

Fantasy series features sisters, dark magic

Seattle author Django Wexler is a self-proclaimed “nerd for world-building.” As such, he has created several series that take place in worlds that have magic, monsters and mayhem.

The Shadow Campaigns is a six-book fantasy series for adults. The Forbidden Library is a four-book fantasy series for middle-grade readers.

Wexler is halfway through a fantasy trilogy for young adults, “The Wells of Sorcery.”

Wells are the sources for different types of magical powers. In the rigidly stratified society of the Blessed Empire, this magic can be tapped by only a select few – the mage-born. The various powers can be wielded with results that might be healing, psychological or deadly.

The first book in this series, “Ship of Smoke and Steel,” focuses on 18-year-old Isoka, who commands the power of Melos, which is the Well of Combat. Her power manifests as blades of crackling green energy that typically wreak fatal consequences.

As an “adept,” Isoka is one of only a handful of people who are so fully vested with the power of their Well that they are expected to serve at the pleasure of the Emperor.

But Isoka has kept a low profile and avoided government service. Instead, she works as an enforcer for the criminals

who control one of the brawling lower wards in the powerful port city Kahnzoka.

She’s chosen this unsavory but lucrative line of work because it enables her to provide Tori, her younger sister, with a life of refinement and safety in one of the upper wards. The two were orphaned years earlier, and Tori’s welfare has become Isoka’s central focus.

When the government catches on to Isoka’s exceptional powers, the Emperor’s spymaster threatens to abduct and harm Tori unless Isoka undertakes a mission to hijack the Soliton, a legendary ghost ship that comes to Kahnzoka once a year and exacts tribute in the form of several mage-born.

The next time the massive ship docks in Kahnzoka, Isoka is among the group who is loaded aboard.

“Ship of Smoke and Steel” focuses on Isoka’s nightmarish voyage as she tries to figure out how to wrest control of the ship while battling giant crabs and other monstrosities.

The second book, out just this month, is “City of Stone and Silence.” This sequel toggles between the two sisters’ separate stories.

Isoka’s travails and responsibilities grow as the Soliton travels to distant lands populated by madmen and living corpses.

Back in Kahnzoka, meanwhile, Tori is venturing beyond the protective sphere

her sister had built for her. She sneaks out to volunteer at a secret sanctuary for mage-born, strikes up a relationship with a young member of the noble class, and begins to explore the capacities of her own Well, telepathy.

This tale is stocked with an assortment of gruesome creatures, brutal fight scenes, corrupted systems, and sexually and politically active teens. It is indeed a vivid world author Wexler creates—one that supplies an array of appetites, spectacle and ideas.

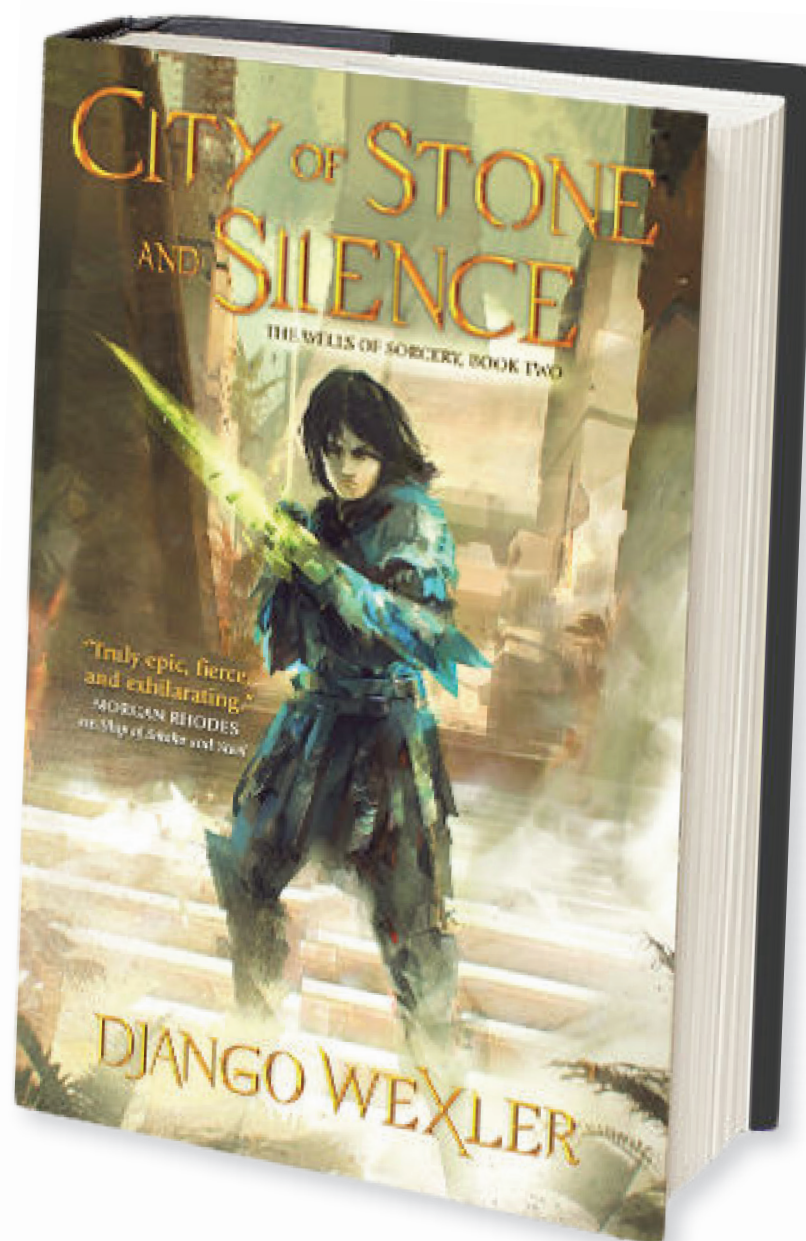
This Week’s Books

“The Wells of Sorcery” series

By Django Wexler

Tor Teen — \$17.99

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com.



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