



The Secrets of Blood and Bone

Rebecca Alexander

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In the stunning follow up to *The Secrets of Life and Death*, Rebecca Alexander has created a gripping supernatural thriller that bridges time, legend and the power of blood.

Following her showdown with Elizabeth Bathory, Jackdaw Hammond is running from her past, hiding from her future, and hoping to contain her newfound thirst for blood. Buying an overgrown home in the middle of nowhere seems like the perfect place to escape...at least until she finds herself in the sights of a murderous family with a terrible secret and a penchant for dark magic. Meanwhile, her old ally Felix Guichard has gone to New Orleans to conduct his own investigation into the nature of blood magic, but is soon sucked into the intrigues of the city's occult underworld. But Jack will need Felix more than she knows, for the battle for her soul is set to begin.

Her only salvation may lie with the secrets of 16th century master occultist Edward Kelley, and a dangerous mission he undertook in Venice to confront the Inquisition, the darkest deeds of his own past, and the fearsome power of Elizabeth Bathory.

The Secrets of Blood and Bone Details

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Author : Rebecca Alexander

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From Reader Review The Secrets of Blood and Bone for online ebook

Althea Ann says

I picked this up solely due to its title; knowing nothing about the author or the book itself. What I didn't realize: it's a sequel. If you're interested, I recommend starting with the first one, 'The Secrets of Life and Death.' A great deal of this book deals with 'past' events, and I think having read the first one would really have helped.

The novel alternates between two different stories. In the first, set in the present day, in England's rural Lakes District, two women have come to renovate a witch's cottage - in which the witch was recently burned to death. The two women themselves may have magical or supernatural qualities, but they're also very human characters, dealing with an odd - and possibly dangerous - situation.

The second is set in 16th-century Venice, deals with the historical Edward Kelley, the notorious English occultist/alchemy, a contemporary of John Dee. The story deals with a wholly fictional trip to Venice, where he is investigating a paranormal rumor of werewolf-like rituals, which may plunge him into danger.

The second story gives background to and throws light on the first, but they remain rather separate. I found the first story, and the characters of the two women, Jackdaw and Sadie, much more compelling, even though I usually prefer historical settings to modern-day. The exception is when the narrative switches to the point of view of their friend, Felix, who is busy investigating vampire fetish clubs in New Orleans with the help of a rather-overly-involved academic researcher. As someone who has spent far more time at vampire fetish clubs than I care to admit, this exotified outsiders' view of the scene really had me rolling my eyes. (OK, fine, I also roll my eyes far too much when I am present AT such events.) Felix's viewpoint also felt largely unnecessary to the story as a whole; I felt the book could have done without it completely.

Overall, I found this author intriguing. At moments, I was reminded of authors such as Caitlin Kiernan & Poppy Z. Brite, maybe a taste of A.M. Dellamonica. But there was, perhaps, a larger helping of M.J. Rose.

Many thanks to Broadway Books & NetGalley for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

Kassie Boyd says

(Quick note: From other reviews I've looked at, there seems to be a very descriptive sexual assault in the book that is continually brought up. By the time I stopped reading, I had not gotten to it yet, so I cannot comment on it. Please keep your triggers in mind if you pick up this book.)

The second book in the Jackdaw Hammond series by Victoria Alexander and I'm already not looking forward to this as it seems to be a run of the mill Twilight knockoff.

I just want to say that, first, I haven't read the first book and after reading this one, I have no interest to. Second, I tried very hard to finish this book, but I could not do it. It's boring, repetitive, and there's nothing to

really link the three ongoing stories together.

I decided to pick up this book despite knowing what it was because the back cover gave me hope for something more interesting than a dreary and dry romance story. The description leads one to expect a supernatural mystery with vampires and magic. As of what I've forced myself to read, that doesn't seem to be the case.

What we do have is a story that flipflops between three different main characters and third and first person point of views, the first being Jackdaw and her friend Sadie as they clean out the destroyed home of a...the book doesn't say how Jack is related to this woman, though she may be someone's aunt or great aunt. The second story takes place in the past, involving what I can only presume is the 'historical' part of this book that is historical fiction. I've honestly never heard of Edward Kelley, so I cannot say if I should know of him or if he's only prevalent in England's common knowledge. In the past, Kelley is called to Venice to conduct research but stumbles upon a more sinister plot related to the main villain of the last book. Or I assume so since their last names are the same. The third part, and I suppose the 'erotic' part of the book features Jack's love interest Felix Guichard in New Orleans researching blood's effects on people who drink it.

