

Several decades have passed. An ancient relic lies buried, waiting to be claimed so that it may wreak its havoc. A relic that creates greed and has a will to dominate life.

No, sorry. This isn't Tolkien, Middle Earth and the One Ring. I'll save that tale for a later date. This is The Crystal Shard by R.A. Salvatore. We still have our wizards, elves, dwarves and even a halfling. This is the tale of an incompetent wizard who finds self-assurance in the discovery of The Crystal Shard. With the influence of the relic, he declares war on the mostly peaceful land of The Forgotten Realms known as Ten Towns.

Akar Kessel, the uncredentialed wizard, has banded an army of warring trolls, goblins, orcs and other foul creatures under the influence of the Crystal Shard. These foul creatures, held together by this fearsome magic, are sent to march on Ten Towns and destroy the land.

An unlikely fellowship is created to save Ten Towns from this wizard's threat. This band consists of the halfling Regis, the dwarf Bruenor, two humans Catti-Brie and Wulfgar and the dark elf Drizzt. Together, they bring their races together to save Ten Towns, while also working from separate angles to achieve the same goal.

While the reader may find very strong similarities to the work of Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings while reading this book, there are several differences that make it stand out. The rich battle sequences that fill the pages are astounding. While Tolkien can describe the scenery down to the most minute detail, Salvatore brings his character's personalities to life in the battles. Each character is distinct, and each one breaks free of the generalities of their race to stand out. The diversity of the fellowship is similar, but their backgrounds bring a different

I didn't want to put the book down. Drizzt held my attention with his cunning and his stealth with each new battle and his heritage he continued to break away from while also using it to his advantage. Wulfgar kept me hanging on to see what adventures lie before him as he chose his fate. The camaraderie between all the members of this fellowship had me glued to each page. I smiled and laughed with these characters. My adrenaline rushed as each battle began and ended with realistic losses on both sides.

Though this book is older, it still holds a great story. I would place this tale right up there with Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. If you can't read Lord of the Rings because of the language and excessive detail, you'll get the same thrills from reading The Crystal Shard.