



Black Widow

Jennifer Estep

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There's nothing worse than a cruel, cunning enemy with time to kill—and my murder to plan.

With wicked Fire elemental Mab Monroe long gone, you'd think I could finally catch a break. But someone's always trying to take me down, either as Gin Blanco or my assassin alter-ago. Now along comes the Spider's new arch-nemesis, the mysteriously named M. M. Monroe, who is gleefully working overtime to trap me in a sticky web of deceit.

The thing is, I'm not the only target. I can see through the tangled threads enough to know that every bit of bad luck my friends have been having lately is no accident—and that each unfortunate “coincidence” is just one more arrow drawing ever closer to hitting the real bulls-eye. Though new to Ashland, this M. M. Monroe is no stranger to irony, trying to get me, an assassin, framed for murder. Yet, as my enemy's master plan is slowly revealed, I have a sinking feeling that it will take more than my powerful Ice and Stone magic to stop my whole life from going up in flames.

Black Widow Details

Date : Published November 25th 2014 by Pocket Books

ISBN : 9781476774541

Author : Jennifer Estep

Format : Mass Market Paperback 357 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, Magic

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From Reader Review Black Widow for online ebook

Jo says

Step into my parlor, said the Spider to the fly.

The showdown between Gin and Madeline Monroe has arrived. Madeline is determined to become the queen of Ashland's underworld, and what better way to accomplish that than being the one who ends the famous assassin, the Spider. Madeline is unlike any of the villains Gin has faced so far. She's manipulative and likes weaving her web, playing Gin and her friends, moving them across her chess board to accomplish her goal. She's been studying Gin for a long time and knows her greatest weakness – her friends and family. And she's going to hit them all where it makes the most trouble, dividing their attention and splitting them apart before she makes her real move. And getting Gin accused of murder is just the first part of her plan.

"I'm going to do what I do best."

The action in this book took a lot longer to happen, and in a way I was a bit disappointed by Madeline. With her acid magic I expected her to attack Gin directly like her mother Mab did, but Madeline's methods seemed more like the acts of a bully than a truly evil villain. Although I must admit they were effective, and she hurt Gin and her friends in ways that Mab didn't even come close to. And don't get me wrong, there were some pretty spectacular fighting scenes that totally made up for the lack of them in the beginning. The fight in the prison was fantastic, and the final confrontation between Gin and Madeline was amazing.

"I don't know if I could do that," he said, his voice dropping to a ragged whisper. "Go on without you. I wouldn't know how to do that."

For me what made this such an excellent addition to the series was all the feelings I felt and how great all Gin's loved ones were. Throughout the book I was so nervous for Gin and her friends, so worried about how things were going to play out. I felt such intense devastation and anger at one time (view spoiler), and such love and happiness at seeing how much Bria, Finn, Jo-Jo, Sophia, Xavier, Eva, Phillip, Roslyn and even Silvio cared about Gin. And Owen I love him even more now than I did before. The way he believed in Gin was such an amazing thing to witness.

I also really enjoyed the ending and the speech Gin gave to the underworld criminals. Gin might not want to be Ashland's underworld queen, but I have a very strong suspicion that with her actions in this book, she's made the move towards that whether she wants it or not. And I'm very excited about seeing how things will all play out in the future. Hopefully the Spider can take care of the corruptness in Ashland.

The big revelation at the end surprised me greatly. I really hope that this happened more because it showed the end of the feud between the Snow's and the Monroe's and not that another reckoning will come in the future. (view spoiler)

This was another great addition to one of my favorite UF series'. I love my bloodthirsty assassin Gin, and all her wonderful and amazing friends!! HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

AH says

Initial Thoughts 4-4.5 stars. A fantastic installment in Jennifer Estep's *Elemental Assassins* series. **Black Widow** was an exciting read and I can't wait for more Gin Blanco and her friends.

The Review:

This series just keeps on getting better and better!

Black Widow by Jennifer Estep kept me reading all night long. I just could not put it down. Set in the dark and corrupt city of Ashland, **Black Widow** is the 12th book (yes, 12th!) in the *Elemental Assassins* series.

Ashland has always been run by a corrupt and power-hungry official with magical abilities. In this installment, there's a bit of a power vacuum due to events in previous books and the criminals are jockeying for power. Gin and her "family" are reluctantly thrown into the mix. Suddenly, their lives are impacted by some rather shady problems. Gin is not the kind of person who sits back and watches. She takes action.

