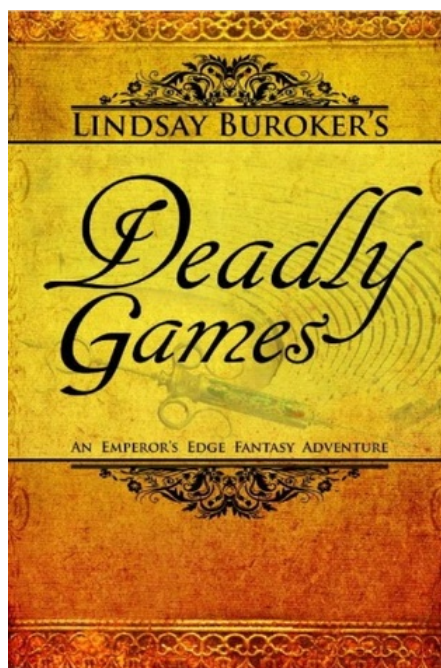




Deadly Games

Lindsay Buroker

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When you've been accused of kidnapping an emperor, and every enforcer in the city wants your head, it's hard to prove yourself an honorable person and even harder to earn an imperial pardon.

That doesn't keep Amaranthe Lokdon and her team of outlaws from trying. When athletes start disappearing from the Imperial Games, they may finally have an opportunity to show the emperor that they're on his side. If she and her comrades can get to the bottom of such a public mystery, they're sure to get the credit.

But plans go awry when Amaranthe's own men start plotting against each other, the new ally she'd hoped to acquire tries to turn her in, and her best fighter—and closest friend—disappears.

Maybe getting involved wasn't such a good idea after all...

Deadly Games is approximately 110,000 words. It is the third book in The Emperor's Edge series.

Deadly Games Details

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Author : Lindsay Buroker

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From Reader Review Deadly Games for online ebook

Nikhil Jain says

I usually stray away from stories about the fairer sex, perhaps because they tend to be too fair to digest. I wasn't always this way, and can in fact vividly remember gobbling upon stories about fairy queens and wicked witches, especially Enid Blyton's Blue, Yellow and Red fairy books, Malory Towers and what not. However, as things often come to pass, and then pass away- my appetite for bright and beautiful worlds faded- and I latched onto a darker and grimmer reality.

Now, to say that female authors cannot sculpt a gritty narrative would be quite blasphemous- and more so since I have come to respect Robin Hobb's penmanship. I have, though, often noticed that books that have female protagonists usually border on romantic notes, hardly, if ever dipping a toe in the realm of gore and violence.

Now, there's Amaranthe, and she ostensibly follows the same trend of a moral high ground. She nags in the manner of a self righteous clergyman and she blushes on the smallest mention of human reproductive organs.

But I love her.

As a matter of fact, I would have no qualms against cuddling her, sweaty or not- she's the rainbow hued yarn ball wet-dream of kittens, or perhaps a nightmare of little cats littering the house.

I have also come to appreciate how Lindsay Buroker maintains a consistency of character. I find it oddly unnerving to encounter a hardcore uncaring (asshole) assassin who turns into a candy licking doll lover in about 25 pages of the goddess-who-touched-his-heart. It isn't just one book that is infected with this disease- not at all, I had to abandon trillions of tomes in mid passage because of spontaneous personality defection of the protagonist.

Sicarius, in a way, reminds me of Lan (WOT) with his, let us say, economy of expression. Although, Lindsay has described the man in a manner distinct enough to credit him a unique personality. His feelings towards Amaranthe *grow gradually* as opposed to the switch-flipperty I have come to detest. It maintains that exoticism in their relationship which I, personally, have come to relish. Instead of popping a saccharine pill that is probably going to ruin your taste- Lindsay has masterfully prepared a dish that provides a lingering taste of sweetness.

Another wonderful jewel I discovered in Amaranthe's world is the fact that people don't turn into gross idiots when trapped in impossible situations, waiting for others to rescue them. Rather, they show initiative and a number of times extricate themselves out of self created blunders- which, to me, is the mature way of handling a story.

I don't wish to be abrupt, but well, I have to start with the next book.

Mei says

This series is getting better and better!

All the good has been kept and the plot deepens more and more!

The mane characters grow and become more complex, but always very, very enjoyable!

