



# A Cast of Stones

*Patrick W. Carr*

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The Fate of the Kingdom Awaits the Cast of Stones

In the backwater village of Callowford, roustabout Errol Stone is enlisted by a church messenger arriving with urgent missives for the hermit priest in the hills. Eager for coin, Errol agrees to what he thinks will be an easy task, but soon finds himself hunted by deadly assassins. Forced to flee with the priest and a small band of travelers, Errol soon learns he's joined a quest that could change the fate of his kingdom.

Protected for millennia by the heirs of the first king, the kingdom's dynasty nears its end and the selection of the new king begins--but in secret and shadow. As danger mounts, Errol must leave behind the stains and griefs of the past, learn to fight, and discover who is hunting him and his companions and how far they will go to stop the reading of the stones.

2014 Carol Award Winner for Speculative

## A Cast of Stones Details

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Author : Patrick W. Carr

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# From Reader Review A Cast of Stones for online ebook

## Carrie says

When I first picked up saw this book, I thought it sounded interesting. When I won a copy through goodreads first reads, I was super excited. Some time between winning and getting my book, a friend told me the publishing company published religious books and I should beware because blah blah blah. Immediately I was thrown off balance. I have no problem reading books by religious authors -no matter their chosen religion- or even books about religion if in the mood for them. But I get very annoyed when I read a book for the story and spend how many pages getting stuff shoved down my throat while the author is up on their soap box preaching to the readers. I want a story and I want to be entertained. That said -and really this is directed at that friend and others who may have similar concerns- THIS BOOK IS NOT LIKE THAT. Sure religion is a big focal point in the world the characters live in, but the author handles it respectfully. This book is so much more than that. To call it simply a christian book is not giving the author enough credit for this fascinating world and intriguing characters inside the pages. \*glares pointedly at said friend\*

Errol, oh what can I say about him. From page one, I was embarrassed by him. I didn't want to be in his head.

My wordless conversation with my book went something like this:

- Oh my god, really? How long is this book? \*checks page count\* \*sigh\*
- He's a drunk this early in the day? How old is he supposed to be?
- Yup let's get more money for alcohol.....why did I want to read this again?
- Author, I don't know you enough to give you the benefit of the doubt..... \*blinks\* Ooohhh! An assassin!
- \*watches as Errol flees for his life\* For a drunk, I think he's got more skills than me. \*would have so totally fallen to her death\*

\*later on\*

- Whoo hooo! You go Errol! Kick his butt! Yes! Whoo hoo!
- What!? Ah! You jerk! How dare you treat him that way! You cow, you!

\*skips more time\*

- \*totally unaware she just read 400+ pages in a few hours\* But why?!? Why did it have to end? Just when it was getting good! I want more...
- When does the next book come out? ooo July supposedly...ok that's not a *bad* wait.

Somewhere along the way, Errol won my -what's the best word?- loyalty maybe? Respect for sure. When your the town drunk where can you go but up? Unless it's six feet under, but I digress. Watching Errol grow and learn was a wonderful adventure. I have liked characters and then turned around and hated them for something they did in a story. But I have never before disliked a character in the beginning only to love them in the end. And that is one of the things I love most about this book.

The story pretty much follows the standard fantasy hero's journey. Even so, there is so much woven into the story that it's easy to get lost and swept away in the pages. Without spoiling things I cannot make half the comments about the plot I wish to, except to say that I am looking forward to reading the next book.

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## Rosanna says

### Update

I've finished this trilogy today and decided to post my full review of all 3 books here (spoiler free) since this is where it all started.

### WOW! WOW! And WOW!

This is one of the best trilogies I've ever read. It's definitely in my top 3. I even decided to put a new category in my bookshelves for "favorite trilogies" just because of this book.

### People! You need to trust me and read this.

Why?

Because it has everything a reader of fantasy/fiction loves. (Well, at least for me)

**Mature writing.** The writing for me was damn near flawless. The dialogue, descriptions of places, people and things were just right. Nothing too much, nothing too little. I could feel, see, hear and almost taste words coming off the pages.

