



Night Shift

Nalini Singh , Ilona Andrews , Lisa Shearin , Milla Vane

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Four masters of urban fantasy and paranormal romance plunge readers into the dangerous, captivating world unearthed beyond the dark...

New York Times bestselling author **Nalini Singh** delivers a smoldering story with *Secrets at Midnight* , as the scent of Bastien Smith's elusive lover ignites a possessiveness in him that's as feral as it is ecstatic. And now that he's found his mate, he'll do anything to keep her.

In #1 *New York Times* bestselling author **Ilona Andrews**' novella, *Magic Steals* , when people start going missing, shapeshifting tigress Dali Harimau and jaguar shifter Jim Shrapshire must uncover the truth about the mysterious creatures responsible.

From **Milla Vane**—a warrior princess must tame *The Beast of Blackmoor* to earn a place among her people. But she quickly discovers that the beast isn't a monster, but a barbarian warrior who intends to do some taming himself.

It's seer Makenna Frazier's first day on the job at Supernatural Protection and Investigations, and her first assignment is more than she bargained for when bodyguard duty for a leprechaun prince's bachelor party goes every which way but right in national bestselling author **Lisa Shearin**'s *Lucky Charms* .

Night Shift Details

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From Reader Review Night Shift for online ebook

Yodamom says

Great little set of anthologies, 4 good complete feeling quick reads. A fan of short anthologies, Yoda is not. I finished Secrets at Midnight, 3.0 stars - it was the typical short rushed feeling PNR. I liked the characters and would have loved to meet them in a full length read. The sex was so short I blinked and I they were done. WTH ? I wanted the good stuff. It did peek my interest in the series, I might squeeze it in this year or the next or at least the year after that

Magic Steals 4.5: I loved it. Jim is everything he should be and more. Dali, well I didn't like her much before this little short, now I adore her.

Lucky Charms 3.5 : This felt more urban fantasy, a bit grittier and I liked it. I am interested in the characters and their world I will look into this author's work more

The Beast of Blackmore 2.5: I liked it and I didn't. It was direct slam in your face action/sex and almost crude, and not in a sexy way. I don't know that I will read anything more from this author.

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

BR with Armina, Evgeny, Monty Cupcake, Eilonwy, Asya, Robin, Vicky, cathepsut, Catherine, Jessica and our fellow freaks over at IAA starting March 20, 2015.

- Magic Steals ★★
- Secrets at Midnight ★★
- Lucky Charms ★★★★★
- The Beast of Blackmoor: ★

??? Overall rating: ★★

? Magic Steals (Kate Daniels #6.5): ★★

Yes this is me the self-confessed IA addict giving one of their stories a 2-star rating. A story **from the KD series** no less. You would have told me as much last week **I would have laughed at you**. Me? Rating an IA story anything less than a 4? **You have to be joking**. I never thought it would happen. **But here we are**.

① Dali *"I'm not an alpha. I'm a half-blind, vegetarian tiger"* Harimau.

?I was expecting this:

?I got this:

?Which made me feel like this:

→ **Dali ruined the story for me.**

? **Grievance #1:** she is supposed to be **27 years old** and yet she acts like an **immature teenager**. The way she talks about "making out" with Jim makes her sound like a **15-year-old**. And don't get me started on her asking Jim to hide **whenever her mommy is around** {insert MAJOR eyeroll here}.

? **Grievance #2:** I don't want my heroines to be perfect and I don't mind if they are insecure but **this was just too much**. A non-stop pity party. It drove me insane. "**I look ridiculous**," blah blah blah, "I don't look hot," blah blah blah, "**I'm weak**," blah blah blah, "I'm not good enough for Jim," blah blah blah, "**Jim is a total badass and I'm totally pathetic**," blah blah blah, "I'm not fierce enough to be an alpha," **blah blah blah...**

(view spoiler)(view spoiler)

② **Physical description overkill.**

Jim is hot. Jim has broad shoulders. **Jim has big muscles.** Jim smells like citrus. **Jim has a great chest.** Jim is hot. **Jim smells like citrus.** Jim is tall. **Jim's muscles are hard.** Jim has beautiful dark eyes. Jim has big muscles. Jim is hot. **Jim smells like citrus.** Jim has a six-pack. **Did I mention Jim was hot?**

③ **The story is boring.**

I didn't find it engaging. At all. **I wasn't interested.** At all. And I should have been. This should have been a cool story (view spoiler)(view spoiler). **Well it wasn't.**

④ **UF vs PNR.**

So I thought this was going to be UF, KD-style. But it read like PNR. **Bad PNR at that.** Actually this shouldn't have been a problem. **I mean, this is IA.** I love **anything** these two write. Even their cute YA short stories *gasps* **I should have liked this dammit!**

You know what, forget it. I think I'll just pretend this never happened. **Just give me KD back and we should be fine.**

? **Secrets at Midnight (Psy-Changeling #12.5): ★★**

→ *Note to self: stop reading the short-stories in this series.*

? **You know** you're reading bad PNR when half of the story is filled with descriptions of the **uber Alpha's amazing body** (see above ↑↑↑). And the other half is filled with **love-dovey crap**. Bonus points awarded for **throwing in a gorgeous, curvaceous**, lonely, scared/scarred but **fierce and uninhibited 24-year-old virgin**. And let's not forget the ~~insta-love~~ **mating thing**. AND the required HEA. **A dream come true.**

