und Dale Lucas zugetraut hätte.

Ihr mögt das *Cop Buddy* – Schema à la „Alter Haudegen trifft jungen, unerfahren Frischling und muss mit ihm einen sehr persönlichen Fall lösen“? Dann seid ihr mit „*First Watch*“ von Dale Lucas gut beraten, ihr solltet allerdings nicht erwarten, dass der Autor das Rad neu erfindet. Nein, dieser Reihenauftritt erzählt dieselbe Geschichte, die wir längst aus zahlreichen Filmen kennen und verpasst ihr mit dem High Fantasy – Charakter des Settings lediglich einen frischen Anstrich. Das ist per se natürlich nicht schlecht, wenn man Lust auf eine Erzählung dieser Art hat. Wie so oft kommt es auf das Timing an. Ich hatte durchaus Spaß mit der locker-luftigen Lektüre und werde „*The Fifth Ward*“ weiterverfolgen. Ich lauere nämlich darauf, dass Torvald irgendwann den einen berühmten Satz sagt: „Ich bin zu alt für diesen Sch\*\*\*\*“.

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## **Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says**

Take your favorite cop show (*Lethal Weapon* is a personal favorite), place it in a filthy city with a distinct medieval feel, add dwarves, elves and other assorted creatures and you'll get a pretty clear idea of what to expect from *Fifth Ward: First Watch*. Everyone has their weak spot, and buddy cop movies are mine, which means I was endlessly entertained by this book.

Rem is a newcomer to Yenara City, unemployed and just a bit lost. He is more than willing to work, but there's no work to be found and his low supply of coins is rapidly disappearing. Through a series of

unfortunate circumstances (involving a smart girl and no small amount of pride) Rem ends up working as a watchwarden, a member of law enforcement in the city. His partner is Torval, an enigmatic and temperamental dwarf, who is four feet tall and just as wide, with a volatile temper and a deep hatred for the orcs. The two are an oddly mismatched pair – Rem, educated, polite and completely inexperienced, and Torval, explosive, often rude and very street-smart.

Rem is hilarious and just a tiny bit pathetic as he stumbles through his first assignments as watchman. He is prone to blushing, the type of person who relies on his manners first and his fists second, but Yenara City has little patience for well-mannered northerners. Before he can be chewed up and spit out by the city's merciless streets, he needs to learn from his partner, and maybe meet him half-way.

The two start working on a missing persons case and they slowly find their rhythm. What started out as an unlikely partnership quickly turns into an odd but promising dynamic. Lucas' detailed worldbuilding only adds to the charm, and the colorful inhabitants keep us entertained. The book suffers just a bit from the burden of being the first in the series, establishing a detailed setting and sufficient character development to carry multiple novels, but all in all, they are just minor problems that can be considered an investment into the future of the series.

Dale Lucas took the usual buddy cop trope and built upon it, and he created a whole new playground for fantasy fans. Yenara City is my kind of literary place with its filthy streets, rivers of ale and fights breaking out left and right. With the second book, Friendly Fire, right around the corner, now is the perfect time to delve into this world.

*A copy of this book was kindly provided by the publisher for review purposes. No considerations, monetary or otherwise, have influenced the opinions expressed in this review.*

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## **The Tattooed Book Geek (Drew). says**

As always this review can also be found on my blog The Tattooed Book Geek:  
<https://thetattooedbookgeek.wordpress...>

I received a free copy of this book courtesy of the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

First Watch tells the story of Rem and Torval, a pair of watch wardens in the fifth ward of Yenara. Rem is new to the city and after being stood up by a girl he met (Indilen) he ends up in his cups and is thrown in jail for fighting. With a dwindling supply of coin he volunteers and agrees to become a watch warden for the fifth ward. Enter Torval who's partner Freygaf hasn't turned up for their watch together and who is subsequently given Rem as a rookie partner for the shift.

Was Rem actually stood up by Indilen or did something happen to make her miss their planned meeting? And, why has Torval's partner Freygaf failed to show up for work? Could both be related? Is there something sinister going on in the streets of Yenara?!

I really liked the characterisation of the two main characters in First Watch. Torval, a surly and belligerent Dwarf often referred to as 'Old Stump' – love that name, it's so fucking funny and made me snigger each time, even if it is rather dwarfish! ? And, Rem/Remeck, a high-born son who has run away from his home the

north for a new life and to make his own way in the world. The relationship between the two and how it changes and grows from at first being a grudging partnership of circumstance and mistrust that later turns into real trust and friendship was for me the core of the book.

