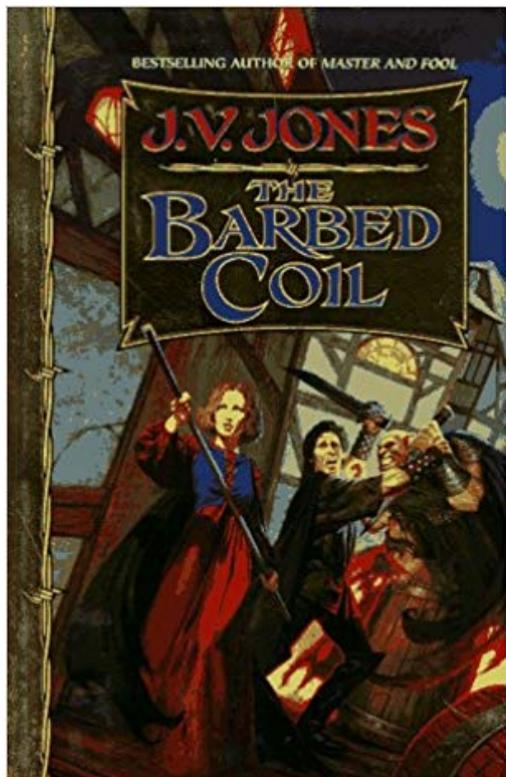


## The Barbed Coil *by* J. V. Jones



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**ISBN:** 0446521094

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**Author:** J. V. Jones

**Book title:** The Barbed Coil

**Pages:** 612 pages

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**Category:** Fantasy

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The author of the Book of Words trilogy presents an epic fantasy novel about a young woman from Southern California who is transported to an alternate universe, where she uses her supernatural artistic powers against an evil king. Tour.



## Reviews of the *The Barbed Coil* *by* J. V. Jones

### Jozrone

Much of this book was truly excellent, but the whole is marred by a few unneeded scenes and a number of weak and annoying characters. A unique plot and magic system, along with a few really great characters, give this book huge potential, and keep it mostly entertaining throughout its >700-page length. The basic gist covers the transportation of a modern-age human girl/woman into a brutal fantasy world where she must overcome impossible odds to achieve her destiny of saving the world. During that time, she of course falls in love and comes to find her inner strength and self reliance. Think Tad Williams' *The War of the Flowers*, although that book is really much better (5-stars).

Jones develops some awesome characters here, some completely like-able, and some completely despicable. Tessa, Ravis, and Cameron are all great characters, each with well-developed personalities and consistent mannerisms and behaviour. Fortunately most of the book is focused directly on them and their struggles against the also-well-done Izgard. Izgard is a power-hungry and completely-insane king on a rampage, and Jones has a definite talent for bringing the deranged to light. She is able to give a glimpse into the mind of evil characters, something that is apparent in her other books as well.

One of the most annoying characters I've ever come across is Angeline. Dim-witted to the point of ridiculousness, the child-like bride of the antagonist takes up way too much of the POV space, and it is painful to see the world through her eyes. Surprising that Jones would create and highlight such a weak female character. Also, the ending of the book feels forced. Every little loose end is neatly tied up, with Emith caring for Gerta, and all the other characters getting married. Add to that the sudden and out-of-nowhere demise of the Bay'Zell banker, and you've got a last chapter that would have been better off never having been written.

All that being said, I am probably overly critical of J.V. Jones because I know what she is capable of. She still maintains her ranking as one of my favorite fantasy authors, mostly due to her spectacular efforts in The Sword of Shadows series.

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Tessa McCamfrey is transported to a magical realm where insane and cruel King Isgard tries to conquer an ancient land using the ensorcelled crown - the Barbed Coil. Using her extraordinary

artistic gifts she, and two men now entwined in her destiny, must race against time to understand and use these powers before the world is left in ruins.

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### **Wizard**

I loved The Baker's Boy series. I bought this one, hoping that it would be the same. Instead, I found myself giving up half-way through. I might pick this up again and finish it, but I stopped caring about the characters. And the previous lip-chewing comment was right. It became a real distraction to me. Too bad, I really wanted to like this.

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### **saafari**

Great reading, but what would you expect from J.V.Jones. The best is that it is a single book and not a trilogy +; can be a pin waiting for the authors to finish the next episode!

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J V Jones is one of my favourites, particularly the Book of Words. Read this while waiting for the latest in the Sword of Shadows. Not 100% into it, but was a good time filler.

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### **Zieryn**

The formidable warlord Isgard has crowned himself King of Garizon and donned the Barbed Coil, the symbol of Garizonian rule. As Garizon's armies muster and prepare to invade the neighbouring kingdom of Rhaize, Camron of Thorn takes it upon himself to raise a defending army. Figuring strongly in his plans is Lord Ravis, the mercenary who engineered Isgard's rise to power. No-one knows more about Isgard's plans than Ravis. But the recruitment is complicated by the arrival of a mysterious woman called Tess, who claims to be from a distant land called California...

One-volume epic fantasies are a rare beast. The building of an entire world, the development of not just multiple characters but entire cultures and empires is something that can eat up not just hundreds, but thousands of pages. Commercial factors also convince many fantasy authors to flesh out their worlds for sometimes dozens of books at a time, cashing in long after the magic of the setting has gone.

The Barbed Coil is a rarity, then. It builds up a major military conflict between several nation states, develops an original magic system (based on the idea of painting and illumination) and features an expansive cast of both "good" and "bad" guys, all of whom are painted in some depth. It's a story with quiet moments and also packed with fast-moving action and some impressive magic, all delivered with Jones's formidable skills.

The Barbed Coil was released in 1997, between her debut Book of Words trilogy and it's sort-of sequel series, The Sword of Shadows. Book of Words was decent, with a nice improvement between volumes, but a far cry from Sword of Shadows, which is one of the finest epic fantasy series of the last generation (bearing in mind it's still unfinished). The Barbed Coil is a complete standalone, set in its own world unrelated to the two big series, telling one complete story with a beginning, middle and end. And it's a good one.

The novel delves into the character of Tess, someone who finds herself drifting through life on Earth with no purpose until she is borne off to a fantastical world and discovers that she is a smaller part of a much bigger pattern that goes back before her birth. Tess's journey of discovery is traditional, but well-handled. It's a pleasant surprise that Tess is less traumatised or freaked out by her arrival on this world than relieved, as various illnesses she was suffering from on Earth have disappeared in transit (shades of Thomas Covenant here, to a much less wrought degree). Our two male protagonists, Ravis and Camron, are also well-drawn characters, neither traditional heroes but who are drawn into having to choose whether to stand against Izgard, join him or flee. We also spend significant time with Izgard, his young bride Angeline and his scribe Ederius, who form an exceptionally well-written, monstrously dysfunctional triumvirate.

One of Jones's skills is combining the best elements of high fantasy - good fellowship, a sense of humour and a genuine ability for heroism - with the darkest - war, savagery and betrayal. The Barbed Coil bears comparisons with K.J. Parker, particularly the exacting detail given to the painting and illuminating side of things and the disturbingly complex relationship between Ravis and his brother, although it's not quite as unrelentingly grim as Parker's work. Still, that's not bad company to be in.

The Barbed Coil (\*\*\*\*) is J.V. Jones doing what she does best, building an interesting world populated by complicated people, fleshed out with an interesting take on magic. The book is available now in the US but, regrettably, is out of print in the UK (even on Kindle). Hopefully it will become available again at some point.

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