? **Let's be honest here:** I read the first three books in this series and actually loved books 1 and 3 (feel free to gasp here). Of course most of the **required PNR tropes** are there but the world building is **pretty amazing** (especially the Psy side of things) so I managed to read the books without **going into sugar shock** (well mostly). Oh, and the **uber Alphas are pretty hot** too (watch Judd thaw). And the ~~sex-scenes are~~ **yummy relationships dynamics** are very interesting (view spoiler)

. **But I digress.**

* * **Simple maths time** * *

PNR tropes - amazing world-building = **any short story** in this series = **I want to shoot myself** =

? **Lucky Charms (SPI Files #0.5): ★★★★★**

YES! Yes, yes, yes, yessssss! It turns out buying this collection wasn't such a waste of money after all!!

→ **Lisa Shearin's recipe for awesomeness:**

① **Wacky characters galore:**

Hungover/stoned elves, gargoyles, **stoned/horny/sex-shifting/cross-dressing leprechauns**, a naked, 96 years old Russian werewolf, **an ogre manager**, a vampire manager, **a dragon CEO**, Seelie, **Unseelie**, a river hag, **a voodoo high priestess**, sexy as hell goblins, **succubi**, incubi and **flying monkeys**. Oh yeah.

② **Crazy storyline:**

Makenna's first day on the job at Supernatural Protection & Investigations. A **stolen bakery delivery truck**. An oddly assorted bunch of SPI agents. **5 horny leprechauns on the loose**. Strip clubs. **Sex clubs**. Disney porn princesses. **Clover weed**. And the possible failure of the banking system of the supernatural world. **Crazy doesn't even begin to cover it.**

③ **Likeable female & male leads:**

✓ **Makenna:** the rookie. Funny, snarky, sensitive to clover weed, makes Inspector Gadget & Blues Brothers references, would do just about anything for a **good dental plan**.

✓ **Ian:** the babysitter. Don't know much about you yet but I'm pretty sure you'd make a **lovely addition to my harem**.

④ **Hilarious scenes & great banter:**

→ take ① + ②, add an **extra dose of crazy**, three cups of **humour**, mix well and you get:

SPI Files, here I come!

? **The Beast of Blackmoor: ★**

Oh wow. Now **this** is a real winner.

Imagine that: a virginal yet uninhibited and fierce **Xena the Warrior Princess** on a quest to tame a forsaken **Conan the Barbarian**. Bad fantasy meets bad PNR. **A dream come true.**

This was so bad I think I'll stick to a list otherwise we'll be here all night and I'm pretty sure **you have better things to do** with your lives. **Let's go.**

? **The Beast of Blackmoor** deserves a 1-star rating because:

- ① **Badly written** story
- ② **Confusing** story
- ③ **Boring** story
- ④ **Ridiculous dialogues.** A special award goes to the dialogues during the sex scenes (see ⑧).
- ⑤ **Instalove**
- ⑥ **Virginal yet uninhibited** and fierce heroine
- ⑦ **Fierce/wronged/cursed/unloved/oh-so-very-lonely/super hot macho barbarian warrior** with a heart.
- ⑧ **Awfully written sex scenes** with the most ridiculous dialogues ever: (view spoiler)

→ I **promise** I am NOT making this up. Want another example? **With pleasure:**

“Come into me, warrior,” she urged. “Fill me with a river of your seed.”

→ **You're allowed to laugh.** Or roll your eyes until your eyeballs **pop out of their sockets**. Or simply be stunned by just **how pathetic this all is.**

(hide spoiler)]

⑨ **Manufactured** drama

??? **And the icing on the cake:**

⑩ **The virginal yet uninhibited** and fierce heroine who lets the Neanderthal warrior **treat her like a whore**. But it's perfectly alright. Really, it is. She's going along with all this **for his own good**. It's all part of her **"let's tame this little warrior"** quest. Obviously. So please **Mr Neanderthal Warrior**, go ahead and treat the Xena wannabe like a **piece of meat**. And demean her while you're at it. But hey, **she's stupid enough** to accept your **"go down on me now you whore"** attitude so by all means, **keep going**. Besides, she's super

fierce and a total badass, **she can take it.**

Jen Davis says

4.5 Stars

Usually, any given anthology I come across will have just one or two stories I am interested in. But with this one, I hit the motherload, with stories from three of my very favorite authors: Nalini Singh, Ilona Andrews, and Meljean Brook (writing as Milla Vane). I didn't love every story equally, but overall, I think UF/ PNR readers will get enough bang for their buck.

Secrets at Midnight: I am such a fan of Nalini Singh and her Psy-Changeling world, but this novella was not a hit for me. It had some good things going on, but there were some parts that really fell flat.

The hero is Bastien, one of Mercy's brothers. He wasn't really looking to settle down, but once he encountered his mate's scent, he knew he had to find her. He tracked her for days, before meeting her in a totally convenient and contrived happenstance. She seems to be human, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out she is part changeling. Kirby and Bastien fall for one another as they work to solve the mysteries of her heritage and her past.

