



Dark Heart of Magic

Jennifer Estep

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"Jennifer Estep is a genius!" --Simply Nerdy

Something Wicked This Way Comes . . .

As a thief, I stick to the shadows as much as possible. But when the head of the Sinclair Family picks me to compete in the Tournament of Blades, there's no escaping the spotlight--or the danger.

Even though he's my competition, Devon Sinclair thinks I have the best shot at winning what's supposed to be a friendly contest. But when the competitors start having mysterious "accidents," it looks like someone will do anything to win--no matter who they hurt.

As if I didn't have enough to worry about, mobster Victor Draconi is plotting against Devon and the rest of my friends, and someone's going around Cloudburst Falls murdering monsters. One thing's for sure. Sometimes, humans can be more monstrous than anything else...

Dark Heart of Magic Details

Date : Published October 27th 2015 by Kensington

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Author : Jennifer Estep

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Young Adult, Magic, Paranormal

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From Reader Review **Dark Heart of Magic** for online ebook

Carmel (Rabid Reads) says

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads.

The Tournament of Blades was the driving force behind DARK HEART OF MAGIC which was perfect because what better way to go full throttle on the action than with lots of fighting while also fleshing out all of the pertinent characters' strengths and weaknesses by putting all of the Cloudburst Falls Families on display. Lila's no longer a team of one, things are moving along with Devon, and Victor is THE villain to beat. Game. Set. Match.

Unlike the previous installment which was a little of both, this novel was centered around the mafia-style plotting rather than the monsters and magicks that comprise Jennifer Estep's BLACK BLADE universe. I enjoyed the scheming a great deal; this author certainly excels at whodunnit story telling, and Talents were vital, but I did find myself longing for more of the world-building that was so strong in book 1, tree trolls notwithstanding.

Seleste was a welcomed addition to this trilogy's cast, and Deah continued to surprise me at every turn. I was kind of disappointed with how Felix dealt with his love life dilemma, and Vance & Blake were just stupid bullies. The Tournament of Blades ended up being an excellent equalizer, and I liked that most of the baddies got their due. Well, except for Victor, but that's what BRIGHT BLAZE OF MAGIC IS FOR—right?

I'm happy with the way Devon & Lila's romance has progressed thus far; there's no triangle which is a BIG plus in Young Adult, next to zero drama, and they are in an optimal spot going into the conclusion. I loved that Sinclair was a genuinely good guy, and that he won Merriweather over by simply being himself. The soulsight sessions between the two of them packed one heck of an emotional punch, and the last few pages definitely pulled on my heartstrings.

DARK HEART OF MAGIC is one of the better trilogy middle installments that I've read.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

After falling in love once again with Estep's writing in Cold Burn of Magic, (okay okay I was a huge fan before but you get the idea!), Dark Heart of Magic was one of my most anticipated reads for fall of 2015.

As I picked it up and started reading, it didn't take me long to remember exactly why that was the case.

Estep has a way with words, not to mention characters. Her heroines are always tough, fierce, feisty, and full of sarcasm, some of my most favorite traits in a protagonist. Add in her unique talent of making something over used, completely new and fresh, not to mention plots that are every bit as fast paced as they are addicting, and you truly have a read that stands out and is every bit as entertaining as those of us that are familiar with Estep's work, have come to expect from her.

And her second installment in the Black Blade series was not a disappointment by any stretch of the imagination.

Once again filled with mystery, great one liners, humor, friendship, action, and danger, this series truly is a stand out series in the genre of young adult.

Every bit as fun as it is adventurous, this second installment lived up to the first and made me anxious for the third.

I'm on edge curious about how this will all end but have complete faith in Estep's ability to deliver with a well rounded, well written story.

An ARC Copy of this was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Terri ♥ (aka Mrs. Christian Grey) says

Quick review:

Cover: Fits

Rating: 3.5

Overall: Disappointed

Characters: Okay

Plot: Girl trying to make it on her own

Page Turner: Maybe

Series Cont.? Probably

Recommend: Not Sure

Book Boyfriend: Devon

SUMMARY (50 words or less)

I have to say there is promise in this series but aggravating to read. I like UF and not every story needs romance. So if you don't want romance, don't add it in as an afterthought. I think this story would have been 10 times better without it.

For a full review and yummy pic, see my blog post at:

<http://www.mybookboyfriend.net/2015/1...>

Audio Review

Brittany Pressley does a great job at narration. She nails the spirit of all the characters.

Annika says

I'm still not madly in love with this series, but I do think it's decent and definitely readable, as is this installment in particular.

Lila is a great protagonist, even when she's often too blind to see the obvious when it comes to what's happening around her; Devon is a very likeable love interest, and there's quite a bit of character development going on, especially for the secondary characters. A fairly riveting story, too, though I like the overarching plot more than the individual mysteries each book revolves around.

