

Siege Chronicles: The Complete Series

Mark William Chase

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In the fun steampunk novellas of Siege Chronicles, a trio of redeemable scamps has exciting adventures in a world embroiled in war.

In Mark William Chase's action-packed, six-part novel *Siege Chronicles*, a mercenary group pursues riches and tries to prevent a cataclysmic event.

In a fantasy realm divided by war, a group of mercenaries is led by Davrick, a bounty hunter. The unlikely group includes Talyaana, an elf who's a thief, and Sid, a genius gear head. They field an unusual request: to board an Imperium battle train and steal an artifact of immense power. The crew manages to best a sorcerer and abscond with the artifact, but is left deep behind enemy lines, with no safe way out. Meanwhile, the world-shattering War of Wars rages on.

In total, the book consists of six novellas that build off of each other, working toward an explosive, cinematic climax. In them, the mercenaries are embroiled in a series of escalating adventures; these include an airship battle and being trapped in a demon realm occupied by warring demon lords. Each novella concludes with a jaw-dropping cliffhanger that the following story picks up on: at the end of one, Davrick and his crew flee a battle train aboard a stolen helicopter; the next begins with them stumbling across a barren landscape. These intriguing transitions help to pique interest in the adventures to come.

A fun, lighthearted tone is maintained throughout. Davrick's wisecracking, Sid's constant fumbling, and the crumbling of Talyaana's tough façade all contribute to this. As these team members grow and change, they have heartfelt moments: Davrick manipulates Talyaana into doing the right thing, knowing that she needs to pretend that she's resisting; Sid learns that his younger sister has been captured, leading the crew into a harrowing rescue attempt. Their conversations are more dynamic than their behavior, though, helping to highlight their shifts; Talyaana, for example, softens when speaking to her friends over time. Meanwhile, gruesome, visceral descriptions of unsettling situations flesh out their world, as do details about its unusual steampunk machinery, fantastical creatures, and increasing horrors. The first novella hints at the war in progress; each successive entry zooms out from it, until the group is forced off planet.

But the book moves with such speed that there's little time for characters beyond the mercenary group. Beyond the main three, people seem disposable; some have similar names. When others die, there's little impact. This extends to an early member of the crew who is lost during a heist. In effect, each novella functions like an episode in an ongoing series; the final entry includes shocking revelations about the war, while its asides hint at possible future story lines, but the arc that carries across the six novellas is wrapped up.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (April 21, 2021)

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