I found this story to be fairly predictable. But my biggest issue was with the dialogue between Kirby and Bastien. They try to be sexy and saucy, but it just didn't have Singh's usual magic. Not sexy at all.

Where the story is at its best is when Kirby finally finds herself and gets to interact with her family. That actually made me a little misty. But the rest? Not so much. It wasn't bad, but I have loved other stories from her much more.

Magic Steals: Jim and Dali. How do I love thee? This is such an understated, wonderful couple. Ever since we first got a taste of the Jim and Dali connection in their (way too short) "Magic Dreams" novella, I have been impatiently waiting for a chance to see them together again. This story satisfied me in every way. It follows Dali, with Jim at her side, as she uses her special Indonesian mojo to fight an evil manifestation targeting folks who share a common business building. The magic plot, though, is only a vehicle to show us Dali in her element –and how she and Jim finally stop tiptoeing around their relationship.

I love how insecure Dali is and how we see her utter adoration of Jim. She views him so differently than Kate does, but through her 1st person POV, we see such a different man. This Jim is awesome. He is so good to her. Watching her finally realize the depths of his feelings is so gratifying. And the end is perfect. (Plus... sex.) Made of win.

Lucky Charms: This is the only story in the group by an author I have never read before, but I really enjoyed this set up for Lisa Shearin's SPI Files urban fantasy series. It follows a seer named Mac who is giving up her civilian life to join a supernatural policing agency. Her first assignment is helping to track down a leprechaun prince and his buddies who escaped a protection detail at a bachelor party. The story is funny and fast paced with an engaging cast of character. I will definitely be checking out *The Grendel Affair*.

The Beast of Blackmoor: I love Meljean Brook and I was totally psyched for this barbarian “beast” story. It was pretty dark and I’m not entirely sure how I feel about it. The story centered on Kavik, a warrior forsaken by the goddess he offended in his youth –and Mala, a champion of the same goddess, on a quest for her favor. Mala’s mission puts her squarely in Kavik’s path and it doesn’t take long to discover that their destinies are intertwined. There is some pretty heavy stuff here: rape, torture, and the like. Some parts seemed pretty bleak. But the sexy times were very hot and the HEA was satisfying. — I leave the story conflicted, but affected, so take that as you will.

Overall, I think is definitely an anthology worth checking out!

Rating: B+

**ARC provided by author for review*

Armina says

Buddy read with **Eilonwy** , **Evgeny** , **Asya** , **Monty Cupcake** , **Sarah** , **Robin** , **Gavin** and a bunch of lovely people from the **Ilona Andrews Addicts(IAA)** group.

This goes only for Ilona Andrews’ novella ***Magic Steals*** .

4 STARS

Not very strong 4 stars but still 4. I liked it more than the previous Jim & Dali novella. Short review to come tomorrow.

Gavin says

This anthology was a worthwhile read. Two of the stories were quite good, one was like nothing else you will ever read, and the flop of the collection was a fairly standard PNR. Here is my thoughts on the individual novellas:

Secrets at Midnight by *Nalini Singh*

I had been looking forward to trying one of Nalini Singh's books for a while and figured this novella was the perfect place to sample a story from her Psy-Changeling series. Unfortunately I was not impressed. This was a standard PNR story of the sort that it feels like I've read a 100 times before. I do not want to be too critical because shifters have always been my least favorite paranormal creature and I think I'm just totally burned out and sick of reading about couples who "bond" with each other before even meeting!!!. I want less of this destiny crap and more of couples falling in love because they are actually interested in each other.

The story did have a few positives. Bastian and Kirby, the couple for this romance, were actually pretty likable, they made a decent couple, and Singh had an engaging enough writing style. Unfortunately the rest of the story outside of the romance was a bit dull. Kirby was coming to grips with the fact that she was a shifter, a fact that was unknown to her as her parents died in an accident when she was young and she was

raised in the foster system. Once it becomes apparent she is a shifter her parents Pack is located.

This novella featured another pet peeve of mine. Foster carers painted as monsters. Why is it that all fictional foster carers turn out to be abusers or, if you are really lucky, just neglecters? One would think your local authorities recruited new carers at the exit gates of prisons if your only experience of them comes via reading.

I'm not feeling very enthusiastic about reading the Psy-Changeling series after reading this one. I might give Nalini Singh one more chance to impress me with her Guild Hunter series, but only because I'm a kindly soul.

Rating: 2.5 stars.

Audio Note: Angela Dawe gave a decent enough performance of this bit sounded less enthused about reading this story than she did reading the Ilona Andrews one.

Magic Steals by Ilona Andrews

This is the second *Kate Daniels* novella featuring Dali as the POV character and it is even better than the first. While reading the main series I was not much of a fan of Dali or Jim, but this novella has done a fantastic job of fleshing out both characters and giving them a bit of depth.

In this tale we follow Dali, and Jim, as she uses her mystical powers to track down a missing person and thwart a black curse. I found it quite entertaining. The mystery was interesting and there was plenty of hilarious moments along the way. It helped that I loved the way the relationship between Jim and Dali developed. It is great to finally get a couple who work as a team without being in constant conflict with each other!

