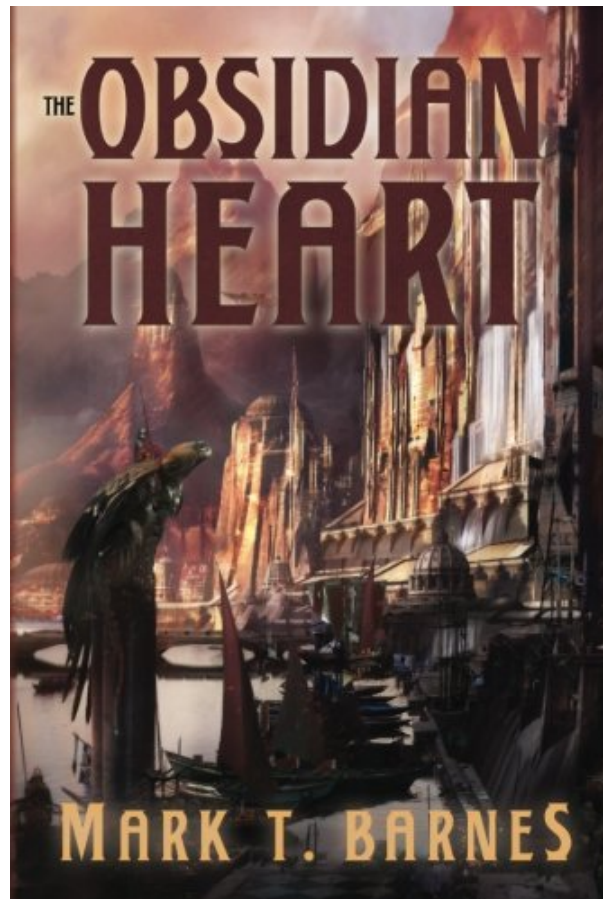
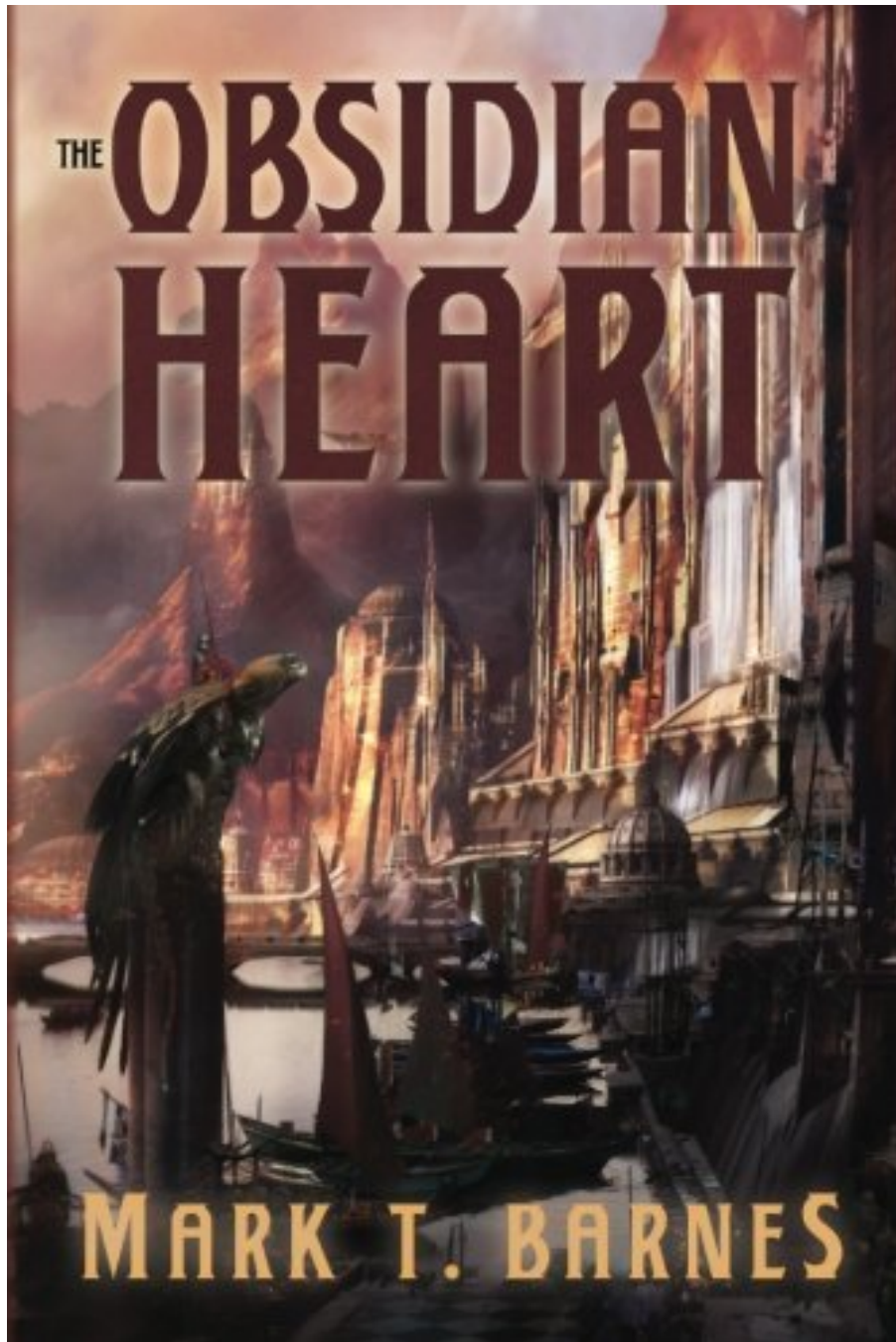