It took a few pages for me to warm to Rem but Torval himself is likeable from the very first time he appears with his gruff demeanour on display. You just know he's going to be a great character. Torval and Rem are a duo akin to Riggs and Murtaugh of Lethal Weapon fame. The grizzled older veteran teamed up with the youngster, the pair complement each other extremely well and they are a duo that you can really root for.

Along the way, through the course of the book and as you follow Torval and Rem on their investigations you will also meet a variety of secondary characters, some you'll like, some you'll hate and one, in particular, you'll find to be a grade A cunt, Hi Frennis! Out of these characters, I particularly liked Ondego (the fifth ward Prefect, he's a tough brusque sort but fair and honest) and Aarna, a comely taverness who Torval has a crush on (just between you and me I think the Old Stump wants to show her his little stump) she's spunky and displays an amiable personality.

We hear mention of other cities and locations in First Watch, but it is a book set purely in Yenara. Luckily, Lucas brings the city to life and it feels like a vast and expensive metropolis. Yenara is made up of five separate wards each with a different ward watch and Prefect in charge. The watch wardens dish out the law to the general human populace but if the law breaker is a non-human (an Elf or an Orc) then they are subject to punishment by and brought before their own ethnarch in-line with the ancient treaties. The Prefects of each ward are very jurisdictional over their own areas, likewise, so are the ethnarchs over their own kind. This means that there is plenty of opportunities for corruption and unscrupulous dealings to be found and had in the streets and wards of the complex city of Yenara.

At approximately 400 pages First Watch is on the shorter side of the normal length of a fantasy book. Lucas packs a lot into the pages giving readers a story full of action and humour with plenty of twists and turns that take place over only a few days. I liked Lucas's style of writing and felt that for the most part, it flowed really well, with the story he is telling moving along at a decent and often riveting pace.

While the conclusion of the book all fits together, nicely closing off this first instalment in the series. I can understand why some readers might have an issue with the part of the ending that focuses on the Rem and Indilen saga. To some, it could be deemed as slightly cloying and sweet, two words that would normally have me reaching for the barf bucket, however! I found it was a pleasant change to see an author forgo the dark route for once of heaping untold misery on a character, who's to say what the future will hold in the further installments of the Fifth Ward series for Rem and Indilen but it made my dark and jaded heart happy to see that there's perhaps some light, hope and a chance for the pair (that is weird as I'm usually a miserable fucker who likes pain and suffering for characters in books).

I enjoyed my time spent reading First Watch. As an introduction to the partnership of Torval and Rem, it's a quality first outing for the pair and I'll look forward to continuing their adventures in the subsequent books by Lucas.

All in all, First Watch is a thrilling adventure, it's a buddy action movie masquerading as a fantasy book and I found it to be an awesome read.

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## Jeff says

I have in previous reviews referred to my enjoyment of bubble-gum fantasy and science fiction. These are novels that you can read in a day, don't require particularly deep thought, involve heroes that, if they were in a western, would be wearing white hats and riding a white horse, and villains that could give Darth Vader a run for his money.

Well, I've got a new one... and it was a hoot. The fantasy world itself is fairly generic (with some interesting twists on the standard fantasy races of Elf, Orc and Dwarf (no halflings yet)). The premise, a major fantasy city a la Lankhmar, Greyhawk, etc etc....

However, the characters are interesting and not simple stereotypes and the twists the author makes to the races elevates this above standard run of the mill fantasy novels.

However, a police novel should have some mystery. In this novel, the mystery is barely there (hence only 3 stars instead of 4) but the plot works well and I enjoyed it. I suspect that future novels, not having to set up the protagonists so much, will do a better job in keeping the readers guessing.

Will definitely read the next one.

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## Gavin says

This is billed as a buddy cop style story in a Lord of the Rings style fantasy world. I do not disagree with my fellow reviewers as that is pretty much what we get with this story. It is a little like the book version of the Netflix movie Bright. Only without any of the stuff that make Bright good and fun to watch!!!

