



Yendi

Steven Brust

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Vlad Taltos tells the story of his early days in the House Jhereg, how he found himself in a Jhereg war, and how he fell in love with the wonderful woman, Cawti, who killed him.

Yendi Details

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Author : Steven Brust

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From Reader Review Yendi for online ebook

Kati says

I love all the intrigue in Brust's books. There's always some twist, something you just don't expect that makes the whole plot click in place and it's awesome. Though it makes me a bit sad that Vlad still doesn't trust his Dragaeran friends - Morrolan, Alieria, Kiera, Sethra, Kragar... - even after they saved his life so many times, even though he was told how scared they were for him. I think that Vlad's hate of the Dragaerans in general sometimes clouds his judgment. Also, I never really saw the love between Vlad and Cawti. It never clicked for me, this part of the plot. I always considered Cawti a cold fish, to be perfectly honest. But other than that, it's an excellent book!

Geoff says

I've certainly become a fan of Brust's Taltos series through the first two books - Jhereg and Yendi. They are fun & light reads. The plot seems straightforward and the characters are a bit one-dimensional but it all just comes off as fun, rather than boring or lazy.

This is a prequel to the first book in the series. I'm usually weary of prequels since there can be a loss of some of the suspense in a novel when you know part of its future. But it's not a big deal here because, for the most part, it's a narrowed scope plot that never threatens to get too into the way of what is established in the first book.

I had issues with two *slightly* major things in this book: the love story and the villains plot. The romance between Vlad & Cawti is turned up to 11. It goes from 0 to 100 in about one chapter. And given the circumstances of their introduction to each other, a little bit of healthy restraint would have been completely reasonable. The ultimate villain's plot in this novel is ridiculously convoluted. There is a built-in reason but it's not properly developed throughout the novel. When it's revealed at the end, it's presented as a known fact of the world but then the story moves on. Neither of these things detracted from my enjoyment of the book though. I'm not worried about the romantic side in future books but, hopefully, major plot revelations are more developed in the future.

I'll be looking to this series in the future whenever I need a shorter fantasy fix.

Rebecca says

In the Empire, the Yendi are known for their Byzantine plotting, and the plotting here is certainly Byzantine.

When viewed with a little distance, it's remarkable how well Brust makes us care about things that we don't really see at all. We know Easterners, but at no point visit the lands they're from, or even spend much time with ones who are not fully assimilated into Dragaeran society. Our viewpoint character is a human, with a normal human lifespan. As such, we're almost completely uninvolved in Dragon house politics, because they're unrelated to Vlad and mostly unseen by him. Everything happens over a couple of months. And yet somehow, the plot turns on events from millenia ago, complex Dragon politics, planned invasions of the

Easterners, and lifespans in which something that happened one or two human generations ago were practically yesterday.

This is not a criticism. Brust does actually make us care, not because he gives us any reason to care about any of these things, but because we care about how they would impact Vlad. Who continues to be irrepressible, sardonic, and entirely too clever for his own good.

Susan says

Ouch. The second Vlad book, which is actually a prequel to the first one, kind of falls on the floor and goes *klunk*.

The first 100 pages are really exciting. We're thrown into a territory war between Vlad, now a small-time underworld boss, and his rival. But there's a mystery afoot that involves his powerful noble friends and the woman who will someday be his wife, and here's where it breaks down. After Brust builds up all this tension with the escalation of the mob war, he digresses into scene after scene of flat exposition between Vlad and his friends, all the while making lame excuses as to why Vlad's territory isn't going up in flames while he's sitting down to tea in Morrollan's castle.

Fortunately, the future books are better.

Mjhancock says

Call it a 3.5. It's the second book in Brust's Vlad Taltos series, which I'm going to take a stab at describing as Sherlock Holmes-esque stories featuring gangsters and set in a fantasy world with magic and fantasy races and such. In particular, in an atypical move for a fantasy series, Yendi takes place at an earlier point in Taltos' history than the first book in the series, at an earlier point in his career as a minor crime boss. The Taltos series is odd--well, it's odd for a lot of reasons, but for the moment, I'd like to talk about Taltos himself. Vlad's an assassin and a criminal, but Brust manages to make him sympathetic. Part of that is, in this story at least, he's clearly the one reacting to someone else's aggression; it also takes some of the sting out of being an assassin figure when Brust sets up that this is a world where resurrection magic is generally common. That makes death more of a strongly worded complaint than the end of a situation. Finally, we don't actually see him shaking up people for protection money or so forth very often; generally, he's just trying to unravel why and how people are trying to kill him.