Ms. Estep is a wonderful storyteller. Her writing has improved significantly since the earlier books in the series. There's a lot of description in the writing and if you enjoy cooking, you may even pick up a recipe or two. This series is best read in order. The earlier books suffer from a lot of repetition but keep reading - you'll be glad you did.

I'm so excited to hear that another book is planned in this series. I can't wait to read it!

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

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

And here it is. The dreaded meh review.

This series and I... Let's say we have a complicated relationship. It is a great series and I love Gin but Estep's writing tends to get in the way. Harsh I know but that's the way it is.

I read the first four instalments in the series despite the constant recaps and repetitions (and when I say constant I mean it sometimes felt like you were reading the same chapter over and over again). This in itself is quite a feat: I usually DNF books pretty quickly if I don't like them but I held on to this series despite its many flaws. Why? **Fantastic potential and great characters.** So I read on, keeping my fingers crossed and hoping Estep would finally turn this series into the awesome story that it should be.

Then book 5 happened! Sing Hallelujah! Pure awesomeness! And book 6! And 7! And 8! And 9! And 10! And 11! **I LOVED them all!**

But then this book happened... Oh man, here we go again! Why, just tell me why? Okay, I'm not being

really fair here. Estep's writing has improved a lot since the first instalments and it isn't exactly the problem here. Black Widow's main weakness is its **paper-thin, unexciting plot**: Gin, please meet your new arch nemesis. Arch nemesis, please threaten Gin, family & friends. Arch nemesis, please try to have Gin killed. Gin, it is now time for REVENGE. Bye bye arch nemesis! **Really? Now that's absolutely fascinating, thank you very much Ms Estep.** The plots of the last few books in the series were a lot more complex so I really don't understand what went wrong here. Lack of inspiration? That's what it feels like.

The other gripe I have about Black Widow is that we get to see little of the series' great cast of secondary characters. Estep has been adding more recurring characters with each new instalment and I have grown really fond of them all. **They add a lot to the series.** I realize that now because they aren't around much in Black Widow and it just isn't the same. And don't even get me started on the lack of Owen... Well, there is some Owen but not nearly enough.

Very true. This is not as bad as I'm making it sound. There are some great things here:

1-Gin, I love you. The ever-awesome knife-wielding assassin with elemental magic is still as butt-kicking as it gets. There's some pretty fantastic character development going on here and it's amazing how much Gin has evolved since the beginning of the series. **Ruthless? Definitely. Resourceful? You bet. Hungry for revenge? Always.** But now with a heart. And she's really great with freezers and peas. Now that's irresistible.

2-Amazing scenes. Sorry can't go on without spoilers here. (view spoiler)

Case in point: there is awesomeness here. It's just not awesome from beginning to end. It starts with a bang but goes downhill halfway through the book. This could have been a great instalment but it's only mildly entertaining and adds little to the series.

BUT. I still have high hopes for this series and I won't give up easily. Come on Jennifer Estep, you can do this! **PLEASE do this.**

Sharon ∞👉 is an emotional book junkie 👈∞ says

Gin's battles get taken to an even higher level with this installment of the Elemental Assassin series. She's finally going head to head with the mysterious "*M.M.Monroe*" and this time her powers get pushed to the limit.

As always, I'm very impressed with how well JE immerses us into her stories. It's true that there's a lot of the same ol' formula going on but that doesn't mean it's not interesting. I was really happy that this time she switches things up a bit.

I think the one thing that frustrates me is that Gin doesn't always pay attention to her instincts. I'm torn from wanting her to best everyone and at the same time for her to make mistakes and be "human"...it's a thin line.

Gin is paranoid and for good reason. "*M.M.Monroe*" has taken revenge to a whole 'nother level and involved more than just Gin. She's throwing everyone for a loop.

And there were some pretty intense scenes (bullpen and the pork pit)...it was really hard to see Gin trying to figure things out. I do have to admit that I teared up a bit at The Port Pit scene. That was a toughie!

