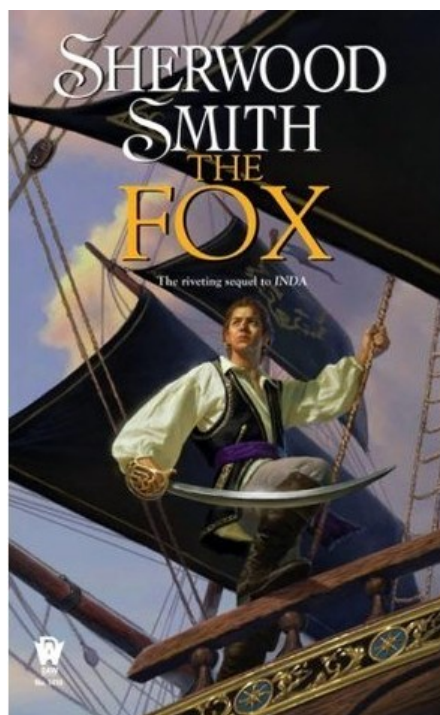




The Fox

Sherwood Smith

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The Fox

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The Fox Sherwood Smith

Acclaimed *Inda* series within Sherwood Smith's epic fantasy *Sartorias-deles* universe • Military fantasy woven with courtly politics, vast worldbuilding, and diverse characters

As the second son of the Prince and Princess of Choraed Elgaer, Inda was fated to protect the realm his older brother would inherit. Forced to flee his homeland before his thirteenth birthday, he finds himself on the perilous decks of a pirate ship, forcing himself never to think of all he has lost.

But his military skills and inborn natural leadership ability cannot be erased, and four years later, Inda has become head of his own mercenary marine company, with a reputation for protecting merchant vessels against the marauding bands of pirates that plunder the waters.

Meanwhile, after the untimely death of Inda's brother, his parents are desperately searching for their second son—for Inda is now the heir to Choraed Elgaer.

From the Paperback edition.

The Fox Details

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Author : Sherwood Smith

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From Reader Review The Fox for online ebook

Satya Prateek says

I've never read a pirate themed fantasy novel before Inda and The Fox but I can be pretty confident that few books will ever top this. The Fox is a much better book than the first one. The pacing is tighter, the damned dual (triple sometimes) language nonsense of the first book is gone making it much simpler to track who's who. There's less focus on the much present and one dimensional politicking present in the previous novel. And finally we get more of Inda being awesome as he comes up with plans, wrecks shit up and actually truly grows up. The narrative still switches scenes and there are a lot of time skips, but it gives a realistic long term view of military plans.

The book does use a few clichéd tropes like characters who pine for each other but cannot confess to each other or somebody rushing to meet a loved one but missing out by a hair's breadth, but they were minor irritants.

Scott says

The second book was just as good as the first, and maybe even slightly better. Inda continues to be an amazing main character and is becoming one of my favorites in fantasy literature. His story continues to enthrall, and it's beautifully surrounded by 3-D characters. There are no cardboard cutouts here!

We get a little more insight into the Venn and their government/desires/plans in this installment and a nice little surprise at the end.

On to the next!

Patti's Book Nook says

Full Review (spoiler free):

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Brief Summary: Here's the biggest takeaway for me and advice for potential reader's of this series: Don't drive yourself crazy with the details. If you try to memorize everything you will drive yourself bonkers. Think big picture stuff unless you have a freakishly good memory (which sadly, I'm not blessed with). Know 1) who's fighting who, 2) the general location said fighting is occurring, and 3) outcome and implications. I felt more emotionally invested with these characters and the series with the completion of this book...partly because of the massive number of pages I've read, but mostly because I simply enjoy the story more after learning the proper way to read it. If you're looking for a world to get completely immersed in and don't mind a more challenging read, this series will suit the bill nicely.

Jen526 says

It's such a pleasure to run into a series that has such depth in its twists and turns, and have it be capable of truly surprising me and keeping me on the edge of my seat. There are so many moments in this book and the

previous one where I assumed I knew where the narrative was going, only to have my expectations turned on their head by the simple fact that the characters are all so much more nuanced and multi-dimensional than we usually get. It started early with the discovery that one-time-sierdanas from the previous book weren't necessarily fated to spend the entire series as cronies to a villain, and continued for the rest of the book, on both big and small scales. The introduction of Fox and the ongoing frisson of tension that his presence gave to much of the story was particularly amazing. Can't remember the last time I've been so unsure whether I could trust a character or not, and it made the book a joy to experience.

