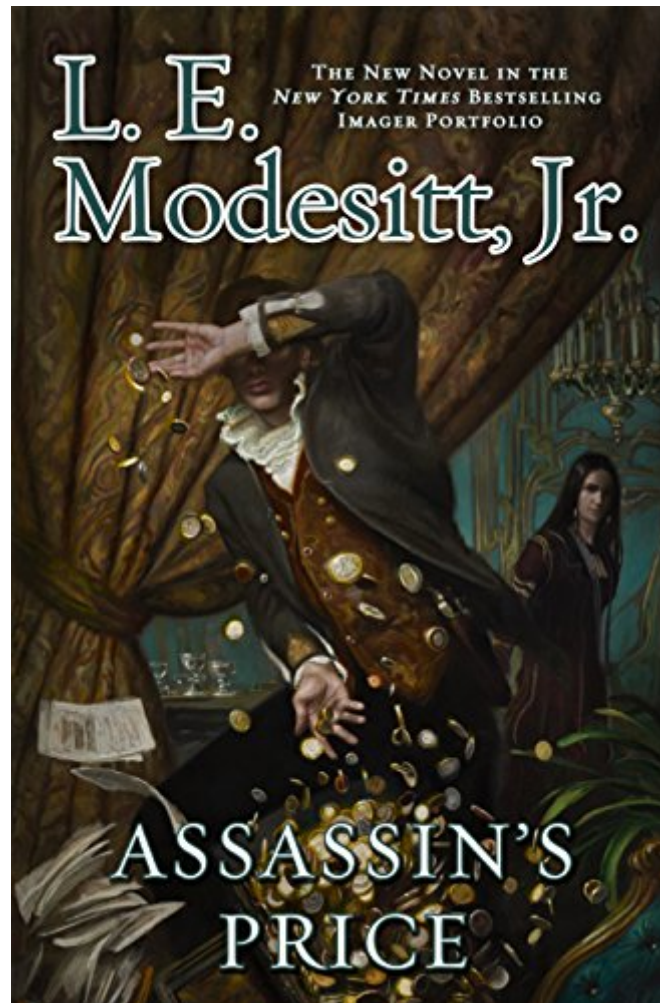




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Assassin's Price (The Imager Portfolio)



Synopsis

Assassin's Price is the eleventh book in the bestselling, epic fantasy series the Imager Portfolio by L. E. Modesitt, Jr. and the third book in a story arc which began with Madness in Solidar and Treachery's Tools. Six years have passed since the failed uprising of the High Holders, and the man behind the conspiracy is where the rex and Maitre Alastar can keep an eye on him. Charyn has come of age and desperately wants to learn more so he can become an effective rex after his fatherâbut heâ's kept at a distance by the rex. So Charyn sets out to educate himselfâcircumspectly. When Jarolian privateers disrupt Solidarâ's shipping, someone attempts to kill Charynâ's younger brother as an act of protest. Threatening notes following in the wake of acts of violence against the rex and his family, demanding actionâ'build more ships or expect someone to die.

The Imager Portfolio#1 Imager / #2 Imagerâ's Challenge / #3 Imagerâ's Intrigue / #4 Scholar / #5 Princeps / #6 Imagerâ's Battalion / #7 Antiagon Fire / #8 Rex Regis / #9 Madness in Solidar / #10 Treacheryâ's Tools / #11 Assassinâ's Price Other series by this author: The Saga of Recluce The Corean Chronicles The Spellsong Cycle The Ghost Books The Ecolitan Matter

