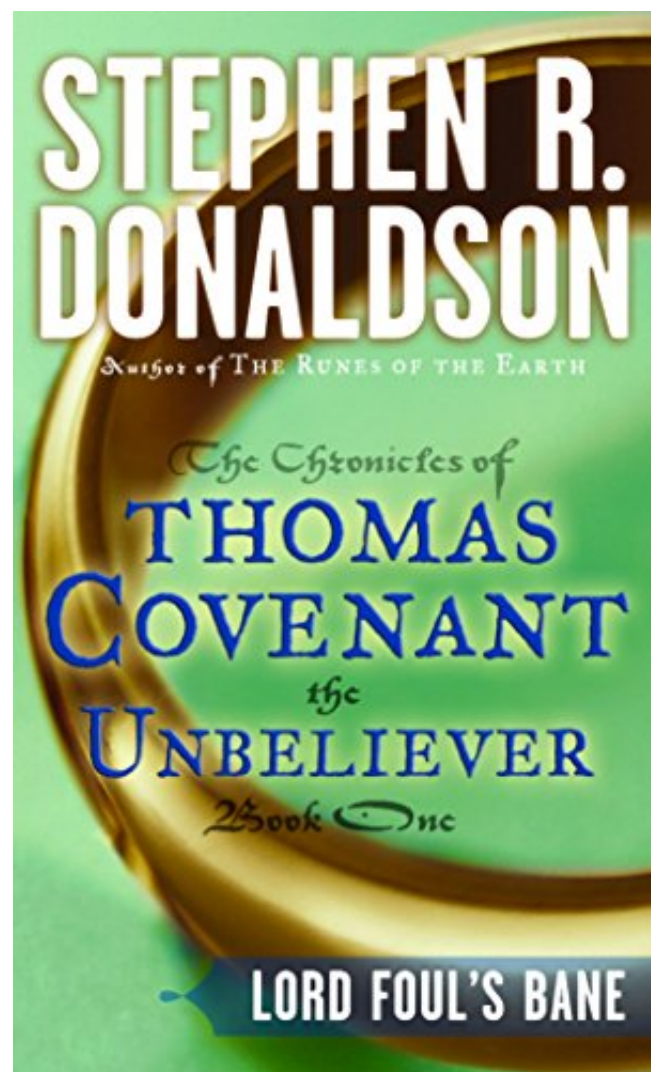


Lord Foul's Bane (The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever Book 1)

by

Stephen R. Donaldson



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Synopsis

"Covenant is [Stephen R.] Donaldson's genius!"—The Village Voice He called himself Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever, because he dared not believe in this strange alternate world on which he suddenly found himself. Yet the Land tempted him. He had been sick; now he seemed better than ever before. Through no fault of his own, he had been outcast, unclean, a pariah. Now he was regarded as a reincarnation of the Land's greatest hero—Berek Halfhand—armed with the mystic power of White Gold. That power alone could protect the Lords of the Land from the ancient evil of the Despiser, Lord Foul. Except that Covenant had no idea how to use that power. . . .

Sort review

"A trilogy of remarkable scope and sophistication."-- "Los Angeles Times"
"The hottest fantasy writer since J. R. R. Tolkien."-- "Washington Post, praise for the author"
--This text refers to the audioCD edition.
From the Inside Flap
The first book in one of the most remarkable epic fantasies ever written, the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, Unbeliever. He called himself Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever because he dared not believe in the strange alternate world in which he suddenly found himself. Yet he was tempted to believe, to fight for the Land, to be the reincarnation of its greatest hero...
THE CHRONICLES OF THOMAS COVENANT THE UNBELIEVER
Book One: LORD FOUL'S BANE
Book Two: THE ILLEARTH WAR
Book Three: THE POWER THAT PRESERVES
From the Paperback edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.
From the Publisher
These books have never received the recognition they deserve. It's one of the most powerful and complex fantasy trilogies since Lord of the Rings, but Donaldson is not just another Tolkien wannabe. Each character-driven book introduces unexpected plots, sub-plots, and a host of magical beings so believably rendered you'd believe you might bump into them on your way to the bookstore. --Alex Klapwald, Director of Production --This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition.
About the Author
Stephen R. Donaldson is the New York Times bestselling author of the original six volumes of the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, as well as several science fiction and mystery novels. He lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.--This text refers to the audioCD edition.
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ONE:
Golden Boy
She came out of the store just in time to see her young son playing on the sidewalk directly in the path of the gray, gaunt man who strode down the center of the walk like a mechanical derelict. For an instant, her heart quailed. Then she jumped forward, gripped her son by the arm, snatched him out of harm's way. The man went by without turning his head. As his back moved away from her, she hissed at it, "Go away! Get out of here! You ought to be ashamed!" Thomas Covenant's stride went on, as unfaltering as clockwork that had been wound to the hilt for just this purpose. But to himself he responded, Ashamed? Ashamed? His face