Crystal says

Apparently this took me a whole month to re-read, and it's probably because I didn't want it to end. In my memory, this is my favorite of the "Inda" series, and it truly lived up to my remembered expectations. There's fewer characters and a lot more action in this book, with naval battles galore. I had forgotten some of the politics but I definitely remembered the intrigue. I still think Inda's gift of war strategy is the most interesting thing about this series. I am starting right away on the next book!

Kes says

We follow Inda as he starts his sea journey. In the meantime, there are things going back home.

Again, we see a fundamental facet of Inda's character: his ability to draw and inspire loyalty in people. It means that Jeje attempts to rescue Inda the first time Inda is taken hostage. It results in Inda being able to form his own marines. This loyalty means that, back in Marlovan Empire, Evred still looks for a way to clear Inda's name, and that Evred's friends (the Sier-Danas) remain loyal to the idea of Inda.

I also enjoyed reading about Inda's ability to command. In fact, his success in battle (however improbable) adds to the loyalty and belief in Inda - that he cannot lose.

We also see the going-ons in the Marlovan Empire. The Sirlaeef continues on his path to unchecked power (and I can't believe that the king is unaware of it - too busy administering his kingdom to look inside his house. Perhaps he trusted his brother too much). This results in (view spoiler).

The escalation of "obstacles" was also good - we move from the workings of the Marlovan Empire in the first book, to an observation of the seaways around the Empire. At the end, the (view spoiler).

This is a book that I would reread.

Darrell Drake says

Like Inda, Smith does prose well. It isn't so ostentatious as to be some sort of literary fiction (like Nabokov or something), but it's got a thin purple veil here and there that I can really appreciate. It's comfortable and smooth.

While The Fox was a great read, I feel as if I would've gotten more out of it if there weren't so many maritime scenes. Don't get me wrong: they're well-written. Not particularly partial to the setting, so they get

dull after a while. Just an issue of personal preference, really. Not a complaint about any shortcomings in storytelling. And, well, it all did the job of pushing Inda forward as a character.

What I really wanted was more of the Marlovans on land. Those were the gems as far as I'm concerned, so I'm looking forward to that in King's Shield, as I've been told they're brought back to the forefront.

Olivia says

Inda was a big surprise for me, since I don't often hand out five stars, and The Fox neatly follows on and is another wonderful read. I don't want to reveal too much of the plot, since many of you might not have read Inda. If you're a fantasy fan and like the idea of a military academy, a bunch of loyal and fierce friends, all bundled with a ton of political intrigue on an epic scale, do yourself a favour and give Inda a try.

It's not an easy read. There's endless world building, lots of names to learn and Sherwood Smith uses an omniscient narrator that is not afraid to bounce from character to character with a breathtaking pace. But the characters are extremely well developed, likeable, complex and wonderful beings. The narrator is a treat, the prose well worth a read and the plot is filled with twists, turns and surprises.

Don't try and remember everything, by now I'm pretty sure that's impossible. The important aspects will eventually reveal themselves and ultimately I was able to follow the book without getting lost.

I can't wait to read the next instalment.

Matt S says

This was a lot of fun to read and hard to put down. The beauty of this series is that it's such a great mix of adventure and political intrigue. The characters are excellent, especially as they've grown up, and the worldbuilding is well done - we get to explore new regions, each with its own style whether it be language, mannerisms, food, court, behavior, etc. Oh ya and politics.

I think the pacing was a bit better here compared to Inda. So many things happened in this book with twists and turns, but I don't want to spoil anything - let's just say battles at sea (pirates), battles on land, assassinations, subterfuge, etc.

I enjoyed it and I'll look forward to continuing the series...there's no way I could stop here.

Mike says

This was good, but since thanks to life, the universe, and everything conspiring against me, it took me almost two months to read it. That sort of pacing doesn't lend itself to appreciating the finer points. That being said, I still enjoyed it, and this series is a great one for anyone looking for a fantasy book featuring pirates.

My chief critique is that it's afflicted with a moderate case of "Worldbuilder's Syndrome." Sherwood Smith, as I understand, has been developing this world since she was 8 years old. It shows, in ways both good and bad. Good in that the depth behind everything was obvious; bad in that there were things that felt like she put

in simply because she'd thought about and developed them, not because they were necessary to the story.

