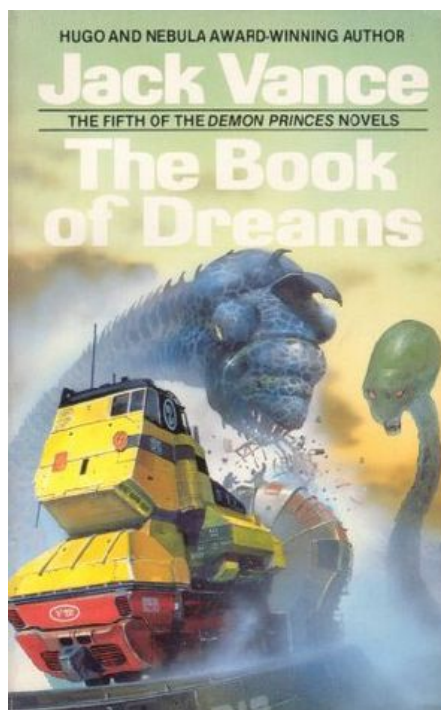




The Book of Dreams

Jack Vance

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Howard Alan Treesong gave a banquet to ten friends. All died in agony, save himself.

Howard Alan Treesong went to his old school reunion to teach his former classmates the meaning of terror.

Howard Alan Treesong was the most elusive of the five Demon Princes upon whom Kirth Gersen had sworn vengeance. A galaxy-wide guessing game proved his undoing.

Howard Alan Treesong wrote his own holy book and called it *The Book of Dreams*.

The Book of Dreams Details

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From Reader Review The Book of Dreams for online ebook

Florin Pitea says

It was O.K. mostly.

Rjyan says

I love Vance, adore him, forever in the man's debt, etcet. But I felt like this was a really anticlimactic ending to the Demon princes saga. Basically the same investigate-and-bait-the-elusive-criminal template as all the others but with a curious absence of any raised stakes or deeper exploration of Gersen or his final nemesis. After Palace and Face everything about this story seems second-rate, including the un compelling, basically tacked-on James Kirk-esque romance with Alice yawn. There was almost a subtext of disappointment or ennui bubbling through that I thought Vance might chase to much profit--- how amazing if Gersen really did fail spectacularly when so close to his goal! Would have been rather Vancey. But no, We get an undercooked twist regarding the villain's odd mental state that really changes nothing and illuminates very little. I'd have much liked a different kind of villain (Treesong's plots are just a more generic version of the Star King's, it seems) or really any distinctive quality at all separating the finale from the preceding stories but alas.

Anthony says

I have now finished Jack Vance's, Space Opera epic classic series, The Demon Princes. With novel five, The Book of Dreams, finished, I have zipped (if you can zip through almost 1000 pages) through the series.

It becomes clear that Vance saved the best for last, as the final two books, to me, are the best of the series.

It is hard to not go back and sort of give a bit of an overview of the whole series, and in this case I am not going to resist that temptation.

The most interesting way to look at these stories is through the prism of the most important characters...the villains! Yes I would say that even though Kirth Gersen is the hero, and is damn near in every scene, I feel that it is each of the villains that adds to the understanding of place, setting, and also to an illumination of the hero.

One thing that must be understood about the series is that you need not read them all to enjoy one of them, however in order to gain full comprehension of what the, "hero," of this story has lost in order to exact his revenge, can only be completely felt by the reader if he reads them all. In order...that's right, in order. The final punch of these stories is, in fact, cumulative in effect, and isn't truly felt without going through the growth Gersen goes through.

What Vance does so well in the series is make sure that each of the Demon Princes is an individual, different from the others. The temptation would be very easy to give into, to make these criminal geniuses into very similar type men. They aren't the same.

Attel Malagate, (the Woe). He is a Star King, an alien species. What we discover is that his reasons for his criminal career are completely different than his fellow villains. He looks at crime, even murder, as a game that he can win, proving his worth as a member of his race.

Kokor Hekkus, (the Killing Machine). In this criminal we meet someone for who crime is a way to create his own fantasy world, into which he pours all his true passion, to the loss of his humanity. The answer it seems to why he commits crimes is just that he needs the money to create his land of myth.

