



# The Shadow Reader

*Sandy Williams*

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*There can only be one allegiance.*

*It's her time to choose.*

Some humans can see the fae. McKenzie Lewis can track them, reading the shadows they leave behind. But some shadows lead to danger. Others lead to lies.

A Houston college student trying to finish her degree, McKenzie has been working for the fae king for years, tracking vicious rebels who would claim the Realm. Her job isn't her only secret. For just as long, she's been in love with Kyol, the king's sword-master—and relationships between humans and fae are forbidden.

But any hope for a normal life is shattered when she's captured by Aren, the fierce and uncompromising rebel leader. He teaches her the forbidden fae language and tells her dark truths about the Court, all to persuade her to turn against the king. Time is running out, and as the fight starts to claim human lives, McKenzie has no choice but to decide once and for all whom to trust and where she ultimately stands in the face of a cataclysmic civil war.

## The Shadow Reader Details

Date : Published October 25th 2011 by Ace

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Author : Sandy Williams

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Fairies, Fae, Paranormal, Romance, Adult, Paranormal Romance, Magic

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## From Reader Review **The Shadow Reader** for online ebook

### **Sophia Sardothien says**

This book was better than I expected, fun fact what I love most was not the plot nor the fantasy elements but it was romance that captivated me into reading it.

Our main female lead is a kickass stubborn heroine. Usually I hate extremely stubborn characters as they are usually very reckless and stupid. But this time I can't help liking her, as she's stubborn for valid reasons but most of all HER HUMOR darn I can't help laughing out loud sometimes.

Then there's the two love interest

AND YES THIS BOOK DOES CONTAIN A LOVE TRIANGLE

However I fairly like this love triangle, it served a purpose

We got the good guy who I don't trust.

The bad guy who apparently is a good guy but has a certain edge in him.

So yeah I like the bad guy who is not actually bad xD

I would definitely recommend this book, though is labeled as NA the content was more like YA therefore no mature scenes which I really like about xD

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### **Jessica says**

This was everything I was hoping for and more. An instant favorite! ♥

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### **AH says**

Awesome! Just Awesome!

It's almost impossible to review this book without gushing. There is so much to love about **The Shadow Reader** by Sandy Williams. The story is told from the main character McKenzie Lewis' point of view. Let me tell you, I loved McKenzie's voice. McKenzie is an intelligent young woman who has suffered through life because of her ability to see the fae. Gifted with Sight, McKenzie can also map where the fae go just by looking at their shadows. Consequently, McKenzie is a valuable human.

McKenzie's life is not easy. She has been in psychiatric wards, has had difficulty completing her college degree, she is estranged from her parents, and has few (basically only one) human friends. For someone who has been through so much, McKenzie is remarkably "normal" She is smart, observant, loyal, and determined. Oh, she also likes to escape from her captors – often. McKenzie is not one of those TSTL (too stupid to live) characters. Every move she makes is made for a reason.

McKenzie has been working for the fae Court. Her handler Kyol, may or may not be in love with her. She has been working with him for ten years and McKenzie is in love with Kyol even though human-fae relationships are forbidden.

McKenzie's world changes when she is abducted by the rebels. Suddenly, her loyalties to the fae Court are challenged as she learns more about their oppressive ways and Kyol's role. McKenzie is taken in by Aren who arranges for her to learn the fae language, something that she was not allowed to learn when she was in the fae Court. McKenzie is treated well by the rebels despite several attempts to escape. Then there's Aren.  
*\*swoon\**

Now, you are asking yourself "Is there a love triangle?" Yes, there is. Is it an annoying love triangle where the girl plays the men off each other? No. Not at all. McKenzie's world views get changed when she is with the rebels. She chalks up her attraction to Aren as Stockholm syndrome, but there is more to it. This is a love triangle done right.

This is a fae book that I enjoyed. The world building is extensive but not complicated like most fae books. The fae realms had a similar feel to our world but without our technology. The book skipped between the fae realms and our world. An additional adversary was added: a group of human vigilante forces intent on destroying the fae.

The fae structure and politics were intriguing, especially the way that the king's influence was attained. I enjoyed the magical aspects as well, especially the way that human skin reacted in fae and how a fae's touch would cause pleasurable electrical impulses on the skin. Neat! My only criticism of this book would be that a glossary of fae terms would have been appreciated.

If you haven't had the chance to read **The Shadow Reader**, move it up your reading list. A second book **The Shattered Dark** is planned for an October 30, 2012 release.

**Review posted on Badass Book Reviews.**

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**Michelle, the Bookshelf Stalker Queen of the Undead says**

Forget my review.... I never got around to it....instead....

AH did an awesome review here...

<http://badassbookreviews.com/the-shad...>

Doing the happy dance ...(stop looking, I know I can't dance).

Loved it.

~~Review coming some time this century.~~

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## Emily May says

Before I picked this book up, I had so many great feelings about it. Partly because of all the dazzling reviews it has received from my most trusted GR friends, and partly just because it is sold as exactly the kind of urban fantasy I love: strong heroine, hot supernatural men, "cataclysmic civil war" between the fae... I admit that I was excited enough to buy this book before reading the 4/5 star reviews.

Okay, so what exactly was my problem? I exhale a great big shuddering sigh as I say - for the umpteenth time - this was just never anything *special* to me. This genre, the urban fantasy genre, is easily one of my favourites when I find a book/series that really appeals to me; they have a way of dragging you into their world and making you care about the characters and lust after the hunky men. But countless times I come across the *same old pattern*. The Shadow Reader will undoubtedly be loved by hardcore UF fans who actually read these books for that same old pattern that I mentioned. Some people love this format and I'm sure that's why books continue to be written in a very same-y way.

For me, I made the inevitable comparisons to the Fever series and this novel just couldn't compete at all. I'm still waiting for a fae novel that can and I've been starting to believe I won't ever find one. McKenzie is definitely a strong heroine, but at the end of this book she doesn't feel as well-developed to me as Mac did halfway through Darkfever. The thing I loved most about Mac is that she was a normal young woman, in fact she first appears far more ditzy than most. She doesn't stroll in, sword swinging, and she hasn't been trained for the situation she finds herself in. And yet, she shows that even the ditziest, blondest young women can turn kick-ass if the moment calls for it. This is one thing I love about that series which is very difficult to find in others. PNR heroines are often sappy and pathetic, UF heroines tend to be factory-manufactured warriors. I want to see regular girls and women - like myself - showing that they don't need super powers to be awesome.

