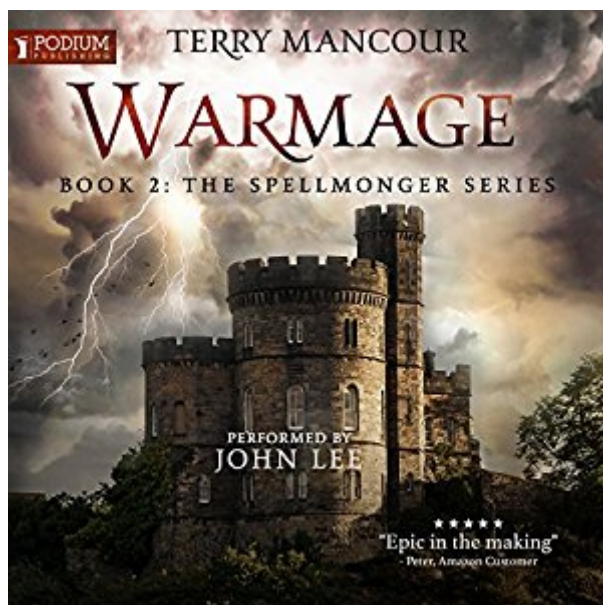


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Warmage: Spellmonger, Book 2



Synopsis

The goblin invasion is on...and a wizard's work is never done! After facing a hopeless siege, an implacable foe and an impossible escape, you would think that Minalan the Spellmonger would be able to rest - but the armies of the undead goblin shaman Shereul (known as the Dead God to his human victims) are rolling over the western reaches of the rustic Duchy of Alshar and is headed toward the heart of the Duchy of Castal. Thousands are fleeing for their lives as hordes of goblins pour out of Boval Vale and devastate the rugged fiefs of the Alshari Wilderlands. And the super-charged shamans of the Dead God are making defending the realm almost impossible for the outnumbered Alshari country knights. While the two Dukes play feudal politics to further their own ends, the only people who seem to care about the invasion are Minalan and his outlaw warmagi friends - and they're busy dodging agents of the sinister Royal Censorate of Magic. But if someone doesn't organize an army in northern Alshar soon, then there will be nothing to stop the armies of the divinely powerful Dead God from conquering all five Duchies in his genocidal quest for vengeance. But things are just not that simple: he has to cope with a sexy young Shadowmage assassin who works for a mysterious spymaster, a cocky new manservant, a dysfunctional group of suddenly-powerful warmagi, the Censor General, and a bunch of whiny nobles before the Dukes will grant him the troops and money he will need - and the Dukes have plans of their own. If Minalan the Spellmonger can't lobby the courts of Alshar and Castal to work together - and quickly - the hordes of the Dead God will sweep over the frontiers of both states. Worse, the mysterious Umbra veil he has erected around Boval Vale may come to imperil all Five Duchies. Minalan would rather just go home and let the Dukes handle it, but his conscience won't let him. Someone has to stop the Dead God...and that someone happens to be him. Beyond politics and plots, goblins and trolls, mercenaries and magic, the Soulless and the shamans, Censors and secret orders, for Minalan there is only the thought that his child is to be born in a world with such dangers, and that is something he cannot permit. It is time for the Spellmonger to pick up his mageblade, summon his allies, and go to war again...as a Warmage!

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Customer Reviews

When I first bought my Kindle, by sheer chance, Spellmonger was one of my first purchases. I read it with great pleasure, immediately looked up Mr. Mancour and found his blog and was very pleasantly surprised to find out that the publication of Warmage was imminent. Having now read Warmage, I find it a very different book than Spellmonger; basically, Spellmonger could have acted as an introduction to an epic fantasy series while Warmage was the first book; and what a first installment! For a start, it is an extremely long read. If it was in print form, I suspect it would come in at the best part of 600 pages if not over that. Despite its length though, the pace never slackens and it also gives justice to the unorthodox structure of having two stories running parallel to each other, just on slightly different timelines. One is very much focused on the political aspect of the crisis facing the main character while the other narrates the military aspect. It is not until the end that the political story catches up to the military story. They are both equally interesting and equally readable. I suspect that Machiavelli's *The Prince* has a prominent place on Mr. Mancour's bookshelf. Minalan, our main character, was an under achiever who has been hoisted onto the path of power by his acquisition of a witchstone; sometimes he stumbles upon this path while at other times he positively dances. He is certainly not perfect but he is thankfully no dummy either. The supporting cast is very well drawn and thank goodness that we have a single person view of the whole story; multiple points of view seem to be all the rage right now and I find that a lot of the time this is an excuse for padding out the length of books with meaningless backgrounds and motivations as well as lazy plotting as we find the same incident in a book being related again and again by different people. The author avoids this. One of the great pleasures of the book is that we see Minalan developing in many ways but mostly as a person and this personal development influences his abilities as a mage, politician and general. If this book is anything to go by, he will need all of these abilities and more in the future. The style of the narrative is bright, breezy and deceptively humorous; some of the incidents are purely lighthearted, like the reports he receives