In this particular case, there's a man named Laris who's attempting to usurp Vlad's territory in their mutual crime syndicate, and preferably do so over Vlad's dead body. The means to accomplish the latter becomes clear when Vlad is attacked by a string of assassins, the first of which being a pair that includes the human Cawti--which readers of the first book will remember as Vlad's eventual wife. Some revelations emerge about Cawti's partner, and Vlad begins to suspect Laris' backer may have a different goal than he originally imagined. The confrontation with Laris is actually quite anticlimactic when it happens; for Brust, the point of the book is more Vlad's pursuit of the solution to the strange array of facts he's been presented with. There are also a number of the usual nice Brust touches that elevate the book beyond just a whodunnit with dragons. Vlad is noticeably shaken at several points by the attempts on his life, which is nice; too often,

death becomes something blaze in fantasy, and to take a moment to step back humanizes Vlad quite a bit. He also gets a nice speech in on racism in the Empire, on what it means to grow up among people who think you're a mindless savage--nothing particularly new, but worth reminding the reader, since Vlad spends so much time with friends who treat him as an exception. And the relationship with Cawti is very interesting. It's almost comically speedy, but Brust makes it believable, within the confines of the storyworld he's set up. There's nothing quite as memorable as the description of what it's like to have a knife at your throat that opened the first book, but it's a good read, all the same.

[Name Redacted] says

Oddly, the second book in the series is set before the first, which becomes a tradition for Brust's "Vlad Taltos" novels. Every other book, starting with the first, is set in the "present", while the rest are all set in the past... So the order should be: 4, 8, 2, 8, 13, 1, 3...

Also, Brust's writing is rather like Sanderson's in that there is very little description to it. You never really know what anyone or anything looks, feels, smells, tastes, etc. like; the action is bare bones, and even the dialogue tends to be extremely simple. The difference is that Brust can pull it off because his novels are usually 200 pages or less (I haven't read the other three he wrote), so you don't really FEEL how empty they are -- they're fun pulp set in a sci-fantasy world, and that's all they need to be.

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

If I had to sum up the Vlad Taltos series in one word, it would be: unconventional. The writing voice is all over the place, flitting between past and present, from in-the-moment to addressing the reader directly. It's as if Steven Brust took one look at the rules of writing and said, "eff those, I'm going to write however I please." In my opinion, that's playing with fire, but some of the most poignant writers take those risks all the time (I'm a firm believer that you must know them well first to break them well). There are places where I thought he took it a little too far, and the heavy voice definitely takes a bit to get used to, but his odd writing style is part of what makes the story so interesting.

Brust also throws you in the deep end of this world to either sink or swim, explaining precisely nothing about the dozens of references he makes throughout the story. He will throw in an occasional anecdote here and there, but for the most part you're on your own. The first 25% of Yendi required a lot more concentration than normal and I didn't start enjoying the story until I got (mostly) acclimated.

My favorite thing about the series so far is what feels to me like a merging of genres. It's definitely a fantasy world but it's presented with a mystery-driven plot and overlay of humor that reads more like an urban fantasy. I will definitely be continuing on. I plan to use this series as a palate-cleanser every time I get sick of the same old stuff.

Recommendations: Venture into this series with a "just go with it" mentality and be prepared for the atypical. I'd hand this to anyone who might appreciate a fantasy/urban fantasy/mystery tale all bundled into one. I would avoid handing it to someone with risk-adverse reading tastes (or people trying to get their feet wet in the genre).

Other books you might like:

Josh says

Didn't grab me like the first book did. I still like Brust's style quite a bit, he's building up an interesting world and some extremely fun characters. But I have to admit I was lost reading this one. I don't think I can even explain what a Yendi is, and I just read a book entitled "Yendi." The plot seemed to be mostly a sequence of confusing skirmishes plus a love story that kinda didn't make sense. Maybe it'll clear up whenever I get around to book 3.

Brad says

I'm rereading my Taltos books these days, and my reread of Yendi didn't do it any kindness. It was an okay way to spend a few sleepless nights, but I very nearly set it down. I suppose I kept going out of nostalgia, but it made me sad.

Now I knew, I know, going into these books that they are readable and fun, but they are also fairly light weight. Yendi is too light weight, however. Sure we get to see the coming together of Cawti and Vlad, but it didn't come anywhere near satisfying me this time, and it felt way too rushed. Sure there was plenty of Loiosh and Vlad wit in their psionic conversations, but the banter has already entered the precious (which is particularly annoying considering this is a prequel to Jherreg). Sure there was lots of intrigue, but the intrigue was way too forced, and if I had been faced with just one more Vlad-speaking-his-thoughts-aloud-while-his-friends-listen-attentively figuring it out scenes I would have screamed my house awake.