**Mature characters.** There's always that book that promises a strong hero or heroine that always ends up as "annoying" and "forced". Well, not the case here -although the author never promised such, he nonetheless delivered such heroic characters that made me feel joyful, tearful and throw out few fist pumps.

I've never read such strong men who could show such a tender side at times, and have it not feel forced or awkward.

I've never read two heroines who were so strong and kick ass, yet.. Still very much ladies. That was brilliant.

**Fast paced.** I'm sure you've heard before how a book grips you from the first page to the last. Well, I'm here to repeat that cliché. Except, I'll say it differently. From the very first chapter I was *Completely. Sucked. In.* it lasted until the final page of the third book! It did not in anyway subside. At. All. This is one of those trilogies that you have to read the books back to back, because you just can't get the story or characters out of your head. Yes, it's that good.

**Incredible story line.** Now that would be a spoiler, so.... Not going there. Read the book(s) yes, all of them. :)

**Romance.** I see you romance readers -you dirty girls on my friends list- \*points finger\* thinking "woohoo! Smexy time!" It's not that kind of romance, but I promise you'll fall in love with the development. ;) trust me....

**Perfect execution.** This trilogy was well thought out. Everything came at just the right time. Information that was withheld, and driving me nuts with angst, was released just so... And it was spaced throughout the entire trilogy, not just BOOM! All at the end, and holy crap what an ending o\_O

**Angst.** "Turn up the angst!" that was a quote from, Tom. My buddy reading partner in crime. Thanks for the

BR, Tom. I'm so glad I had someone to vent to! Lol

**Twists and turns.** there was plenty of twists and turns throughout the series. Some you can see coming and others, not at all. Regardless, I was completely entertained.

**Religious politics** I found the religion and political aspect of this book amazing. At first, I wasn't sure what to expect. In fact, I wasn't even sure I wanted to read this because of that. Um... That would have been a HUGE MISTAKE! Don't make that your mistake. This is first and foremost... A fantasy, with a nice twist on religious power.

**POVs.** I have to throw this in here because I absolutely love how the POVs were introduced in this trilogy. I wish more authors would do this!

I don't consider this a spoiler BTW but if you don't want to know about POVs, skip this last part.

Book one we're introduced to Errol. He is the main character and the POV -which is in 3rd person past tense- (my absolute favorite) is his through out book one. We're introduced to important,secondary characters as well. And I must say, I loved them. Sometimes secondary characters can be underdeveloped, however, not the case here.

Book two we get 2 POVs and I loved it because we're already very familiar with the other character and love them.

Book three -the most intense by far- we have 3 POVs and let me tell you. It was perfect!!

What a gem I found in these three books. Truly. I have found a new favorite fantasy author. I will be looking forward to his next book.

That is all, folks.. :) happy reading. And go read this book!

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**original post**

This is the first book by this author that I've read, and I loved it! I'll definitely continue this series.

Great writing

Great story (seemed very original)

Great characters

It held my attention from beginning to end. I would say it was pretty fast paced. The world building is easy to follow as was the religious aspect.

I believe it's still free on amazon, but if it weren't, I'd definitely buy it.

<http://www.amazon.com/Cast-Stones-Sta...>

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## **Kat Heckenbach says**

I really wanted to like this book. I heard so many great things about it, how it's what Christian speculative fiction fans have been waiting for...

I made it a few chapters and decided to pass on the rest of the book. The characters didn't really jump off the page, and the story world was rather sparse. What drove me to completely give up was the redundancy. The main character is a drunk--I get it. No need to reference it every third line. Overall it just felt that there was too much focus in areas like that, and not enough in building the story world.

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## **Ron says**

Excellent epic fantasy. Carr's "hero", Errol, is as unheroic as the village drunk--because that's what he is. Therefore he at least has an excuse for his early stupidity and unwillingness to get involved in the issues of the greater world. But, true to type, almost nothing is what it seems.

The entire narrative is written tightly from Errol's point of view. The reader may suspect more, but is told only what Errol sees, hears, smells and experiences. Unlike so much contemporary fantasy Carr provides meaningful motive for most of Errol's choices. And, even more rare, suitable guidance and opportunity to grow in the course of his high fantasy journey. There's good and evil out there, and choices matter.

