



MARK
LAWRENCE

THE
WHEEL
OF
OSHEIM

‘Excellent ... on a par with
George R.R. Martin’

CONN IGGULDEN

THE
WHEEL
OF
OSHEIM

Book Three of The Red Queen's War

Mark Lawrence



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HarperCollins*Publishers*
1 London Bridge Street,
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

Published by HarperVoyager
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers* 2016

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Cover layout design © HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd 2016
Cover Illustration © Jason Chan
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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Source ISBN: 9780007531615

Ebook Edition © 2015 ISBN: 9780008171001

Version: 2016-05-05

Dedication

Dedicated to my father, Patrick.

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Author's Note

For those of you who have had to wait a year for this book I provide brief catch-up notes to Book 3, so that your memories may be refreshed and I can avoid the awkwardness of having to have characters tell each other things they already know for your benefit.

Here I carry forward only what is of importance to the tale that follows.

1. Jalan Kendeth, grandson to the Red Queen, has few ambitions. He wants to be back in his grandmother's capital, rich, and out of danger. He'd also love to lord it over his older brothers Martus and Darin.
2. Life has become a little more complicated of late. Jalan still lusts after his former love, Lisa DeVeer, but she's now married to his best friend. Additionally he's still in massive debt to the murderous crime lord Maeres Allus, and wanted for fraud by the great banks of Florence. Plus, he's vowed revenge on Edris Dean, the man who killed his mother and his sister. His sister was still in his mother's womb and the necromantic sword Edris used (that Jalan now carries) trapped her in Hell, ready to return as an unborn to serve the Dead King. Jalan's sister had the potential to be a powerful sorceress and will make a very dangerous unborn – such potent unborn require the death of a close family member to return to the living world.
3. Jalan has travelled from the frozen north to the burning hills of Florence. He began his trip with Norsemen Snorri and Tuttugu of the Undoreth, picking up a Norse witch named Kara, and Hennan, a young boy from Osheim, on the way.
4. Jalan and Snorri were bound to spirits of darkness and light respectively: Aslaug and Baraqel. During their journey those bonds were broken.

5. Jalan has Loki's key, an artefact that can open any door. Many people want this – not least the Dead King who could use it to emerge from Hell.
6. In this book I use both Hell and Hel to describe the part of the afterlife into which our heroes venture. Hel is what the Norse call it. Hell is what it's called in Christendom.
7. Tuttugu died in an Umbertide jail, tortured and killed by Edris Dean.
8. We last saw Jalan, Snorri, Kara and Hennan in the depths of the salt-mine where the door-mage, Kelem, dwelt.
9. Kelem was hauled off into the dark-world by Aslaug.
10. Snorri went through the door into Hel to save his family. Jalan said he would go with him, and gave Loki's key to Kara so it wouldn't fall into the Dead King's hands. Jalan's nerve failed him and he didn't follow Snorri. He pickpocketed the key back off Kara and a moment later someone pushed the door open from the Hel side and hauled him through.
11. More generally: Jalan's grandmother, Alica Kendeth, the Red Queen, has been fighting a hidden war with the Lady Blue and her allies for many years. The Lady Blue is the guiding hand behind the Dead King, and the necromancer Edris Dean is one of her agents.
12. Aiding the Red Queen are her twin older siblings, the Silent Sister – who sees the future but never speaks – and her disabled brother Garyus, who runs a commercial empire of his own.
13. The Red Queen's War is about the change the Builders made in reality a thousand years previously – the change that introduced magic into the world shortly before the previous society (us in about fifty years) was destroyed in a nuclear war.
14. The change the Builders made has been accelerating as people use magic more – in turn allowing more magic to be used – a vicious

cycle that is breaking down reality and leading to the end of all things.

15. The Red Queen believes the disaster can be averted – or that she should at least try. The Lady Blue wants to accelerate to the end, believing that she and a select few can survive to become gods in whatever will follow.
16. Dr Taproot appeared to be a circus master going about his business, but Jalan saw him in his grandmother's memories of sixty years ago, acting as head of her grandfather's security and much the same age as he is now...
17. The Wheel of Osheim is a region to the north where reality breaks down and every horror from a man's imagination is given form. Kara's studies indicate that at the heart of it was a great machine, a work of the Builders, mysterious engines hidden in a circular underground tunnel many miles across. Quite what role it plays in the disaster to come is unclear...