Viole Falushe, with his palace of love, and his lifelong passion for romance and poetry, despite his impotence sexually, and his bizarre relationship with the poet Navarth, is a man that thinks of crime as art.

He became a criminal in response to a slight by a girl at school when he was a child, and made it his life's goal to make this girl (or her facsimile) love him.

Lens Larque, is a criminal for what can only be termed social reasons. He is a member of a looked down at race of men, who feels that his, "jokes, and games," are a way to show his superior intelligence to those who think they are his betters. Kirth Gersen, in going after this man begins to feel the same feeling of prejudice, that Larque felt leveled against him.

Howard Alan Treesong, the villain of the last novel, is easily the most grandiose of these villains. A megalomaniac, and a childish fool as well, he is in some ways the most sympathetic, and also the vilest of these monsters. I would say the reason for this is the fact that though he is clearly a monster, he is also the most tormented from within. I also got the distinct feeling that of all the criminals, he is the one to in fact actually be clinically insane.

This last novel has a lot to recommend it; not the least that it is well written and filled with many, many looks into extremely well built human societies. We meet the weird and the strange on several planets and communities Gersen visits. These include a world with a society basically rooted in the culture of the game warden, and a planet on which we meet religious fanatics who seem to, deep down inside, know their creed is total nonsense. There is more to sell it as a story; including the final chapter, in which the hero has the reaction to his ultimate final success, that we kind of always thought he would...if we thought about it.

Peter says

Jack Vance's Demon Princes saga ends with the taking down of the last and probably most interesting of the five space pirates who destroyed Kirth Gessen's home village way back when. Howard Alan Treesong, like Viole Falushe, one of the previous baddies, just can't get over high school. Born on a planetary backwater that sounds a lot like the upper Midwest or some descriptions I've heard of rural New Zealand, an imaginative and willful boy, he gets the works from the locals and dedicates his life to revenge. He gets far enough to become a sort of "Mr. Big" of galactic crime and nearly becomes something like space-Jesuit-General. But of course, he's no match for Kirth Gessen's focus and grit (and unlimited money he secured whilst taking out a previous Demon Prince).

Hero and villain both live for revenge. Kirth lives to avenge his family and home; Treesong lives to get his vengeance on his high school class and to make the universe as much like his adolescent fantasies (in the titular book, which Kirth eventually finds and uses as bait). The latter option seems to lead to a somewhat more colorful, if nefarious, existence for Treesong (and his fellow space pirates), but the latter provides the drive necessary to go through all the hoops to eliminate the former. In this installment, they range from a fake magazine contest to identify the one known picture of Treesong to the shenanigans with the lost diary to Kirth having to pretend to be a flautist to infiltrate the band at the high school reunion Treesong interrupts with dire theatrical revenge. Sometimes, the difference between hero and villain is how they go through the rigamarole.

The Demon Princes books are pretty cool. Vance clearly made more world than he could really fit in to these fairly conventional detective stories, as evidenced by the long epigraphs to his chapters full of lore from his universe. You mostly get the worlds through the odd planets Kirth visits, which showcase Vance's fascination with the plasticity of people and societies, where oddballs in backwaters keep getting odder due to their cultural — and their planet's ecological — logic. I ultimately prefer the Cugel and Anome books, but these are also cool. *****

<https://toomuchberard.wordpress.com/2...>

Jeroen Van de Crommenacker says

The final volume in the Demon Princes novels. It has been an exhilarating ride. Shame to come to the end.

Mohammed says

Vance saved the best villain for the last, the most interesting, fascinating and insane of the criminals called Demon Princes. Howard Alan Treesong was something.

It was a very fine ending to a great series and Kirth Gersens personal story had a good bitter end for me. Not the usual kind of revenge story. Technically this book might have been the best along with the fourth book The Face but i enjoyed The Face more. It had more interesting, weird human cultures, more interesting side characters.

I rate this book 5 stars because its the best of its kind in my reading experience of SF Space Operas, SF thrillers. Not that you should expect political, epic action story in space. Gersen stories were more about human cultures, meetings of those cultures in the guise of a SF thriller revenge story. The few action scenes there is in every book was intense, enjoyable to read for a Vance book who usually dont focus on those elements.

Crowfood says

Perhaps the best of the series.