I wish I had discovered this series before: it's soooooo good!

Willow says

This book was so much better than *Dark Currents*. I'm giving ***** ½. In fact, so far it was the best in the series. I feel like the action was more directed and had purpose. There was an exciting dynamic between the characters. One character decides to kill the other, while two others start to care for each other. This conflict, along with the mystery, gave this book a lot more suspense, and definitely gave the characters more depth. The Emperor's Edge are slowly becoming an elite team of professionals and they are becoming good friends. It was very satisfying to read.

One of my favorite things about this series is the characters. I've grown so fond of all of them. Each and every one of them teaches something new to the group. Each one of them is important to their success. I long to get into everybody's POV. I always think the most mysterious is probably Sicarius, but then again I know so little about Akstyr. I'm curious to find out both of their backgrounds. While each character is an archetype, they are slowly developing more and more of their own personalities, and I realized after this series is over, I will actually miss them.

Out of all the characters though, Amaranthe is my fav! She's such a great female character. I see her as a true leader, the fabric that holds The Emperor's Edge together. I love how she's got a soft touch, always approaching everything with tact, instead of bashing people over the head. She'd rather talk her way out of a bad situation instead of fight, and with slew of badass Buffy wannabes out there in the fiction world, I think she's wonderfully refreshing. Amaranthe shows that a woman doesn't have to act like a pain-in-the ass Alpha douche to be a true leader. I also love how the guys are so protective over her and treat her like family. They follow her because they admire her, not because they want get into her pants, and they know that if any one of them gets into trouble, she do everything she can to get them out. It's so rare to have a female in a position like this. I've read comments that say she's a little bit Mary Sue, and maybe their right. She does have some unreal kind of luck. But they are several things about her that don't make her a Mary Sure. For starters, she doesn't have some special power, she's not the fairest of them all, she does make mistakes and she doesn't always have the right answer. In fact, she relies on her elite team to help her out. If it weren't for the others, Amaranthe would fail, and she knows this. Yet if it weren't for her, there would be no team. I think she's the bomb!

Anyhoo, this story has a crazy ass ending involving a giant squid, a bunch of evil scientists, and an underground water city. It was a lot of fun, in all. I really hope that someday they make this series into a graphic novel because it would be so awesome to see these books drawn out.

This was a buddy read with Jeannette! I'm definitely reading book 4.

Sabrina says

Here are the reasons why I'm loving this series:

- when I was a kid, I liked watching the A-Team;
- [reason #2]
- [reason #3]
- [reason #4]
- ...
- ...
- I LOVED the A-Team.

Also:

Also:

Maldynado reminds me of Face.

cEe beE says

How do you it Ms. Buroker? This series just keep getting better with each volume! You even added a kraken to the plot! And the last chapter, OMG. That just made me SWOON!! I knew there was some fire smoldering deep inside Sicarius's icy exterior. And Amaranthe Lokdon is one of the BEST heroines I've ever come across!

The action is non-stop, but the strength of Deadly Games and the rest of the books is that it's character-driven. I LOVE IT!

A says

since I'm not gonna be able to post my full review soon... currently I'm on short vacation and then there will be a crazy busy week at work before I go off for another, longer vacation :) so I will give you a bit of a longer review than my usual sentence or two after finishing a book :) this is the third installment in one of my all time favourite series :) it's a mix of fantasy and steampunk vibes and I absolutely adore this band of misfits, the banter between all of them is absolutely hilarious :) the writing style in general is phenomenal and entertaining :) I already can't wait to see what's gonna happen in the next installment, especially after that ending... :) not to mention that I finally had some swoonworthy moments with Sicarius... *sighs dreamily* :) I definitely recommend you guys this book, and this series in general, because you really should read them in order :) expect a full review closer to the end of june :)

edited to add, finally :) my full review :)

This series just keeps getting better and better... :) *sighs happily* I feel like I need to start my review with once again thanking one of my #BookBesties for recommending me this amazing series in the first place :) so thank you Karen :) be prepared to hear it every single time I finish one of the installments :) but back to our story :) it's book #3 in a series that I highly recommend you to read in order... even though all of them follow around the same cast of characters and each of them revolves around a certain event and stuff... I

know, it's super vague, but I don't want to spoil you anything accidentally ;) there are a lot of important stuff you need to know from previous stories before going into each new one... plus, they are all just so awesome, that reading all of them is not a chore ;) and again, since it's one of the middle books in a bigger series, it's gonna be hard to say how I felt about it without giving away too much, but as always I will do my best :) so let me start by saying a bit more about the overall plot and our main character :)