Rating: 4 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by Angela Dawe rather than Renee Raudman, the regular KD series narrator, and that was for the best as I enjoyed Dawe's interpretations of Jim and Dali a lot better.

Lucky Charms by Lisa Shearin

This was the shortest of the novellas in the collection. It was a humorous and fun read.

Makenna Fraser's first assignment at her new job as a Seer in the SPI is to locate a leprechaun stag party, who gave their last protection detail the slip at a strip club, and return them to the Seelie Court before they are captured by agents of the Unseelie Court. Hilarity, and a hint of romance, ensues as Mak encounters all sorts of paranormal creatures along the way.

This was a great intro and advert for Shearin's SPI Files series. Which I'll definitely be reading at some future point.

Rating: 4 stars.

Audio Note: Angela Dawe gave another decent performance with this one. She got the tone and the humor of the story.

The Beast of Blackmoor by Milla Vane

I have no idea what to say about this one. If Conan the Barbarian was a porn flick instead of an action movie then this would be pretty close to being the novelization!!!

The world building and the non-romance parts of the story were pretty intriguing. The romantic aspects of the story were spectacularly awful. I shook my head in disbelief at some of the cringe-worthy dialogue, and I'm a hardened reader of PNR and historical romance!

I'm all for romances in a fantasy setting so I do not want to be too critical and this novella had enough plus points that I'll probably try another of the author's series. I just hope I enjoy any romances in those series a bit more.

Rating: 3 stars.

Audio Note: Angela Dawe has narrated all the books in this collection and just like with the others she did a decent job here:)

Jessica's Totally Over The Top Book Obsession says

I only read *Secrets at Midnight* by Nalini Singh but it was awesome. I loved Mercy's little brother so I really enjoy Bash's story!

Samantha says

Night Shift is one of the best anthologies I've read in a while with contributions from three powerhouse writers in their respective genres.

It says something when the "worst" story in a collection is from Nalini Singh. *Secrets at Midnight* is her contribution and it's pretty boring. Leopard shifter, Bastien Smith, has scented his mate but quickly finds out that not all is well with her. Singh can write some compelling short stories, so I was surprised at how she seemed to have sleepwalked through this one. The conflict is non-existent and it's painfully obvious what is going on with his mate from the minute Bastien starts talking about her. If I had to rate this one on an individual basis it would be a **3/5**.

Magic Steals by Ilona Andrews was the reason I had been so anxious to get my hands on the anthology. The story takes place in the Kate Daniels world and follows the characters Jim and Dali who were featured in *Magic Dreams*, which I had adored. This story completely lived up to my high expectations. Dali is approached to look into the case of a missing person and Jim tags along for the ride. It was great to see Dali take the lead and I loved getting a little more of these two working together. I'm still holding out hope that we'll eventually get a full-length novel featuring Jim and Dali, as they're just fantastic. **5/5**

Lucky Charms by Lisa Shearin was the only author in the collection who was new to me. Makenna Frazier is

a seer who gets pulled into a high profile case involving leprechauns on her very first day of work. I'm guessing this is a prequel to Shearin's Urban Fantasy series starring Makenna because the story works to set-up a much more involved plot. All in all, this was a good contribution and I was intrigued enough by the characters to potentially read the first book in the series. **4/5**

The Beast of Blackmoor by Milla Vane (aka Meljean Brook) was my second favorite contribution in the anthology. Mala is on a quest for her goddess to tame the beast of Blackmoor in a corrupt kingdom dominated by a tyrant. I really loved how different interpretations of words and personal perceptions influenced this short story. I'm not a huge fan of medieval settings but this one worked for me. I'll be looking forward to the first full length book set in the world. **4.5/5**

All in all a great anthology that is well worth the money.

Otila says

Rating is for the Ilona Andrews and Nalini Singh novellas only.

Magic Steals by Ilona Andrews -- 4 Stars

Dali and Jim look into the disappearance of a friend's grandmother.

I love Dali and Jim and I love when we get novellas about the two of them. Jim is the scary badass head of security for the Atlanta pack and takes his job very seriously. I like seeing another side of him when he's with Dali. He lets his guard down and is even playful. Who knew Jim could smile without the threat of imminent death being attached to it?

Secrets at Midnight by Nalini Singh -- 2 Stars

I never really cared about getting a story about Bastien and this novella didn't change my mind. I found both MCs to be pretty boring.

?★Tinja★★ A Court of Pizza and Laziness says

Rating for Magic Steals only.

This is the second short story with Jim and Dali <3 They are so adorable and funny together. The curses/Dali's powers/Asian mythology (which we had more of in the first book) is so fascinating to me. And Dali's mom cracks me up.

Evgeny says

Updated on 3/31/2015. I will update the review after I read other stories, so sorry if you feel like I spam you with this one's updates.

Magic Steals.

A story about Jim and Dali - their relationships only, with their fight with evil magic which plagues post-

apocalyptic Atlanta in between. Dali is asked to investigate disappearance of an old Balinese lady. Jim tags along. Together they uncovered great evil which needs to be taken care of. They do.

Let me start with reminding that Dali can shapeshift into a freakin' white tiger. How cool is this?