However, there's a little too much petty teen drama for my taste, I'm not exactly crazy about the writing (too repetitive, overuse of onomatopoeia, very simplistic regarding clues and hints and far too obvious for me to be surprised by any of the twists and revelations), and I still haven't warmed up toward the world building, though it's becoming easier to ignore.

This is an easy to read series, all in all enjoyable and compelling enough to make me curious as to what's going to happen in the sequel, but it's not perfect by any stretch.

Ian says

In *Cold Burn of Magic* Lila found herself reluctantly pulled into service with one of the ruling crime families of Cloudburst Falls. Now in book two, *Dark Heart of Magic* her quiet life as a thief slipping by under the radar is well and truly over. She has been entered into the Tournament of Blades which pits the best of each family against each other.

But in the shadows a vicious sadist has been attacking and brutally murdering the monsters that make the woods around Cloudburst Falls home, and Victor Draconi is plotting a pogrom which will end all the other families. And Lila is the only one who can stop him.

The *Black Blade Trilogy* has Jennifer Estep writing Young Adult Urban Fantasy. Honestly as soon as YA is mentioned I get a little wary. When it's good, it's great, but it sadly often ends up as an angsty, self-absorbed soup. Thankfully this series is way up at the "great" end of the sliding scale. It's entertaining fun for older young adults and there are plenty of adults who will love these books too.

Beth says

Once again, I'm thrilled by the newest addition of the Black Blade series, *Dark Heart of Magic*, a young adult spin off that takes place in the marvelous world of Estep's Elemental Assassin series.

Lila is now caught up in the Sinclair family, serving as Devon's body guard.

A magical tournament is about to take place, pitting the 4 revered families in the ultimate battle for power and bragging rights. Lila is chosen by the Sinclair's matriarch to be one of their representatives in these magical duels and challenges.

I'm loving this new series! Lila continues to grow and bloom under tests that certainly would push even the most trained individuals to their limit. She's lived homeless for years, on her own, hiding from discerning eyes and surviving by her own wits as a thief. To suddenly become a revered warrior in one of the strongest magical families around and in the spot light; it truly is something to watch Estep's amazing imagination

make this transformation come alive.

Don't miss this outstanding urban fantasy, its packed full of humor and tension that bring a marvelous cast and tender, slow building romances right off the pages and into your life.

I received this ARC copy of *Dark Heart of Magic* from Kensington Books in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication October 27, 2015.

My Rating: 5 Stars

Written by: Jennifer Estep

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Amazon | Barnes & Noble

For Reviews and More Check out: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

Marta Cox says

This is the second book in the Black Blade series and we catch up with Lila as she continues to work as a magical bodyguard for Devon the son of the Sinclair family. This does have a YA feel to it but nevertheless the author continues to pull this reader in. Most of the action happens as the four revered families enter contestants in a tournament designed to entertain both humans and those with magic alike. It's pretty clear right from the start though that someone is determined to win no matter at what cost. Fairness and friendly competition is most definitely not on the agenda ! As Lila continues to fight she becomes increasingly aware that enemies of the Sinclair family are about to step up their game as they prepare for an all out war! In this land where monsters roam the streets and attack the unwary Lila usually has an edge but something nasty is in Cloudburst Falls and magic and blood are far too often linked!

I really like this series with it's likeable heroine. Lila is hellbent on avenging her parents but is intelligent enough to bide her time and make sure she is in the right place at the right time. Not a gung-ho type but most definitely one who will take on any and all comers ! It's obvious that her affections for Devon cannot be ignored for ever as these two seem more drawn to each other with each book and yes there's a little romance within these pages. Fear not though it's not a sloppy story but a mystery to unravel as the reader follows the clues to find out just how monstrous a person can be. Answers are given here about Lila's family that are both shocking and surprising and we even get to find out more about the often hilarious Mo. Fans of this author will smile as a certain barbecue restaurant is mentioned but I'm a little over all the foodie bits as it seems a little too like a certain series involving Gin. I did stay glued to my kindle and had guessed who the big bad was if honest but it's a great story with such amazing possibilities and I know for sure that I will be

snapping up the next instalment .

I was gifted a copy in exchange for an honest review Four and a half from me

Shelley says

I received this book for free from Jennifer Estep in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Genre Young Adult, Urban Fantasy

Rating 4.0

My Thoughts

Dark Heart of Magic is the second installment in the Black Blade trilogy by author Jennifer Estep. Welcome to Cloudburst Falls, West Virginia home to magicks, monsters, and powerful families that control everything. Cloudburst has accepted the label as the most magical place on the planet. A label that is hard to dispute. It is what brings the tourists and money into town in droves. Protagonist Lila Merriweather (17) now works for the Sinclair Family as a bodyguard for Devon Sinclair, the bruiser, and second in command of the family. After living on the streets for the past 4 years as a thief extraordinaire, she is steadily working her way towards completing her revenge against the man who killed her mother; Victor Draconi.