There was nothing intrinsically wrong with the world Lucas created. The scale was not large as the action took place in a single city but I've never had an issue with small scale fantasy when it is done right. The populace was a mix of humans, dwarfs, elves, and orcs which is where all the Lord of the Rings comparisons obviously originated from. This sort of old school fantasy world make up is not my favourite but many authors have pulled it off well enough. The problem with the world Lucas created here was that he decided not just to keep the old school fantasy creatures he also kept the racism and misogyny that is rampant in books like Lord of the Rings. Which was super disappointing to say the least. The one spin we got was the the elves in this tale were sexual deviants who viewed consent in much the same as your average serial rapist. I could have lived without this fresh new take on the elven race!

I know what you guys are thinking: Gavin has it all wrong. This is actually a story offering a bit of scathing social commentary on issues like racism, misogyny, violence, and abuse of power. If only, my friends, if only. I'm afraid Lucas was 100% serious as there was not a bit of satire in sight! I actually had to pause to check this was published in 2017 and not 1917!

There was also zero humour to be had in general which was another big flaw in my eyes. All the best buddy cop movies are comedies so to have one devoid of humour was a strange choice.

Our "heroic" duo were actually supposed to be likeable characters that reader could emotionally invest in and root for throughout the story. Mind-boggling really when the most likeable of them, Rem, a young runaway

human noble, was an incredibly passive character who was prone to violence and spent his time leering at every female that entered his eyeline.

Here is a few classic Rem observations on woman:

*Her name was Indilen, and his short but pleasant conversation with her in the market had told him that she was far too polished and well-spoken to be just a barmaid.*

'Cause regular barmaids are just not good enough for our dashing hero.

*“You should’ve seen her, Torval. Auburn hair. Big brown eyes. And well-spoken, too. I can’t tell you what a turnoff a dull-witted woman is.”*

Yep, all peasants with their regional accents are "dull-witted". As a regular fantasy reader I like to think of moments of wisdom like this as Goodkind-isms!

*Without a single word— with all the simple, honest sincerity of a true and longtime friend— she threw her arms around Torval and held him. To the dwarf’s credit, he didn’t try to throw off the embrace or shun it— as many a dwarf might— but put his own long, thick arms around Aarna and held her, too. **It was a good thing he was sitting on his stool, otherwise, his head would’ve been buried in her ample bosom. Then again, maybe that would’ve assuaged his grief further.***

Guy is being comforted after just learning his best pal got murdered but good old Rem is daydreaming about the ways the woman could improve her comforting technique. Some might scream lecherous little perv but I'm sure Rem was just being compassionate lol!

*Rem suddenly found himself staring, watching the young lady as she smiled and flirted and freely laughed with a group of stonemasons as they placed their orders.*

*“Oh ho, see here,” Torval said beside him. “Some bull’s had his lead yanked.”*

Indeed. I'm not sure what it was with barmaids but Rem viewed every single one of them he met as if they were on the menu!

*The porter approached his mistress, bowed, and whispered into her perfect pointed ears. How Rem wanted to nibble on one of the soft, pale lobes at the base of those perfect, tapering ears ...*

I swear I thought Rem was going to have to ask for a pause mid crime interview so he could go for some "me time". This moment was the tip of the iceberg when it came to his leering at the sexy elfmaid!

*The Creeper turned his dark gaze on Rem. Suddenly, Rem felt violated. There was something in the robber baron’s eyes that made him profoundly uncomfortable. Rem felt naked ... leered at. Desperate to avert his gaze, Rem looked to Torval, silently asking if an introduction was in order.*

I almost died laughing at Rem's reaction to some crime baron looking at him. Not a hint of irony here which is what made it so hilarious considering all his leering at the female characters throughout the story!!! All the great moments of satire in this book were, sadly, unintentional.

If you thought Rem was bad wait until you get a glimpse of his lovely grouchy dwarven partner Torval:



*“Orctown’s just outside the North Gate, not far from here. They’ll drink where they can, providing the proprietors let them.”*

*“Hardly sporting,” Rem muttered. “If they’re not causing trouble.”*

*“Oh, they will,” Torval said, perhaps a little too bitterly. “They always do, the mouth-breathing bastards. Save your pity, boy. They don’t deserve it.”*

Yep, Orcs are just naturally awful in good old Torval's eyes and need to be segregated on principal!

*Hang the lot of them. If I had my way, they’d not be within a hundred miles of any civilized city.” He spat on the sawdust-strewn floor.*

Oh Torval, you grouchy old charmer!