Some things are better left alone. So do I stop now? Or do I press on in my plan to reread with the belief that most of the books really are better than this one?

I am going to regret my decision, I think.

Trent says

Overall, I enjoyed this much more than Book 1 (Jherreg). The world continues to be fleshed out beautifully, plus, as this is a prequel, we get to see an earlier (see: sassier) version of Vlad, which is fantastic. It's also fun to see him interact with characters like Morrolan and Alieria before they really trusted each other as much as they do in the present time.

The only thing that held this book back was the nature of the introduction of Cawti and her relationship with Vlad. I LOVED Cawti in book 1 and was so excited to see the beginning of their relationship, but it was SO rushed It felt....fake, honestly, which is so different from high-quality writing that I've already begun to take for granted from Brust.

So, yeah. That was a bummer. Still - a really fun read, and I plan to continue with Vlad books promptly. I think I've found a new favorite!

Nathan says

I couldn't decide on 3 or 4 stars for this book. Definitely not as good as the first in the series.

I knew going into it that it was set chronologically before the first book, but I still didn't like it. I found the start of Vlad's idiosyncrasies a little disappointing. Specifically the changing of weapons every so often seemed to be a random idea rather than a reasoned decision or even the result of Vlad's paranoia.

The book also depicts Cawti's entrance into Vlad's life and their subsequent romance. The story was fun, but its rapid progression was unbelievable. While I believed the love between them in the first book, I found the start of it unlikely.

All in all it was a fun book to read, and as a part of the series so far it's not bad, but even in my early stages of reading the series, it's not the best.

Mimi says

Imagine The Godfather, but told from the perspective of a young snarky Vito Corleone who's all alone and setting out on his own. He's fighting to make a name for himself as an assassin and mob boss in the Dragarean underworld. He's got a small network of semi-legitimate businesses and a corner of the city to himself. He's trying to establish his territory while fighting off stronger, wealthier, more experienced neighbors who are moving in on his turf. He's fighting on multiple fronts, all the while trying to stay on top of Dragarean politics.

This book has a lot of things going on and the action never stops. Just when you think it can't get anymore twisty, it gets one more twist in. Turn the page and something new is happening to Vlad. In the midst of all this mess though, Vlad is still an engaging, funny storyteller, and I can listen to him talk all day long.

Like Jhereg, this book is out of order, but unlike Jhereg, it's near the beginning of Vlad's tale. So it's a good place to start the series. You get to know Vlad on his way up the social ladder, but you also get to a glimpse of the things he's been through that have made him who he is today. He's still got that optimistic (but also realistic) outlook on life and his place in the world about him that I like. The tone is light and funny and a stark contrast to the story he's telling, which has a variety of people out to kill him including his future wife... which makes it a little bit funnier because he's so matter-of-fact about it.

Notes for future reference: (view spoiler)

Cross-posted at <https://covers2covers.wordpress.com/2...>

Stephen says

4.5 to 5.0 stars. The *Jhereg* series is one of those series that I love to come back too whenever I am in the mood for a good, fun read. This is the second installment and I think it was as good as the first one. I love the world that Brust has created and the main character (Vlad Taltos) is great. I highly recommend this series to everyone who has not tried it yet.

Melissa McShane says

The thing I had forgotten about *Yendi*, in this most recent read via audio book, is how fundamentally straightforward it is. Vlad, still new to controlling his territory, is challenged by someone who wants to destroy him--that's the basic story. It isn't until you get most of the way in that the depth of the plotting is revealed, and it becomes clear that only a Yendi, master of subtlety and complex machinations, could be behind it.

I loved this book when I was young primarily for the romance between Vlad and Cawti. Having read *Jhereg* about a million times the year I was thirteen, I adored their relationship as a married couple, which at the time (I had only just discovered adult fantasy literature) was so rare in stories. So reading the story of how they met was exciting. This time, I was more conscious of how unusual it was that they came together at all. It makes sense for Cawti to have fallen in love with Vlad, having studied him so closely, but Vlad's attraction to Cawti as anything more than physical lust is less obvious. Is it that she's in the same line of work? That he's wanted more than the casual relationships he's had up to this point? I don't know. I think if I really were reading this chronologically for the first time, and didn't have a million readings of *Jhereg* influencing me, I'd be skeptical. One more reason not to read in internal chronological order if it's your first time with the series.