While in this form she can fight evil magic using her aura and physical strength to destroy it:

Unfortunately outside of her evil-fighting time she is really insecure and immature, so she feels more like this:

I think I already made my point with illustrations above. Dali destroying evil is awesome, plain and simple. She is also unbelievably insecure: take all of the women of the world insecurities, roll them into one and give it to Dali. This is how she is. I also agree with my friends that she overdoes on describing Jim's sexiness practically pushing the story genre into PNR territory.

I still gave 4 stars to the story, why? Recently I had a misfortune to read quite a few mediocre paranormal romances, including ones disguising themselves as urban fantasy. As a result I became accustomed to skim over badly written angsty young adult romances. So in this case I was able to overlook everything related to Dali's relationship with Jim - the bad parts that is. I also need to mention Jim remains perfectly fine two-dimensional character, exactly like everywhere else in the series.

Despite all my criticism Dali's awesomeness in the white tiger form and humor scattered among her self-doubts were enough for me to give **4 stars** to the novella.

The Beast of Blackmoor.

A long time ago - right after the dinosaurs ruled the Earth there were action heroes in the literature like the following:

Fast forward to modern times; people demand having strong women in any book, including something like stories about all-male prisons. Some authors were not prepared to meet the demand and quite a few of them could not write a strong woman even if their lives depend on it. Feat not dear writers, I am here to help and give some friendly advice.

Pick up any story featuring a beefy guy as the main hero. Load it into a decent word processing program - Microsoft Word will do - and make global replace for the following words: "Conan" -> "Mala", "he" -> "she", and "The Barbarian" -> "Warrior Princess". If you manage to get your hands on script of Xena the Warrior Princess series you do not even have to do the last suggested substitution.

You may ask, "This is all fine and simple, but how do you make sure the readers will not forget they read about a woman heroine?" I am glad you asked. Make her fall in love with a dark, handsome, and scarred warrior. You do not even have to remember his name while writing; just make the heroine call him "warrior" all the time. Plagiarize any classic romantic book; they have plenty of such heroes, starting with George Gordon Byron. Make him break her heart and - the most important part - make her so heartbroken that she abandons her quest to save all the people in a kingdom while she is being miserable.

Please send me a personal message and I will let you know where to send the payment for the consulting.

As to the plot, I already practically gave it away: a tough woman is sent on a quest by a goddess. She beats

the crap out of everything and everybody that stands in her way until she meets a brooding guy she falls in love with after which the book became a story of non-stop sex told from a female submissive BDSM point of view - and not very well written sex I might add. This is a fantasy book, to be sure so it refers to a certain part of female anatomy as sheath to make things look authentic.

The plot is confusing. My thoughts while reading dialogues most of the time:

There are two reasons I gave this story 2 stars instead of 1. Firstly, I actually managed to finish it. Secondly, a lot of my friends who read it rated it highly: guys and girls, this extra star is due to my respect for you, so **2 stars** it is.

The average rating of the anthology for the stories I read so far is **3 stars**.

Jo ★The Book Sloth★ says

4 Dali Needs A Dose Of Confidence Stars

“You need to neuter him. Otherwise he’ll spray all over the house. The stench is awful. And when he isn’t out catting around, little female cats in heat will show up and wail under the windows.”

Kill me, please. “He is a nice cat. He’s not like that.”

“It’s instinct, Dali. Before you know it, you’ll be running a feline whorehouse.”

This novella takes place while Kate, Curran and the gang are away in Europe and Jim has the run of the keep. True to Ilona Andrews' style, this novella is well structured, fun and action packed, without seeming rushed or glossing over storylines. And Dali's mom once again stole the show.

But, after all this time I still can't see Dali and Jim as a couple. I know this is something that most people disagree with me on but I just can't connect with them. Dali's lack of confidence and pity-partying was a bit over the top, and if I read the phrase "blind, skinny tiger girl" once more I would be tempted to kill her. But all in all I liked the book. And I generally like Dali too, she is sweet and compassionate. She just needs to start believing in herself.

You’re a weretiger. Confident. Aggressive. Roar.

“Dali, you are a tiger. You’re the largest cat on the planet and you weigh over seven hundred pounds in your beast form.[...]You don’t have to be a good fighter for us to make a good team. If you just sit on our attacker for a second, that’s enough for me to kill them.”

Just the Ilona Andrews story for now.

Lila says

Oh, my god, this book was one giant, crazy whac-a-mole!

Leopard roared...

Jaguar roared...

Barbarian warlord roared AND stumped his chest...

and Shearin story brings an old, familiar debate:

"Do you think if I shoot leprechaun with my gun, lucky charms will explode everywhere?"* ;)

1.Nalini Singh - "Secrets at Midnight" - 4,5 stars

"This is Bastien. Don't let him charm you - next thing you know, you'll be naked."

If you are familiar with Nalini's Psy/Changeling world, Bastien is not a new name for you. He is one of Mercy's beloved brothers she feels very protective of, but he also has to endure the love of other Smith woman: he has to suffer through endless parade of possible girlfriends his mother is throwing at him...until he catches a scent of his mate. :D

You remember how we were whining for Psy/Psy couple for 11 books and then Nalini gave us two in a row with third one coming up? Man, I love them Arrows with a strength of 1000 burning suns, but Bastien reminded me how fun and flirty changelings are! I mean, from the moment they meet their intended hea it's like one, long, sensual foreplay until they finally hook up. Skin privileges, ftw!