*As the orc wailed, Torval proceeded to shatter its teeth and jaw with his fists. By the time he was done, the orc was no longer roaring or wailing ... it was sobbing, begging for mercy. Rem’s stomach turned. He wasn’t sure what sickened him more: the sound of Torval’s bare fists striking the orc’s thick flesh, again and again, without relent, or the ferocity of Torval’s hatred. His broad face was a mask of fury and contempt, but there was an infernal light in his eyes— a sort of feral satisfaction.*

If only this scene was a scathing observation on institutionalized racism and abuse of power by those in a position of authority! What it really is is just the climax of an action scene that saw a tiny dwarf beat the shit out of tons of orcs and some random humans in a bar brawl. We are actually supposed to feel sympathy for poor Torval as by this point in the story it has become clear that some nasty orc stole his lunch money or something along those lines in the days of yore so this is just him working through his feelings! Despite being "sickened" by Torval's actions Rem just sweeps this whole incident under the rug and never mentions it again. Not even a cursory half-arsed "you might have went a bit to far there, old pal" just right out with the brush and under the rug with it all!!!

*“Had I my wish,” Torval muttered, almost not to Rem at all, “we’d toss the lot of the knuckle-dragging sods into the Fires of the Forge Eternal and swill mead as they slowly burned.”*

"knuckle-dragging sods" you have to love a good ole bit of fantasy racism.

*Torval punched him. Rem hit the floor.*

Torval spends the first third of this book beating the shit out of his new partner. By the 30% mark I was just praying the guy did not have a spouse and family at home as it was clear violence was his answer to pretty much everything that even remotely annoyed him!

Some might call Torval a dangerously violent racist but I'm sure you guys agree he is just the typical grouchy, foul-mouthed, good at heart partner every naive good guy character needs in a buddy cop show!

The worst thing about First Watch, barring all the violence, racism and misogyny obviously, is the fact that Lucas actually had a mildly engaging writing style and that the slow burn murder/mystery story arc was decent enough to inspire a bit of interest, if not any real excitement. This could have been an OK read if not for all the stuff that drove me insane!

It is fair to say I found this one a bit disappointing. It might not have offered a scathing social commentary within the pages of the story but it did offer a scathing indictment on modern fantasy and the publishing

industry just by existing!!! I'm not sure if publishing has just went downhill in the last decade or if I'm just becoming less tolerant of racism and misogyny as I age. Either way I'm beginning to despair at the quality of books being churned out by the big fantasy publishers lately:(

Rating: 2.5 stars. Yeah, not even a 1 star rating as despite my massive rant I've actually read way worse than this story and it did have a few good moments. It just frustrated me so much that I ended up hating it!

Audio Note: I've never been much of a Simon Vance fan. I'm not sure what it is with the guys voices and accents but I find I'm more prone to disliking characters in my stories when he is on narration duties. Not that I can point to any single issue with his pronunciation or performance as a specific issue.

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## **Jaime says**

I was given this book as a result of winning a Giveaway. I was excited by the description, which is why I entered the giveaway, but I found the book hard to get through. I didn't hate it, but I didn't really like it either.

Many other reviewers called it a fast read, and it might have been, but I didn't have any emotional engagement with the characters at all so i was reluctant to pick it up. They just weren't that interesting to me, and it's not because I don't find buddy cop shows interesting. I am a big fan of Lethal Weapon and Law and Order, among others.

In trying to figure out what I don't like about it, I was thinking about older books, like The Gunslinger, by Stephen King, where they don't really explain emotional states of the main character, and there is a lot left up to you as a reader to figure out what the characters are thinking. If you aren't super insightful about the human psyche (which I am not) this can be a challenge to follow. This book seems like it has the opposite problem. I felt like there was too much explanation of Rem's emotional state, so much so that there was no mystery to him at all. I will say I have the problem with books that I only like them if they have characters I like, which is why I couldn't get through Game of Thrones (all the characters I liked kept dying), and why I won't read the sequel to Lev Grossman's The Magicians, because Quentin is horrible. Rem and Torval aren't horrible, they are just not interesting.

I also didn't like how the plot was nothing but short action scenes; like it was made to be a TV show or a movie where there can't be lulls or slow parts instead of book that can take it's time. It felt like the book was trying to squish all of the typical fantasy characters into one book when there really wasn't the space for it.

It was ok, decent story, and interesting concept, it just wasn't for me.

Also, I would have liked a map of the city at the front of the book. visualization, especially when the layout of the land/city is so critical to the story, is key.