contorted in a wild grimace. Beware! Outcast unclean! But he saw that the people he passed, the people who knew him, whose names and houses and handclasps were known to him—he saw that they stepped aside, gave him plenty of room. Some of them looked as if they were holding their breath. His inner shouting collapsed. These people did not need the ancient ritual of warning. He concentrated on restraining the spasmodic snarl which lurched across his face, and let the tight machinery of his will carry him forward step by step. As he walked, he flicked his eyes up and down himself, verifying that there were no unexpected tears or snags in his clothing, checking his hands for scratches, making sure that nothing had happened to the scar which stretched from the heel of his right palm across where his last two fingers had been. He could hear the doctors saying, “VSE, Mr. Covenant. Visual Surveillance of Extremities. Your health depends upon it. Those dead nerves will never grow back—you’ll never know when you’ve hurt yourself unless you get in the habit of checking. Do it all the time—think about it all the time. The next time you might not be so lucky.” VSE. Those initials comprised his entire life. Doctors! he thought mordantly. But without them, he might not have survived even this long. He had been so ignorant of his danger. Self-neglect might have killed him. Watching the startled, frightened or oblivious faces—there were many oblivious faces, though the town was small—that passed around him, he wished he could be sure that his face bore a proper expression of disdain. But the nerves in his cheeks seemed only vaguely alive, though the doctors had assured him that this was an illusion at the present stage of his illness, and he could never trust the front which he placed between himself and the world. Now, as women who had at one time chosen to discuss his novel in their literary clubs recoiled from him as if he were some kind of minor horror or ghoul, he felt a sudden treacherous pang of loss. He strangled it harshly, before it could shake his balance. He was nearing his destination, the goal of the affirmation or proclamation that he had so grimly undertaken. He could see the sign two blocks ahead of him: Bell Telephone Company. He was walking the two miles into town from Haven Farm in order to pay his phone bill. Of course, he could have mailed in the money, but he had learned to see that act as a surrender, an abdication to the mounting bereavement which was being practiced against him. While he had been in treatment, his wife, Joan, had divorced him—taken their infant son and moved out of the state. The only thing in which he, Thomas Covenant, had a stake that she had dared handle had been the car; she had taken it as well. Most of her clothing she had left behind. Then his nearest neighbors, half a mile away on either side, had complained shrilly about his presence among them; and when he had refused to sell his property, one of them moved from the county. Next, within three weeks of his return home, the grocery store—he was walking past it now, its windows full of frenetic advertisements had begun delivering his supplies, whether or not he ordered them—and, he suspected, whether or not he was willing to pay. Now he strode past the courthouse, its old gray columns looking proud of their burden of justice and law—the building in which, by proxy, of course, he had been reft of his family. Even its front steps were polished to guard against the stain of human need which prowled up and down them, seeking restitution. The divorce had been granted because no compassionate law could force a