Only gripes:

- 1) The female characters in each book were token and shallow, but that seems to be true of a lot of sci-fi of the time.
- 2) The conclusion of this (and the other novels in the series) seemed abrupt and a bit anticlimactic.

Kat Hooper says

The Book of Dreams is the final book of Jack Vance's The Demon Princes saga. Kirth Gersen must find and eliminate his last elusive enemy: Howard Alan Treesong. As usual, he has the help of his reluctant banker and there's a new Innocent Pretty Young Female to attend to, also.

The Book of Dreams is reminiscent of The Palace of Love (the third Demon Princes novel), which also featured a sensitive boy turned bad after being bullied and teased by his peers. Kirth finally tracks down Treesong at his high school reunion where he shows up to get revenge on his classmates. That scene was hilarious. There were plenty of other humorous Vanceian elements, too, including an intergalactic magazine contest and a species of sub-humans who had devolved because they don't eat meat ("the dark side of vegetarianism").

I thoroughly enjoyed all of the Demon Princes novels, but I was hoping for something extra in this final episode — perhaps the most outrageous enemy, a near-death experience, the cleverest plot, the perfect girl — something special to wrap up the series. Vance could have done more with Howard Alan Treesong who had multiple personalities and was planning to take over the universe. He could have been a scarier villain.

The end of The Book of Dreams was abrupt. All through the series, I've been wondering what Kirth would do when his life's work was over. Would he feel relieved? Depressed? Purposeless? This was answered in two lines at the end of The Book of Dreams. I was hoping for more, but Vance chose not to enlighten us. So, I didn't get the "go-out-with-a-bang" ending or the epilogue I was hoping for, but I'm still satisfied. Kirth Gersen is one of Jack Vance's best heroes. I'm going to miss him.

Jesús says

Disappointing

Donna says

This was the fifth and final instalment in the *Demon Princes* series. I quite enjoyed the whole series. Vance is clearly a most imaginative and clever author, and as a sci-fi writer he stands among the best. Every chapter begins with an excerpt from some important published work of the future, something that advances the plot or elucidates some element of the story. I particularly enjoyed his careful descriptions of clothing styles, which varied dramatically from planet to planet, and the details of various strange and wondrous foods and menu items. Meticulous attention is also paid to local dialects and musical instruments, dances, and songs. Each world is brought to life with its own colours and sounds, and plenty of elaborate detail. Pure genius!

TJ says

The Book of Dreams was published in 1981 by DAW Books and is the fifth and final novel in Vance's The Demon Prince series. My copy is 190 pages, making it the second longest novel of the group. All of The Demon Price novels continue to be in print. I like the two volume set by Orb Books that has the first three novels in volume one and the last two in volume two. The Book of Dreams is my favorite of the five novels, and I rated it a five both times I read it. But the whole series is highly recommended as being highly readable, entertaining and interesting. Although some of the novels in The Demon Prince can be read alone, I have found, after reading the series twice, that enjoyment can be greatly enhanced by reading them in order and by repeated readings. I look forward to reading the series again in a few years.

We learned in the first novel of the series that when Gersen was a child the colony where he lived was attacked by five demon princes who killed everyone, including his family members, and destroyed the colony. Kirth and his grandfather were able to flee and were the only survivors. His grandfather arranged that Kirth be trained for many years in hand to hand and weapons combat so that he could avenge his family. No romance or other attraction has yet turned Gersen away from his monomania, and his stealthily acquired wealth only further enabled him in his pursuits of the demon princes.

Here in the final novel Kirth Gersen continues his quest to track down and kill the five demon princes. The final one Gersen seeks is the elusive and grandiose Howard Alan Treesong, Lord of the Overmen. Several years ago, in his attempt to consolidate power and perhaps become the first ruler of the Gaeen worlds, Treesong almost succeeded in having himself appointed as Chief of the Interworld Police Coordination Company (IPCC). The IPCC has not heard anything about him lately, though, and a major problem with tracking him down is that nobody knows what he looks like and there are no known photos of him in existence.

Gersen obtains a photo of a group of seven men that was sent anonymously to his Cosmopolis Magazine company. A note was written on it says "HA Treesong is here". They do not know who sent it, who else is in the photo or where it was taken. Gersen decides to publish the photo in a free inaugural periodical called Extant that he creates. He includes it as part of a contest that offers a reward to the person who can identify the most people in the photograph. He hopes to at least narrow down which man in the photo might be Treesong.