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## **Roy says**

4.5\*

Take the middle earthian fantasy setting ( orcs, elves etc), combine it with buddy cop crime movies/novels (bad boys, starsky/hutch and lethal weapon) and you havr the First Watch. Very simple in setting, typecast

characters ( seen them before) but has great humour and a fun plot that made this addictive for me. There was something about the writing that made it so easy and fun to read. Maybe I was in the right mood for something a little lighter. Rem and Torval are put together to solve a murder in the city of Yenara. Obviously they dont get along, and so we experience the trials/tribulations of them solving this crime whilst dealing with eachother. Some will find it too formulaic or simple in nature, I just found it a very good fun read. I expect book 2 to be another crime novel set in the same city. Cant wait for the next one.

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### **Crazy4Books says**

I really wanted to love this book but I was kind of disapointed. The summary sounded great with all the different creatures. I thought I was getting a gritty dark fantasy but that just wasnt the case. I enjoyed some parts of it so it wasnt a bad book. I think I just wasnt in the right mood. Ive read enough adult fantasy this past month and was craving something different. It wasnt as dense or as slow as some adult fantasy Ive read but the world building felt a bit info dumpy with too many unnessecary details.

Maybe if the descriptions were written differently it wouldnt have bothered me so much. I wanted to know more about the good stuff not a bunch of random buildings and streets that werent described as anything special. It was tedious and just slowed down the pace. Not to mention, the long chapters made the pace even slower. I eventually started skimming the details that didnt seem important, like one of the fight scenes that seem to drag on. Despite the main character perspective being filled with world building I just didnt care about, I actually liked Rem.

I thought Rem was smart and curious. I also liked his Dwarf partner Torval. He was quite the character. I thought the scene with his family and his crush for the barmaid were really cute. I dont know why they didnt get a Mage from the Watch to check over more of the Dwarfs old partners belongings right away. Something he had on him or his clothes but maybe it doesnt work with clothes and everything he had on him was stolen. I dont know because the magic wasnt explained fully. I also didnt understand why they didnt question the barkeep where Rems crush disapeared from.

It took a while to find out what the point of the plot was. They mostly just walked around the city trying to keep the peace. Thankfully, about a third of the way through a mystery starts to develop. I love a mystery in my fantasy and scifi books. I was able to guess some of the plot twists. The story did get a bit more interesting and faster in the second half. I read mostly YA so Im not the best judge to decide how this compares to other adult fantasy. I think other people might enjoy it more than I did.

\*received in exchange for an honest review\*

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### **FanFiAddict says**

4.5/5

First thing that came to mind when I read the synopsis was Will Smith's new Netflix movie 'Bright'.

"Humans, orcs, mages, elves, and dwarves all jostle for success and survival in the cramped quarters of Yenara, while understaffed Watch Wardens struggle to keep its citizens in line."

Having read the book in its entirety, I still hold to that thought, except this isn't present day LA and swords replace guns. I also have to say that, for an Orbit publication, the cover left a bit to be desired. Not that the cover doesn't fit the story perfectly; just that it isn't one that would fly off of the shelves IMO. Having said all that, this is a great start to what I expect to be a wonderful series.

Rem, a young northerner who is new to the city of Yenara, wakes up in the dungeons to await whatever fate is to come. When an unforeseen opportunity arises to join the Watch, Rem realizes he has been given a second chance. When introduced to his new partner, Torval, Rem realizes he may have bitten off more than he can chew. You see, Torval is like Denzel Washington's character, Alonzo, in the movie 'Training Day'; he tends to put enforcement of the law above justice and public safety (and honestly, it comes off as a bit racist and unacceptable). Well, Torval's former partner has gone missing and the two must put their heads together, and their prejudices aside, in order to uncover the truth that lies hidden in Yenara's deepest, darkest pits.

To give you a picture, I think of Yenara sort of like King's Landing from GoT. The Watch is sort of like a Kings Guard/Night's Watch that patrol and serve the king's justice wherever deemed necessary. The difference being that there are five (5) Wards in Yenara and justice can only be dispensed in the Ward you are assigned. Cross the line and expect your lashings. There is a magic system in place, but it isn't a big focal point of the story except as a tool for healing. I'm sure this will be expanded in future books. The characters are also well drawn out and backstories are slowly explored, which gives the reader a sense of familiarity with the protagonists.