Ok, this story is definitely more enjoyable if you read series before, but you can read it without being completely confused. Big, overreaching arc of turmoil in Psy world is briefly mentioned but it's not adding anything to the story. In that case, it will read like nice, neatly wrapped shifter story and that's not bad. But for fans, this is such a treat since there are so many of these nice little fan favorite cameos- I was personally delighted with Teijan appearance and I really want to read his story now- If anyone can pull that, Nalini can. ;)

2.Ilona Andrews - "Magic Steals" - 5 stars

First novella featuring Jim and Dali (Magic Dreams) is my favorite novella set in this world. :) But, let's face it, in a series where side characters are almost as loved as main characters, can any side story end up being not worth your time?

No, and you will not be disappointed with this one either. ;)

So, first things first.. with all other stories in anthologies, there is a chance you can enjoy it without being familiar with characters before. With this one, I pull a line and say no.**

For fans of series, this story is set between book #6 and book #7, so if you were expecting to read Jim's meltdown about news of his new job..we will have to wait some more. (*But, it's going to be epic because Jim is in such a good place right now...;*))

So, Dali and Jim are dating, they are doing all those things like... dinners and lingerie has being bought and stuff... but her mother and her close family of 30+ relatives has no idea about it.:)

We know that Dali is very special shifter: she is a White Tiger and she has her own magic, magic tied to her cultural identity and legacy. So, when her mother brings a friend whose grandmother is in trouble, Dali has

to look into it. And Jim volunteered to accompany her. Mystery was completely whacked- villain's MO is not hard to guess, but motive behind it is just crazy. But that's all in background; characters and relationship development is a real story here..This novella has so many great scenes between Dali and Jim, between Dali and her mom; so many great lines.:)

I really like Dali. In a group of badass female and male characters, Dali is unusual because her magic is primarily non combative. She may be be blind and vegetarian cat without fighting skills, but her strength lies in her impressive knowledge on mythology and her smarts, and this is something that was made clear to us in book #3 and in first novella. This Dali is still present here, but what I liked about this story is that it showed us that Dali still is a shifter and therefore dangerous. If she can't curse you or outwit you, she can still be a threat. Of course, this is something Jim was instrumental in making her come to that conclusion herself, but I loved it- it was such a boost to her confidence and exactly what she needs taking her future role in consideration.

But Jim guys! Jim is just swoon-worthy and sexy and flirty here. Let's all cherish this novella for rare treasure that it is...Jim actually smiled. and it was not one of his "you-are-dead" showing-teeth smiles. This was Extra Virgin, 100% pure smile. :)

3.Lisa Shearin - "Lucky Charms" - 3 stars

Ok this is a prequel to The Grendel Affair, new Shearin UF series. It's a series about Makenna "Mac" Fraser, who is working for SPI (that's like FBI, but for supernaturals) as a seer, which allows her to see through any glamour and this story is actually her first assignment for SPI, as she is sent with her new team to collect five rogue leprechauns.

I personally didn't enjoy TGA, because it looked to me like a UF version of Stephanie Plum, with heroine who keeps stumbling on stuff by accident and is just too silly. It's same here: these leprechauns are like giant, raging balls of hormones with confused sexual identity, so silliness is a given, but I did have fun his story. Maybe this style is working in shorter format for me? ;)

4.Milla Vane - "The Beast of Blackmoore" - 4 stars

I am still giggling like a lunatic over this one.

I don't even know how to describe this!!!

There is a tormented barbarian warlord who pissed of gods(heh!) and there is a female, badass holy warrior who is on a quest "bestowed on her by great goddess". And they fall in love from the moment they laid eyes on each other, "covered in blood and rotting stench of devil's beasts they slayed." And they have this crazy and really smutty romance with funniest sex scene I read in a while. (view spoiler)

Guys, there are leather loincloths!

And swords and armors!

And they slay demons by dozens!

It's majestic!

And cracastic and cheesy and hilarious.

And outrageous!

and completely insane.

I swear, while I was reading, I saw these scenes so clearly in my head, in such vivid colors like it was directed by Dino De Laurentiis himself.

Milla Vane is, of course, a pen name of fabulous Meljean Brook and I completely understand now why she got to write Red Sonja.

She is the woman for the job.

I bow to you, Meljean, you are the queen of outrageous entertainment.

So, let's repeat: which one to read?

**I will never pass a chance to quote Alucard, HUA.*

** (view spoiler)

Ferdy says

Spoilers

**Only read Ilona Andrews and Nalini Singh's contributions.

SECRETS AT MIDNIGHT: 2/5 stars

Didn't enjoy this it was super predictable, the romance was based on nothing but insta-lust/love, and the hero and heroine were generic and cliched, there was nothing endearing about them whatsoever.

Bastien was the typical cocky-slutty-hero and Kirby was a Mary Sue with no personality, their romance was so trite. It felt like I'd already read their story before because the characters/relationship dynamics were the same as every other PNR.

