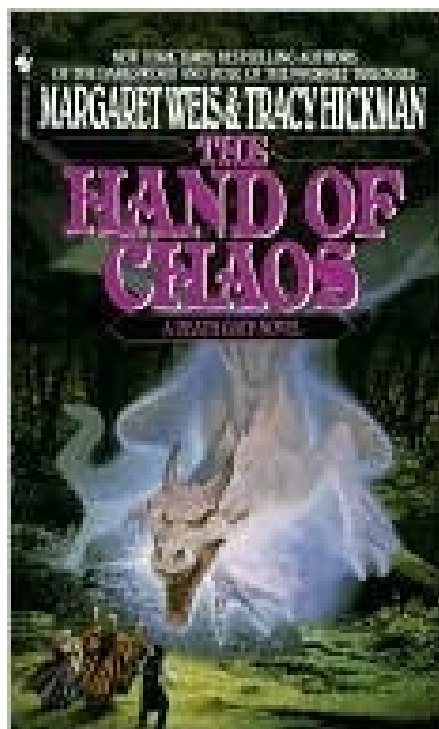




The Hand of Chaos

Margaret Weis , Tracy Hickman

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Chaos is everywhere as the Lord of the Nexus orders his servant Haplo and the human child known as Bane to further their master's work on Arianus, the realm of air. But their one time companion Alfred has been cast into the deadly Labyrinth. And somehow the assassin Hugh the Hand has been resurrected to complete his dark mission. More important, the evil force that Haplo and Alfred discovered on Arianus has escaped. As Haplo's doubts about his master grow deeper, he must decide whether to obey the Lord of the Nexus or betray the powerful Patryn...and endeavor to bring peace to the universe.

The Death Gate Cycle

Millennia ago a battle raged between the Sartan and the Patryn, and the Sartan sundered the world into four realms - air, fire, stone, and water - and then vanished. But now the two races have rediscovered each other through the magic of the Death Gate - and war is about to erupt anew.

The Hand of Chaos Details

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astaliegurec says

In all probability, people who read the first of the Death Gate Cycle books and like it, are going to want to read all of the books in the series (regardless of any fluctuation in the individual books' ratings). Ditto for the reverse: if people don't like the first book, then they're probably not going to want to read any of the other books in the series. Thus, instead of individual book ratings, I've rated the whole series and given a short blurb on any specifics for each book.

Overall, this is a very good series. The authors were amazingly creative in coming up with this concept and the books are well-written, extremely interesting, and internally consistent (mostly -- see below for some exceptions). I highly recommend this series of books for everyone. My comments for the individual books follow:

Vol. 1 -- Dragon Wing: This book covers the exploration of Arianus: the realm of Air. It introduces us to the two main characters (Haplo and Alfred) and many of the recurring characters throughout the series. It's a well-paced, well-written book that's an excellent representation of what to expect in most of the rest of the series. Essentially, if you like this book, you'll like the other six books. If you don't like this book, then there's no sense in reading any of the others.

Vol. 2 -- Elven Star: This book covers the exploration of Pryan: the realm of Fire. Alfred is entirely missing from this book, and Haplo isn't really the centerpiece. Instead, the book is mostly written from the perspective of the mensch and of the newly introduced (and recurring) Zifnab. The one possible weakness in the book is that Weis/Hickman wrote it such that the structure of Pryan itself is more of a mystery than Arianus was in the first book.

Vol. 3 -- Fire Sea: This book covers the exploration of Abarrach: the realm of Stone. Once again, both Haplo and Alfred are present. The characters and areas presented in this book are key elements for the entire series. An interesting book, but not a very happy one at all.

Vol. 4 -- Serpent Mage: This book covers the exploration of Chelestra: the realm of Water. Both Alfred and Haplo are on this world. But, for the most part, they follow separate plot lines. There's a lot of action taking place throughout the book and Weis/Hickman introduce some actual Sartan (besides Alfred). They also bring in an ancient evil to balance the ancient good introduced in the previous book. The most irritating thing about this book is that it ends in a cliff-hanger. The previous books tied up their worlds' activities fairly nicely. Not so in this book. It ends at a very inconvenient spot.

