The Lies of Locke Lamora

A Fairly Succinct Review

In this stunning debut, author Scott Lynch delivers the wonderfully thrilling tale of an audacious criminal and his band of confidence tricksters. Set in a fantastic city pulsing with the lives of decadent nobles and daring thieves, here is a story of adventure, loyalty, and survival that is one part Robin Hood, one part Ocean’s Eleven, and entirely enthralling.

An orphan’s life is harsh—and often short—in the island city of Camorr, built on the ruins of a mysterious alien race. But born with a quick wit and a gift for thieving, Locke Lamora has dodged both death and slavery, only to fall into the hands of an eyeless priest known as Chains—a man who is neither blind nor a priest. A con artist of extraordinary talent, Chains passes his skills on to his carefully selected “family” of orphans—a group known as the Gentlemen Bastards. Under his tutelage, Locke grows to lead the Bastards, delightedly pulling off one outrageous confidence game after another. Soon he is infamous as the Thorn of Camorr, and no wealthy noble is safe from his sting.

Passing themselves off as petty thieves, the brilliant Locke and his tightly knit band of light-fingered brothers have fooled even the criminal underworld’s most feared ruler, Capa Barsavi. But there is someone in the shadows more powerful—and more ambitious—than Locke has yet imagined.

Known as the Gray King, he is slowly killing Capa Barsavi’s most trusted men—and using Locke as a pawn in his plot to take control of Camorr’s underworld. With a bloody coup under way threatening to destroy
everyone and everything that holds meaning in his mercenary life, Locke vows to beat the Gray King at his own brutal game—or die trying.…. 

My Personal Review:
Rich is the word that keeps coming up as I talk to people about this book and its sequel.

Lynch is one of the most original and engaging new authors I’ve ever read. It’s hard to believe this is his first book. It’s a great read that satisfies on many levels. It feels like a classic .. but also completely original.

It’s a little bit Fafhrd-and-the-Grey-Mouser-meets-Oceans-Eleven, with a side of Oliver Twist and a dash of Renaissance Italy.

And it’s a good mix. It left me satisfied with an extremely well-told tale … but still wanting more of these characters and their world. I fell in love with Locke – and his friends and his world - within just a few pages and I could. not. put it down.

In addition to a refreshingly original protagonist, story and voice, Lynch offers an amazingly detailed and unique world and fully realized supporting characters.

Lynch’s narrative style - jumping back and forth between Lockes past and present - was VERY skillfully done. It “could” have been distracting and disjointed. Instead, it brilliantly serves to reveal Locke (and the other characters and even the city - which is almost a character unto itself) to the reader a little bit at a time - like slowly and tantalizingly peeling away layers of wrapping to reveal the prize within.

This was hands-down one of my favorite books I read in 2008. I was completely drawn in to this amazing world and emotionally invested in the characters. I enjoyed it so much, I immediately ordered the sequel, Red Seas Under Red Skies and devoured that as quickly as the first. I am eagerly awaiting the release of the third installment.

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