woman to raise her child in the company of a man like him. Were there tears? he asked Joan's memory. Were you brave? Relieved? Covenant resisted an urge to run out of danger. The gaping giant heads which topped the courthouse columns looked oddly nauseated, as if they were about to vomit on him. In a town of no more than five thousand, the business section was not large. Covenant crossed in front of the department store, and through the glass front he could see several high-school girls pricing cheap jewelry. They leaned on the counters in provocative poses, and Covenant's throat tightened involuntarily. He found himself resenting the hips and breasts of the girls—curves for other men's caresses, not his. He was impotent. In the decay of his nerves, his sexual capacity was just another amputated member. Even the release of lust was denied to him; he could conjure up desires until insanity threatened, but he could do nothing about them. Without warning, a memory of his wife flared in his mind, almost blanking out the sunshine and the sidewalk and the people in front of him. He saw her in one of the opaque nightgowns he had bought for her, her breasts tracing circles of invitation under the thin fabric. His heart cried, Joan! How could you do it? Is one sick body more important than everything? Bracing his shoulders like a strangler, he suppressed the memory. Such thoughts were a weakness he could not afford; he had to stamp them out. Better to be bitter, he thought. Bitterness survives. It seemed to be the only savor he was still able to taste. To his dismay, he discovered that he had stopped moving. He was standing in the middle of the sidewalk with his fists clenched and his shoulders trembling. Roughly he forced himself into motion again. As he did so, he collided with someone. Outcast unclean! He caught a glimpse of ocher; the person he had bumped seemed to be wearing a dirty, reddish-brown robe. But he did not stop to apologize. He stalked on down the walk so that he would not have to face that particular individual's fear and loathing. After a moment, his stride recovered its empty, mechanical tick. Now he was passing the offices of the Electric Company—his last reason for coming to pay his phone bill in person. Two months ago, he had mailed in a check to the Electric Company—the amount was small; he had little use for power—and it had been returned to him. In fact, his envelope had not even been opened. An attached note had explained that his bill had been anonymously paid for at least a year. After a private struggle, he had realized that if he did not resist this trend, he would soon have no reason at all to go among his fellow human beings. So today he was walking the two miles into town to pay his phone bill in person—to show his peers that he did not intend to be shriven of his humanity. In rage at his outcasting, he sought to defy it, to assert the rights of his common mortal blood. In person, he thought. What if he were too late? If the bill had already been paid? What did he come in person for then? The thought caught his heart in a clench of trepidation. He clicked rapidly through his VSE, then returned his gaze to the hanging sign of the Bell Telephone Company, half a block away. As he moved forward, conscious of a pressure to surge against his anxiety, he noticed a tune running in his mind along the beat of his stride. Then he recollected the words: Golden boy with feet of clay, Let me help you on your way. A proper push will take you far But what a clumsy lad you are! The doggerel chuckled satirically through his thoughts, and its crude rhythm thumped against him like an insult, accompanied by slow

stripper's music. He wondered if there were an overweight goddess somewhere in the mystical heavens of the universe, grinding out his burlesque fate: A proper push leer will take you far—but what a clumsy lad you are! mock pained dismay. Oh, right, golden boy. But he could not sneer his way out of that thought, because at one time he had been a kind of golden boy. He had been happily married. He had had a son. He had written a novel in ecstasy and ignorance, and had watched it spend a year on the best-seller lists. And because of it, he now had all the money he needed. I would be better off, he thought, if I'd known I was writing that kind of book. --This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition. Read more

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What people say about this book

Chris Lonsberry, "I Have LOVED This Entire Series Since The First Day. Back when I was but a wee lad in the Army, a buddy turned me on to a fantasy series of books called The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever by Stephen R. Donaldson. At the time, there were two series of three books. This was.. about 37 years ago?? I devoured them. I remember sitting up through the night reading each book from cover to cover. There was a pause.. and then Mr. Donaldson released more books. I bought the final book almost 6 years ago. Maybe I was hesitant to read it because it meant the end. I thought about starting it this morning and decided it makes more sense to go back to the beginning. Some people find Thomas unredeemably annoying and/or whiney.. and don't dig the books. There's no such thing as a book that EVERYONE likes. But I have absolutely LOVED these for almost 40 years. If you like fantasy books.. this may well be THE series. Mr. Donaldson, if you ever read your reviews, I can't say Thank You enough!"