This story, as well as the previous ones, takes place in the Turgonian empire... after writing that I am sitting here thinking if I remember the name correctly, but to be honest I am too lazy to get up and check it, so if I made a spelling mistake, we are all just gonna move on... ;) anyway... :) it's this absolutely amazing fantasy / steampunk world that I am dying to know more about... :) but the best part of this story, as well as all previous ones, are the characters... specifically... Amaranthe :) I know that all of you people who read these books already, expected me to say Sicarius, but I will get to him in a second... *sighs dreamily over the mysterious assassin* I'm sorry, where was I??? oh, right... ;) back to Amaranthe :) she used to be an Enforcer, sort of like police in that world, but then some things happened, some misunderstandings occurred and... she's not anymore... she is actually on the exact opposite side of the law now :) it's not like she *wants* to be there, but the current circumstances are what they are... ;) she's working on getting to the right side of the law, but it's a process :) I absolutely love her :) she's hilarious, resourceful and care a lot about her band of misfits... because Amaranthe does not work alone... oh no, there is a team... and what a team it is... :) I won't name everyone, even though they are a very colorful bunch, but in case you are new to this series, the identity of some of the members is not revealed until the end of the first book, so I don't want to spoil you stuff... but I have to... I just have to... say a sentence or two about Sicarius... *sighs dreamily* give me a moment... *at least ten minutes later* ok, get a grip woman... I would say that I'm sorry for taking a break, but it would be a lie... ;) I just love Sicarius so much... which is a bit ridiculous, when you think about how little I actually know about him... and, you know, the fact that he is a fictional character ;) but that is a topic for a whole another discussion :) but even though we know so little about him, those scenes he's in... he is the epitome of a mysterious assassin... he doesn't talk much, but once he opens his mouth... you guys... there was a scene towards the very end of the book... I'm not gonna tell you who exactly besides Sicarius was in it... but I read it like three times in a row, because it was sooo good :)

It was yet another easily given 5 stars :) I had so much fun reading this action packed, surprising twists filled story with entertaining and hilarious writing style... I swear you guys, the banter between those band of misfits is freaking fantastic... ;) I always laugh out loud when I read it, and it constantly surprises me in the best possible way... :) since I have breaks between each installments to read other stories, I am always able to convince myself that those books cannot possibly be as good as I remember them... and then I read another one and BAM! :) I'm reminded just how awesome they are :) I already can't wait to see what's gonna happen in book #4 because that last chapter... that ending... damn... ;) and I should already mentally prepare myself, because I heard that the endings of other books are even more cliffhangers... yes, that is totally a word... ;) if you haven't already, be sure to pick this book, or the first one if you are completely new to this series :) and prepare to laugh hard and awwwww in the most surprising places... ;) you can thank me later ;)

XOXO

A

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Yukari Watanabe says

Addictive.

Lynn says

This series has me totally sucked into it. For those interested let me tell you what not to read it for first. Don't read the series for worldbuilding. Don't read it for ironclad plots. Don't read it if you need romance of any significant degree. It's only there in the faintly in the background and it is extremely slow burn. It's also one of those you cheer on even though every sane, rational part of your brain said that it's not logical to cheer it on.

Do read it for a collection of characters that you can't help but to root for despite being (some deeply) flawed. Amaranthe leads a motley group with a lot against them. She becomes the heart and soul of the group leading to them slowly through the books developing and becoming so much more. The series is humorous and works because it doesn't take itself overly serious. It has kind of mad caper moments at times with adventure, fantasy and a soft take on steampunk. Overall it is fun and sucks you in.

The first book is just from Amaranth's POV. The second includes Basilard's POV. This book delves into POVs by Basilard and Amaranthe. It was good to get inside Basilard's head and find out more what makes him tick. Each book is better than the one before as things are intensified but slowly the characters are growing and evolving. The stakes keep going up with each book.

Sierra says

I'm going to attempt to make this a more analytical review, instead of just gushing about the characters. But I can't promise anything...