Vol. 5 -- Hand of Chaos: This book returns Haplo to Arianus and the people he met there earlier. Whereas the first four books of the series cover the exploration of the four realms, this book starts the synthesis of the various threads from those books into a movement towards closure. It's a good book, but, unfortunately, it doesn't do anything with Alfred. The previous book left Alfred heading towards a bad end. This book doesn't do anything with that. So, while reading the book, you constantly have this little voice in the back of your mind going "what's happening with Alfred?" Irritating.

Vol. 6 -- Into the Labyrinth: This book ranges across just about all of the worlds of the Death Gate. It brings all of the various threads from the other books to a head. Most importantly, it finally does something with Alfred. The unfortunate thing about this book is that it contains a lot of technical errors (or, more specifically, contradictions). For instance, in Dragon Wing, we're told that a person needs to be familiar with an area to use a transportation spell to get to that area. Yet, very close to the beginning of the book, one of

the characters uses such a spell without ever having been to her target location. There are also several instances where the characters COULD have used such a spell, but don't. Likewise, there are problems with replication spells. In Fire Sea, Haplo and Alfred use such a spell to replicate enough food for a large group of people. Yet, in this book, no one seems to consider using a replication spell to produce more of some food. But, later on, those same people are using that same spell to replicate weapons. Plus, at one point, Xar uses a spell to just materialize both food and drink for a party. But, if such a thing is possible, why do the Patryns hunt and, apparently, farm in the Labyrinth? Also, the size of the Labyrinth seems wrong. From the previous books, it's taken hundreds (if not thousands) of years for various Patryns to traverse the hundreds of Gates in the Labyrinth. Yet, in this book, from the very beginning of the Labyrinth they can see the results of things happening at the Final Gate. There's also the problem of how people at the center of the Labyrinth would know anything about the Final Gate.

Vol. 7 -- Seventh Gate: This is the conclusion of the Death Gate series. Unfortunately, I didn't much care for it. Basically, it comes across as being pretty sappy. All of a sudden, Haplo and Alfred are best buds and want to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. Most of the various threads are tied up adequately (if not very satisfyingly). But, the sudden push towards liberal "peace, love, and harmony" is trite. Of the seven books in this series, this one is the least good. Once again, I didn't much care for the tone of this book. But, since it adequately ties up most everything that needed tying up, I'm not going to downgrade the whole series because of that.

MMF says

There are a lot of good things about Hand of Chaos. Haplo continues to develop. I like the Kenkari. I applaud the return of Bane the devil child. As well as Limbeck and Jarre. Also, randomly, I like the side character Trian.

I'm sort of ambivalent about the return of Hugh the Hand from the dead. On the one hand, what he turns out to be is pretty interesting, and... I like the guy. I also really, really appreciate that his relationship with Iridal doesn't go anywhere beyond — his admiration of her. He cares about her but is intentionally keeping her at a distance, and it works well that way.

I do not like Iridal. Iridal is really sort of terrible. Instead of having proper strengths and weaknesses, she just seems to go from being swooning and helpless to massively powerful. Her abilities are just never USEFUL in a sensible way; they're either worthless, or a quick deus ex machina. Iridal is also evidently a complete idiot.

- spoilers follow -

She spends the whole book being completely, nay willfully blind to the fact that her son is not a sweet, innocent little boy. Despite OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE. She even knows enough to hide the fact that she has a means of talking to him because she knows everyone would suspect Bane of being up to something terrible. That is DEDICATED denial. Up until the last gosh darned minute, she throws herself blindly upon his mercies and envisions a peaceful family life for the two of them in the High Realms. This is after he has led her, personally, into a trap, had her drugged and imprisoned, and used her as leverage to convince Hugh to kill the King and Queen. All that she thought was just fine.

But then at the eleventh hour when she appears just as Hugh (intentionally) blows the assassination, and

Bane picks up a sword and attacks the King himself... she just outright murders the little bastard. Suffocates him to death, in fact, and says it's "fitting" because the real prince that Bane was swapped for as an infant suffocated in the poor atmosphere of the High Realms.

I mean... really? After all that? A complete turnaround in a matter of seconds. Because she saw him attack someone with a sword in a fit of childish idiocy (seriously, even if the attack had succeeded, there's no way Bane could have been crowned as he wanted considering everyone saw him do it, and he announced his motive as he did. Sinistrad's spell was no longer in effect, so there's no reason the nation shouldn't turn on him, and there were multiple people who knew the truth that he wasn't the true Prince...).

With her magic, Iridal could have just stopped him, contained him, something like that. Yeah, he's a messed up (terrible) child who's been influenced by some powerful and not very nice people, but... it just doesn't make sense. It's so stupid.