But OMG.... **OWEN** , could he be any more amazing?? I'm sorry that I **ever** doubted him! It's embarrassing that I even rooted for "what's-his-name"! (view spoiler)

I loved how things worked out...even with the little twist that I sincerely hope doesn't turn into anything. Hopefully, Gin's kindness will put an end to that once and for all.

So, what's not over? Gin helping out with other people's problems and of course, people out to get her. I'm definitely interested in seeing where she goes from here.

Favorite quotes:

♥ "If you believe that, then you obviously don't know Gin at all. But I *do*. And I know that she'll be here just as soon as she can."

♥ "Sometimes, killing people just wasn't worth cleaning up the mess afterward."

Denisa says

3.5 Ohh, fun!

Like expected, I liked this one.

Maybe it didn't really deserve the 4-star rating, but I missed these characters! If you've stuck to the story this far, it's worth continuing.

Same old plot, but it's a damn relaxing, fun read. Who wouldn't love Gin and her friends, they're absolutely great!

What is still annoying a bit is that, like always, Gin says it's always her fault, no matter what. This can get old pretty fast...

But ah well, fun, fast, relaxing read, all in all!

Maria Dimitrova says

Weekly buddy read with the best buddy read gang of bloodthirsty assassin-loving people over at

BB&B . I can't imagine my Wednesdays without you!

This review contains spoilers for the entire series so far. Read at your own risk.

The dreaded MM Monroe has finally shown her face and is weaving her own web of destruction. And while her mother was a formidable enemy in her own right, Mab was never as dangerous as her daughter. Because Madeline has something that the Fire Elemental did not - cunning. Maddie doesn't attack directly - something Gin has a lot of experience handling. No, Madeline attacks from the shadows. Much like Gin herself. But these are not the shadows in which Gin dwells. Madeline uses her money and power over the corrupt civil services in Ashland to snare the Spider and her friends in legal webs of deceit. Because she knows that the way to defeat Gin is to target her friends and family. To chip away her support system and to make her focus on them instead of the threat to her own life. And as much as I despise her for her cowardice I also admire the brilliance of her plan. Madeline is a tactician with a keen sense for the weakness of her enemies. She had one hell of potential, more so than her mother, to be a great villain. Unfortunately in the end she did fall a bit short. This is the second time that Ms. Estep fails to deliver a truly epic showdown after a big build-up. Still I loved the book and it kept me on my toes the entire time. And it had some awesome scenes. (view spoiler)

One of the things I really loved was that Gin showed her craftiness in staying alive. And her absolute determination to outlive her enemies. Maddie thought that Gin is not ruthless enough to (view spoiler) but she was dead wrong and in the end it cost her everything. Because Gin is not just a pretty face with a couple of knives and endless bloodthirst. There's a brilliant mind hidden behind the cold facade and she's just as good a tactician as Madeline herself. She wouldn't have remained alive for so long as the Spider if she wasn't. She just prefers a more direct approach. One that doesn't endanger innocent bystanders. She strikes from the shadows but she never hides behind a wall of disposable bodies.

For a while now I expected Ms. Estep to kill a beloved character and in a way she did that here. When (view spoiler) I bawled like a baby! It was one of the most emotional scenes in the entire series. Even more than Fletcher's funeral. Just like Gin, I felt it like a stab to the heart. And a few pages later another touching moment occurred: (view spoiler) Karma does come around and twice in this book we see how prior actions impact the present. Once Gin escapes a laid trap because of good deed her sister did and once the revenge she took for a grieving family years ago as the Spider pays up in the form of the help of the coroner. I knew that guy would play a role sooner or later after the spotlight Ms. Estep shined on him in *Heart of Venom*. I love how Silvio has been adopted along with Catalina into Gin's family. The interaction between the gang is what truly makes me return to this series each week. And that family keeps on growing. I wonder who will get adopted next?

Even though the big threat was eliminated in this instalment there are a lot of loose ends left. Mainly Emery Slater and Jonah McAllister. That guy is worse than a cockroach. Won't he just die already??? He's been a thorn in my a@@ since the beginning of the series. It's is time to bite the bullet. Preferably after a lot of suffering. And now that Gin is the unofficial queen of Ashland it's time to clean up the house.

Ian says

When Gin finally killed Mab Monroe she thought her life would get easier. Unfortunately since that day, every single gangster in Ashland has been out to make a name for themselves by taking her out. That is until Madeline Monroe (Mab's estranged daughter) shows up.