Full Review Posted 10/26/2015 @ Gizmos Review/Blog Tour Stop

<http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...>

Expected publication: October 27th 2015 by Kensington

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

The Black Blade series started out as Elemental Assassin lite, a young adult version of the series Jennifer Estep is first known for. I liked it well enough at the time, but saw it merely as a reprise of sorts, a nice way to pass the time, but a book I could have easily done without. The same does not apply to the sequel. Jennifer Estep truly stepped up her game and gave us a book that stands out.

We reunite with Lila only days after she's become Devon Sinclair's personal bodyguard. Their world is still as violent as ever, with threats from other magical families always looming over their heads. But even with an outright war brewing, traditions need to be upheld, and one of those traditions is the Tournament of Blades. Lila is naturally one of the contestants, and so is Devon, and they work together more closely than ever to discover the various conspiracies and traps set by other participants.

I distinctly remember feeling ambivalent about the lack of romance in the first book. I had no such problems here – the romance is understated, yes, but wonderful nevertheless. Devon's steady, dependable presence and Lila's reactions to him hit all the right notes for me. Even when they fight against each other, they do it as a

team, which is very difficult to achieve, but so beautiful to behold.

My only true objection is aimed at the predictability of this book. I don't like feeling that much smarter than the characters and I intensely dislike feeling frustrated while waiting for them to catch up. Lila was painfully slow in this book, always failing to see what was right in front of her. To make matters worse, the villain was glaringly obvious the second he/she showed up, which made it impossible not to feel bothered by the blindness of our heroine. If you can put that aside, however, *Dark Heart of Magic* is an exciting, emotionally charged book that outshines its predecessor by far. I have very high hopes for *Bright Blaze of Magic* and I absolutely trust Jennifer Estep to deliver a fabulous read.

AH says

Initial Thoughts: Ms Estep is a wonderful storyteller. I know that I can always count on her stories to keep me entertained.

The Review: **Dark Heart of Magic** is the second book in Jennifer Estep's Black Blade series. For those familiar with the author's Elemental Assassin series, this series is a companion series, written for a young adult audience. The world is similar, though I think that there are more monsters in this one, and the power struggles are with magical mafia-like families.

In this installment, our heroine Lila discovers some disturbing things about a rival family. I liked the way that Lila developed in this book - her character gets stronger and wiser. And she likes bacon. Lots and lots of bacon. The supporting cast was great, especially Oscar the pixie and his pet tortoise Tiny.

I was describing the writing style to my husband and I had to chuckle. As I mentioned above, she is a wonderful storyteller and that keeps me reading. She does have a few little quirks - there are multiple instances of eye colors. It can get annoying. The other thing she does is describe food in such a way that you are certain that there should be a follow up cookbook somewhere. (Alas, there isn't). So don't read if you are hungry. Oh, there is a shout out to Gin's Pork Pit....

Thank you to NetGalley and Kensington Books for a review copy of this book.

Lina Lovegood says

Leider nur 3,5 Sterne, da es wieder mal sehr vorhersehbar war und mich das an Jennifers Esteps Büchern langsam wirklich stört.

Marga says

[

HOW ABOUT NO?

(hide spoiler)]

KKat says

What a page turner!!

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Final review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Note: some spoilers for the first book, *Cold Burn of Magic*.

In *Dark Heart of Magic*, the second book in Jennifer Estep's BLACK BLADE teen urban fantasy series, the adventures of seventeen year old Lila Merriweather ? orphan, ex-homeless person and pickpocket, current bodyguard, and swordfighter extraordinaire ? continue. In a world that contains both normal mortals and magicks, humans endowed with different magical powers, Lila has two extraordinary powers: soulsight, which enables her to read the emotions of another person by looking into their eyes, and transference, the ability to mirror another person's magical powers that are being used against her. This makes Lila a particularly valued bodyguard for the Sinclair Family, one of the most powerful magical families in the town of Cloudburst Falls, which has unusually high levels of magical activity ? so much that it's become a tourist hotspot for people who want to see pixies, monsters, trolls and other magical creatures.

Lila intends to serve out a year-long term with the Sinclair Family and then leave town, despite the "soulful green eyes, teasing grin, and rocking body" of Devon Sinclair, the son and heir of the head of the Sinclair Family. Devon is a caring, kind person who wants to pursue a relationship with Lila, but because of her plans not to hang around long-term and her unwillingness to allow anyone to get too close to her and possibly hurt her, Lila keeps pushing Devon away.

