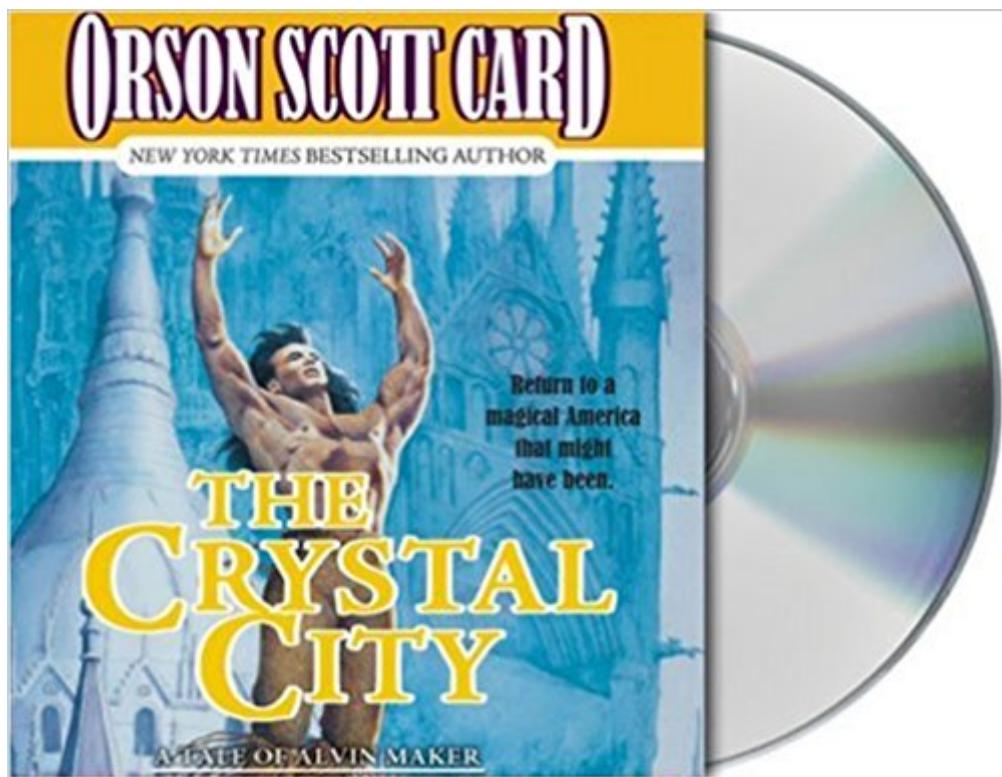


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The Crystal City: The Tales Of Alvin Maker, Volume VI



Synopsis

This full-cast production of Orson Scott Card's newest title is finally available on audio. From the end of the 18th century, Americans travelled west to find new homes and new lands. They brought with them the magics of plain people. It is from these roots of the American dream that award-winning writer Orson Scott Card has crafted what the Charlotte Observer called "a uniquely American fantasy." • Using the lore and the folk magic of the men and women who settled a continent, and the beliefs of the tribes who were here before them, Card has created an alternate frontier America. Charms, beseechings, hexes, and potions all have a place in the lives of the people of this world. Alvin Miller is the seventh son of a seventh son, born while his six brothers all still lived. Such a birth is a powerful magic; such a boy is destined to perhaps become a Maker. Rejoin the tale of Alvin and his wife Peggy as they work to create the Crystal City of Alvin's vision, where all people can live together in peace.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *The Crystal City*, Orson Scott Card's 6th book in the Alvin Maker series, Alvin starts an epidemic and builds a bridge, Arthur Stuart gets kissed and runs to Mexico and back, Calvin postures, Verily sulks and Margaret sighs. That's about it. Before embarking on *The Crystal City* I went back and reread the entire series, as it had been five years or so since I was through them last and I wanted to be sure everything was fresh. I was, once more, delighted by the voice with its

smooth use of early American colloquialism, impressed by the obvious knowledge of history and folklore that went into them, captivated by the engaging characters and astounded by the scope of the work. "Boy," I thought, "This is one Great Series!" Then I came to the current volume. And I was really disappointed. It purely does not compare with its companions in any way. The story was frankly boring and the Biblical allegory--which was very suave and subtle in the earlier works-- was just ham-handed. I don't object to Alvin's spending the entire book leading a group of slaves to freedom, but it doesn't make for very interesting action and the subplots weren't developed enough to alleviate the tedium. The language was mundane, without any of the personality I had come to expect. The earlier books seemed to be told by a breathing human being; TCC resembled a recitation by a history prof counting the days until retirement. The characters were flat. The characters we had seen before were not developed any further and the new characters were not developed at all. In previous books even minor characters had personalities and stories, but only lip service was paid to that here: note the stunning difference between *_Heartfire's_* Denmark and TCC's Old Bart.

The sixth book of the Tales of Alvin Maker feels a lot like the increasingly tired books at the end of the Ender series. It's not that the book is boring--I read it in two sittings--but although the plot is fine, it's simply not as well crafted as the earlier volumes in the series, and it shows. For one, the earlier books had a distinctive narrator, a sort of folksy presence that was clearly of the world of the book, but that is completely absent from this book, making the book read more like notes for a screen play than a coherent whole. Secondly, there's no overarching plot arc that makes this book stand alone the way the others in the series could--it feels more like the collected other adventures of Alvin Maker, and not like a coherent whole where the plot tensions pull the book to its conclusions. Third, the book has a strange quality that it does not take place immediately after the events in *Heartfire*. There's nothing wrong with that, per se--it might even be interesting, except that in this case a lot of the emotional tension from the previous book is just gone. Peggy and Alvin are separated again, their baby stillborn, and although you are told about Alvin's guilt in not being able to save his child you don't get to see it, and it carries little weight--it feels for most of the book that they've drifted apart, but I'm not sure that's the intention. At the end of the last book, Verily Cooper has found new love, but Purity is almost entirely gone from this book, with some hints that their romance went nowhere. Calvin is back, but all the rapprochement between him and Alvin is gone--which is probably realistic, but very unsatisfying after the last book where we see a seachange in Alvin's brother.

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