I didn't even bother comparing either Kyol or Aren with Barrons because they are a million miles apart in every way. But looking at them on their own they still seem to be rather boring, Kyol's the nice guy and Aren's the bad one. McKenzie has known (and secretly wanted) Kyol for years, she has known (and secretly wanted) Aren for a couple of weeks. Guess who she chooses here?? Yet another Twilight-style love triangle it would seem. *ZZZzzzz....*

Yes, so sorry to the people who loved this, I'm not sure why I feel guilty for not loving it too, but I do. The only thing I will say in its favour is that this book reminded me how much I need to re-read the Fever books, so I thank Sandy Williams for that.

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## ♥Rachel♥ says

I had high hopes for **The Shadow Reader** after seeing so much love for this read, and after recently discovering the awesomeness of Urban Fantasy. Unfortunately, I only ended up liking the story overall. I'm sure this is a case of "it's me, not you" with a lot of "it's the narrator", as well. Twelve hours is a long time

when the narrator isn't your cup of tea.

McKenzie has "the sight" meaning she can see fae when other humans cannot. She's special because she can locate other fae who shift by reading the shadows they leave in their wake. This is very helpful to the current fae king because there's a war going on in the Realm and locating Rebels is an aid in the fight. McKenzie has worked with the king's sword master, Kyol, who keeps her safe during missions. Unfortunately, McKenzie has fallen hard for Kyol, and this is a big problem because the king has forbidden relationships between his fae and humans. Kyol would never disobey his king outright. This doesn't mean there haven't been stolen kisses and things haven't gotten heavy between them, only that they have no future. McKenzie knows she must move on and plans on separating herself from the fae permanently.

Things do not go according to plan when she's kidnapped by one of the Rebel leaders, Aren, and expected to help them in their fight. Aren is charismatic and maddening, but he stands for everything that McKenzie has been taught to hate. And yes, you guessed it; we have ourselves a love triangle. \*groans\* While being held captive, McKenzie begins to learn the situation between the Rebels and the Court may not be as clear cut, and the full truth has been kept from her.

I guess my main issue with the story was McKenzie. I had such a hard time with her. The back and forth feelings for Kyol and Aren were grating to me. Supposedly, McKenzie's been head-over-heels in love with Kyol for years and then she suddenly has feelings for Aren? Plus, when it was clear that the Rebels were not the bad people the Court made them out to be, she makes choices that put everyone in danger. It did not help that the narrator's voice wasn't my preference, and her performance made me think of a teenager instead of a mid-twenty year old.

By the end, I started liking McKenzie just a little bit more and the action became exciting. I will continue with the series because I got the last book for review, so I hope the positive changes continue. I won't be continuing with an audio version in the next book, and I think that'll help with my enjoyment of the series, as well.

You can find this review and more at [The Readers Den](#).

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## **Steph Sinclair says**

*The Shadow Reader* had everything I love in a fae book. Seriously, I have a special place in my heart for fae characters. Ahem, Ash and Puck. \*Wink, wink\* It had action, hot Fae guys, adventure, romance, hot Fae guys, court intrigue, witty dialogue, and epically cool fight scenes. Oh, and **did I mention the HOT FAE GUYS?!**

*Excuse me while I fangirl.*

McKenzie Lewis is a special human. She can see the Fae and read their shadows. This ability makes her a very important ally in the war raging between the Court and Rebels because she can tell where the Fae are teleporting to. Just think of her as one hell of a blood hound and you get the picture. For years she has helped the Court track down and kill Rebels, until one day she is kidnapped by a rebel leader named Aren, who henceforth in this review shall be known as: "*Le Hottie*." While in captivity, she discovers the war she once considered black and white, just gained a whole lot more colors in between. As a result, she starts second

guessing her alliance with the Court and her awkward relationship with the King's sword-master, Kyol, "*Le Steamy*".

First off, this is a really awesome debut novel for Sandy Williams. *The Shadow Reader* grabbed me from page one and held me in a choke hold that would make "Stone Cold" Steve Austin proud. And considering the last two books I've read had me in a "two-star" reviewing slump, I was extremely grateful for a fun read. That's not to say this book is without its flaws. Oh, no. Lol. But, there is just something about it that makes me a lot more forgiving. *The Shadow Reader* is like a toddler just finishing up a cherry Popsicle on a hot summer day. She's a little messy with sticky fingers, but she's just so darn cute you want to hug her anyway. And that's exactly how I felt about this book. Even though McKenzie did irritate me at times and the romance was toeing the "insta-love" line, I couldn't help but really enjoy reading this book.

### **The Plot:**

Two words: Action packed. I don't even think this book had "down time." It was just back to back revelations, fight scenes, sexual tension. You know, all those things to keep you on the edge of your seat. This was a solid plot with pretty good world building. I easily got a feel for the Fae's world, but the only thing I would have liked to see was a freakin' map! McKenzie's ability to track the Fae's shadows is reliant upon her knowing where the locations actually are. I would have liked to have been able to *see* where these places were myself on a map. There is a lot of traveling done in the book between "fissuring" (think: teleporting) in and out of the human world or between the providences of the Fae world. So, yeah, it would have been nice to be able to flip to the map and see exactly where they were.

McKenzie's goal in the first half is to escape *Le Hottie* (Aren) and his Rebels and return to *Le Steamy* (Kyol) and the Court. She firmly believes they are evil and remains loyal to the Court. But, she never expects to fall for her captor and grow sympathetic to the Rebels cause. When she finally does return to her sword-master, she finds that her loyalties no longer lie with the Court.

### **The Characters:**

Le Hottie (Aren), McKenzie, and Le Steamy (Kyol) were smart, sassy and classy respectively. I usually don't like love triangles, but this is one of those rare occasions where an author tells me to, "Shut it, Stephanie and read the *damned* book. You *will* like it!" And lil' old skeptical me goes:

*Hmm... We'll see about that Ms. Williams.*

Well, here I am eating my words because I loved this love triangle. If I were McKenzie, who would I chose? Le Hottie or Le Steamy? Jeez, I don't know! They were both awesome guys! Aren's the cocky son of a biscuit eater that has you wanting to smack that ridiculous grin off his face and kiss him at the same time. While on the other hand, Kyol is the mysterious silent type that will keep you up all night trying to puzzle out the secrets hidden in his eyes. (AHHHH! Hot Fae guys! I.CAN'T.EVEN!)

Of course, we have our heroine McKenzie. I won't deny that there were times when she really irritated me because I thought she just couldn't see the bigger picture of the war and how the Court treated her all those years. The Court specifically didn't want her learning the language of the Fae and she not once thought that was strange. And one of the first things Aren does once she is kidnapped is have her taught the language. This should have been a gigantic red flag to McKenzie, but she remains loyal to the Court until it nearly very dearly costs her. But, she's supposed to be a stubborn heroine. I get that. I just wish she was a little more observant. However, she is a strong-willed heroine because she never does give up trying to escape her captives. I have to give her props for that. Even when she knows her attempts are in vain, she continues again

and again. I have to admit, though, I did wish she didn't need quite so many rescuing from our **hot Fae guys**. In fact, why does she even have a sword on the cover? I kept waiting for her to kick *someone's* ass in the book, but it never happened. (view spoiler) No matter. That wasn't enough to stop me from enjoying the book at all.