That's a lot going on in one book and it's really way too much. In fact, this is enough to plot two, even three books, not one. For a woman who prides herself on having a MA in Creative Writing, I would expect Mrs. Alexander to know this. It really hurts this book. The most interesting part of this book is what Jack is doing, because she is our main character, and yet we spend so little time with her. We spend more time with Kellie and Felix in the first eight chapters than with Jack and what the pull of this story is supposed to be: the questionable death of the house's previous owner, the mysterious family that threatens Jack and Sadie, and the magic garden.

Speaking of Felix's side of the story, it goes nowhere. It's just the author rambling on about how she did some research online and wanted to tell you what she found about 'real life' vampires. If this was used in the plot in some manner, this would be interesting, but it's not so it isn't. Instead, we have the same obvious question being asked over and over again: "are there any side effects to blood drinking?"

Keep in mind, I have not read the first book, but Jack is a vampire, or at least a corpse of some kind. It doesn't matter how you dress it up or what you call them, she is a vampire. I bring this up because I don't understand why Felix is asking the above question. I don't even understand why he couldn't take five minutes to think about why drinking blood would or wouldn't have side effects and thus have his answer like any one would do when posed with this question. For such an 'intelligent' man - or I assume he is as he mentions having an office, traveling, and observing rituals and studying the occult - he acts as if he's never studied how blood can carry pathogens, much less considered all the times he's sure to have ingested a small amount of blood from either a cut lip or any steak he's ate in the past.

To further waste our time, each book starts with a needless quote, such as the ones being from the perspective of the garden. What all this comes down to is it needlessly slows down the pace of the book and most of these different perspectives and information could have either been integrated into the story or removed completely. Because of all the jumping and the introduction of so many side characters who are just as bland, I started to forget who they were or what they were there for, which is the worst thing to do in any mystery story where the reader is expected to keep up.

To make this worse, some of the sentence structure is strange. This could simply be because I am American and the author is English, but I think it's more along the lines of it made since in her head, but no one bothered to give it another look before she published it.

I also don't understand why we go out of our way to make the American characters dislike the 'British' nature of English characters. For example:

(Page 33) "He'll talk to me though. If you come along, and don't act so – British - he might get you into one of the (vampire fetish) clubs."

What does this even mean? Is the author implying that Americans think English people are shy virgins and stuffy prudes? Or is she trying to say Americans are loose and wild? Either way, I take offense at the author's stereotyping.

If you have not read the first book, then you will not know or understand the in universe terminology that this series uses. The book casually throws out that Jack and Sadie are 'Barrowed Timers'. What does that mean? If I have to guess, the author needs to go back and rewrite into the story a quick explanation. I've said it before in my review of *Unholy Magic*: you cannot expect that the person reading your second book has read your first book or will even go back to read your first book. As an author, you must take the time to explain in every book what you expect to be common knowledge to the reader. It doesn't have to be as detailed as the explanation in the first book, but it should basically be a cliff note for new readers and a reminder for returning readers.

In conclusion, don't buy this book. There is nothing for you here.

I'd like to thank BLOGING FOR BOOKS for a free print copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Erik says

Rebecca Alexander's second novel "The Secrets of Blood and Bone" is a lot like her first novel. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but also not necessarily a good thing. It continues with the simultaneous story of modern day Jackdaw Hammond with the 16th century story of Edward Kelley, again alternating chapters between the two time period. I enjoyed the first book, but my main reservations were that I was more interested in the chapters that dealt with Kelley and John Dee than I was with the modern chapters. I also felt the modern day climax was fairly banal. This second installment leaves me feeling about the same, but with the chapters flipped. I enjoyed the modern day chapters much more than the Kelley 16th century chapters. This time around the replication of the alternating chapters felt unnecessary and not really adding much to the present day plot. What was needed from then to help with the modern section honestly could have been done in a Prologue, and because it also dealt with characters from the first book that we already knew of their fates it left those 16th century chapters feeling tacked on and boring. The modern day chapters, telling a compelling story of witches and dark transformation rituals were quite fun and captivating. And unlike the first book, I was quite taken with the climatic ending. Ms. Alexander clearly is a talented writer and both of these books were all in all quite fun. I can't help but think though that one long book with a tighter plot could have woven all of these story lines together in a much more interesting fashion.