Like the previous books in the series, I found the plot to be kind of dull. And because the characters are so interesting and function so well together, as a reader, you have higher expectations for the story. In this installment, Amaranthe and her men are investigating the disappearance of some elite athletes. It takes quite some time to piece together what it is happening, and at the end of it all, you just get a very simplistic explanation that doesn't even seem to be worth all the effort put into the investigation. I understand that this particular investigation is still part of a 'bigger picture' but there is just some sort of spark missing with the actual storyline.

That being said, the plot for this book is still far better than the plots for the two previous ones. But there is definitely still room for improvement.

Sicarius is also absent for a decent chunk of the book. I expected to hate that, but surprisingly, it worked out for me. Especially because of WHY he was gone ((view spoiler)). It gave the author time to play with the dynamic of the group and I really enjoyed that. Sicarius is also going through some personal improvements, which is great! Thanks to Amaranthe and the rest of the boys, he even is starting to develop a sense of humor :P.

AND THAT ENDING.

I have no words.

It was just fabulous.

Simply Sam ? says

So even though it took me 3 1/2 months to finish this one it is probably the my favorite yet. For *reasons...* Okay, maybe just one reason. Sicarius.

"You're the only person who's ever wanted to give me happiness..."

Athletes in what's equivalent to the Olympics are disappearing. Amaranthe and the gang are on the case.

Blah Blah Blah

Basilard has vowed to avenge the wrongs done to his kingdom.

Blah

Maldynado tries to set Amaranthe up with Lord Mancrest (Deret). Not once, but TWICE he tries to turn her over to enforcers.

Some more blahs,

Basilard gets choosen as the ringer for the competition, and both he and Sicarius end up kidnapped due to their superior physical prowess.

Even more blahs,

Amaranthe and the remaining gang are to the rescue.

There's some more plot stuff here,

Akstyr continues to improve is magical abilities. I'm beginning to worry about him.

Throw in some more blahs (and some diving and sea monsters),

Sicarius runs around naked.

Sicarius runs around naked.

Sicarius runs around NAKED!!!!!!!!!!

After that there were some other words but who really cares at this point? I just want to know *is he blonde all over??*

Everyone is safe and sound. Basilard decides Amaranthe will be upset with his revenge plans so he decides ixnay on the executionay.

Oh, and last but not least,

Amaranthe tries for a third "date" with Deret (he apparently really, really wants a date at this point).

EXCEPT....

Amaranthe gave leave to Sicarius to take the night off to do whatever it is he wants to do so....

And it is absolutely worth the wait.

So yeah, I don't think Amaranthe will be going on any more dates with Deret.

Have I mentioned how much I love Sicarius? Yeah. I kind of do. And when I say "kind of" I mean I would have his little blonde headed assassin babies.

Lynxie says

OMG! What a way to spend the last day! Lindsay, you absolutely amaze me with how much I love all your books, but Deadly Games was incredible!

If I was slightly in love with Sicarius in the last two books, I am totally done for now! The incredible way he is portrayed, with his lack of emoting makes me want to simultaneously shake him and hug him for making me smirk, then smile, then grin like an idiot. I can honestly say I really wish he was real, I would love to see that stoney-faced silent stare and revel in the shudders that would likely race up my spine.

Amaranthe, well, some of the other reviews of this tale sum her up brilliantly. She is the ever present glue for this motley group of men. What I especially like is her ability to think quickly on her feet, and the fact that the guys all love (and sometimes roll their eyes at) that about her.

I do have one thing to say about the choice of ending for this one though. I hate that I now have to wait to find out what happens, but WOW! What a way to end this fantastic story!

Lindsay, you should be most proud of this one! Thank you for the best yet!

To those reading the review, buy this! Buy all of the Emperor's Edge series! Buy everything by Lindsay Buroker, you will not be disappointed!

Deanne says

Fast becoming my favourite set of outlaws, this time a series of kidnappings catches the attention of the emperor's edge.

Sicarius is as difficult to read as ever, though there are flashes of humour. Amaranthe continues to keep the group together.

It's Basilard's turn to be the main focus of the story as he struggles with some revelations from Dark currents, the previous book. It does help to read the books in order as they follow on from each other.