### **The Romance:**

Ah, here is where the gushing review dies a painful death. Oh, insta-love, how I hate thee!! You manage to ruin it for me every time! When will you leave the awesome stories and their characters alone?! \*Evil fist shake\*

*Darn you insta-love. You've gotten Tink fired up again. I'll be beating the pixie dust out of my sofa pillows for days now. Thanks.*

First of all, I want to say I loved Aren and McKenzie together. They had great chemistry, but for the life of me, I couldn't figure out *why* they liked each other. Apart from the little *zings* of electricity shooting from each other, I don't understand why they were in love. It's your typical, "Oh he's hot, but he's the bad guy and I'm not supposed to notice that. Oh my *damn*, I can't look away!" As for Aren, I didn't even realize he really liked her until he kissed her and by then I'm like, "Wait, you actually *like* her? You were *for real*?" Then, by the end he's telling her he loves her. -- Case and point, I found their attraction rushed and underdeveloped.

McKenzie and Kyol's relationship was a bit more believable because they had been working together for ten years compared to her brief few weeks acquaintance with Aren. The King had forbid Kyol and McKenzie from being together and despite their intense feelings for one another, Kyol tries his best to keep their relationship strictly business. McKenzie waits for him for ten years. **Ten years**. But when she returns from captivity he realizes this has been a mistake. By that time, he has kept so much from her (and Aren has laid a claim on her heart) that it damages their relationship. I really applaud McKenzie for standing up for herself and telling Kyol that she shouldn't have waited for him and that she was moving on. But, something tells me that his hold on her heart has not yet loosened its grip...

Overall, I really enjoyed reading *The Shadow Reader* and can see this appealing to fans of Richelle Mead. This book falls somewhere in the 3.5-4 star category for me, but what the hell, I'm rounding up to 4 for the special unputdownable quality (view spoiler).

More reviews and more at [Cuddlebuggery Book Blog](#).

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### **Wendy Darling says**

Searching for another kick-ass urban fantasy heroine? Look no further, because McKenzie Lewis has arrived. Caught in a fascinating war between the fae king and the rebel faction, she is kidnapped by the rebellion, who wants to use her special cartography skills for their own means. McKenzie fights to escape in some seriously great action scenes, but gradually she starts to wonder whether the truth behind the war is even more complex than she ever imagined.

What's intriguing about McKenzie is that unlike most other urban fantasy heroines, she's not a warrior. She has no magic sword, she doesn't have mad martial arts skills, and hell, she can't even fire a gun. But she is an



exceptionally gifted shadow reader, a person who can see the trace imprints left behind when one of the fae has teleported to another location. The author does an amazing job of showing us how special McKenzie is, particularly in scenes involving a tracking test that's set up for her by the rebels. This girl is fierce and determined and fearless and funny, and I liked how she actually *thinks* and *reasons*. You know how sometimes you want to yell at the page because something should be occurring to the heroine, but it doesn't because the author wants to let the story drag on? It's like McKenzie hears you yelling loud and clear and answers you immediately in her actions. But I also like that she's so very human in the middle of all the powerful magic and power plays exhibited around her. She miscalculates, she doesn't know whom to trust, and she actually bleeds and feels pain in a jarring, wince-inducing way. And I like that in the middle of a blistering attack when her own life is in danger, she stops to rescue a little squirmy *kimki* animal.

And yeah...there are a couple of really sexy guys in this book. McKenzie's been waiting 10 years for something to happen in her forbidden relationship with the strong and principled Kyol, the king's swordsman; but her rebel captor, Aren, is also strangely compelling, with awesome healing powers and a pesky habit of making her feel things for him that she shouldn't be feeling. (Oh, and he has disheveled, sexy hair, too. :D ) Love triangles are usually equal parts agonizing and annoying, but the romantic entanglements are handled incredibly well here. It's like the Dorian-Kiyo thing (view spoiler) but done in a much more sophisticated, non-icky, non-frustrating way. I like that everyone behaves honorably and that fae politics and war add so many complicated layers to the situation; while everyone has secrets and agendas, it's clear why both men are so attractive to McKenzie, because both are certainly very attractive to us. The electricity running under her skin whenever she's touched by one of the men is incredibly hot, especially considering that there is no actual sex in any of these relationships. Yet.

*Aren holds on for a moment more, his lips and hands lingering as if this is his last breath. As if this is the only breath in his life that has ever mattered.*

and

*"Fine," he says, his words coming out breathless. "I'll save your precious sword-master, McKenzie. But I will never, ever give you back to him."*

I'm really happy to find another great series, especially one that features such a smart and funny heroine and a well-plotted story. If you're a fan of Richelle Mead, Ilona Andrews, Patricia Briggs, or Chloe Neill, don't wait another minute! This is urban fantasy series you've been waiting for.

P.S. If you're still not convinced, let me just say that I made the mistake of starting this book when I went to bed late at night and I was so hooked, I couldn't put it down until I finished it at 6 am. By the time I woke up a few hours later, a few of my friends had already purchased it..and it looks like they really enjoyed it, too. Yay!

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## **Stacia (the 2010 club) says**

When a person writes a review, the first thing they have to do is think about what they want to say about the book and what is worth mentioning. After reading a few reviews on this book, I'm thinking that my idea of prioritizing must be completely different from everyone else's.

Somewhat frustrating love triangle...blah, blah, blah.

A few similarities to Dark Swan...blah, blah, blah.

Heroine who really should have known better about a few things...blah, blah, blah.

Great action for a first book...blah, blah, blah.

No cliffhanger ending...blah, blah, blah.

Mischievous hitchhiking pet which is a mix of a cat and a ferret...blah, blah...WHAT?!?

Why did *no one* tell me about the *kimki*? Where are your priorities, people!?!

\*edit to add that Wendy Darling did in fact mention the Kimki but I missed it\*

Okay, so maybe this was more important to me than it was to all the other people who actually cared about the *story*. Silly people. Did no one else have a love for the cheesy 80's movie, *Beastmaster*? You know, the one where the little ferrets would follow their master around? I can not tell you how much I wanted creatures to come to me whenever I called after watching this movie.

If ferrets aren't your thing, then how about a falcon?

Either way, creatures at your beck and call = game winner.

Although, I'm pretty sure that I pictured Aren from the book to be much more attractive than the beastmaster guy.

And since I've already mentioned one of the men in *Shadow Reader*, I will now go back up to the top of my original list.