Michelle says

This is a sequel to *The Secrets of Life and Death*. I said in my review of that book that I didn't know if it was

one book or a series because the last one had enough closure but there was an opportunity for the story to continue. I enjoyed this continuation. I give it a solid four stars. You can tell the story is more comfortable and detailed in this one. There are more answers given but for each answer there are 10 new questions which keeps you reading, wanting to know what is happening to our favorite revenants. Again you have to adjust between the two timelines. We are following the present day with Jack, Sadie, Maggie & Felix along with the past but only Edward Kelley this time with some new acquaintances, Dee is mentioned but not with him.

This starts off not long after the first one ends. Jack is still running high on the blood Felix gave her and Sadie is still weak. They are in a different town where Maggie's sister died under suspicious circumstances. Jack is different but still Jack for the most part. Things have changed quite a bit in a short period of time. We are introduced to a new set of baddies. Bathory is gone in the present but the Dannicks are there and they are frightening. They are part of an ancient line of "hunters". There is a wolf on the cover so I am not really giving anything away saying, holy moley there are Weres in this book and not the ones we think of care of movies. These are 100% more disturbing.

I think if you enjoyed the first book, this one will be a welcomed continuation. If you didn't read the first book, no worries, both can stand alone as they give enough backstory for you to follow. But I think you should read the first one just so you can understand more of the internal battle Jack is having related to Felix and blood. I would recommend it. It is packed with supernatural happenings along with bits of historical fiction to grab your attention and keep it.

(view spoiler)

I received this book for free from Blogging for Books to give my honest review.

Meradeth Houston says

This is a review based on both the first and second book in the series:

I went into these novels with a whole lot of excitement, as they're quite different from my normal fare, but looked fantastic! Plus, because my writing has been veering in the "adult" direction more and more lately, I have been feeling remiss that I haven't been reading as widely in that area. Anyhow, both books were intensely interesting, with a really fascinating slant on magic and both vampires and werewolves. I rather liked the characters, especially Sadie, though Jackdaw (who goes by Jack), always felt a step removed from the reader--I still don't feel like I have a good sense of her personality or really anything beyond her

condition. Interwoven in both books is the story of Edward Kelley, while he either starts or is involved in some of origins of what Jack is facing in the modern portion of the book. This is a clever way to tell the story, though Kelley himself doesn't draw me in as much and I found myself wanting to skip those chapters (I didn't) to get on with Jack's tale. I imagine this is always the hazard with dual narratives--one is always more interesting than the other :) Other than that, I did find the pacing to be a bit off in both books, but I do wonder if that's because I have been reading quite a lot of YA where pacing is expected to, well, keep up. Here, the beginnings were good, but the middle lagged, often up until the last couple of chapters. It made for some sleepy reading a few times, I'll admit. Anyhow, this is a long-winded review, mainly because the books were complex with a lot that both drew me in and left me wanting more.

Aly says

This book was very confusing. This book could not hold my attention. I was not brought into the world in this book and I just did not finish it. * I received this book thru a giveaway with LibraryThing in exchange for an honest review*

Jessica says

My Thoughts:

This is the second installment in the Jackdaw Hammond series by Victoria Alexander. In this book there are two different stories being told at once. One is set in the present time following a Jack.

This was slightly confusing. Every other chapter is in a different time setting. There are a lot of characters to follow. The character development wasn't very strong so it was easy to forget who everyone was.

Present day, you have one girl, Jack, who was saved from death by magic struggling to understand what she has become as a result. Another, Sadie, fighting for her life. Both girls have some weird abilities, which, in my opinion, is really the only thing that saved the book.

The parts set in the past were boring and gloomy. I really think these parts of the book should have been trimmed down because they seemed to drag on forever. Actually the whole book could have been trimmed down, and would have been much more enjoyable if it had been.

To be honest, this book was all over the place, and slow moving. I am still confused about things, and not because of the way it ended in a cliffhanger. I didn't read the first book, but I don't think it would have made a big difference. I am a huge fan of books from this genre, but this one was just blah. I really wanted to like this. I was excited after reading the synopsis and had seen reviews of this book stating that it would be okay to read it as a standalone.

Also, there is a rather descriptive sexual assault scene. If those things bother you, stay away. The incident is brought up over and over.

Excerpt:

"Borrowed timers are always skinny." Jack thought back to the moment when she had augmented her life - preserving magic with a mouth full of fresh blood. It had infused her with energy, enough to last three months. For a moment, the craving for Felix's warm arm, the cut skin against her tongue, the slow pulsing of salt into her mouth, overwhelmed her.