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Customer Reviews

"Assassin's Price" is the eleventh book in Modesitt's Imager Portfolio, my favorite of the three fantasy series of his that I've read. It takes place several years after the events in book ten, "Treachery's Tools," switching perspective to Charyn, heir to the throne of Solidar. I note that it is fairly clear that this storyline will continue in book twelve. I enjoyed reading this book very much, yet am somewhat at a loss to justify my enjoyment. Charyn isn't initially obviously likable: he rescues no small animals, does no wanton acts of kindness, etc. I was prejudiced in his favor by the previous thirty-plus books that I've read by Modesitt, which was sufficient for me, but might not be sufficient for a reader new to Modesitt. Given my willingness to identify with Charyn, I found the book a very immersive reading experience. Modesitt's detailed, painstaking evocation of his invented worlds makes them real to me. I believe some readers find his style annoying; I find it very effective. I was caught up in Charyn's considerable difficulties. I cared what happened to him. Whatever it is that Modesitt does, it works for this reader. Spoiler warning: I noted with interest that Charyn displays little to no magical talent in this book, a significant departure from Modesitt's usual approach. There is one scene where Charyn may be foreseeing the future, and hints that perhaps he can occasionally sense what others are feeling, but nothing more definite than that. I anticipate that Charyn's abilities will be confirmed and developed in the next book. In a second but less pronounced departure, Charyn kills fewer people than is usual for Modesitt's protagonists.

The latest book in his Imager Portfolio takes place six years after Treachery's Tools. Alastar is still head of the Imager Collegium, but he isn't the central character of this book—that's Charyn, son and heir of the Rex Lorien. Lorien has been reluctant to shift any of his responsibilities over to Charyn, or even to have Charyn sit in on his council meetings or other official duties, so Charyn sets about learning more about the kingdom of Solidar on his own. He finds himself significantly more comfortable with the factors (wealthy merchants) and imagers than with High Holders (feudal nobles). There are troubles, both foreign and domestic, that seem to be piling up as the book wears on, culminating in an attack on the royal family itself. My feeling is that there will be at least one more book following Charyn and Alastar; whether that ends the Imager Portfolio or whether Modesitt wants to write more—either set between the Alastar books and the Rhennthyl trilogy that began the whole portfolio, or set after the Rhennthyl books. Either could work, and I think I like this world more than I do either Recluce or Corea. My preference would be to see what happens after Rhennthyl, but I wouldn't mind another transitional set of books.

Modesitt does his usual outstanding job of storytelling in *Assassin's Price*. It takes place about 6 years after *Treachery's Tools* and centers on Charyn, heir to the Rex. We watch him grow into being capable of becoming Rex and fighting the conspiracy that works to depose his father and destroy the family at the same time. There is less involvement with Imagers except in supporting roles. So, there is less direct attention paid to the power and inner workings of imaging. Imaging is still there. But the emphasis is on ruling, what makes a good ruler and how to advance to a stronger and better ruled country with limited resources, strong enemies and lots of conflict both political and physical. As a result, we see more aspects of Solidar, its people, its institutions and the troubles that they face. We also get a view of the wider world around Solidar. It's tremendous to see all the pieces fit together and create a tremendous tapestry showing an interesting place and interesting people with problems that relate to our problems in our world. This is the best book in this series. And, it gives hope that there will be more! Read it. You will enjoy it!

Mr. Modesitt is one of my all-time favorite Sci-Fi/Fantasy authors, and his latest is a great example of why. His world-building continues to be superb, with the perfect balance between sufficient details to place you firmly in the location and keeping the plot moving. For those of you familiar with his other fantasy works, this one is a little different inasmuch as the protagonist is not himself a magic-wielder, though the Imager series world has them and they figure into the plot of *Assassin's Price*. But this volume, which continues the story arc begun in "*Madness in Solidar*", focuses on a young king suddenly thrust into power by the assassination of his father, rather than on the imagers who were the focus of all the other books in the series. As such, the book deals heavily with weighty matters such as politics, trade, economics and law, topics which some might find tiresome, but I find fascinating and thought-provoking. It's wonderful to see LEM expanding his writer's chops in this fashion, and I hope he continues to do so.

While I generally don't enjoy a shift in the focus in the story line or of character type in a book series that I really like, this story centered on a non-imager is one of the best of the Imager series. Rex Charyn has no supernatural power and must rely on his own wits and efforts to solve chronic and deep problems. He does get invaluable support from imagers, but they don't just take over and solve all of his and Solidar's problems with extraordinary imaging. Another of Mr. Modesitt's books that I did not want to end as quickly as it did.

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