**Somewhat frustrating love triangle :** It was. Up until the end of the book, I was not a fan. I don't like how we were made to believe that the love McKenzie had for Kyol was super strong, yet she immediately started having feelings for another man (played off as chaos lusters and Stockholm Syndrome). The point could be made that maybe the original love was based more on familiarity and dependency, so there was a reason she might gravitate toward another person, but I still felt like the love triangle could have built slower. However...the way the ending of the first book was handled without a cliffhanger made me pleased with the way things turned out. For those who are not fans of love triangles and don't mind a small spoiler, click this because it might make you feel better about trying the book : (view spoiler) Because of this development and the way the book ended, my rating jumped up from a 3 to a solid 4.

**A few similarities to Dark Swan :** I saw more than a few in the first 5 chapters (enough to have me worried) but thankfully, the rest of the story felt unique enough to stand on its own. Crisis averted!

**Heroine who really should have known better about a few things :** The fact that this woman failed to learn much about the details of her job, then kept flip-flopping about who she wanted to trust or believe was a point that bothered me. Again, thankfully, the way the book turned out hopefully nipped a good portion of this in the bud. Another possible crisis averted!

**Great action for a first book :** There were equal parts world building and story/action, which was NICE for a first-in-a-series UF. To say that this is rare would be an understatement.

**No cliffhanger ending :** This is another rarity in UF (heck, series in general) these days. You know what's probably coming down the road and know that the battle has just begun, but at least the book ended on a note

where you weren't waiting to figure something out.

Other than my initial feelings about the love triangle, as well my confusion over the few "flashbacks without warning," I enjoyed the read.

In case you're curious about the world and how it functions, let's give a super fast breakdown :

McKenzie is a shadow reader, which means she's a human with abilities that are useful to the Fey. Among her gifts are the ability to see the fey, as well as her ability to map the shadows which Fey travel through. In essence, her job is one of a hired tracker. She's working for the "court" Fey who are opposed by an offshoot group of rebels. In a time of war, her skills are invaluable, so she is in high demand - from both sides of the war.

Captured by one of the leaders of the rebellion, McKenzie finds herself bombarded with new information, questioning everything she previously thought was truth. Aren, her captor, is probably my favorite character as of right now. His banter with McKenzie was one of the highlights of the book. I loved that he called her "my nalkin-shom."

Contact between the Fey and humans produced an effect called *edarratae*, which are likened to sparks of electricity. This absolutely takes personal chemistry to another level.

### **How would you not love Aren?**

*"I could heal you with a kiss." Mischief sparks in his silver eyes.*

*He swipes it out of the way and storms forward. "He's had ten years to make you fall in love with him! I haven't had ten weeks! Tell me how that's fair!"*

*"Fine," he says, his words coming out breathless. "I'll save your precious sword-master, McKenzie. But I will never, ever give you back to him."*

Yes. Me likey.

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## **All Things Urban Fantasy says**

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

There is something shocking about McKenzie Lewis, the protagonist in *THE SHADOW READER* by Sandy Williams. She's not a super woman/warrior goddess/magical titan capable of destroying the universe with a wink. Nope, unlike many urban fantasy heroines these days, McKenzie is pretty normal. She does have one ability that sets her apart from the rest of us; she's a shadow reader, someone who can watch a fae 'fissure' (instantly teleport from one location to another) and know exactly where they will reappear. A highly coveted skill when there is a fae civil war going on, which is why McKenzie finds herself being sought after

by both sides.

Where do I start with all the things I loved about THE SHADOW READER? The fae mythology wasn't overly complex, but it was unique and perfectly suited to this world. I especially loved the idea of chaos lusters, tiny, visible lightning bolts that dance over the skin under certain circumstances like when fae touch humans. And speaking of touching, the tug-of-war going on with McKenzie's heart was nothing compared to what I felt. How do you choose between the honorable warrior Kyol loyal to the fae king and the determined rebel leader Aren?

Another highlight for me was the constant cloud of doubt I was kept in. I was thrown back and forth suspecting first Kyol then Aren and back again so many times that I got dizzy. Just like McKenzie, I never knew who to fully trust, who to love, or who to align with. And just when I'd think I'd finally figured it out, something would happen and raise the questions all over again. The action was relentless and the emotions kept so sky high that I couldn't decide until the very end.

THE SHADOW READER is a fantastically fun urban fantasy! One of the best debuts of the year and easily my favorite fae urban fantasy since Karen Marie Moning's Darkfever series. Wonderfully integrated mythology that flowed naturally in the story without needing lengthy explanations, a to die for love triangle, and a relatable non-super woman protagonist who relies on her brain and bravery to fight for what she wants. This is a book that checked off all my urban fantasy wish list boxes and I can't wait to read the sequel.

Sexual Content:

Kissing. References to rape

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## Dija says

**\*\*\*FAVORITE UF/PNR OF 2011\*\*\***

*"This is ridiculous, Aren. I'm not Cinderella at a ball. And this...this isn't going to win my support, not even my sympathy. I won't—"*

*He places a finger over my lips. "I forget my responsibilities when I'm with you. It's nice. Peaceful." His hand slides behind my neck, beneath my hair. He plays with the clasp of my necklace. "I wish you'd let yourself forget things when you're with me. You'd be happier."*

## Rating Explanation:

**+1 star** for McKenzie. She's everything an excellent UF heroine should be, but still has her own spark that's unparalleled. She's human, strong, sensitive, sharp, and witty. I adore her! Especially how she stood up to Kyol and Aren. She doesn't let *anyone*, no matter how sexy, push her around, and I seriously respect her for it.

**+1 star** for Aren. Again, he's the typical male lead but still unique enough that he doesn't blend into the endless list of hot heroes. And am I the only one surprised that the "bad" guy actually (view spoiler) in the end? It certainly makes for a great change, especially since I was rooting for him throughout.

**+1 star** for the acknowledgment of all the violence and killing that goes on during a war. Most UF/PNR series brush murder and killing off with nothing more than the twitch of a dagger, but I liked how McKenzie felt every death and did suffer for it. She's the farthest thing from wimpy, but at least she's human enough to hate taking lives, no matter how necessary.

**+1 star** for all the action. This book certainly doesn't give the reader a chance to calm down and think things through. It also doesn't suffer from the Dull Beginning Disease. *The Shadow Reader* is surprisingly fast-paced for a first book, and so many things happen that it could have easily been a standalone novel, but I love the characters so much that I'm definitely not complaining about this being a series.

**+0.5 stars** for Kelia and Naito. These two were just too cute! I love their romance and the whole Romeo and Juliet aspect of it. I wish there had been more of them in here. (view spoiler)

**+0.5 stars** for Kyol. I blame him for making McKenzie wait so long, but it's nearly impossible to hate him. He's just too sweet. And do I see a potential pairing with him and Lena? Hmm...