Ebook Tops Reader, "Lord Foul.... I first read this book perhaps 40 years ago and several times since. I finished it again tonight with all the wonder of my first reading. Thomas is so human and lost that I can hardly bear to describe how he touched me. Don't give up due to the language, I read it with a dictionary nearby and find myself better for reading."

M. J. Haynes, "The very first chronicle of Thomas Covenant. The huge popularity of The Lord of the Rings led in the following decades to a boom in Tolkien-like epic fantasy, often written by new writers who were impressed by Tolkien's work and wanted to create their own version. Not only were most of these later fantasy series epic in scope and subject matter, but they also imitated Tolkien's trilogy in epic size, with long multiple volumes. One of the earliest notable examples is The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, a trilogy subsequently expanded with further volumes, of which Lord Foul's Bane is the opening book. I suspect though that what would have struck the readers when the book first came out in 1977 would have been how different Donaldson's work is to Tolkien's (in contrast to the contemporary The Sword of Shannara by Terry Brooks). Besides a different fantasy world, metaphysics and races, Donaldson provides us with a deeply unsympathetic, flawed and psychologically complex protagonist hero, and the sort of grim realism found in popular recent epic fantasy. For me as a contemporary reader, the similarities to Tolkien stood out much more. Though I am not a fan of that brand of epic fantasy, overall Donaldson did enough differently to keep me interested through the whole 500 or so pages of his novel. The main character, Thomas Covenant, is a successful writer whose life has been wrecked by the devastating condition of leprosy. The side effects of this horrible illness include the loss of two fingers from one hand and impotence. His wife and child have left him and he is shunned by the local community, leaving him reclusive, angry and embittered; but determined to survive by grimly accepting reality and rejecting false hope. Following an accident that renders him unconscious, Covenant awakes to find himself in a sort of Tolkeinesque world. Unable to

entirely believe or entirely disbelieve the veracity of his experiences, he is uneasily drawn into events in a world where the inhabitants seem intent on regarding him as a magical saviour. I liked the book a lot. It can be very grim reading at times and presents other challenges, such as some slow passages and parts that were too close to Tolkien for my taste. However, Donaldson gives us something that is original (despite the heavy debt to Tolkien) and distinctive, complex and intriguing. The book is well known for its unsympathetic protagonist and that is very true. Covenant is certainly no heroic personality, not even an anti-hero. He is interesting to read about though, if frequently infuriating; and his personal journey in subsequent volumes is one I am eager to follow. Some readers apparently find Donaldson's prose style a barrier, finding it too purple. I liked his style (even in this his first book) and I particularly liked the rather arcane vocabulary he frequently deploys, which I think is ideal for this kind of fantasy writing. I recommend you try this book if you are interested in epic fantasy."

Gizmo, "A good book even if the prose is flawed. I remember picking this up in a hotel bookshop in Greece when I was about 14. The thing that attracted me was the cover but as I read the story I became hooked. When I got back to the UK I bought the other two books in the first trilogy and thoroughly enjoyed them. Now, reading the first book some x years later, I find I'm not enjoying it as much as I did the first time. This is for two reasons: the first is Thomas Covenant's continued stropy behaviour, acting like a spoilt child throughout the book. Yes, I know he's a leper, he's bitter at his condition and he's having a hard time believing the Land is real, but come on! Why keep shoving his illness in our faces, as well as the characters he meets, who've never even heard of leprosy. It gets tiring after a while. Just accept it and move on. The second reason is Stephen Donaldson's continued use of 'as if'. For example, 'When the dawn came to wake him, he met it as if it were an affront to his sanity.' Sometimes there are as many as four 'as if's to a page. Again, it gets tiring after a while, as if I've heard it all before (see!). The story would flow much better if he'd thought of a different way to compare things. Or maybe his agent / publisher could have cut some of them out of the text. Could a little late revision be in order? However, despite those moans this is still a good book, if you can just ignore the deficiencies, as if they weren't there."

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