She's a powerful acid elemental and she's decided to take over her mother's empire, but first she needs to take care of business, and that includes getting rid of Gin and all her friends.

She's one of the most powerful elementals Gin has ever faced and her acid magic can burn right through Gin's ice and stone magic.

This series had a bit of a shaky start for me...I wasn't expecting to be reading book twelve, to be honest I considered walking away from the series after final showdown with Mab. But I'm glad I continued. The last three or four books have been the best in the series in my opinion. The series has very much found it's groove.

The only thing that really didn't work for me in this book was the romance. I want it to be there, just not necessarily on the page — and that's from a romance reader. Still that's such a small part of the story and it's done and dusted in ten minutes.

Everything else is kind of perfect. It delivers everything I expect from urban fantasy.

Many thanks to Pocket Books and Edelweiss for providing me with this ARC

Marta Cox says

Is this really the twelfth book in this fabulous series? I'm beyond impressed that the author consistently comes up with new foes for the ever resourceful Gin aka The Spider. Gin is a trained assassin living in Ashland a town not too dissimilar to the fictional Gotham complete with underground mafia, crooked cops and even vampires ! Add a group of people who can control the elements and it makes for a riveting read that never fails to impress this reader.

So Gin has finally defeated the cruel Mab Monroe who murdered members of her family and it's been a long time coming. You would expect that Gin can take a much needed rest but that's not about to happen any time soon. She has finally come out as The Spider following a bloody battle downtown but that leaves many wondering who the next leader of the underworld will be. It's clear that whoever can eliminate The Spider will prove once and for all just who holds all the power.

Gin isn't stupid and knows she has a target painted on her back but she has survived this far and isn't about to let her guard down now . There's a new player in town and this time a direct approach to taking out Gin is the furthest thing from their thoughts. No this time Gins friends and family are well and truly caught in the cross hairs and as the trap is sprung Gin is well and truly ensnared . As a powerful elemental though the ever patient Gin knows full well that sometimes overconfidence proves to be fatal!

I am a die hard romantic and yet I'm completely hooked on this urban fantasy series that most definitely keeps the romance aspect low key. Why? Well first and foremost the author gives us a heroine who is downright scary and totally badass. There is nothing that Gin won't do to protect those who need it and her battles are truly awesome. In this book the action is nail bitingly good but it's the buildup that really captured this reader. Gins new enemy is a sneaky one and targets those around Gin in an effort to keep her off balance but it's the corruption and greed that enables her plan to come to fruition. Luckily Gin and her fabulous friends make a great team but it's no easy ride and right up until the end it's a shocking storyline with a twisting conclusion that you won't see coming . Bring on the next book and please let it be soon

Steven says

This was an awesome entry into the series!!! I saw one thing coming about in the long term that came to fruition at the end of this book. Totally didn't see Madeline's personal twist coming at the end though! Yikes!!

So much fun for everyone to be involved in this one though. :)

Choko says

*** 4 ***

Weekly buddy read with the best buddy read gang of bloodthirsty assassin-loving people over at BB&B . I can't imagine my Wednesdays without you! <--- I totally stole this from my friend Maria, but it fits perfectly, so I wanted to give her props!!!

This was an emotional addition to the series, not only because we get to deal with one of the most Machiavellian villains in the series, but also because it felt like the end of an era, despite eventually things taking back some shape of normalcy...

As always, Gin wants to be left alone, bad guy or girl prevent her from doing so, Gin takes care of bad guy or girl... Yes, it is formulaic, but obviously, if we have gotten to the 12th book in a series, this formula works for us in this setting. Gin is smart, strong, sassy, and at times arrogant, but she has one thing really going for her - the love of her gang and her loyalty to all of them. This is her biggest strength and her greatest weakness. Her enemies know that about her and use it as a weapon against her, manipulating her into traps and dangerous situations. And MMM is smarter than most with a bigger grudge than any, and with the means to do the most harm to our heroes...