Also, why was Kirby a virgin? It made no sense, she may not have known she was a changeling but that's exactly what she was deep down. It's been established that changelings enjoy intimacy and lots of sex when they're teenagers/in their early twenties yet somehow 24 year old Kirby remained a virgin despite being a changeling. Her not being fully manifested didn't mean she was any less of one, she should have been having sex just like any other changeling. Her virginity was so contrived and nonsensical, and written that way just so she could be 'pure' or some bullshit.

Then there was Kirby's mandatory tragic past, whenever she thought about her past or talked about it to Bastien it made me roll my eyes. Was her being an orphan and being oh so lonely meant to magically make her more interesting or sympathetic? If anything it did the opposite.

How stupid was Kirby's dad not giving his pack/parents details about his mate and daughter? He didn't tell them their names, their DOB, their whereabouts. Because of his stupidity Kirby grew up an orphan and his grandparents didn't get to raise her. Ugh, he was such a twit.

I did enjoy getting to catch up a little with other characters from the series, also the writing wasn't as embellished and over the top compared to the last few Nalini novels.

MAGIC STEALS: 4/5 stars

Loved Jim and Dali's story. They were so cute together and it was fun getting to 'see' a softer side of Jim.

I enjoyed reading about Dali's magic and her role in the pack and Indonesian community, she was just as badass as Jim, they made a surprisingly good team. The mystery and investigation of who was attacking all those business owners was entertaining, but I was far more interested in Jim/Dali's relationship and the back and forth they had going on than the main mystery.

I was glad Jim and Dali both had normal families and upbringings, there was no hidden inner pain or cliched tragedies in their lives. Jim/Dali talking about their families and interacting with them made both characters seem more real and interesting. I absolutely loved Dali's mum, their relationship was funny and sweet.

One thing I wasn't impressed with was Dali calling herself blind when the only visual issues she seemed to have was needing to wear thick glasses, her vision with her glasses was more than satisfactory - she didn't have any blind spots or problems with detail or long distance. Nothing written in the story indicated her having low vision or severe sight issues. If she was meant to actually be partially sighted then it should have reflected in the character/writing.

Eilonwy says

I only read two of the novellas, so the rating is for these:

Magic Steals , by Ilona Andrews

Dali the white tiger shapeshifter struggles with low self-esteem and self-consciousness as she tries to adjust to being involved with huge, muscular alpha-Cat Jim the jaguar. Oh, and she solves a magical mystery, too. The relationship stuff was a little predictable but managed to round out both Dali's and Jim's personalities for me, and the magic and mystery were pretty interesting. Ilona Andrews never fails to amaze me with the breadth of their knowledge of mythology, and the creative and clever ways they put that knowledge to work in their stories. I give this novella four stars.

The Beast of Blackmoor , by Milla Vane

Mala has been promised the strength of 10,000 warriors to protect her land if she can complete a quest for the goddess Vela: tame the "beast of Blackmoor," also known as Kavik, a man who has been forsaken by the same goddess. And while she's at it, Mala also figures on taking care of a demon "tusker" (think nasty wild boar) that's been cursing the land and waters all around itself, and maybe knock off the corrupt and evil ruler of Blackmoor, as well. I really loved the mythology and worldbuilding in this story, especially the first half. Then it turned into a very explicit erotic romance, and a combination of insta-love (Mala), fated love (Kavik), and angst (both of them) over-rode the elements I'd found so intriguing. And, since it's a novella, the resolution to all of these plot threads ended up feeling a bit rushed. Overall, though, I loved the setting and imagination in this story, and I'll try a novel set in this world when one comes out. (Btw, Milla Vane turns out to be a high-fantasy pen-name for Meljean Brook, known for her urban fantasy.) I give this three and a half stars, rounded up.

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Buddy read beginning March 20th...YES we finally have a date joining me will be Armina, Asya, Eilonwy, Evgeny, Monty Cupcake, oOSarahOo, Catherine, Vicky, Gavin and Jessica on Ilona Andrews Addicts (IAA)

Overall 4 stars for the entire anthology

?★Magic Steals ★★★★★ ☆?

I'm a huge Ilona Andrews (IA) fan so this story is the reason I bought the anthology. I think for most people it will be a love it or hate it sort of story. Dali is not your typical IA heroine in that she isn't really sure of herself, she lacks confidence, she isn't a good physical fighter, blood makes her sick to her stomach and she has a tendency to forget what she is doing after shifting. But she does know how to do kick ass magic using calligraphy, she has ancient magic powers, a car named pookie and is trying to figure out how to date the alpha male of the Cat clan.

I understand Dali, while I would love to be like Kate or Andrea and just be a kickass heroine with some deadly skills Dali is far more human to me. She has some of the same flaws I had going into my mid 20s. I mean the last time I think I tried to be 'sexy' for my husband my heel caught on the lingerie and I tripped fell onto him in the least sexy and most painful way possible *long fingernails falling on upper inner thighs you get the idea*. I'm not 'sexy' in the traditional sense, I'm bubbly, fun, inventive and cute but it took me awhile to realize to him that made me beautiful and perfect to him so I get Dali's lack of confidence and how she sometimes gets stuck in her head overthinking everything.