# **THE OBSIDIAN HEART (ECHOES OF EMPIRE) BY MARK T. BARNES**



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## Review

"The Obsidian Heart was every bit as amazing as The Garden of Stones." —Reading Reality

"Mark T. Barnes has become one to watch out for. His second novel is one of the best of the year, both stylistically and plot-wise. If you're looking for an intelligent Science Fantasy novel that's different from the rest, though not too weird, then I highly recommend The Obsidian Heart." —Acerbic Writing

"[The Obsidian Heart] is a book that is fit to bursting with all the things I love in fantasy. Epic history and world building, rich and elegant prose and a pushing of the boundaries of creativity ... In two novels Mark Barnes has revealed a tremendous vein of authorial gold, and what's even more exciting is that he has only just begun to tap it." —Marktimmony.com

"With the world building out of the way, Barnes gets right into the plot with well fleshed out characters and beautiful descriptions of the world around them. [The Obsidian Heart] is enjoyable to read and very well written." —BooksBooksBooks

## About the Author

Mark Barnes was born in Sydney, Australia, in September of 1966. A strong athlete, he was also drawn to the arts at a young age, penning his first short story as a seven-year-old. He worked in finance and advertising and eventually landed satisfying work in information technology, where he continues to manage a freelance organizational change consultancy. In 2005, when Mark was selected to attend the Clarion South residential short story workshop, he began to write with the intention of making it more than a hobby. Since that time, Mark has published a number of short stories, worked as a freelance script editor, and has driven creative consultancy for a television series. **The Obsidian Heart** is Book Two in the **Echoes of Empire** series, which began with his first novel, **The Garden of Stones**.

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# THE OBSIDIAN HEART (ECHOES OF EMPIRE) BY MARK T. BARNES PDF

Echoes of Empire: Book 2

An uneasy peace has settled over the Shr'anese Empire, and for Indris and Mari, a life together just might be possible. But while the fighting may be over, the struggle between the two great Houses vying to rule has just begun, and caught between them are Indris and Mari—warriors of the highest caliber...and members of the opposing families.

With the court moved to a new city, the old machinations of Mari's father, Corajidin, are still churning as he maneuvers to shape the future Empire. For Mari and Indris, though, it could be the past that's their undoing, as lost lovers and forgotten flames reappear as if by dark magic.

And dark magic it could be, for a dangerous alliance with witches could not only grant Corajidin control of Shr'an, but once again plunge the nation back into war—especially after a sorcerous battle destroys much of the city...and forces Indris and Mari to part ways.

In *The Obsidian Heart*, the second volume of the *Echoes of Empire* series, darkness falls over a kingdom already reeling from a costly civil war. Can the Indris and Mari survive this new threat to save not only the ones they love, but possibly the entire world?

- Sales Rank: #1902935 in Books
- Published on: 2013-10-15
- Released on: 2013-10-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.19" h x 1.18" w x 5.39" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 438 pages

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## Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Nice worldbuilding but the characters leave me a little flat

By booksforabuck

For hundreds of years, the Shrianese Federation has endured but there are those who wish to bring back the ancient empire. Using forbidden powers, Corajidin, leader of the imperialists, calls back exiles and bribes, extorts and manipulates his way to election as head of the federation. Corajidin's own daughter, Mari, opposes him and is in love with Indris, a warrior-mage who can't fully commit to the battle.

There's a lot going on here, with political maneuvers, battle, magic, and mysterious forces moving characters like pieces on a chessboard. Author Mark T. Barnes creates an engaging world and a believable political structure.