About the Author:

REBECCA ALEXANDER is the author of *The Secrets of Life and Death*. She has worked in psychology and education, and has an MA in Creative Writing. She lives with her husband on the coast of England.

Amazon US: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/B00R04...>

I received a copy of this book from Blogging for Books in exchange for an honest review.

Shelley says

I received this book for free from (Publisher) via (NetGalley) in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Genre Historical, Paranormal

Rating 3.5

My Thoughts

The Secrets of Blood and Bone is the second novel in the *Jackdaw Hammond* series. Once again author Rebecca Alexander spins a story that takes place both in the 16th century with Edward Kelley (1596), and in the present with Jack, Sadie, Felix, and Maggie. Kelley's story actually takes place in Venice, Italy a full year after the end of his experiences dealing with Elizabeth Bathory.

Full Review Posted @ [Gizmos Reviews 11/21/2015](http://gizmosreviews.blogspot.com/201...)

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

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Zee says

Thanks to Edelweiss and Random House for providing a review copy. I don't read a lot of historical fiction, but Bathory has always fascinated me, so I couldn't wait to read this. Unfortunately, "The Secrets of Life and Death" just wasn't in the budget for this month, so I came into this sequel with a bit of a knowledge gap.

Nevertheless, I really appreciated the writing and more importantly, the very distinct styles used for the modern and medieval chapters. The story fit together seamlessly and each perspective enhanced the others, this was a fascinating and well paced read.

Frank Errington says

Review copy

Rebecca Alexander is the author of *The Secrets of Life and Death*. She has worked in the fields of psychology and education, and has an MA in Creative Writing. She lives with her husband on the coast of England.

Jackdaw Hammond (Jack) calls herself a "borrowed timer." In *The Secrets of Life and Death* there was a near death experience with Elizabeth Bathory. Jack is alive today only because of her friend, Felix Guichard, who willingly fed her his blood.

A good portion of the book is spent trying to learn what side effects may come with such a feeding. Jack doesn't feel any different, but so much is still unknown. At one point Felix meets with Madame Ivanova leading to this quote..."For those who have crossed over from mortal life, blood is energy, joy, warmth. It is immortality."

After Ellen Ratcliff, the owner of Bee Cottage, dies tragically, Jack and fourteen-year-old-Sadie move in. Sadie is in a bad way, being kept alive by magic.

There's another family with a son who is dying of a muscular dystrophy type disease. They believe the recipe for a cure is somewhere on the Bee Cottage property and will go to any length to get their hands on it.

There is also a parallel story of Edward Kelley set in Venice in the 1580s. Edward is a Protestant, influential in the field of magic, and on a quest to learn more about Alchemy. He's also being hounded by a member of the Inquisition.

The Secrets of Blood and Bone is a literary work filled with complex and interesting characters. It's a work of fantasy and horror with magic, witches, werewolves and vampires, of a sort. I found the book to be well-written and entertaining. It was refreshing to read a work with substance. It might have been even better had I read book one, but it certainly was not necessary.

There is a lot going on in this book, but it does all come together in the end, although I wouldn't rule out the possibility of a third book in the series.

The Secrets of Blood and Bone is published by Broadway Books, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. It's available now both in paperback and e-book formats.

Mary says

I'll say it again, seldom does a sequel trump the first book in a series. That's not to say it wasn't a decent offering, but it's like a second helping of dessert, never as tasty as that first bite. And, if you haven't read the first book in Alexander's series, you'll probably be a bit lost. In my opinion, this book is not exactly a standalone. Take my advice and read *The Secrets of Life and Death* before picking up the second book in the *Jackdaw Hammond* series. It'll make more sense. Let me also say this, I kind of feel tricked, like maybe I signed up for one thing and got another. I dunno. I just wasn't crazy about the direction this book took. The present day story, the world that Jackdaw Hammond inhabits, seemed to putter along. I was nearly 200-plus pages in before anything substantial happened. However, when Alexander revisits the character of alchemist Edward Kelly, sans John Dee, the story is always interesting. Kelly is never far from Countess Erzsébet Báthory and the Inquisition is still after both. Kelly's nomadic life is once again in danger and he faces seriously scary foes. A couple of scenes were rather chilling. Towards the end, both stories melded together and each was equally good. And, the ending? Never. Saw. It. Coming. Overall, I liked the book well enough to read the next book in the series. There just has to be a *Jackdaw Hammond* #3.