All the more notable as the author's first published fiction.

A very good read.

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## **Ariana Pedigo says**

Praises to Deas for Patrick W. Carr, for this excellent and audacious novel!

Errol, a boy who has wandered far from the path and is a habitué for ale drowning within the barrel, agrees to carry a letter to the hermit priest (Martin) in the hills, for a coin which he already plans to use on ale to keep himself glazed for a week. Little does he realize that this action would change his entire life.

So begins an adventure which covers 432 pages of excitement and invaluable lessons. Errol meets clever and kind friends who help him along the way. (view spoiler)

Through the entire book your gripping the book and bearing your teeth at anyone who tries to take it away from you, because it really is an intense read! Errol faces danger at every corner, deadly assassins, a malus, horrific monsters (ferrals) which you can hear snarling in your ears as you turn each page of the book.

The book, is filled with quite a bit of action, so it is understandable that someone who doesn't like action and violence, they would most likely not enjoy reading this book very much.

I loved the fact this was a Christian Fiction book, the churches, priests, abbots, and monks, were positively fascinating! Even if you aren't religious, I'd still say, this is a good book to read anyway, especially if you love fantasy fiction at all!

There are so many twists and turns in the plot making you wish you didn't have to eat and sleep to stay alive, because the only thing you want to do is finish the book!

I kept waiting for an anti-climax to the story, but it didn't come! There is hardly a moment of this book in which any fantasy lover would not enjoy!

I cannot wait for book two!

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### **Adam Collings says**

This story centers around a very unlikely hero. Eroll is a drunk. His life consists of earning enough coin to spend his nights in the ale barrel. When he is unexpectedly thrust into a dangerous game of crown and church politics he is forced to rise above his weaknesses and become a new man.

I loved the protagonist of this book. We spend the entire story deep in his point of view, which makes him immediately sympathetic, despite his many flaws. Seeing his growth and transformation is a lot of fun.

The book features a very Christian-like religion. The similarity was clearly intentional and nicely done. The "magic system" of the book was closely linked into the theology of the world and draws inspiration from Christian spirituality. I enjoyed learning more about it as details were gradually let out through the progression of the book.

A Cast of Stones features strong characters who I grew attached to, and a thrilling plot. The book ties up its immediate conflicts but leaves plenty of room for sequels. I look forward to reading more in this world.

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### **Allison Reid says**

#### **Excellent Christian Fantasy**

This fast-paced adventure centers around a most unlikely hero, chased by demons of his own making as well as those set against him by unseen enemies. There is plenty of intrigue to go with the action, so that you never really know what is coming next. This is a great read you won't want to put down--I am eagerly awaiting the next book!

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### **Jamie says**

A little over halfway through the book I realized I was going to be upset at the end. Why? Because this was only book one of the series. Meaning things weren't going to be completely resolved. To which I say Boo!

Reason #895 why I like to wait until a series is complete before I start it. I can be impatient on occasion and waiting isn't really one of my gifts. Just ask my parents how awesome road trips were with me in the back seat. And now I have to wait for-ev-er until the next one comes out. Unlike. Or until July, but still. Unlike!

But that's a good thing for the author because it means the first one kicked off right!

*A Cast of Stones* (The Staff and the Sword) by Patrick W. Carr dives right in with suspense and action from the very beginning. I also kept waiting for a dragon to show up (thanks to The Inheritance Cycle), but no dragons in this one folks. There's adventure, friendship and mystery, along with a medieval fantasy vibe. I was left wondering where the journey will go and how Errol will continue to change. There's a couple characters I'm not sure what to think about yet either. Are they too good to be really good? Will two of the characters fall in love? Will power corrupt some?? Even a week after I finished, I was still pondering these questions. I'm looking forward to the second book and what it will reveal!

If you don't like fantasy medieval novels, I still think you should give this one a shot. You never know! And if you do, I believe you'll find *A Cast of Stones* enjoyable, entertaining and a great start to an exciting saga. There's characters you think you know, but you don't, ones who turn out to be friend and not foe and then a few where you'll just have to wait to find out with the next book. It leaves you waiting for the next release!