I am only going with 4 stars here, because despite the great buildup we have had for this particular villain, JE fell a bit short... The way she dealt with the bad guys was just a bit anticlimactic and not enough torture was involved. The devastation that they brought to Gin and her loved-ones was too much for them to just get an easy out... Maybe it is just me, maybe I am too bloodthirsty, but I wanted true REVENGE!!! I needed pain and blood, cleaning out of their bank accounts, humiliating them in front of the world, making them gravel... Get the point? And yes, there were two great fights, which did good things to satisfy my evil streak, and the moment when (view spoiler) was truly indicative of Gin's character when someone deigns to hurt her and hers! And they all deserved it, particularly what happened to the Pork Pit!!! *****FEELS*****

The restaurant's demise and the last chapter's discovery of the house-guest in MMM's mansion were the two moments when my heart just stuttered! It was painful, sad, and also reminded us that life goes on and we need to make choices so not to find ourselves in an evil circle of useless destruction and hate just because of the habit to hate... Yes, this book was not what I expected, but it had some really strong moments in it, so it is worth the time to read:)

I also want to thank my Wednesday Buddy Read UF Group, because they are the best in discussing books,

but also the best at being there for their buddies when needed!!! I love you guys and am glad to have found you!!!

Happy reading, everyone and May you always find joy in the pages of a good book!!!

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Reading with my lovely UF ladies and Steven at Buddies Books & Baubles

This is probably the best book of the series and you have to wait clear until Elemental Assassin 12 to get it.

Reasons Why This One is Better:

→ **Finally the villain has a more complicated plan to kill Gin than the ever popular hulk smash** or I will rape and kill you because I'm a big badass. She actually has a very well thought out and complicated plan that she spent a lot of time on and even when Gin thinks she is out of the woods she finds out that maybe....just maybe she underestimated her opponent again.

→ **The incessant recaps and repetitions are done.** Usually I have to eye skim through several sections in the book because Estep does a recap of something that happened a few books ago, or five chapters ago. Finally she avoided this and so I felt more engaged with the story.

→ Gin was way more likable overall. Normally I struggle with her characters since she seems to steamroll even over her friends to do what she thinks is best. But her she gets to be protective of her friends and family but...she also finally uses them to the best of their capabilities to go after the infamous triple M.

→ **I finally didn't figure out the entire story by chapter 8** and then have to just wait for it to play out. This time there was more than one surprise. I wasn't sure what the next attack was going to be and how Gin was going to get out of it. It was much more intense and I enjoyed the journey to the very end.

→ Threat of rape wasn't the driving force for the plot. I really have hated how this series has leaned on that so hard to try and drive the suspense or danger factor of a situation. It is good to finally move past that into something that seemed more real and less contrived.

Hopefully this bodes well for Estep and the series. But still shouldn't we be wrapping this up sometime soon. I mean it is book 12 and there doesn't seem to be any ending in site. I like these books but at some point Gin should get a semi-HEA and the door to a series should come to an end....right?

But let's at least hope with the events of this series that Gin is going to stay a little more interesting since she seems to have gained an even bigger and better role in Ashland now.

Jennifer says

Originally posted at The Book Nympho

There may be some mild spoilers for book 11, POISON PROMISE ahead.

After POISON PROMISE I was a little worried going into BLACK WIDOW that we would get a sense of deja vu dealing with M.M. Monroe. But I was wrong and I should know by now to trust Jennifer Estep 100%.

Gin Blanco, aka The Spider pretty much works alone but over the course of the series she's had help from her friends and family. But BLACK WIDOW is an exercise in extreme team building, that's for sure! Everyone gets into the act of taking down M.M. Monroe. All of the secondary characters you love are present plus the new addition to Gin's team, Silvio Sanchez, Gin's personal assistant.

Silvio brings some organization to The Spider in the form of daily assassin reports (LOL) and some comic relief in his rivalry to Finn as Gin's go-to-guy for dirt and information on the citizens of Ashland. It's funny watching Finn flounder when Silvio scoops him. Gin has her very own Jonah Mcallister on the payroll now. Speaking of Jonah, like a bad penny he turns up yet again. He was once at the side of Mab Monroe and now he's in the back pocket of Madeline Magda Monroe right were the slimy little worm should be.

Madeline might be the daughter of the infamous Mab Monroe but their similarities end at the last name and red hair. Mab was a powerful fire elemental who would kill and asked questions later. Madeline was an acid elemental and sneaky, preferring to play games and misuse the law to get what she wants. So where Madeline lacks in the show of physical strength she shows it in her sneaky and cunning planning. Madeline really stepped into it when she went after Gin's friends, family and even The Pork Pit. Madeline got sloppy, sloppy, sloppy and before she knew it, The Spider was serving her up like a cold plate of leftovers.

