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The Wise Man's Fear: Kingkiller Chronicles, Day 2

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"My name is Kvothe. I have stolen princesses back from sleeping barrow kings. I burned down the
town of Trebon. I have spent the night with Felurian and left with both my sanity and my life. I was
expelled from the University at a younger age than most people are allowed in. I tread paths by
moonlight that others fear to speak of during day. I have talked to Gods, loved women, and written
songs that make the minstrels weep. You may have heard of me." So begins the tale of a hero told
from his own point of view - a story unequaled in fantasy literature. Now in The Wise Man’s Fear,
Day Two of The Kingkiller Chronicle, an escalating rivalry with a powerful member of the nobility
forces Kvothe to leave the University and seek his fortune abroad. Adrift, penniless, and alone, he
travels to Vintas, where he quickly becomes entangled in the politics of courtly society. While
attempting to curry favor with a powerful noble, Kvothe uncovers an assassination attempt, comes
into conflict with a rival arcanist, and leads a group of mercenaries into the wild, in an attempt to
solve the mystery of who (or what) is waylaying travelers on the King’s Road. All the while, Kvothe
searches for answers, attempting to uncover the truth about the mysterious Amyr, the Chandrian,
and the death of his parents. Along the way, Kvothe is put on trial by the legendary Adem
mercenaries, is forced to reclaim the honor of the Edema Ruh, and travels into the Faé realm. There
he meets Felurian, the faerie woman no man can resist, and who no man has ever survived... until
Kvothe. In The Wise Man’s Fear, Kvothe takes his first steps on the path of the hero and learns how
difficult life can be when a man becomes a legend in his own time.

Book Information

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The first half of Wise Man’s Fear is an improvement over the previous book in the Kingkiller
Chronicles. There is intrigue, mystery, complex interpersonal drama, great writing, and great pacing. Then halfway through the book, Rothfuss decides to let us in on the fantasies of his fifteen-year-old self, and the book goes downhill from there. The book picks up precisely when the previous book left off, sparing little time to catch people up or re-explain everything in case a reader started with book two. I'm glad about that. I hate it when a series is up and running and the author or publisher feels that they need to throw in some exposition for people who didn't read the earlier books. Seriously...who starts a series at book two? Anyway...It goes great for a long while. I found the second half of the first book to be the best, and this seemed like a continuation of that. A lot happens, mostly having to do with Kvothe's adventures at the University and then on to a different land, where Kvothe gets some experience dealing with nobility and goes on an adventure with a ragtag group of adventurers. Then...just over halfway through the book, the plot comes to a grinding halt. Don't want to spoil anything. So I'll just say that something happens that is totally unrelated to what had been going on in the first two books. It is mentioned in book one (I think), but only as one of Kvothe's many legendary accomplishments. Funny thing is, what happens is very similar to one of the fantasies I used to dream up before bed when I was a nerdy, lonely, sex-crazed teenager. I don't mind the occasional bit of self-indulgence from an author, but this goes on way too long, further emphasizing just how juvenile it is. After it is finally over, we are then diverted again to another side-adventure in which Kvothe learns how to fight. Once again, the teenage fantasies kick-in, and not only does he learn to fight, but he gets to have sex with hot women while doing doing it. As I was reading this, I couldn't help but chuckle and shake my head at just how unbelievable and juvenile the whole thing is. And yet again it goes on way too long. After these two bits are over, we get a bit of the good from the first half again...then the books is over. I felt the author took too long with side-diversions and things left unresolved from book one were left hanging, especially his relationship with Denna. I'm not going to spoil anything, but I feel confident in advising anyone who hasn't read this yet to go ahead and skip the "romantic" scenes with Denna. Seriously. Just skip them. NOTHING is resolved. They are frustrating, and not in a Pride and Prejudice way, but in a "Yeah, yeah, dude...We get the picture...She's hard to get! Can we PLEASE move ON!!!" way. Also, Denna is the most uninteresting character in the series. Her only good qualities seem to be that she is pretty and witty. Given the many interesting women with whom Kvothe finds himself, Denna is the least exciting. My favorite of Kvothe's relationships is the one with loan-shark Devi, a fascinating character who practically leaps off of the page. When you read her scenes, it almost feels like Rothfuss realizes how much more interesting she is than Denna, and so stubbornly stops himself from letting her truly shine in the way she should. C'mon Patrick! Free Devi!
...Or else make Denna more interesting. We should be given a reason to fall in love her along with our protagonist. SO far, you have given us no reason for Kvothe's bizarre obsession with her, and given us every reason to fall in love with Devi. Can't blame us for that. The book is worth reading if you can tell yourself to go ahead and skip ahead a few pages when it feels like it is meandering. I will read the third installment when it comes out. Hopefully Rothfuss will keep it moving forward and spare us the adolescent fantasies the next time around.

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