*I received an ARC from Blogging for Books in exchange for review.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

www.melissa413readsalot.blogspot.com

3.5 Stars

I haven't read the first book in this series yet, but that is okay as this second book is fine as a stand alone. I do want to go back and read the first one of course to see what happened in the beginning.

I was confused at times about what was going on in the book. This mostly had to do with the occult side, what they were looking for, what really happened to these people and things like that. I'm sure this will be explained better in the first book for us with simple minds :)

There seems to be a potion that can heal people with certain diseases and some turn evil ..sooo.. the characters in the book are trying to find out all they can to make sure they can cure but not create monsters.

Jackdaw Hammond and her daughter (for all intents and purposes) named Sadie move into Maggie's old home. Maggie is Jack's foster mother. There is more to that story and how they came about the "Bell Cottage" but you can read that for yourself.

I love the gardens at Bell Cottage because... they are alive! It's a witch garden and it protects the home from any and everything that dares to walk through it.

The Story:

You have the evil Dannicks that harass Jack and Maggie to find a potion from their garden to heal their son. Jack and Maggie are also trying to keep Sadie alive because she has the same kind of disease.

You have Felix who is in love with Jack and is traveling around trying to find out if there are side effects to drinking blood. Someone in the book had to do that because of the disease they have.

This book is very in depth about the occult, blood drinking, vampires, werewolves, and demons. The story does go back and forth in time so you can read more about the history of the evil people and where all of this stuff started.

I thought it was a pretty good book. I didn't love it and I didn't hate it. It's not full of any kind of real excitement if that is what you are looking for, but it is a good book if you want to read about some weird stuff going on and different things in history. I honestly want to know what is going to happen with Jack and Sadie.

I would like to thank BLOGGING FOR BOOKS for a free print copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Jodie says

This will contain spoilers for the previous book, The Secrets of Life and Death, so if you do plan on reading that one, consider yourself warned! And I will say, right now, you will definitely benefit from having read the first.

Still shaken by their encounter with Countess Báthory, and with Jack still feeling the powerful effects of drinking blood, borrowed timers Jack and Sadie have moved from Devon to the Lake District, to begin restoring an old cottage left to their witch saviour Maggie. Mysteries abound here, from the curious visit of Sir Henry Dannick, desperate for a potion that will save his grandson, to the tragic nature of the former occupant's death, to a garden that seems to fight back any attempt to tame it.

Felix, meanwhile, pushed away by Jack's fear of her new power and her potential blood lust, is making enquiries in New Orleans, further exploring blood magic, hoping to find something that may yet save Jack from turning into the very creature they just worked together to destroy.

Edward Kelley also returns, taking in a tour of Europe, sans his master and friend John Dee. Becoming known in his own right as a sorcerer and alchemist (and becoming a wanted man in the process), Kelley travels to Venice, in the hopes of meeting like-minded men of science. Instead, he meets with a dark curse, with violent rituals and with some unwelcome old faces.

As I said at the start of this review, I don't think Blood and Bone quite matches the first. I did have a few issues with Life and Death and, sadly, these issues have either not been addressed or have, bizarrely, been made worse. I prefer to end things on a high, so let's get the negatives out of the way first.

For me, as with the first, the constant need to re-explain things, because of the two concurrent stories and because people aren't always in the room when they're supposed to be, was really distracting and can slow

the story down – and definitely more prevalent in this book than Life and Death.

Trivial details are also a huge distraction. We know that Sadie isn't looking too well (is she ever any other way?), but we don't need to know what she's wearing.

Something I didn't mention in the previous review was my problems with the relationship between Jack and Felix. I didn't feel it was as well developed as, say, the mythology behind the magic, or as the characters themselves were – it just didn't sit right or feel particularly natural for them to come together. The only thing it felt was obvious, like there had to be a love story in there somewhere, and, actually, I feel the story might be even stronger with just them as close friends. This off vibe definitely carries into the second novel and, as the relationship plays such a (unnecessarily) huge role, particularly in relation to Felix's explorations in New Orleans and the difficulties that ensue when he returns, this really seemed to slow things down. The introduction of the character of Gina seems to only serve as fuel to the relationship's fire, rather than have any actual bearing on the story, however she may return and play a greater role in forthcoming books.

The book also has a fairly slow start and a fairly muted end – on Jack's end at least. In the build up to what I thought was the finale, things were rocketing along. It was fast paced, tense, and a little scary and, with the resolution of that, that's where it should have ended. Instead we get what feels like it should have been the first chapter of the third book, a sort of stop and start that feels unnecessary. The stronger end was with the finale of the Dannick storyline, for both Jack and for Kelley and the bonus chapters, while they worked within the Kelley narrative, it didn't sit quite right with Jack's. It's almost as if the stories are becoming too parallel, mirroring each other too closely, a major issue I have with novels that jump from one era to another.