Twelve is a golden number for Jennifer Estep. It's a true testament to Estep's writing that with twelve books under her belt, she can still deliver great plots and characters with her the Elemental Assassin series. With no signs of slowing down, BLACK WIDOW is definitely in the top 3 of my favorites in the series and now that the landscape of Gin's life has changed, I can't wait to see if Estep can make number thirteen lucky for Gin and the group.

Review originally posted at RomanceatRandom.com

Karla says

4 Stars! A good installment with some surprises!

While overall I enjoyed *Black Widow*, I did have two issues, one being, I wanted more Gin and Owen time. However, in the author's defense the storyline wasn't really conducive to a lot of romance, but I love when these two have "couple time", I'm selfish like that and wanted more. It makes me happy to see Gin finally have a man in her life that understands, accepts her for who she is, and is willing to sacrifice for her. It's always a highlight reading about them together, intimately as a couple! There was an important, albeit brief, touching, defining moment that really brought to light how much these two mean to each other...Owen is so swoon-worthy!

It was also a little heavy on narrative, and I missed the snarky witty dialogue that normally takes place among this collective group of ragtag heroes. I've come to look forward to the off the cuff banter between the characters, something that this author has mastered over the course of the series, but to my disappointment was all too little in this read. On the plus side, these secondary characters, who have essentially become primary characters, were brought on board to bring about the demise of the evil entity, or in this case entities...and it was AWESOME!

The competition between Silvio Sanchez, Gin's self appointed assistant, and Finn, her foster brother, made for an entertaining aspect in this read. These two go head to head and try to one up each other with their know-how and never ending secret sources of information. It was amusing to see Finn's ego taken down a notch, I love that man, but it looks like he might have met his match in Silvio!

The author always keeps it interesting, spicing it up with a new elemental with unique abilities who is out to best Gin...and ultimately finish her off. I always worry that Gin won't be able to outmaneuver the new elemental, and wonder how Jennifer Estep will make it a believable, yet she always manages to do just that. Gin uses her own unique skills, Fletcher's wisdom, and comes out on top, a little tattered, actually a lot tattered, but alive! We know she'll prevail, but none the less, it's always exciting to see how she manages it.

Although I had a inkling what the surprise was at the end, I couldn't wait to find out for sure. It's a great set-up for the future of the series, as it continues to move forward with the constantly developing plot line. I dread the day when Gin and her story comes to a close...don't even want to think about it!

A copy of the book was provided by the publisher via NetGalley

Ferdy says

Spoilers

Same old, same old. The plot was pretty much the same as the last few books, it was unbelievably predictable. Also, there was no character or relationship development whatsoever, which made everyone one dimensional and dull.

-I was bored with the typical bad-guy-of-the-week type plot, the only difference this time was that Gin was fighting off someone more relevant to the series, unlike most of the other random villains. Because of that I was expecting more from Mab's daughter (Madeline), I thought she'd be a real challenge for Gin, but she was pretty much the same as all the previous bad guys. I did like Madeline getting Gin in trouble legally but everything else not so much. She had no nuance, depth or real personality, she was just another caricature.

-I didn't like Finn much, he used to be a decent character, but he was a bit of a joke in this one with his excessive flirting, shallowness and 'witty' lines. After twelve books there should be some development but he's exactly the same as he was in book one, him having a steady girlfriend doesn't equal character development. Also, I wasn't impressed with Finn not believing Gin about Madeline and thinking she was just being paranoid. It was ridiculous him not trusting her judgement when she'd proved herself right countless times in the past. He should have had way more trust and faith in her.

-I couldn't believe how slow Gin was when she was trying to figure out whose murder she was being arrested for. For a deadly assassin Gin was really thick at times.

-What was the point of Owen? He was such a non-character, he didn't do anything, his feelings for Gin were so lukewarm and meh. At least Donovan had some bloody passion and feelings for Gin, the only people Owen has ever truly been bothered about is Eva, his evil ex, and Philip. Gin doesn't seem to inspire any feelings in him at all. I really don't think he'd care if she dropped dead, no matter how many times Gin supposedly sees love and concern in his eyes.