One of the people who eventually responds to the photo is Treesong's father so Gersen visits his planet to learn more about Treesong. He learns that there is an upcoming 25 year high school reunion that Treesong might be attending. In order to be part of the reunion ceremony Gersen hires a band for the reunion on the condition that he be allowed to be one of the members. He cannot play any musical instrument so takes intensive flute lessons, enough to be able to barely play. The reunion turns out to be much more than expected when Treesong turns up with hired thugs, takes control of everything and begins to take acts of revenge against former bullies, teachers, would be girl friends and others who humiliated him when he went to high school there. Treesong, a trained musician, notices that Gersen can't really play the flute so asks his hired men to take Gersen to the river and toss him in. When they arrive at the river Gersen overpowers the two men, takes their weapons and stalks back to the reunion with the intent of killing Treesong But Treesong is only wounded, and Gersen is only barely able to escape the planet alive.

Gersen learns from Treesong's estranged family that Treesong murdered his own best friend, Nymphotis Cleadhoe, when in high school because he thought his friend had stolen his fantasy world writings he titled The Book of Dreams. Treesong's brother, though, was the one who hid the book, and this book is still where he tossed it. Gersen realizes how important this book is to Treesong so he buys it from Treesong's brother. Next Gersen devises an elaborate scheme to allow Treesong to learn about the existence of the book to try to lure him to retrieve it. He contacts Nymphotis Cleadhoe's parents who now reside on a jungle planet where they are caretakers on the Bethune Preserve. (Note the similarities to the later Cadwal Chronicles.) The Cleadhoe couple know that Treesong murdered their child many years ago so gladly cooperate with Gersen in attempting to kill Treesong. Gersen cleverly sets up the trap.

The novel is suspenseful, unpredictable, and elaborately plotted with vivid portraits of odd places and inhabitants such as the religious fanatics in the Maundish area on the planet Mouderveldt, the residents on the planet Pontefract who are obsessed with hats and have developed elaborate customs regarding the wearing of hats, and the Bethune Preserve with its very strange creatures. The novel is so descriptive and detailed that I was even more enthralled the second time I read it. I look forward to reading The Book of Dreams and the entire series again in the near future. Very highly recommended!

Judy Goldich says

The final installment of the Demon Prince" series. Opinions vary, and my sci-Fi living husband thinks I'm crazy, but I rate this as second best of the five, after "The Face." It ends quite abruptly, with the death of the last the Demon Princes, and not even at our hero's hands. Vance spent at least 700 pages building up to this, and given the character development, I don't see that he had much option but to cut it off. Or perhaps, he was tired of it. Still, fun read.

Jaro says

First time read as ebook (audio)

Second time read in Orbit omnibus.

Stephen says

4.0 stars. Satisfying final volume of the excellent, and under-rated, Demon Prince series by Jack Vance. In this episode, Kirth Gersen, our revenge seeking hero, searches out the last of the "demon princes," a master criminal known as Howard Treesong.

Vance is a master story-teller with an incredible imagination and a talent for concise, descriptive writing that immerses his readers in the worlds he creates without needing a lot of pages to do it. As with the other Demon Prince novels, this book is relatively short (223 pages), but Vance fills every page with the history, the culture, the economy, the governments and the people of the Oikumene (the universe setting in which these stories take place). Yet such information is so seamlessly interwoven into the plot, that you never get the "info dump" feeling that can sometimes detract from the pace of the story.

Bottom-line, Vance is rightfully considered one of the best writers of science fiction's golden age and this is a superb example of why. Highly Recommended!!!! (less)

Jamie says

Howard Alan Treesong, the last remaining Demon Prince, must die. And so it goes. The last installment in Vance's Demon Princes series ends on a high note. Each book in the series, which tells the tale of revenge against one of the five Demon Princes, entertains without fail. If pressed, I'd say the best is The Face, book number four. The worst? Not to be had.

Our protagonist, Kirth Gersen, remains the same throughout, yet everything else changes, as he pursues his targets across a multitude of diverse, fascinating worlds, built by Vance with masterful style and richness. As with everything Vance, it is these rich, amazing, utterly unique worlds which he creates with such detail, and yet with economy, which make these stories gems.