**-0.25 stars** for McKenzie's indecisiveness towards the end. I'm glad she finally chose who she would be with, but the 70 or so pages before the last chapter were my least favorite and I didn't like McKenzie going back and forth between the two men.

**4.75/5 stars**

**For more reviews, visit my blog.**

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### **Vinaya says**

Even more than YA, my relationship with Urban Fantasy has been a love-hate one. In fact, I even made a table about it, and it holds true. So when I DO find an urban fantasy book I like, I can't help but talk about it nonstop, not to mention recommending it to everyone I know!

*The Shadow Reader* was one of those books I went into with a great deal of trepidation, only to end up gasping for breath about 20 pages in. Excellent worldbuilding, fast-paced, breath-stealing action and brilliant characterization all combine to make this book one hell of a ride!

McKenzie is a shadow reader. She can mark the portals to and from Faerie into our world, and point out with a fair degree of accuracy exactly where the portal leads to. This makes her valuable to the Faerie king, who is fighting a battle against false bloods who are trying to claim his throne. McKenzie has been instrumental in the capture of several of these rebels, so it's not surprising that she soon becomes a target for these false bloods.

However, when McKenzie *does* get kidnapped by Aren, the leader of the false bloods, instead of being killed outright, as she is half-expecting, she ends up having her world turned on its head. The Faerie court has kept McKenzie more or less in the dark, her sole point of contact being the King's swordmaster Kyol. Kyol and McKenzie are secretly in love, but the King has forbidden Fae-human relationships, so they are doomed to snatched meetings and secrecy.

The kidnapping does more than just pull McKenzie into a fight that is not her own - it also makes her

question her beliefs, her loyalties and her love... how true are the things she has always taken for granted?

I loved McKenzie's character for the most part. She's not super, extra special, but she's not shy and retiring either. She's most definitely smart, scared in all the right places, wily when she needs to be. For someone who's led such an unusual life, she's surprisingly level headed, and most refreshingly, she doesn't focus on her love life to the exclusion of all else.

What can I say about the love interests in this story, except that they were HAWWWTTTTT!!!! Seriously, anyone who's read my reviews know how much I hate love triangles. But let me let you in on a little secret - I hate well-done love triangles EVEN MORE than I hate badly done ones. At least with badly done love triangles, you don't have too much emotional investment in the characters, so you couldn't care less what happens to these moany, indecisive individuals. But well-done love triangles are **heartbreaking**. When you can see the good in both men, when you find one as flawed and beautiful and perfect as the other, the knowledge that one of them is going to lose out on the woman they love is infinitely more painful. I was rooting for Kyol the whole way through, but that is because I have a well-developed soft spot for a man of honour. Which isn't to say I didn't like Aren. I totally felt the frisson and everything when he got all up-close-and-personal with McKenzie.

I found the grey-shaded characterization of both the main love interests especially intriguing. Kyol is McKenzie's first love, the man she has held in her heart since she was a teenager; Aren is a mature woman's choice - a man who first attracts, then interests her, and who eventually manages to win her trust and her affection. McKenzie is a surprisingly introspective character for such an action-packed story. She constantly analyzes her motives, and the motives of people around her, and the state of the world in which she finds herself. And the secondary characters help to flush out both the worldbuilding and the plotline in ways that are amazingly unexpected.

The one thing that really bothers me about the way McKenzie treats Kyol is that (view spoiler)

I am most definitely raring to read the next book. There are several intriguing plotlines left suspended - not unfinished, precisely, but open-ended, and I would love to see political situation of the Fae in greater depth, now that (view spoiler) Sandy Williams, if you ever read this - GIMME! Definitely a book I would recommend to all urban fantasy enthusiasts, and ESPECIALLY to ex-UF readers like me who are disillusioned with the genre. GO. READ. NOW.

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## Denisa says

2.5 Meh

This book has so much potential and it was all wasted on mediocre writing and bad characters.

*How can I be so mean? I'll explain.*

I'll start with the bad parts.

1. The love triangle.

Gah, how can that be in a book that's suppose to be more fantasy than romance! I didn't come to this series for that, I wanted so much more. It seems to me that the focus is too much on the romance and not enough on

the actual plot. It's really not what I wanted when I started this. When I want love, I go to a contemporary, not to a UF.

## 2. The characters.

The MC is an annoying little girl who knows nothing about anything. Even more, her lovers aren't too good either. Although I really did appreciate that (view spoiler) Still, that moment went away pretty fast and it all got back to being about her. I at least expected some betrayals and back-stabbing!

## 3. The writing.

I felt like the author was confused while writing this story and, I'll say it again, it felt like she couldn't decide if she wanted to make it more romance or more fantasy so she chose both and the result was pretty disappointing.

Now, finally, the good parts. Why it deserves 2.5 stars.

The idea is interesting and I kind of liked the bad guy, I liked that he's been plotting this for a long time.

The world seems interesting too (although I wanted a LOT more information about it... maybe if the author hadn't concentrated so much on the love story that would have happened).

Oh, and what made me round it all up to 3 stars, not 2, is the fact that Sandy Williams had the guts to (view spoiler)

All in all, it's not a bad read, just as long as you want more love and less blood from your books.

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## **Angela James says**

I was pretty conflicted about what to rate this, and I find myself once again wishing Goodreads would let me do a half star, because I think it's truly 3 1/2 stars. Keeping in mind, that 4 stars is a book I love and 5 stars are reserved for books I think are truly top of the pile books and I'll recommend them to anyone who will listen.

I thought this book started out very strongly, and I was intrigued both by the heroine and by the world the author has developed. I liked the heroine's voice, and I especially appreciated that she had strength of conviction.

However, I'll be the first to admit that I'm not a fan of using the "which guy should I choose" plot construct as the driving conflict for an urban fantasy. Actually, I'm not keen on it as a form of conflict in general. I like romantic conflict, but not in terms of "which guy" instead of romantic conflict between two people. I also want the driving conflict of an urban fantasy to be within the world itself, because I think this is much harder to pull off, but ultimately more interesting. "Which guy" is hard to pull off with any kind of original twist at this point.

So this book began to falter for me at the point I realized this was going to be the main conflict, and ultimately didn't convince me in the final choice she made. I saw so much potential in building this world, and the conflict between the two competing faction of Fae, and I was left disappointed that more development wasn't offered there, instead of in the heroine's torn feelings about two men.