Lucas has written a fine book and Simon Vance killed the audio (per his norm). The only real issue I had was with world-building as there really wasn't any. Just about everything takes place in Yenara and the only glimpses of other cities you receive are races from other parts of the world. I expect Lucas to expand the "universe" in the sequels and believe he will open up adventures in other Wards, but we will wait to see. I would also like to know a bit more about Torval as there has to be something hidden underneath all of the anger he holds so close to his heart.

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## **The says**

I wanted to like this one, I really did, but there's sadly nothing memorable about it :(

The main characters seem bland and lifeless, despite what should have been an interesting pairing up of different cultures. There is no humour, and what might have been an attempt at such was poorly done. There are far too many lengthy descriptions of places and people that are really unnecessary, and the fight scenes go on for pages at a time, way too long. Again, unnecessary.

The tragedy is that this could have been a cracking good book; there's so much scope for entertainment, with many different races of folks, but the author doesn't make use of it. The story jumps about too much as well, and as of 60% (when I gave up) it still hadn't tied together in any way. There are many missed opportunities here.

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## **Sam says**

Supernatural buddy cop adventure. Do I have your interest now? I so enjoyed this book. I honestly thought it

was going to be more of a contemporary urban fantasy story, but it was in a legit fantasy world while focusing on the members of the city Watch. It felt like I was witnessing a D&D adventure, really, with all the different races and the inherent cliches and racial biases that we fantasy lovers are so familiar with. Rem was a cool protagonist and I actually enjoyed Torval's gruffness. I'm really looking forward to seeing what happens in this city/world next.

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## **Paul says**

I do so enjoy a good buddy cop movie – Tango and Cash, The Heat, The Nice Guys, the list goes on and on. The premise of *The Fifth Ward: First Watch* by Dale Lucas couldn't be simpler, take your favourite buddy cop movie and transpose it to a slightly different setting. Just exactly how would Riggs and Murtaugh fare if they had to square off against belligerent drunken orcs. Oh, and let's not forget the extra wrinkle that one of the partners happens to be a dwarf?

When we first meet Rem, he is a little adrift in his life. He has travelled to the big city in search of a change of direction but all he succeeds in doing is getting arrested for brawling while intoxicated. Fortunately, fate smiles upon him. Rather than end up serving a jail sentence he is given the chance to join the city watch. The rules of the watch are pretty simple – don't skim too much off the top, share your spoils with your fellow watchmen and make sure you've always got your partner's back.

The only problem Rem has? His new partner, Torval, can best be described as a gruff no-nonsense dwarf. Straight talking, to the point of bluntness, Torval does not suffer fools gladly. Hard as nails, Torval is all about the direct approach when it comes to police work. Subtlety really isn't anywhere even near his wheelhouse, never mind in it. I think it is fair to say the partnership of Rem and Torval gets off to a rocky start. This is the thing I liked most about this novel. At the heart of *First Watch*, it is this burgeoning relationship between the two officers that gives the narrative all its emotional weight. Torval is the canny veteran, more than a little world-weary and suspicious of just about everyone. Rem is the opposite, keen and, on more than one occasion, a little naive when it comes to the watchman's role in Yenara. Like all the best buddy cop movies, the new partners don't always get on, but once they realise they can rely on one another a trust starts to develop.

*First Watch* acts as the ideal introduction to Rem and Torval's world. Their investigation offers a perfect opportunity to discover the various races, colours and creeds that inhabit Yenara. The city is quite the cosmopolitan melting pot when it comes to fantasy races. Elves, orcs, dwarves, humans and more all mix with one another. It is up to the city watch to step in when necessary as, from time to time, these groups do have a tendency to butt heads. In Torval's case, this is a literal truth. He uses head-butts as a favoured integration technique. Put it this way, there are a fair number of people wandering around town with broken noses. Nothing better than seeing a Glasgow Kiss popping up in fantasy fiction. I can only assume dwarves are genetically predisposed to being hard-headed? \* Makes sense I suppose. It would be extremely handy having a hard head if there is a chance you are going to get caught in a cave-in for example.

*First Watch* is great fun. The characters are engaging, the plot whips along at a good pace and there is bucket loads of potential for this to develop into a rather wonderful ongoing series. A lot of the themes feel reassuring familiar, but the addition of the extra fantastical twist injects new life into a well-established formula. This is another thoroughly splendid debut from Orbit's class of 2017. It most definitely deserves a place on your bookshelves next to *Kings of the Wyld* by Nicholas Eames.