Yeah, you lost an entire star just for Iridal, book.

Pamela says

Book 5 and I'm thoroughly vested in these characters, but right off the bat, Bane's back. Ugh! One dose of this sneaky conniving little kid was enough and here he is again, causing havoc along with the serpents disguised as key characters. Hugh the Hand is back from the dead and not happy about his situation, when he gets a chance to fulfill his last contract, creating another problem. Haplo is still trying to stay true to his Lord, but conflict arises when Jarre is in trouble and the serpents have their own plans for Haplo. Questions about the dog are finally subtly answered. All and all there's plenty of new developments to keep readers intrigued and moving on to book 6.

Bill says

Oh, too bad. Not even halfway through this and I hit the wall big time.

I enjoyed the first four books a lot. It was so fun and interesting learning about each world and getting a glimpse of how they all interrelate. But, at the point I'm at now, it seems the focus is more on the turmoil between the powers that be, and frankly, I'm not all that interested in that. The world building here is very imaginative, and the storyline up until now has been enough to drive me through about 1500 pages. But now we're at the point where the storyline and characters need to drive the interest along, and mine is waning. I've read enough reviews of the final two books to decide that the payoff is a little thin, but recommended for those who have come this far. But there are way too many lukewarm reviews to keep me in this for the long haul, and my reading list continues to grow with novels I'm much more excited about. So, I'm out. No regrets, though.

Charlie George says

Enjoyed the reintroduction of the popular character Hugh the Hand, thought dead in Dragon Wing (Book 1), but resurrected by Alfred. Haplo begins to stand up and defy his master Xar, blinded by ambition and hatred

of the Sartan. He also shames the mensch of Arianus for fighting and hating one another by illustrating their common enemy. In turn, the mensch, including a human mystriarch, elven Kenkari wizards, and the stubborn dwarven leaders Limbeck and Jarre, show Haplo that the only way to fight the ancient serpents introduced in Serpent Mage (Book 4) is without fear, their lifeblood and sustenance.

This book had long tracts of meandering and positioning, and was heading for a dull 1 or 2 stars, but culminated in some exciting and consequential fireworks in the last 50 pages. The various plot lines dove-tailed well, and even characters that I hadn't cared much for performed admirably, giving purpose to their place in the overall story.

Heidi says

This is the book where The Death Gate Cycle changes--Haplo has explored all four worlds created during the Sundering of the original world, and it's time to start putting his Lord's plans for domination into action. However, Haplo is suffering a crisis of faith. He's doing his best to blindly follow Lord Xar, but he has seen too much and experienced too much to believe in the one-dimensional view of the world that Xar is promoting. Haplo is also starting to believe that Xar is misguided and just plain wrong, which terrifies him.

I missed Alfred in this book but enjoyed the brief reappearance of Zifnab. I also really liked getting to see favorite characters from the first book, how their lives have changed, and how their individual stories contribute to the bigger picture.

Jennyfurann says

This book was a little annoying. I don't know why. I think it's Bane. That little bitch pisses me off!

Cris says

Ha sido todo un acierto recuperar esta serie que leí por primera vez durante mi adolescencia. Como era de esperar, esta relectura la ha privado del barniz de obra maestra que le apliqué entonces, pero aún así ha pasado la prueba con creces. Se trata de una colección de libros en la que tiene cabida la reflexión sobre grandes temas pero que se sustenta, sobre todo, en unos personajes carismáticos, un universo rico y complejo y un ritmo narrativo adictivo que deja espacio suficiente a los detalles.

En mi opinión, esta serie llega al listón de joya del género fantástico (con permiso de Sapkowski) ya que, a pesar de apoyarse en muchos de los estereotipos tradicionales, crea un nuevo espacio totalmente genuino. Se aleja en gran medida del hilo narrativo habitual: si bien también contamos con la figura del héroe (varios, de hecho), en vez de seres humildes que descubren poco a poco su poder, los protagonistas surgen de entre los que hasta ahora se creían dioses. Su hazaña final no será luchar activamente por la salvación del universo, sino que dicha salvación depende en gran parte de su capacidad para aceptar lo limitado de su poder, saber retirarse a tiempo y aceptar que no tienen derecho a gobernar en la vida de nadie. Recorremos, por tanto, el camino contrario al que siguen muchas historias del género.