I do have to give the author props for not leaving this on a cliffhanger, though there's clearly room for future books. At the end of the day, I can't explain more about my dissatisfaction with this book, since some of it lies in how it ended, how she chose, and explaining that would be a major plot spoiler for the book. I will say that I think readers who love urban fantasy and love the conflict of choosing between two heroes will enjoy this book, and I think the writing makes the story interesting and diverting. I'd like to see more from this author within the constraints of a new, more developed conflict. e

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## Cait says

As a kind of pre-review to my *actual* review, this is the first book I read after reading a book that was, undoubtedly, one of my favorite books of 2011, *Angelfall*. And I hoped that if I stuck to the same kind of genre and general character makeup that *Angelfall* had I could find a great book that was, at the least, pretty enjoyable. So, was it?

Meh..... *kinda*.

Oh and, by the way, my real rating for this book is 3.5 stars and I'm *seriously* considering dropping it to three.

It's the truth.

I guess the first thing that I want to talk about is the cover, which is a bit of a gripe for me, if I'm telling the truth. Now I don't know if it's one of the covers that someone actually made specifically *for* *The Shadow Reader*, or if it was just a pre-existing picture that they found that just fit what the general plot of the story was about, but McKenzie *never* has any kind of sword throughout the whole book, especially not such a badass-looking sword as the one on the cover. Honestly, it sent quite a bit of a false message to me as a reader because I thought that McKenzie was going to be some kind of warrior who went around beating shit up and cutting through people like they were grass; a real badass warrior chick. Sadly, McKenzie didn't really live up to the cover. Not saying that the cover isn't really awesome, because it is, but the false advertising that it gave may have done this book more harm than good, in my opinion.

Since we're on that topic already, let me discuss what I liked and didn't like about our main character, McKenzie Lewis. First off, just because she didn't go around cutting people up like I originally thought doesn't mean that she wasn't an independent character; for the most part, she had a great thinking process that I could actually *follow* and understand, had real guts, was cocky, and very stubborn. Sometimes, though, her stubborn nature and cocky attitude got on my nerves. There were times when the answer was quite clearly dangling right in front of her face, but she just refused to believe fact, or her thinking that she could get away with anything and/or was smarter than everyone else around her made McKenzie make really stupid decisions that I couldn't support as a reader. And, as I said although for the most part I could follow what McKenzie was thinking and why she had those thoughts, but, again, some kind of went against what Williams had built up her character to be; kind of like little hiccups that she just didn't catch. The whole



scene where she tried to free a friend of hers from prison and everything that led up to the fact really baffled me; it was quite obvious what was going to happen but McKenzie just couldn't figure it out. If I'm completely honest with myself I skimmed over that section because it was just damned confusing. Also, whenever she was without either Kyol or mainly Aren in this book, she fell into that Mary Sue reaction of, "oh noes I'm helpless and stupid and can't do anything because they're not here! I'm useless without a man to help me"

Just imagine how *I* took that reaction. ~~Not very damn well.~~

The plot, besides the few points where we had to see and think through McKenzie's muddled up thoughts and ideals was very fast-paced and, for the most part, enjoyable. It was mainly Kyol and Aren who did the ass-kicking when it was done ~~not that I minded much; seeing those two hot pieces of ass kick some ass~~ ~~certainly didn't hurt me any~~ but it did bother me that McKenzie didn't get into much of the action, and when she did most of the time she ended up pulling more of a Mary-Sue type reaction than doing anything good *or* helpful. She was kind of like a hand-ninja; cute but pretty damn useless:

Okay, I'm kind of starting to like McKenzie less and less ~~and the hand more and more~~

Now this is the main beef with this book that basically contributed to it losing those 1.5-2 stars; the whole damned love triangle, especially with it came to McKenzie and Aren. *It didn't make any damn sense to me. At all.* Yes, Aren was one hot piece of ass, and I won't say that he didn't have at least that going for him, but nothing else that he or McKenzie did while *with* him made any sense to me. Let me give you all a bit of a situation and tell me what your answer would be at the end:

You have been fighting a war for many, many years against your evil counterparts, and for the last ten years they've been using a girl who can tell the exact location of all of your troops whenever they go anywhere and they are all killed when they're found; many of them you knew very closely and personally, and you just keep on losing all of your fighters. She is the single reason that you are losing this fight. You finally decide enough's enough and make the plan to kidnap her so you can get her out of your hair, and quite possibly kill her if she doesn't cooperate with you. You finally find her, get her in your hands, and.....what do you do?

- A). Kill the bitch
- B). Force her to find the locations of her former comrades and use her powers
- C). *Fall in looooooveeee the moment you see her.*

If you answered A or B to that question, then you're a normal human being, but if you answered question C then you're Aren! That's right I'm not joking; he basically falls in love with her the second he sees her and doesn't do what he *should* have done in the first place. Even worse there's a point when McKenzie grows feelings for him and he goes and *slits her fucking throat even though he said he's in love with her and has the balls to basically say that he didn't mean to.*

Yeah that's right that what Aren did, the man who, at the end of the book, "claims" to be in love with her. After he slits it, to make matters even worse, he refuses to heal her for a while because she "disappointed" him (or so McKenzie claims and ultimately believes) and then he says that she should be *lucky* that he knew what he was doing enough to not slit her throat in the wrong place. If I were her I'd say fuck you and head for the hills, but what does McKenzie do? She forgives him and says that it was *her own fault for getting her throat slit; that she's the one to blame.*

[image error]

That girl has problems.

Now I understand that some things are going to be different because of her much her world has changed since she was about 16, but that I will *not* accept. Anything that Aren may have said that was witty or interesting died for me because all that I could see from him was a controlling bastard. All he ever does is tell McKenzie what to do and when to do it and she just blindly accepts it and only tries to escape at the *stupidest* times possible. Honestly I'm still a huge Kyol fan. Yes he didn't get involved with McKenzie for ten years (although I personally find why pretty reasonable, considering how bat-shit crazy the king is) which I know is a long time, but, compared to Aren, he's an angel. Here's a basic comparison:

Aren:

1. Slits McKenzie's throat just because she chose not to reveal where Kyol and his men went even though; by this time, he's supposedly "in love" with her
2. Controls her
3. Lies to her
4. Doesn't keep his promises
5. Forces her into situations she doesn't want to be in
6. Blames her for things beyond her control
7. Is a hormonal little bitch half the time
8. Doesn't let her make her own decisions

Then, we have Kyol:

1. Rejects an offer for marriage from another Faerie because he's in love with McKenzie even though it's against the law, and basically made him an outcast for rejecting the other Faerie.
2. Has protected McKenzie for ten years from the court
3. Lets her make her own decisions and will follow whatever she chooses to make sure she's okay
4. Directly disobeys the king and doesn't kill humans when told to (although McKenzie flips shit and blames him for everything without knowing the facts which ends her ass up in jail)
5. Is loyal and caring
6. A badass swordsman with a knight's morals
7. Would leave the Faerie realm for her after he realizes what he's done to her
8. Even when she rejects him he will continue to protect her and help her any way he can and hopefully win her back by being a fucking *man*.
9. Has never hurt McKenzie the way Aren has a day in his life

Now tell me honestly who would you pick? Trust me there's a bit difference between a man and a bastard, and I know who's the man in this love triangle.