\*and possibly Glaswegian?

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## **Reggie Kray says**

DNF. A rated G Training Day. No thanks.

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## **Maddalena says**

### **3 & 1/2 STARS**

I received this novel from Orbit Books, in exchange for an honest review.

The theme of the more seasoned cop being teamed with a rookie he can't initially stand is one of the main staples of detective literature, movies and tv series, but no one had so far tried to translate it into a fantasy background, and *First Watch* is probably the first example of this mashup, one that works well exactly thanks to its unusual setting.

Rem is a young man of noble origins who was feeling constrained by his pampered life, and therefore decided to seek adventure out in the big, unknown world: he ends up in Yenara, a colorful city rich with possibilities – and dangers. Finding himself almost destitute, and incapable of landing any kind of work, Rem wakes up in the city's jail after a drunken brawl: a series of bizarre circumstances leads him to his enrollment in the Wardwatch – the local version of a police force – and teamed up with veteran Torval, a grizzled dwarf Warden whose partner was recently murdered in mysterious circumstances.

Yenara is a bustling city filled with many kinds of creatures, as humans of various races, orcs, dwarves and elves coexist more or less peacefully in its streets where crime and honest business rub elbows, and despite his privileged education Rem is poorly equipped to hold his own, as testified by his imprisonment. Even though he's still guilty of a measure of naiveté, he's also quick on his feet and this helps him gain some points with Torval, whose irritable demeanor hides a good, honest soul, and a person ready to grant his new partner some slack.

The two start their association by investigating the murder of Torval's former mate, and in so doing they gather some unexpected clues concerning a series of disappearances and killings that might be related: it's quite amusing to observe how bureaucracy and territorial politics are a constant, no matter the time period or the place. As we are used to seeing in modern police procedurals, there are rules and limitations that hinder an investigation and sometimes force an officer of the law to go against them, ruffling a few feathers, in order to see justice done, and in this *First Watch* is no exception.

As the two unlikely partners move across the city in search of answers we learn much about Yenara, which appears like a crucible of races and customs that come together in a sort of free zone where everything is possible, everything is allowed (if you hold the right license...), making the inevitable parallel with modern New York – the city that more than any other one is the perfect place for a police story – quite clear. The pace is fast and the story moves along between brawls and fights to the death, with a few sidelines of attempted murder on the two partners, rolling nicely toward the final showdown, one that however promises more adventures for the two unlikely – but by now well adjusted – partners.

If I enjoyed this story, and found myself often smiling at Rem's and Torval's antics, still I could not avoid finding a few details that spoiled the overall flavor of the novel. My main point of contention is with the descriptions: the author is quite fond of adjectives, indeed, never employing just one where two – and sometimes three – can be crammed in to sketch any given person or object. So you are not simply told that someone looks despondent, but rather that he sports a sad, mournful, desolate face; or a shady character might look hostile, aggressive and pugnacious, instead of simply truculent (the examples are mine, not directly drawn from the text, but can give a good idea of what I found). Such... richness of detail is not necessarily a bad thing, but when it's constantly repeated with every instance in which a description is required, it becomes distracting and ultimately slows the narrative flow down.

Something similar happens every time Rem sees someone, or witnesses an event, because in his mind he sort of makes up a back story for the action being shown, with no clues whatsoever about where it all came from: if he sees someone hurrying along with a worried face (again, the example is mine), he thinks it might be a clerk who has forgotten to run an important errand for his master, and is afraid of the consequences. Since none of these flights of fancy are useful to the economy of the story, are not substantiated by the narrative, nor are they of any interest to the readers since they concern the story's... extras, they are more distractions than background features, and the sheer repetition proves more bothersome than helpful.

And last, the final revelation - while interesting and bolstered by a quite epic battle between the Wardens and their quarry - is offered through lengthy explanations by the bad guy in chief, a method I always found mildly annoying, not unlike the main staple of many B-movies where the Evil Mastermind illustrates his Dastardly Plans to the captive hero before killing him - which never happens because the hero always manages to even the odds. Finding this narrative device here damped a little my enjoyment of the story and somehow ended it on a less than enthusiastic note.

Nevertheless, these are all personal considerations and should be taken as such: on the whole, First Watch is an entertaining read whose best feature is the relationship between two polar opposites, whose differences give origin to an engaging story that will put a smile on your face. And sometimes this is more than enough...

Originally posted at SPACE AND SORCERY BLOG

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