But it's a mild critique. Looking forward to *The King's Shield*.

Sherwood Smith says

Part of a long arc, thinking about consequences of actions as well as consequences of emotional verities.

Brownbetty says

Okay, so, not a real review, because I want to try to review the first, and attempt to deal with just why these books are so OMNOMNOMNOM. BUT.

I cannot believe that the internet has not informed me about the existence of books in which NO ONE POOPS.

I mean, I've read plenty of books in which no one poops, because the author doesn't feel the need to deal with it, but that's not what I mean; in the world of these books, there is magic known as "waste spells" for cleaning up effluent. But characters use these spells betimes, and apparently the waste spell just magics the poop right out of one's bowels! (Also works with pee! And menstrual effluvia?) Which I guess makes sense, if you could, you wouldn't really want to waste time in the can, would you? So I suppose the only times you'd poop or pee would be when you were too young, or drunk, or whatever, to get the spell lined up.

A WORLD IN WHICH NO ONE POOPS. CONSIDER THAT.

(This is like, a totally minor point in the book, and probably only occupies a total of 100 words over the ~1500 pages I have read so far. I feel, however, that this revolutionary bit of world-building is under-explored.)

Scott Hitchcock says

Book 1: 4*

Book 2: 4.25*

Great continuation of book one. I definitely have my favorites in this story and cannot wait to get back to their POVs. I love how the author keeps everything about the story no matter if on land or sea. The setting enhances the story it doesn't distract from it. A lot of books about ships, be they space, water, air or whatever, the authors tend to get too fixated on the operations of the craft. Smith balances this perfectly.

I also have to credit the author with artfully changing gears in the middle of book 2 of 4. I was 100% sure I saw the story arc for this entire series and never saw this shift of fortunes coming until the end. Masterfully done.

Can't wait for the next one.

Mayim de Vries says

“Civilisation is not made by single great events. Civilisation is a net, made up of moral choices. Bad ones tear the net... If I am not allowed to be a maker, at least I can rid the world of the tearers, can't I?”

When compared with this beauty, the majority of contemporary YA fantasy look like ugly ducklings.

It all starts simply enough and **Inda goes pirate**. My biggest concern was that I won't remember all the names and places and connections (and there are so many of those!), especially that I have returned to The Fox quite sometime after having read Inda. As it turned out, I was anxious for no reason. Ms Smith manages to recap everything without being obvious and reattach the reader both to the protagonists and the main plot. My second biggest concern was that, well, Inda goes pirate. I was already tired with the maritime adventures previously, and to think that I have yet another whole monster of a book at sea, led me to a conclusion that I will not enjoy the ride the cruise. I am relieved to say I was wrong. The book is setting-driven, that is for sure, but not setting-determined and because the sea was also balanced with a huge portion of events that took place on the land, there was no pirate overload.

Although, **I should perhaps start with a caveat, that while the previous book was a little bit overspiced with YA shenanigans, in The Fox our protagonists mature** and for the most part we accompany them when they are in their early twenties which means that not only are they forced to face challenges high above their age group but also that they are somewhat more equipped with experience and all that comes with it.

“When I was young I understood the world, too. Until the word ended.”

If you equate YA with angst and romance, you can put your prejudice to sleep. There are various relationships in the book and most of the protagonists are entangled in a very complex emotional web of loves and hatreds but neither of those is the main driver of the story. To the contrary, I loved reading how their love lives are woven into a wider canopy of political, cultural and societal threads.

There is **a tremendous set of characters in this series and I promise you will have problems with deciding who you do like the most**. As far as Inda is concerned, while he grows as a protagonist, it is consistent with the previous buildup and there is no sudden metamorphosis into a wonder-boy. There is still certain innocent integrity about him. Lack of pretence, awareness of the endless stream of possibilities ahead and a sorrow for the unrecoverable past.

“Inda. You are not even twenty. Why in damnation are you determined to take on the world's most powerful empire?”

“Because no-one else will.”

Inda is a sweet cupcake but for those of you who prefer something slightly darker and more morally ambiguous awaits Fox Montredavan-An, a striking redhead prone to casual menace. The scion of a disgraced royal house is Inda's main partner in this instalment and, oh May, what a treat he is.