that his fiancée is not getting on particularly well with his mother but in many cases we can see that Minalan is using the humour to mask the horror and desperation he feels about some of the situations he is forced to confront. One slight criticism I do have is that Minalan's development as a magician does not seem to be keeping up with the other aspects of his character but that will probably come in future books. Finally a couple of words of warning: this is a beta version of the book and there are a few typos here and there. I am not going to mark down the book for that. They are easily fixed and the sheer scope of the story easily eclipses minor issues like that. It is extremely good value for its length and a final version of the prose will be uploaded next month by all accounts, possibly priced at a dollar more. Honestly, it would be extremely good value at twice the price. Also, the bad guys here are really, really evil with a few twists that I have not come across before so be warned. The end of the book announces that Book 3 of the series, *Magelord*, will be issued in 2013. It is good that Mr. Mancour is giving himself a year to write it as this is a fantastic start and the author is obviously taking great care in his world building and the development of the story; but I also hope that it is not issued too far into 2013 as, like the other reviewers, I am eagerly waiting for Minalan's next adventures.

The second in the Spellmonger series, *"Warmage"* starts where the previous novel, *"Spellmonger"*, left off; the goblins are coming, with an expeditionary force of about a hundred thousand, while the Five Duchies are unready to acknowledge, let alone meet, the threat. Minalan faces dangers to himself and his comrades from the Censorate (a kind of magical inquisition), roadblocks due to petty power-plays of minor nobles, scheming courtiers and spies, and the rather grander schemes of the ruling Dukes. If he can overcome his human opponents, he'll still have to face the goblin horde. But, if he can succeed, he may be able to usher in a new future for mages, removing the previous restrictions on owning property and conducting research; he himself may become the first *Magelord* in generations. *"Warmage"* shows significant improvements in writing style and originality from *"Spellmonger"*. Part of that is that *"Spellmonger"* took a traditional "goblins invade" storyline with archetypal characters, then slowly warped them into original forms; *"Warmage"* begins within this more original framework. Another part is that Mancour has grown as an author. The book is epic in length, and describes an entire military campaign in detail; if you think George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* series, but without the character jumping, you wouldn't be far off. The level of internal realism is impressive, as was Mancour's ability to keep all the characters straight; I occasionally felt a similarity to Greek epics, where many side characters conduct much smiting. The characters continued to grow, with the most significant growth centered around Minalan's coming to grips with

his increasing responsibilities and power. One of the things I most liked about this novel was that though magic played a large role, there wasn't a "magic bullet" solution to the goblins. So, that's the good part, and now we come to the bad; Mancour desperately needs a proofreader. He can obviously write, understands semi-colons, punctuation in general, sentence structure, etc. That said, there were way too many homonyms (words that sound the same but are spelled differently, eg greaves- a piece of armor, vs. grieves- sad feeling), occasional accidental keystrokes (eg, adding "m," instead of just ","), the occasional sentence skip (normally where a bit of text was accidentally deleted), etc. The book is long, and it's inevitable that there will be mistakes. Also, to reiterate, Mancour can write; the book is well edited, and it reads well despite the errors. Still, it's at the point that the errors are distracting. I'll keep an eye on the novel, and when there's been a significant proofread, edit my review and bump the book up to 5 stars. Until then, I'd advise readers to think of this as an ARC (Advance reader copy, or pre-release book) that hasn't been to the proofreader yet. Overall, a highly enjoyable, impressive book that will keep even the fastest reader occupied for a while. Recommended to fantasy fans in general; I wouldn't be surprised if enjoyment from this book resulted in friends being recommended to start the series.

The story being told is fantastic, enough to hook a new reader on the entirety of the series. Characters are richly developed and stand out well. The world the author has crafted is superb. Pay special attention to the times indicated at the start of each chapter, as the constant bouncing back and forth between flashbacks and current events is quite confusing if you aren't looking for it at the beginning. There are many grammatical errors in this series as well as entire segments of paragraphs that are completely missing. Editing seems to have been completely missing from this entire endeavor. Many of the errors are so basic and any author/editor should know better (there, their, they're).

Magic. Action. Adventure. Intrigue. Politics. Not a romance novel. Good tongue-in-cheek humor without overwhelming the plot. These books are far longer than most fantasy 'novels' on these days and well worth the price. Characterization is decent and development is solid, especially the younger characters who are still growing up. The magic system is balanced well enough to sound plausible without explaining so much that all mystery is lost. A bit of homophone editing to do (the kind spell check misses), but not bad enough to interfere with my reading. Overall, an outstanding 5 stars!

This would probably be a 4-5 star book if the author didn't jump back and forth in time every other chapter. It is like trying to listen to a song you like if you were trying to listen to a song but the verses were not played in order. The constant time jumping really did not let me engage in the book as it really ruined the flow.

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