Lila gets roped by the head of the Sinclair Family into taking part in the annual Tournament of Blades, a sword-fighting competition with over a hundred competitors. The competitors also include her friend Devon, Deah Draconi (daughter of the arch-rival Draconi clan and past champion of the Tournament), Deah's nasty brother Blake, and Katia Volkov, a gorgeous redhead with designs on Devon's best friend Felix ... who's no longer interested in Katia because he's now involved in a Romeo-and-Juliet type of secret relationship with Deah Draconi. Winning the Tournament will bring honor and accolades, as well as a cash prize, but Lila would really prefer to avoid attention, particularly from the nefarious Victor Draconi and his son Blake, who killed Lila's mother years ago and whom Lila now suspects of planning to take down the other magical Families and take control of Cloudburst Falls.

What with sneaking into the Draconi mansion to discover Victor's plans, trying to figure out who is killing all of the tree trolls in town, and pining after Devon, Lila has a lot distracting her from the Tournament. Not that Lila really cares about the Tournament, at least at first, but when an unknown person sabotages the obstacle course that's the first round of the competition, gravely endangering Lila and others, Lila starts to think it might be worth trying to win the Tournament.

Between the competition, the murdered tree troll mystery, Draconi skullduggery, another mystery about

Lila's family and past, and the obligatory love interest, there's a lot going on in *Dark Heart of Magic*. The quick pace and multiple plotlines help to make up for some superficiality. Lila, who has a young and frequently snarky voice, narrates the story. I didn't find the constant sniping of Lila and some of the other characters particularly witty, so it got tedious for me, but younger readers might disagree. The characters, other than Lila and the hidden villain, are strictly one-dimensional. Even the secret villain is fairly easy to spot, given a couple of rather obvious clues that Estep leaves in the text.

As the main character, Lila has some greater depth, particularly as she attempts to come to terms with her painful past and determine what she really wants in life. But, as often happens in fantasy novels, Lila's skills are over the top, between her super-special magical powers, amazing sword-fighting ability, and expert skills at spying, pickpocketing and lock-picking. In fact, she's extraordinarily good at pretty much everything except interpersonal relationships.

Overall, *Dark Heart of Magic* is a light and fun read, if you don't mind some murder and mayhem. I'd recommend this to a teenager who likes fast-paced fantasy adventures with a dash of humor, but isn't looking for anything really deep or complex. If you enjoyed *Cold Burn of Magic*, the first book in this series, you'll probably like this one just as well.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at [Carole's Random Life](#).

I liked this book but I didn't like it quite as much as I did the first book in the series. My 4 star rating is probably a bit generous but it is really a fun read. This book really has a lot going for it and the world that it is set in is amazing. I just love the combination of magic, monsters, and the mob that this world is built upon. This book picks up right where the first book in the series, *Cold Burn of Magic*, leaves off so I would recommend that this series be read in order.

Lila has assumed her role as bodyguard to the Sinclair family bruiser, Devon. It is time for the annual Tournament of Blades competition. This competition will consist of selected members from each family facing off against each other until the champion is named. Lila doesn't know a whole lot about this tournament from her prior life as a thief but she may be the Sinclair family's best chance at winning. When some unusual things start happening, Lila works to try to find out what is going on through the use of her magic and the skills that she has developed from her work as a thief.

The tournament was interesting and I liked that it allowed members from the different families to interact. Some of the characters from the other families are actually pretty interesting and others are just ugly to their core. The action during the tournament was exciting but not quite as exciting as the action that occurred outside of the tournament. There were a few twists and turns in this story which I really loved. Lila had grown as a character and seems a bit more sure of herself as she learns more about her parents' past.

The only thing that bothered me about this book was the romantic pieces. I know that this is a YA novel and I am just an old lady but the romance felt so very young and was distracting at times. I do appreciate that the story is not centered on a love triangle but Lila's indecision regarding her feelings for Devon are becoming old. I kind of wanted to slap her so that she would either act on her feelings or stop thinking about it. I am hoping that the next installment will have some forward momentum in terms of their relationship even if it means that they don't have one...I just want someone to make a decision and quit talking about it.

I would recommend this book to fans of Young Adult novels. This story is set in an interesting and creative world and there is a lot of action to keep things exciting. I have read several books by Jennifer Estep and plan to continue with this series when the next installment is released.

I received an advance reader edition of this book from Kensington Books via NetGalley for the purpose of providing an honest review.

Initial Thoughts

I liked this but not quite as much as I liked the first book in the series. There was a lot of action and enough of a mystery to keep me guessing. I do really like the world this series is set in and the characters are great.