“He was tall, hard muscled though lean in build, always dressed in black. Fox. His mouth, as always, was sardonic. He would meet death with sarcasm, that one.”

Finally, there is Barend, Sponge's cousin also supposedly lost to the sea. (view spoiler) But this novel is **more than about three Marlovans against the rest of the world**. So many other secondary and tertiary

protagonists to love and to hate that only listing them would change this review into a register. Let me name only a couple of favourites:

In the first place Evred-the-Sponge who needs to learn how to balance the personal and the royal and Inda's sister, Hadand, a truly Marlovan fighting queen. There is Tau and Joret in their own aristocratic league of beauty (and remember that there is more to beauty than the appearance of it) and Jeje sa Jeje whom I'd love to have as a friend together with the staunchly loyal Tdor. There are also characters who are perhaps not so influential in terms of events but together they create the unique ambiance of the whole series (I'm thinking, for instance, of the bouncing Nugget going to battles as one would go for a picnic.).

This richness determines the narrative and perhaps I should flag it up that **there are frequent POV changes and sometimes reading the book feels like you are in a movie with the camera's shifting focus going from one person to the other**. In some chapters, you will also find simultaneous narrations accounting for events happening roughly at the same time in different locations.

I still think that **despite the title, the series is not about Inda**. Surely, he remains the fulcrum of many events but the cornerstone of the story lies somewhere else. Inda happens to be at the forefront of many events, being the innate leader, but so are other people whose actions and decisions, small and sometimes not even conscious, are of equal importance. I think this is one of the main strengths of Ms Smith's writing that she has **managed to show how in the end, all grand plans notwithstanding, what happens often results from a latticework of accidental encounters and incidental decisions ruled by the vagaries of human heart and nature**. In The Fox stealth and cleverness, and fighting skill count as much as a set of circumstances beyond our comprehension or ability to manipulate.

"Everyone is a verb. When we dwindle to a mere noun, we die."

There are **plot twists (particularly in the first part, although its ending is deceptively lulling) that not only I didn't see coming but I didn't invite to come over**. There are new allies and new enemies; we learn more about the mystery of Norsunder (a place beyond time and physical space) and its magic, the role of women concerning magic is still unanswered, we learn more of the morvende as well as the Venn and why they are forced to push their boundaries outwards. Again, **you will not find simple black and white answers here. Ms Smith doesn't do easy**.

"Consider how many of our kings and heroes appear to define honour by the worthiness of their enemies. Things will change only when honour is defined by our works."

I also wanted to emphasise the **delicious world building**, especially that it keeps the reader far from your typical fantasy set of medieval-like western cultures. In fact, when we are faced with one, it is laid bare in all its idiosyncrasies, paradoxes and preposterous habits. Most of the time we find ourselves in a non-Western milieu. (I want to be Marlovan when I grow up!) **All the details, from eating habits to fashion and from architecture to social ladder are mastered so meticulously that (dare I say it?) Malazan richness comes to mind**. Also the language is beautiful; the sentences flow one after another and I wasn't able to put the book down.

All in all, **forget my general stinginess with stars and my average rating of 3.5. If this wasn't a ★★★★★ read then I don't know what is**.

Also in the series:

1. Inda ★★★★★?
3. 3. King's Shield

4. Treason's Shore RTC

Alexa says

Ah, it was so much fun to dive back into this world again – I thought I could just save this for late-night pleasure reading, but it wouldn't be denied and ended up demanding all of my reading attention all day long. It's a grand adventure, where you just keep turning the page, desperate to know what's going to happen next, with fully drawn characters that you take to your heart, and a political system that is just odd enough to be fascinating. An absolutely grand adventure – sheer fun! I do enjoy the way she plays with gender, creating some regions with no gender roles at all, and others with very defined gender roles, yet all so richly different from what we might have expected. Such fun!

(Actually though, it really looks more like two entirely different novels, or parts two and three of the series – each with a complete climax and resolution and thoughtful epilogue – but who can complain about getting two books in one? I loved the way the central climax was handled, shift to shift to shift, the whole thing really kept me on my toes.)

Overall it's great plot construction and world-building, very rich and nuanced and detailed. I just didn't want to have to emerge from the world. It's a great old-fashioned adventure, but with gender and sexuality treated right! Completely, absolutely, perfectly satisfying! I'm all so eager to pick up the next!