In the backwater village of Callowford, Errol Stone's search for a drink is interrupted by a church messenger who arrives with urgent missives for the hermit priest in the hills. Desperate for coin, Errol volunteers to deliver them but soon finds himself hunted by deadly assassins. Forced to flee with the priest and a small band of travelers, Errol soon learns he's joined a quest that could change the fate of his kingdom.

Protected for millennia by the heirs of the first king, the kingdom's dynasty is near an end and a new king must be selected. As tension and danger mount, Errol must leave behind his drunkenness and grief, learn to fight, and come to know his God in order to survive a journey to discover his destiny.

(I was given a copy for my honest review by Bethany House Publishing)

booksandbeverages.wordpress.com

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## **Sarah says**

Well... this book was just confusing. I would be following along fine, and then I would feel like someone had skipped ahead one minute and expected me to still know what was going on. I decided to read something else.

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## **Shantelle says**

*A Cast of Stones* by Patrick W. Carr started out interesting enough ... it even really captivated me at certain points; but it ended up just not being the greatest fantasy read for me, personally.

It starts out with a young man, named Errol, getting thrown out of a tavern. He shortly thereafter meets a church messenger, and agrees to go on an errand for the man. After all, it means he'll be paid. And pay



means more ale. However, Errol gets much, much more than he bargained for; in fact, his world is thrown into chaos.

It was quite a story. After all, our POV character is a drunkard. And the world of *A Cast of Stones* is obviously well thought out. There's so much going on. Mysteries and secrets and stunning revelations. Vicious fighters, and greedy men abound. The king grows weak, and someone needs to take his place before it's too late. There was a lot of character development, which was great. The fighting scenes were done well - enough to have you quite interested; but not get tired of one fight after another. The plot, themes, world ... were intricate.

Perhaps that was part of the problem for me. I love fantasy. But at times it just gets too in-depth, and I'm suddenly in over my head, like, *What are they even talking about? Can we move onto something else?*

\*Ahem\* Yeah.

I find that I don't really prefer books with just a male POV character. Why? Um, maybe because I'm a girl? I just understand women better! Most of the time. Anyway, as much as I grow to adore a lot of main characters that are guys (even Errol wasn't so bad); I end up getting a little weary of not having any female companionship. I love when there's a girl character that I really understand her emotions, and actions ... I relate to her. I can put myself in her shoes. And there was just Errol in *A Cast of Stones*. As I said, he was a good character, and went on quite a journey. I would even like to see more of him! But I just connect better with books that have some female main characters as well.

That being said, I do *not* understand Errol and his reactions to girls. He goes here and ... *Wow, what a beautiful, amazing woman!* Then he leaves and goes someone else, and meets another beautiful, amazing woman! And by the end of the books, there's at least three girls who are either pining after him, or he's pining after them. I don't know. After awhile, I'm feeling like, *Okay, young man, guard your heart ... and protect theirs!* I know Errol was young ... erm, sort of? ... and was still growing in a sense; coming out of being a drunkard. But it still frustrates me when the guy forgets the pretty girl he kissed that fast, because a new pretty girl is in his life. Ah. Rant over.

The lot casting unnerved me a little at times. It's kind of hard to judge who's really a good person. And is the church good? Also, there was some violence and gore, and perhaps some frightening scenes.

Overall, this book made a 3.5 stars. After finally connecting, I thought I'd enjoy it more; but then the end kind of fell flat for me. I'd still like to see what happens with Errol, so I plan to finish this series someday!

\*smiles\*

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## Kim says

Note: I received an ARC of this book from the LibraryThing Early Reviewers Program.

I enjoyed this book! Mr. Carr is a very talented writer. The story was imaginative and kept a nice pace, not too slow and not too fast and an easy read. The story line was easy to follow – maybe a little too easy (not really any surprises and was a little predictable). I was a little worried after receiving the book, reading that Mr. Carr was a member of a Christian writing group and that it was listed as a Christian fiction, that it might get out of my comfort zone but it stayed pretty typical for fantasy writing and did not become preachy at all.