I do like the development of Vlad's relationship with Morrolan, Sethra, and Alieria. What Vlad says to Cawti about his loathing for Dragaerans is a stark contrast to what to me seems like a clear friendship. (view spoiler) The one thing I think a new reader to the series might benefit from by starting with *Dragon* is seeing Vlad's relationship with those three develop. I have *no idea* how Brust was able to keep track not only of what Vlad knows and when he knows it, but what kind of interactions he has with, say, Morrolan over the course of jumping around in time. It's just brilliant.

Moving on to *Jhereg*, which even now I can quote large chunks of from memory.

Brad says

Damn. I'd written this nice little meta-review about being a geek, and then some errant keystrokes backed me out of the review I was writing and everything disappeared. I don't have it in me to rewrite at the moment, so here are some quick thoughts.

- Vlad Taltos' little gangster turf war is the best part of *Yendi*, and I hope that we get a little more of that as the series goes on, although I sense that he may be getting closer and closer to going legit-ish, or at least becoming all political.

- the Sorceress in Green twist was a convoluted (on purpose), but it was a little too convoluted for my tastes. Still, it didn't take away any of the fun, so don't let it stop you from reading the story.
 - the prequelness of Yendi was handled well, and I actually thought the Cawti-Vlad relationship was believable, even after the assassination attempt on the latter by the former.
 - two books in, and Yendi confirms that this is a series worth reading -- even if it is fantasy gangster lite. I am definitely in for the long haul.
-

Bradley says

I freely admit that I don't know whether this second book was written before or after the first's publication date, but it certainly falls five years before the main action of the previous novel.

Why does this matter? I don't mind having that tantalizing clue of having died years ago in the first novel being expanded into it's own interesting tale, but something has been itching under my skin as I read Yendi.

It didn't feel as polished as the previous novel. I kept picking up on clues that felt like this was the first tale, not the second. It was straightforward, following action after action, reversal after reversal. The previous novel jumped through time with important scenes and barrelling through ten years giving us the weight of great things and interesting stories untold, letting our imaginations do most of the work and driving us into some seriously important Work without stalling. This second novel compressed the time involved to just a few months, keeping things simple if not uncomplicated.

So why do I feel like this one could have really been the first novel of Mr. Brust? Because he didn't use all of the excellent tools of his writing that were at his disposal.

Don't get me wrong. This was a great mob-boss turf-war novel set among half-dragons and an unfortunate Easterner (read human) interloper in a big city. It also catapulted his love-interest to the forefront, and despite being such a whirlwind romance, I was charmed. Cawti was fully in the driver's seat, whether she was literally killing or loving Vlad. I rooted for both of them. What can I say? It was hopelessly romantic. Thank goodness for revivication. It's what turns any would be tragedy into high comedy.

One thing Steven Brust does fantastic in both novels is the near breakneck speed he can turn any desperate situation into a natural tragedy following from unintended consequences of character's actions.

(view spoiler)

I really liked the novel's twisty plot turns, the love story, and the quick battles for supremacy. It might not have been as good as the first, but I still really enjoyed it.

I'm still curious to see all the places this series will go. Thank god I've got twelve more to go!

fantasy fiction is everything says

3.5 stars.

Olethros says

-Fantasía cocinada con todos los ingredientes de la novela negra más clásica.-

Género. Narrativa Fantástica.

Lo que nos cuenta. Vlad Taltos, dedicado a los negocios ilegales en la ciudad de Adrilankha, capital del imperio dragaerano, se ha hecho recientemente con el control de un pequeño territorio, pero parece que su dominio sobre el mismo está siendo puesto a prueba. Segundo libro de la serie de Vlad Taltos pero anterior al primero en la línea de tiempo de la vida del protagonista.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

Maggie K says

Yendi is the 2nd installment in the Vlad Taltos series, and is actually a prequel to the first book. It establishes some background; how Vlad met Cawti (she tried to kill him) and how he built up his Jhereg territory. There is also the obligatory political problem, which in this case was extremely convoluted.

I do enjoy these books...they are fast paced, and have action. They aren't too long or convoluted. They are a great relaxing read.

For some reason, it took me a little bit to realize we had gone into the past at first read, and it was a bit jarring. The territory war/plotline was interesting. The love story didn't really seem very genuine...It came off more like Vlad is just a horndog...

and the political scheming? Kind of well, contrived. The power-scheming was so convoluted, that it had to be a Yendi, because they are into being convoluted, and here is a Yendi...so it must be her! Let's work it backwards...it is!

I still enjoyed it, just wasn't buying it.

M Hamed says