Sherwood Smith says

Thoroughly enjoyed this next installment in the adventures of the Emperor's Edge, Amaranthe's well-meant team of do-gooders who still manage to leave mayhem and disaster in their wake. The central romance progresses with delicious slowness (I would have so hated insta-love begetting insta-change); probably my only complaint would be that the secondary character chosen for this one actually reveals no more than we knew already.

But that won't stop me from getting the next!

Ashley says

"You're the only one whose ever wanted to bring me happiness..."

Oh my stars. I can't review this properly because those last 15 pages got me like:

I'M JUST SO HAPPY I CAN'T STOP SMILING.

Lala_Loopsie [fire breathing B!tch Queen] says

I'll be honest and say what i've read of this book just wasn't as good as what i've read of the other books in the series. I know once i get into it it'll be better, but now just isn't the time.

Sylvia Mercedes says

Loved this one! Love this series. Going to take a break from it for a little while to read some other things, but definitely plan to come back!

Frankly Frankie says

If you believe your soul safe, why risk your life over and over, trying to impress the emperor? Is it just for a pardon?

“It’s partially about clearing my name and partially about... trying to give happiness to someone who means a great deal to me.

“You’re the only person who’s ever wanted to give me happiness.”

Ladies and gentlemen we have romantic progress on our hands!

Thingsss happened in this one.

So many things.

I literally gasped and then ran around screaming for a bit before I came back to continue reading.

clears throat

Yes. Well. *That!* is how I feel about this book.

Deadly Games opens with a steam punk rendition of the Olympics. Athletes have journeyed from far and wide to compete in the Imperial Games, where for the first time, the champions will have the chance at an audience with the Emperor.

Before the games can even begin though, athletes start disappearing and a mysterious yellow powder is discovered on the scene.

Basilard, our favorite mute merc, enters the games undercover to sniff out the truth but also work at a chance to meet with Sespian.

Of course, like all of Amaranthe’s plans, this one goes bollocks up from phase one.

I won’t give anything away because this one took a few unexpected twists, but the end had me in fits of glee (see above).

Important updates include:

stirrings in Amaranthe's dating calendar...

and further development of Akstyr's Scientific skill.

This one did not disappoint! Can't wait to start the next one!

Férial says

Still trying to stop my heart racing that fast. That was so intense !! Non stop action and the battle/s on...er...inside the lake was/were something...something...ah, see for yourself.

I don't know what to say really. I just want to keep reading because that message at the end of the book...How is the team going to respond to that ?

But Amaranthe likes a good challenge, doesn't she ?

Nitzan Schwarz says

WE GOT A KISS!!!

Claire says

Genre: high fantasy with a touch of steam, a dash of magic and the tiniest sprinkle of romance

I'm not sure I can accurately describe how much I love this series. Lindsay Buroker nails it again in the third instalment. This edition is easily as cinematic as the previous two. You could transcribe it word for word onto the big screen and hold me riveted.

These characters continue to grow and endear themselves to me. Funnily enough, the character that struck me as the most changed was Maldynado. He really has become a rather loyal fellow who looks out for... well, Amaranthe, but there were several "Aww, the big softie" moments. I think he is acting more and more like her big brother (albeit one that doesn't get possessive or expect her to be chaste - we can leave that to Sicarius).

Akstyr worries me. He is useful, but I don't think he has formed the type of bonds for Amaranthe as the others have. She is the glue that holds them together, and he isn't quite as attached. I think when we get his point of view, we might see things differently, but I am expecting a surprise from him.

Amaranthe continues to be a lady to admire. She doesn't have to resort to seduction or lies to convince

people to join her cause. Her humanity and passion do that. But I see a few cracks of doubt appearing here and there, which should open some interesting discussions going forward. I'd actually like to see how Sicarius might deal with her moments of doubt. She's always kept such a positive face for him. Especially since he is depending on her planning to bring him... well, potentially two rewards now.

Basilard was 100% correct. Amaranthe humanises Sicarius. But then, she brings the best out in each member of that team. I'm glad Basilard did not go through with his plan.

That epilogue was brilliant (as was the scene preceding it, but I truly do not want to spoil it for everyone who SHOULD be reading this book). What a brilliant tease for the next chapter in this series, which I hope I won't hound the author for too much in the coming months.

Bottom line: Awesome storytelling. Engaging and unique characters. Flawless eBook. On my top ten list of books I've read in 2011 (which also includes the other two). Must read.