Actually knowing that it is listed as Christian fantasy may have spoiled it a bit for me at the beginning of the book as I was probably waiting for it but once I realized it wasn't going to become anything that I wouldn't normally read, I relaxed and enjoyed the read. There are a few typos/spelling errors that are now probably too late to fix. They are a little annoying, but nothing so bad that I wouldn't recommend the book.

I really enjoyed this story and the main character Errol has caught my interest and I look forward to continuing to read this series.

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## **Paula Vince says**

Wow, what a journey!

Everyone recognises Errol Stone as the village drunk, and he's not yet nineteen years old. His one ambition is to earn a bit of money for his next fix of ale, so he won't fall apart. When a strange messenger wants a secret parcel delivered to Pater Martin, the reclusive priest, Errol is quick to volunteer. He knows the pay will keep sobriety at bay for at least another week, but comes to wish he hadn't bothered.

He never expects to be plunged, unwittingly, into the dangerous tension of church and politics. Opening his mouth to remark that he can see writing on a strange carved stone is his first big mistake. He is whisked away as a pawn in some weird game he can't understand, along with Liam, the village good boy, who seems perfect in every way. While he can understand why Liam, who can apparently do no wrong, may be desirable, he's at a loss to figure out why he's being dragged along too.

It's satisfying to see a main character develop from a pathetic alcoholic and self-proclaimed waste of space to a sharp and quick-witted young man who must remain on his guard every moment. Every time I picked up the book and said, "I wonder what Errol's up to," it was bound to involve intense intrigue, adrenaline and many secrets. There are the secrets he kept himself, which gradually unfold helping us to understand why he became a drunk at the age of 14. Then there are other secrets which he remains clueless about. Even the friends who want to train him up to be a reader of cast lots don't know. We don't know either. It seems only the baddies know.

The great question keeping us turning the pages is often uttered from the mouths of many different characters. 'What makes you so important, boy?' If only we knew. At a loss to answer, Errol doesn't have a lot of time to think about it, between having to defend himself from vicious murder attempts.

At the finish, my first move was to get hold of the second book, 'The Hero's Lot' on my kindle, as quickly as possible. It feels as if I'm under a compulsion, as Errol was to get to the city of Erinon. This book should come with a warning, "Don't start unless you're prepared to put time aside for an epic trilogy." If the next two books are anything like this one, I'm sure it will be.

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## **Lydia Redwine says**

This trilogy is my favorite trilogy of **all time** (at least, when it comes to books.) It is also my third favorite series of all time, so obviously on this reread I would give this book 5 stars and tell you why.

When I first heard of *A Cast of Stones* I pictured it as a typical Medieval fantasy book (which is in some ways) and thus wasn't super into reading it. BUT it was free on iBooks so I picked it up and well...the rest is history.

First are some minor issues I have with the story despite my immense love:

- This book **MAJORLY needs a map**. I can't even fathom why this book *doesn't* have a map. It seems absolutely necessary BUT ITS NOT HERE FOLKS. Apparently a map wasn't included because this world is an exact copy of England and its provinces with different names BUT STILL a map is needed my friends.

- God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (the trinity) are known deities in this book (they're called Deas, some name that starts with E that I can't remember and Auae) but they're kinda glossed over like they're just *there*. I don't necessarily have a problem with this its just that this world very much screams Medieval Catholism/the church at the time which I'm not a huge fan of in fantasy because I SEE IT SO MUCH. The church is a huge part of the way the main culture in the world runs but the roots of the church are kinda left on the sideline. I would think that the author would represent it that way because that's how it was in Medieval times but I would have also expected maybe the main character to think more deeply about it. I would expect that in a world where the church matters much that the main character would at least have a moment to think somewhat deeply about its roots. BUT NOPE.

- Another little squabble I have is with the **world building**. It's certainly an interesting world with many places and neat names but it all seems somewhat underdeveloped and complicated in places where we do have information (which is the main reason I chose to reread this.) Rereading this DID help and it might have been better had I HAD A MAP IN THE FIRST PLACE. (I seriously considered drawing my own map but would have probably gone mad in the process.)

BUT, my friends, here is why I love this book:

- The **writing itself is excellent**, and I would have never guessed that this was Carr's debut had I read it without knowing as such. The word choice, sentence flow, and dialogue is all written very well.