And you know what bothered me even *more*? That McKenzie rejects Kyol after he says he'll leave with her and does the whole, "let's just be friends" shit to him and chooses Aren even though she only admits to have some kind of *feelings she can't explain* even though she knows that she's still *in love* with Kyol by the end of the book. Yes, I understand the idea of she's putting her foot down and making Kyol see the error of his ways and all that ~~shit~~ stuff, but I know McKenzie is making most likely the stupidest decision of her life.

IT JUST PISSES ME OFF!

*Shut up, Goodreads.....*

I guess to finish this book was good, but not really what I wanted it to be because of a *certain* love interest. Read *The Shadow Reader*, but be warned that you may not like some of the relationships which is sadly a main part of this book. Too much romance and too little action in my opinion.

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## &#x1f98a; Jessi ♥? H. Vojsk says

Story ??????????

Did you ever wish there would be more books like the “a court of thorns and roses” series? Filled with fae and magic, badass female characters and a (funny) handsome bad boy?

There’s a war going on in the fae world between the king, his followers and the rebels. In the middle of it is McKenzie, a shadow reader, one of the strongest weapons against the rebellion. One day McKenzie gets captured by the rebellion and soon her world is shook.

Who can she trust?

Who is lying?

And who should sit on the throne?

That was a book I couldn’t lay down. First of all, the main character is so funny and so freakin stubborn. She was constantly trying to run away and in the end I always smiled reading the dialogues between Aren and McKenzie.

This is definitely a book that has a nice pacing, is filled with action and a little bit of love and heartbreak. Definitely worth reading!

Characters ??????????

Oh, McKenzie our wonderful main character- you go girl. You are so stubborn, so creative in getting away from the rebellion that you don’t even mind getting hurt.

And you’re so intelligent!

I was in love with you from page one.

McKenzie was definitely my favorite character in this one.

I wouldn’t say she had a character development in the end, but did she find her kind, brave heart.

But one thing was a little bit sad to see - McKenzie was nearly always saved by someone. She wasn’t a girl who could save herself, but at least she tried to - she didn’t want to rely on someone. That was a nice start, maybe it gets better with the next books.

Aren was the Rebell who captured McKenzie and tried to get her to work for the rebellion. He was a funny, handsome and kind guy who could be sassy sometimes. I loved him. He was never brutal or mean to McKenzie.

He always treated her good.

I liked that about him.

Kyol was her partner and guard sent by the king of the fae. She worked with him for over ten years for the king. Kyol’s biggest character trait was his loyalty to the king. This man was so loyal, I never doubted it.

Never ever. He wouldn’t betray the kingdom for McKenzie even though if he would have they could’ve been together. But he didn’t.

The best thing about the book was, that I liked all the side characters. I was interested about what happened to them and if they survived and when they died I was actually pretty sad.

I especially loved the female badass characters in this one - Lena and Keira, if you want someone who is loyal, brave and ready to fight you should definitely choose these two ladies!

World ????????

This is probably the hardest thing to describe, but so so important!

The world building was great in this one, not perfect but still really enjoyable.

We have a great magic in here: we have the fae who are invisible to humans if they don't want to be seen and who produce little lightnings when touched by a human. The fae move from world to world by portals and through the worlds through little rips they create in the world. They step through them and step right into another place.

Also they're bonds between two fae - when they're bonded their power is put together and they can feel each other through rooms and places. They feel where the other is.

Next to the awesome jumping-through-places-talent they can also use heat and fire to burn people or heal them with their power.

There are other special talents, but I don't want to spoiler, so just know that there is more!

Next to the awesome fae we have human shadow readers who can locate the fae by reading the shadows after they disappeared into a rip through the world. They also can see through illusions.

All in all there is an awesome magic system in there and so many places to discover.

Also we jump between the human world and the fae realm which makes everything so much more interesting. (They even went to Germany - how cool is that?)

My favorite thing about the whole world was when humans and fae touched their touch is addictive. And as long as they touch little Lightnings or sparks jump through their skin. It seemed like a really beautiful and magical thing. ?

Relationships ????????

Oh, boy. I don't even now if I want to be called *Kaasha* or *Nalkin-Shom* . For a proper explanation you should read the book, but i would probably choose the second name.

I'm team Aren, always was, always will.

Yes, I know you think: what? there is a love triangle in it? Yeah, it has a love triangle, but I didn't really saw that as a problem.

I'm not a fan of love triangles, don't get me wrong, but only when they're absolutely useless and stupid.

But this one was kind of nice? I liked it.

I liked McKenzie and her chaos of feelings.

Writing style ????????

Sandy Williams is no Leigh Bardugo or Sarah J. Maas, but her writing was still really nice, with a nice pacing, funny dialogues and action. It was always entertaining, never boring, but it wasn't a beautiful or special writing. I couldn't even find a proper quote I could use in the beginning.

But still: try out the book! It was definitely worth a read.

P.s. if you hate Acotar etc. don't read this book. You'll probably hate this one too.

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**Anzu The Great Destroyer says**

Ooooooh *The Shadow Reader*! Ooooooh average rating 4.14! Happy day!!!!

My first thought:

My second thought:

My third thought:

My other thoughts are verging between *ugh idiot, duh, gah* and *pass the jelly*.

Imagine you have a cold. But not a normal cold. It's one of those bad ones where you have to drown in antibiotics and syrup. You know the feeling you get when you are eating something, and you can't feel its taste? You look at the people you're sharing the meal with and see them moan in pleasure because the food is so delicious. Don't you feel like stabbing them in the eye with your fork because they can feel it, but you can't? That's exactly how I feel about *The Shadow Reader*.

My main issue is (as you surely guessed) the freaking love triangle. I'm not going to play the pick your side game. Again. Why are all authors using this damn love triangle theme? I really don't get it. It's unoriginal and boring, and it will turn the book into this as well. What's so hard to get? It made the book too frustrating to the point of wanting to throw it out of the window to taste some of the acid rain I'm having right now. The fact that it's an e-book, and that I've read it on my Kindle (which I love at the moment), kept me from doing it.

Anyway, I fail to see where McKenzie is badass, she's more of a typical YA heroine. *The Shadow Reader* was supposed to be a YA; they probably mixed up the genres somehow. Which reminds me... **this book is so f\*cking predictable!** I knew how it was going to end since chapter 10. Not. Cool.

In the end Naito was my favorite character. I'd maybe read the next book for his sake only. But I won't. To the spam shelf with you!