But onto the good stuff!

One of my favourite things about the first book and, even more so, about this one, is the ethical implications of the types of magic practiced. With Felix exploring blood cults, rituals, and magic in New Orleans, all with their own methods, reasons, and belief systems, and with Jack's own experience with drinking blood, and the effects it has on her character, there's much that Alexander can say about the rights and wrongs in what the cast of characters are doing. Sadie is still weak after the encounter with Báthory, while Maggie is dealing with the strength of her own magical powers – all questions raised about the ethics of what these people are doing. As I said in the previous review, this is a real strong point for the book, that Alexander has crafted a magical world that doesn't just allow for things to be explained away, dismissed because they're magical. Jack's outbursts, though driven by forces she can't control, say a lot of what one might be thinking about what Maggie did to the girls, while snippets of their lives together, as a (admittedly rather oddly arranged) family, show how maybe the darkness that brought them together might be transcended.

Kelley's story, too, was a high point for me. Much better paced, much more interesting, much more rounded characters – both new and old. Unlike in the first one, Jack's story became something of a regurgitation of Kelley's; the strength in Life and Death was that Kelley's adventures were the background to Jack's. They informed the belief system, gave legitimacy and heritage to the magic. Here, it just seems like a 16th century mirror to them, though a much more exciting one.

A slightly weaker second part to what seems to be a growing series, you will absolutely benefit from having read the first. To really gauge the characters and to find yourself caring about them (in the modern day sections, at least), you'll need that background knowledge – something I had, which definitely made the book feel a lot more complete and aspects of Alexander's writing style a lot less annoying. Forewarned is forearmed, as they say! The Dannick storyline is an interesting and exciting one though, both in Jack and Kelley's narratives, so if you're looking for something a little spooky, hone in on that section – in both eras,

it's fast paced, tense, and actually pretty scary at times!

***Disclaimer:** I received a copy of this book from Blogging For Books, in exchange for my review.*

Yzabel Ginsberg says

[I received a copy of this novel through Edelweiss, in exchange for an honest review.]

I had quite liked the first book in this series, but I didn't enjoy this one as much. Perhaps because the pacing felt too slow, and the book too long for what it had to say? Either it would have worked better as a shorter read, or it would have deserved to be expanded on, developed more.

The format pretty much follows the same one as in the first book, interspersing the contemporary plot with one involving Edward Kelley again -- this time in Venice, where he's looking for information for the Dannick family, not realising he's about to stumble upon another, dangerous family, as well as meet old acquaintances of the not-so-pleasant kind. The Dannicks in turn play a part in Jack's and Sadie's lives, too, as the two girls set into the cottage of a dead witch and gradually discover what really happened there.

There are very interesting ideas and questions raised here, all the more after reading *The Secrets of Life and Death*. Jack's and Sadie's fates as "borrowed timers" obviously tie into the whole matter of having to feed on blood to survive, and what it involves and implies: would Jack become a monster by doing so? Would she suffer side effects? Can she, Maggie and Felix afford to let Sadie try this too, even though her health is failing and she's not likely to last as long as Jack has, even with the circles and potion?

However, while those points are indeed raised, not many answers are brought, and there's only slight progress towards the end to explain what may be happening. Sure, this sets the backdrop for a third novel, but considering that not much happens in this one, all things considered, I think such developments could very well have occurred here instead. Not necessarily through Jack herself: more about Felix's research, the people he met (Gina, Ivanova...), would have been nice as well.

The same is worth regarding Sadie. There's something going on with her and the garden at the new cottage, and it was brushed upon rather than given the weight it deserved. It felt like Sadie was mostly meant to be the Damsel in Distress again, and this made her potential role and importance... somewhat less potent.

As for the two families, the one in Venice and the one in England, I didn't find them so convincing as antagonists, and I think this is due to how little we actually see them "in action as villains". There's more telling than showing when it comes to the Dannicks -- the other one seemed a little more convincing... although the bit about them at the end left me wondering how such a change came to be. Details were needed here as well in my opinion, after what the Kelley chapters allowed me to see.

Conclusion: a novel with interesting elements, but too shy in exploiting them.

Maundrell says

It's not YOU, it's ME. I am too old for YA I'm afraid.