This is Dali and Jim's story to figure out how to be a strong team together. It is clear at the beginning of this that they haven't really figured out what is going on between them since their first novella. With Curran/Kate and crew away Jim has been running the Pack and Keep. But finally they will get to spend a bit of time together. Seeing a deeper side to Jim was really good. I always just thought of him as Security officer Jim but Magic Steals dives a bit into how multifaceted Jim really is and maybe what we have seen up until now is just the face he wants us to see.

"For the first three years with her all I did was covert work," Jim said. "Pretend to be someone you're not. Go to the right place at the right time, listen, talk to people, be likeable and be convincing. It wasn't my favorite part of the job, but I've learned to be what people expect me to be."

Dali and Jim are spending a lovely day together tracking down whatever seems to be targeting the owners of a strip mall. I like the dynamic between them. Dali is so adorably clueless as to why he could like her so much so she is so standoffish about telling anyone they are dating sure that it isn't going to last. Jim however is **big alpha man and will not be kept a secret even if that means he has to make all the big moves and out them one Thud! at a time.**

My mother stared at the ceiling. "Did you hear that?"
"Hear what?" I asked, my eyes wide.

I would kill Jim. He could sit completely motionless for hours when on stakeouts. I'd seen him do it. He had to be dropping things on purpose. Thud!

All in all I liked the new magics introduced in the story. There are some new fighting styles blending the changeling fighting skills that Jim possesses with the magical mojo that Dali can throw down. I think it did a great job in showing that they could be a power couple in the rest of the series. Also I really appreciated how Dali explained to Jim all of the worries she had about what it would mean if they were a mated pair. I respected all the logic she threw in there but I adored Jim for having a counter to everything she said.

This isn't the strongest story in the Kate Daniels World but still enough to just tide me over until something else by them comes out.

?❀ Secrets At Midnight ★★½ ❀?

I have found that Nalini Singh's novellas are pure PNR fluff for the most part. There is nothing wrong with that sometimes I just want some fluff in 80 pages or less. But if you go in expecting world building or wanting some sort of plot besides a quick romance then you will be disappointed.

Secrets at Midnight follows one of Mercy's brothers Bastian as he tries to help his mate discover the cat that has been suppressed inside her for years. Kirby has no idea that she is in anyway a changeling and it seems that being around more of them has triggered something deep inside of her.

Honestly out of all the stories in the anthology this was my least favorite Kirby and Bastian are likable enough but all and all it is a lot like any other PNR story with a quick bonding or insta-love thrown in.

?❀ Lucky Charms ★★★★★½ ❀?

Lucky Charms was my favorite story in this anthology.

What didn't this story have in it? On her first night of work Makenna Fraser has been chewed out by an Ogre, talked to a water sprite, been teamed up with a reluctant and deadly human babysitter, seen a werewolf naked and a few fae high on clover, gone searching for a leprechaun bachelor party run amuck and almost been snatched by a deadly yet oh so sexy Goblin all why trying not to upset her new dragon boss. Maybe it would have been easier to mention all the things not in this story.

Apparently this realm of earth has become a hot spot for all things mythical, magical and lorelike. **'And for them, our world and dimension now ranked at the top of their "Best Places to Live, Work, Play, and Eat" list. Unfortunately, the "eat" part often included humans. Why all the attention? From what I understand, it all started with two little words: indoor plumbing'** SPI is the agency tasked with keeping all things supernatural on the down low from the delicate humans and Makenna is their newest employee. If her first night on the job is any indication things will never be dull.

Makenna and new partner Ian are running around a bunch of strip clubs looking for a bachelor party consisting of five horny leprechauns one of whom is a prince who slipped their security detail.

"Obviously putting five male agents in a strip club and telling them they can't look proves that

there's been a training oversight on the discipline side because the prince and his boys flew the coop before the first G-string dropped."

I had so much fun on this little trip. The writing is hilarious and there was just enough sexy in it to make my eyes perk up, I do love a good sexual tension tease. I was not expecting such a fun story and **this had just enough of everything to grab my hook line and sinker so I plan on continuing on with the series.**

?* The Beast of Blackmoor ★★★★★ *?

I'd never heard of Milla Vane before this anthology so I have no idea what any of her other work is like but I will be sure to look for her in the future.

Beast of Blackmoor is a high fantasy love story ***gasp*** I know there aren't a lot of those out there. My friend Gavin best summed this up as a porn version of Conan. Kavik, desperate for revenge asked help of a goddess. When she refused he defiled her temple and was cursed to be forsaken and watch all those he cared for suffer until the Woman in Red ended him. **Note to self:** Do not anger goddesses, woman scorned and all that.

Mala is on a quest for a goddess to tame the Beast of Blackmoor in order to gain the warriors she needs to save her homeland. Both warriors are strong in both body and will so which one of these alphas will win and bring the other to heel.

Just a little warning the sexy times (I was not expecting them so big bonus) are a little harsh. It fits with the story line, these are warriors and not scribes but still very dominance alpha in nature and slightly crude. I never have issues with sex scenes like this but it might be rougher than some like.

Overall the plot and story line are pretty well flushed out for a novella and I wouldn't mind learning more about the evil in the land the demons that seem to be infecting creatures or the big bad that they haven't encountered yet.

Milla Vane, I'll be watching you as High Fantasy Romance could be my Achilles Heel.