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**Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says**

**\*\*1.5 stars\*\***

**I didn't like this very much and I'm pissed that I bought the second book before finishing this one.**

I have mulled over my review for a few days now, and I'm still trying to figure out why most people loved this and I didn't. I think my main issue with this book is that the world building and plot felt like a distant second in priority to the love triangle.

What I liked when I started with this book *was* the world. I love the idea of the fissures that bring the fae in and out of our realm, and the concept of a shadow reader, a person who can see the shadow through the fissure that indicates the fae's location. I was enamored with the world and thought this book was a sure thing for me.

However...

As the book progressed, I started having some real issues. First of all, I thought that McKenzie was unforgivably wishy-washy about who she was interested in. The back and forth went on for the entirety of the book and, honestly, bored me to tears. I was also mystified as to why, literally out of freaking nowhere, Aren starts loving her. McKenzie is downright rude and mistrusting of Aren and it didn't seem like they were even building up to "like" so I was completely taken aback by his interest in her.

I thought the whole "court" vs "rebels" thing wasn't very well explained and I felt like the seriousness of the issue got pushed aside so McKenzie could debate more about who she wanted to kiss. It irked me to no end. As the book progressed, I realized that I was never going to get the plot that I was hoping for and this wasn't going to be to my taste.

If I compare this book to the amazing and unforgettable Fever series (Darkfever is the first), which also is about the fae, this book is like the gum stuck to the shoe of Jericho Barrons. Just different leagues.

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## **Kelly says**

(4.5 stars) *The Shadow Reader* is Sandy Williams' debut novel and the first in the new MCKENZIE LEWIS series. If this book is any indication, I anticipate great things from Williams and this series in the future. I enjoyed *The Shadow Reader* immensely.

McKenzie is a human woman with a talent that makes her invaluable to the fae. She is a shadow reader, which means that when a fae teleports, she can map where that fae has traveled to. There are other shadow readers, but McKenzie is an unusually good one. As a teenager, she was recruited to help King Atroth's Court win a war. Now, ten years later, the Court still calls upon her services... and it's taken a toll on McKenzie's life. Her family has written her off as crazy. Her college degree is taking far longer than it was supposed to. And her forbidden flirtation with Kyol Taltrayn, the King's sword-master, keeps McKenzie's love life on hold. She's ready to retire as a shadow reader, finish her education, and live a normal human life.

Then she's kidnapped by rebel leader Aren Jorreb, who also needs a shadow reader, and everything changes. McKenzie is attracted to Aren, but at first figures it's Stockholm syndrome. (May I just mention how refreshing it is that McKenzie even \*considered\* the possibility of Stockholm syndrome? I've read way too many books where the whole romance seemed to be rooted in it, yet it was never really examined.) But Aren has some unsettling information for her, information that leads her to wonder whether she's been on the wrong side of the war all along.

This is a love triangle for readers who are sick of love triangles. Why? Because this is a \*good\* one. The question is not just who's more handsome or makes McKenzie's heart beat faster. McKenzie is not just deciding between two men but two worldviews and two versions of the truth. If one man is telling the truth, the other is guilty of horrible things, and vice versa — and really, no one's hands are clean in this war. McKenzie is a fierce heroine, not necessarily in the combat sense, but in her determination to seek the truth, stick to her own sense of ethics, and maintain her self-respect. She's strong in the face of psychological pressures that would break a lot of people, and it's great watching her forge her own path that isn't quite what either of her suitors has in mind for her.

McKenzie's struggles play out both in her own psyche and in Williams' well-realized setting. It can take a

little while to get one's bearings in the fae world Williams has created, but she does a terrific job of making that world feel fleshed-out and lived-in. One gets the sense of a rich history and geography in the background, even if McKenzie only sees a small sampling of it in this first book. I was reminded both of Karen Marie Moning's FEVER universe and C.L. Wilson's TAIREN SOUL in terms of the setting.

The Shadow Reader kept me turning pages frantically, and when I wasn't reading it, I was thinking about how much I wanted to be reading it and finding out what happened next or what new truth would be revealed. I had a lot of fun with The Shadow Reader and can't wait to read more about McKenzie.

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## **Regina says**

Why is this not a 5 star or a 4 star book for me? I have put off writing this review for a week or so because I am confused as to why everyone I know on goodreads loved this book but me. In part, I think this may be a "Its not you, its me" kinda thing. I may be over my urban fantasy binge. Hey, it was a good ride. It started summer 2010 and lasted until now. When I hear about new titles or series in the paranormal, they just do not interest me -- with the exception of my favorite authors and series. So, my thoughts on this book should be put into that context -- that urban fantasy just does not have the same pull for me.

Another issue for me that should help my feelings on this book be put into context -- for an urban fantasy book to thrill me, I need the main struggle to be something other than the romance. That is why I prefer UF over paranormal romance. And I know many of my goodreads friends can point out several paranormal romance series, historical romances, and contemporary romances that I love. Yes, I do enjoy a romance that is well done -- but my well done is this. I enjoy the angst romance plot line too, but the true struggle/fight/conflict for me needs to be about the world/story. And the characters and relationships in the book need to be three-dimensional with growth and progression. I did not see this in Shadow Reader. In my opinion, the main conflict in Shadow Reader is the romance. And that is fine, but I didn't buy into the characters feelings for the individual that made up the third part of the love triangle. Which poses a problem for me as a reader, if I don't believe in the romance, which is the main struggle of the book -- then the book falls flat for me.

The romance with the guy who is the third leg of the triangle (I am trying to be vague and non-spoilerish) just was not believable for me. What I saw was an incredibly sexy guy that the lead character was attracted to and he was attracted to her as well to her. But when did they develop love? I did not see a relationship developing at all. I never felt or believed in the "who should she choose" storyline. I had strong opinions about who she should drop and then maybe move on in her life, but choosing someone else to fill the void of the person just dropped? Nah, Sandy Williams did not convince me.

There was a side conflict to the storyline -- where should MacKenzie place her allegiance? The court or the rebels? Again, I thought this was not set up well nor was it done believably. MacKenzie places her allegiance with any one side based solely on emotion and relationships, not on critical evaluation. I know people do this in real life, but I find that downright scary. But whatever, my criticism of decisions aside I do not think the author convinced me as to who MacKenzie should be loyal to.

So those were my problems. I liked the characters, I liked the world, and I really enjoyed the beginning. I do think this should be labeled paranormal romance or romance based urban fantasy though.

Positives about the book: The world building is done very well and there are some interesting side

characters. There is solid writing and some good action scenes. If readers are okay with the main conflict being about who will she choose, then I think this book will be a win for those readers. I think fans of Angels' Blood by Nalini Singh would enjoy this book/series. I am one of the few people in the urban fantasy reading world that is not a fan of the Guild Hunter series for the same reason Shadow Reader missed the mark for me.

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