To me, what's missing from this story is a real emotional involvement with the characters. Indris and Mari are in love, but they never really talk about it, instead, they steam in their own heads. Corajidin is really the most emotionally engaging character and he's clearly the badguy of the piece so getting emotionally invested in him isn't going to have a great payoff for the reader. I also found myself distracted by occasionally clunky writing and editing.

There's a lot to like about *OBSIDIAN HEART* and I certainly had no problems reading this book so I'm giving it a OK mark. With all of the potential Barnes has created here, I had hoped for a bit better delivery.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Full, detailed and intricate

By sanoe.net

I feel like I may have read the first book of this series, but I can't remember for sure and while I don't think reading "*The Garden of Stones*" is needed to get into "*The Obsidian Heart*", it probably does help.

As it is for me, I struggled to read this book. Take my rating with a grain of salt in that it isn't a reflection of the writer or the story, but more that I just simply struggled to get into it. Mark T. Barnes has a very detailed, densely packed writing style so there is a lot to remember because he's building a world as much as telling a story. That's admirable in many ways but for me, it was probably too much to take it.

In this story, Indris Dragon-Eye and the federation are in the after effects of battles (this may be where reading the first book is helpful). The antagonist, Corajidin is awaiting trial and it seems to be a straightforward outcome but as with any good antagonist, he is not to be underestimated or counted out.

Add to this for Indris, he is coming into his own but his lover, Mari, just happens to be Corajidin's daughter and as such, she has issues of her own to figure out.

That's the simplified version but the story itself is much more detailed and full. I think that readers who enjoyed the first book will enjoy this one. I think readers who can handle full blown world building and detailing will also enjoy this story. But for someone like me, it may have been just bit more than I could handle.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Stellar Epic Fantasy

By Wendell

The Obsidian Heart is a prime example of a second book in a series that actually works. Here Mark T. Barnes has taken all the amazing world-building from The Garden of Stones, added to it a story that immediately sucks you into that mesmerizing world and then mercilessly hauls you along for an amazing ride with both its heroes and villains. Well written and conceived, this second act of the Echoes of Empire saga is quite simply a wonderful piece of fantasy literature and reinforces that Mr. Barnes is a brilliant new voice in the field; one that every fantasy fan should take notice of.

Continuing where the first book ended, The Obsidian Heart finds the fate of the Shreanese Federation hanging in the balance. Indris Dragon-Eye and his friends are recovering from their previous battles and awaiting the despicable Corajidin's trial before the ruling body of the Federation at the capital of Avenweh. But while the formalities of a trial must be met, everyone expects the determination of guilt to be quickly accomplished, for the evidence of Corajidin's diabolical and bloodthirsty actions are overwhelming. However, as he showed in The Garden of Stones, Corajidin is not a man easily cowed by the greatest reversals of fortune, so instead of desperately trying to hold onto his rulership of House Erebus, he determines to roll the dice of chance yet again, willing to risk all, do all, break every moral code, and surrender everything – including his very soul! – in order to turn his supposed moment of shame into one of glory and become Asrahn of his people!

Sounds great, right?

And it is. Where The Garden of Stones created a world and set the table for an epic adventure The Obsidian Heart delivers on that promise in spectacular style! Here Mr. Barnes shows real progression in his storytelling ability, jettisoning some annoying writing habits and sharpening the focus of the story into more easily digested scenes. The action is fast and furious when it comes, the stakes fought for are higher, the moral choices more serious, and – above all else – the character's come to life. Where before Indris was merely an intriguing magic user with a lost love, he now becomes a man of destiny, forced to deal with the consequences of his actions and come to terms with his past and his growing love for his enemies daughter. Mari, daughter of Corajidin and lover of Indris, really begins to shine in this novel, showing herself as a confident and skilled warrior who knows her place in the world but struggles against the inevitable that somehow she did not have to choose between her love for her father and her honor. And the "bad" guy himself, Corajidin, dazzles in his darkness, willingly falling into a deeper and more deliberate evilness, as his ambition seemingly overwhelms all sense of restraint. And as these characters strut and bound across the pages of The Obsidian Heart, they weave a breathless tale of power, betrayal, hope, and above all else love.

As you can no doubt tell, I really enjoyed this novel. In fact, I have loved the whole series thus far and wish that more of my reading friends knew about it. If not for stumbling upon The Garden of Stones on Netgalley and really liking the cover (I am a cover purchaser, I admit it.), I might have never even taken the time to try out this intriguing series. Thankfully, I did see it, and now, I am a Mark T. Barnes and Indris Dragon-eye fan for the foreseeable future. So if you're looking for an interesting fantasy world that is different from the rest, then I highly recommend this series, but do start with The Garden of Stones, otherwise you will be playing catchup with all the interesting world-building and lore.

I received this book from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank both of them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

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