- This series includes a lot of **adult characters**. I'm not entirely sure this series is marketed as young adult, but I kinda assumed it was since the main character, Errol, is a teenager. (Well 19...but still.) But it is important to have adult characters because hey, adults actually do stuff. They aren't always **A)** useless or **B)** tyrannical leaders or **C)** there just so they can die to spurn the main teenage character on which is what a lot of YA novels would have us believe.

- Other than Martin, Luis, and Cruk (aka the main adult characters) there are some other interesting characters. My favorite side character is **Rokah** who is great because **A)** she's kick-butt awesome **B)** her sole propose is NOT to be the love interest for the main character. **C)** she's cunning and smart. **D)** she's witty and humorous. And **E)** she's surrounded by men but holds her own. **SO BASICALLY I LOVE HER.**

- Naaman Ru aka the caravan master is someone readers will enjoy hating.

- Errol Stone** is the main character. He's a drunkard at the beginning of the story which is a rare but good representation to have in literature. His character development (including his journey to forsake his addiction) is superb. He is flawed and an impressive lead character. This would also be a good time to

mention that he is my favorite male character. **OF ALL TIME.** Hands down. He's also immensely adorable and doesn't quite know what to do around the ladies. He has a dark past that haunts him but he's not a brooding bad boy either. **ALSO.** There's a prophecy about who's gonna be the next King and all **BUT** Errol's part in the story is very very very different and interesting.

This book and series as a whole is unique on sooooo many levels and here are some of the reasons:

- In about every fantasy book the characters battle with swords (there are swords for those of you who eat that kinda combat all up) but Errol uses a staff which is **A)** something I hadn't read before this and **B)** actually pretty dang interesting. Normally, when reading fantasy I kinda skim the combat scenes **BUT IN THIS BOOK** every single combat scene was actually a lot of fun to read about! It was interesting and unpredictable as well as thrilling.
- The **magic** is unique too. But it's also difficult to explain so all I'll say is it involves **A)** casting lots to tell the future. **B)** certain people who can cast and read lots. And **C)** it has rules to it and plays a huge part in the story. I'll leave it up to you to discover the magic in its entirety.
- The world building though underdeveloped at times is actually quite interesting in some portions. The names are my favorite part because literally every name of every place was great!
- The plot tends to move slower than most fantasy books, but I actually quite like the pace of this book. **ALOT** happens in the last fourth and brings the book to a cliffhanging end.

*// "Some men are more easily broken by kindness than censure." //*

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## **Melanie says**

I did not expect to enjoy A Cast of Stones as much as I did. I tried reading this a while ago and couldn't get into it, so I set it aside. I decided to try it again recently and this time around I really enjoyed it. Once I got a little bit into the story, I was intrigued and kept wanting to read more.

I thought the fantasy world was written very well. I felt like the characters and setting were real and believable. The plot was interesting and held my attention.

All in all, I liked A Cast of Stones a lot and recommend it. I'm looking forward to reading the next book.

\*Disclosure of Material Connection: I received one or more of the products or services mentioned above for free in the hope that I would mention/review it on my blog. I was not required to give a positive review, only my honest opinion - which I've done. All thoughts and opinions expressed are my own and I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will be good for my readers. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.\*"

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## Allison says

*A Cast of Stones* is a Medieval-style fantasy with a Church, priests and monks as a major power in the kingdom. But other than the similarities to the religious background of Medieval Europe, the history and the magic of casting divine lots is unique enough that I felt like it took place in an unknown fantasy world. Although much was standard high fantasy fare (e.g. unknown peasant protagonist), this was still different enough to feel fresh to me.

The main character is a 'boy' of 18 who has been an alcoholic for several years. I found Errol hard to like at the beginning because he was always drowning himself in ale and didn't care too much about anything. But as the story progressed, he grew and changed, and I really began to enjoy his tale.

About half way through - once Errol came out of his alcohol-daze and began to understand what was going on around him - I had a hard time putting the book down. All-in-all, a quick, enjoyable fantasy, and I'm looking forward to the next one. This is the kind of find that makes reading galleys worthwhile.

*\*\*Received free arc for review.*

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