-Gin apologising to her loved ones for faking her death for a few hours (so the bad guys wouldn't find and slaughter her) made me kind of despise her. She didn't do it on purpose and she she didn't do it just for the heck of it, why did she feel guilty and feel the need to apologise over something that was out of her control? Ugh, her whole martyr complex and guilt over things that couldn't be helped was so irritating.

-I used to love Gin's family/friends but I've started to really hate them. She does everything for them and doesn't care about risking her life to help/save them but it doesn't seem like they'd do the same for her. Sure, they help but they never really put themselves before her. They care way more about their own lives than they do Gin's, I wish Gin had the same attitude as them. Why should she put them above her when they would never do the same for her?

-There was so much cheesy and unoriginal dialogue/narration, especially whenever Gin was face-to-face with Madeline, I spent most of my time rolling my eyes.

-I don't know why everyone's eye colour kept getting mentioned over and over. How was it relevant in any way?

-Apple-and-pear grilled cheese sandwiches. Really? Yuck.

Carmel (Rabid Reads) says

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads.

How do I love thee, Gin Blanco? Let me count the ways. I never thought I'd say this of such a long running series, but this twelfth installment was just as good, if not better than the first, and second, and third... That's not to say that I didn't have my doubts going in to BLACK WIDOW because all of the events leading up to this book lead me to believe that it might have ended up being a rinse/repeat of SPIDER'S REVENGE, but previous experience has taught me to have absolute faith in Jennifer Estep, and I think my 5-star rating speaks for itself. I L-O-V-E-D this novel; from the Big Bad's unexpected approach, to all of the secondary characters pitching in, to the knock 'em out awesome fight scenes. And then, to top it all off, a promise of

more to come with a preview of the next ELEMENTAL ASSASSIN installment. Yes, I am one happy fan-girl!

One of the most challenging aspects of these books has got to be coming up with new villains for the Spider to kill because each one needs to be bigger and badder than the last, and must be conquered in a different, yet equally kick-ass way. This author makes that feat look like a cake walk, and I was pleasantly dumbfounded by M. M. Monroe. I mean, with a last name like that the first thing that comes to any EA reader's mind is Mab—the most in-your-face, powerful fire Elemental, and infamous Queen of the underworld. Any relative of hers has got to have an iron fist, right? So, when this latest antagonist tried to legalese Gin and her friends to death, I was speechless. A law abiding villain... in Ashland—you've got to be kidding me! I enjoyed her unexpected approach, cunningness, and the little 'surprise' up her sleeve.

My girl crush on Blanco is no secret; I've loved watching her character grow throughout this series from vulnerable street kid to fearless assassin, and in my mind there's no foe that she can't defeat. However, in BLACK WIDOW Gin really takes a lickin' to the point that I was biting my nails, and thinking "so this is how it's going to end." Monroe attacks all of the limbs before going after the head, heck even the Pork Pit doesn't escape unscathed. This felt like a series finale, and the Spider has already gone through her nine lives and then some, so her death was a definite possibility. But boy, what a way to go! The bull pen brawl was jaw dropping-ly sensational, followed closely by her spectacular escape from the po-po, not to be outdone by her frozen pea fort, and then an Elemental duel to boot! Blanco 'came out' in POISON PROMISE, but in this novel she claimed her crown.

No heroine would be complete without a trusty sidekick, or in Gin's case fourteen: Finn, Bria, Owen, Eva, Jo-Jo, Sophia, Xavier, Roslyn, Phillip, Cooper, Violet, Warren, Silvio, and Catalina. Sanchez was a new addition to the EA crew, and I liked what he brought to the dynamics. His back-and-forth with Lane was hilarious, and I loved the idea of daily assassin briefings. Grayson's faith in his woman when all seemed lost brought tears to my eyes, the Deveraux sisters never fail to breathe life into a hopeless situation, and I was happy that even Bria put her cop morals aside when push came to shove. Blanco usually flies solo to protect those most nearest and dearest to her, so I couldn't resist doing a fist pump when the call to arms came. The ending was brilliant with grandiose speeches, Gin throwing the law back in Monroe's face, and a bonus twist.

The Spider strikes again in BLACK WIDOW! Summer 2015 + EA #13 = it's a date, Jennifer Estep!