Reseña completa y mi versión de la portada en <https://sidumbledorefueralibrero.com/...>

Natalia says

Prestado por: Sergio

Kaotic says

I've said it a thousand times, and I'll keep saying it. *I absolutely love this series.*

It's the kind of fantasy that I really enjoy, it's intricate, thought out, culturally diverse and in depth, great action, and wondrous feels.

The powers that are pulling every races strings in this are quite mysterious and fascinating- the series always leaves you questioning everything you think you know. While you're going through the story you learn so much, yet everything you learn leaves you asking more questions and craving more.

Seeing as this was a cliff hanger, I can't wait until I start the next one (even though that will be a couple books from now).

Saskia (Smitie) says

Ik heb weer erg genoten van dit 5e deel in de serie. Het blijft me verbazen dat Weis en Hickmann mijn aandacht zo goed vast kunnen houden en dat ik wil blijven doorlezen. Het begin kwam wat traag op gang en er werden wel erg veel nieuwe personages, groeperingen en politiek op me los gelaten. Maar terwijl het verhaal vordert raak je steeds meer geïnteresseerd hoe het af gaat lopen, wat gaan de Serpenten doen, wat gebeurt er met Haplo en nog meer van dat soort vragen. Ik miste Alfred wel een beetje, maar de terugkeer van het duivelskind Bane en de Kenkari maakte het wel goed. Het was ook fijn dat er een korte samenvatting van de eerste vier delen in zit, maar ik miste een kaartje van Arianus. Ik kon me de stand van de eilanden nog wel herinneren van het eerste deel, maar een opfrisser had wel fijn geweest.

Ethan says

This one is so far the weakest link in the chain, but it's still good. It suffers from some pretty unlikeable main characters (an annoyingly precocious and evil child, a gang of evil incarnates, and a suicidal assassin). And there's a rehash of the annoyingly simple Gogs (dwarves) who have lost their innocence but haven't gained much wisdom. The previous books had long stretches of compelling reading (so far Fire Sea is the one I couldn't put down), but this one I could start and stop at will. Alfred is absent in this one, which means the Alfred vs. Haplo dynamic is absent, and that's what makes the whole series work for me. Haplo is not given much to do in this one. Hugh the Hand is back, but he's an empty shell. This one boils down to Haplo vs. the snakes in a chess match, and he's shown a weakness in the snakes that has more to do with character than action, which should foreshadow a future confrontation. This one moved the actors in the series along,

without really growing them much.

Jerfus says

My favorite installment so far, at first I was growing weary of the whole Sang-Drax business, dragging my rating between 2 and 3 stars, but once the Kenkari kicked in the whole mythos of the series began growing at an amazing rate and the whole story just went uphill from there.

Geoff Battle says

With the various Gates explored, it is time for Haplo to head back through the original Gate, with Bane in tow. In no time at all Haplo and Bane find themselves embroiled in a Race war and the vague plot sprawls across half the book, continuously adding more cast members, until eventually settling down. That half is hard going, where not much really happens, however the latter half of The Hand of Chaos produces a decent plot and welcomes back an old character to spice things up. Definitely a drawn out middle book, which is worth the slog to see through the second half, however it remains very much a set up for the next chapter of the Cycle.

Grayson Lawrence says

In the book, Haplo is tasked with turning on the Kicksey-Winsey. Meanwhile, Lady Iridal and Hugh the Hand, with the help of the Kenkari Elves, are going to rescue Bane from the Elves. The dragon snakes are wreaking havoc down on Drevlin. This is all happening on the world of Arainus. At the end of the book, Hugh the Hand is tasked with killing Haplo.

I chose to read this book because mainly, I didn't have another book to read so I found the series at a thrift store and couldn't put it down.

What really works in the book is how everything is woven together so well. There are 4 main worlds that the series takes place in, but there is also the Labyrinth and the Nexus. there are 5 races that we know of and some other unknown entities in the worlds. There is a group of characters for every world and a few characters that transverse through all the worlds. It is all woven together seamlessly.

There is really nothing for me that doesn't work, besides some parts were pretty boring but almost all books have boring parts.

My impression of this book and the series is that it is a must read series. It is my favorite series.

If you like science fiction, really complex story lines, and lots of diversity in characters, then you will really enjoy this series and I highly recommend it.

There is little offensive material, just some smoking and alcohol use, and a few cuss words here and there. Other than that, this is a pretty clean book
