



BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	A Little Hatred
Author	Joe Abercrombie
Date	September 2019
Stars	

It's like meeting old friends after not seeing them for years. The familiarity with their ways, their foibles, they all fit back into the perceptions you had so long ago. It's like that some of the characters in *A Little Hatred*. Admittedly those characters from *The First Law* stories are older by three decades. They've got adult kids now. The world has grown too, less dependent on magic as it encounters the problems and spurious advantages of an Industrial Revolution.

The King of Grimdark hasn't really changed much of the chemistry that makes nihilism the centre of world. People suffer, people die. They do so in order for the rich and powerful to become more rich and powerful. Except sometimes that is turned on its head and it becomes the rich and powerful who die. The Circle of Life. Just like in *The Lion King*. Except in grimdark it's the Circle of Death.

Joe Abercrombie's writing is the biggest plus factor here. If he's the King of Grimdark he's the Emperor of Language. It provokes so much reaction in so few words, he's an editor's pin-up boy. *'Her mouth tasted like despair', 'her dark hair was shot with grey and bound back as tightly as a murderer's shackles', 'it was hot as an oven and noisy as a slaughterhouse and it smelled of old tar, unwashed bodies and rage'*. The language is luxurious, tight, emotive. It is something to savour, like a good wine.

However, I'm unable to wax as lyrical as the other reviews I've read. Let me preface it by saying that *The First Law* had a profound effect on me ten years ago. It influences my own writing even now. But I confess to feeling a little underwhelmed.

The characters lacked that emotional electric-shock therapy we got in the first books. Glokta back then was the JR Ewing of his day, the man we loved to hate but couldn't help feel a certain sympathy for the cruelty of his past. Jezebel's incompetency, Bayaz' ambiguous morality, Ninefinger's rage. They were factors that made the stories vibrate like a bow string.

I didn't find that this time. They sometimes did bad things, sometimes good. Circumstances forced them to commit acts which were morally wrong, cause suffering and such. Fine. But they didn't generate that buzz for me. Frankly, the endless politics and social upheaval rather bored me. I felt like I was reading a Charles Dickens novel in places, after all, he was a grimdark author of his day.

I enjoyed it. The language and technical skill stood out. But was I engaged? Not so much.