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Black is for Beginnings (Blue Is for Nightmares)

Laurie Faria Stolarz
Flux (September 2009)
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Meet Stacey, a young woman who can perform magic. But with magic powers come some arcane problems: dreadful stuff, like malevolent premonitions. Stacey and her boyfriend Jacob, another user of magic, are able to see the future…through their nightmares. Yep, they can only see *bad* things in the future, shocking portents like a stalker who will nearly kill one of Stacey's best friends or a drunk driver who will kill the girl for whom Stacey baby-sits.

In the prequel to this novel, Jacob developed amnesia after falling off a cruise ship while trying to save Stacey's life. After that incident, he moved back to his hometown in Massachusetts to try to recover his memories. As this novel unfolds, he is recuperating while his ex-girlfriend Kira spends her free time helping him remember his past. When Stacey comes to visit, Kira sticks to them like a magnet slathered with superglue. Not only that, Jacob can remember Kira, but he doesn't remember Stacey.

Stacey and Jacob try their best to cope with their problems and rekindle their romance. While they still love each other, Jacob's move to Massachusetts complicates the relationship. Kira's advances only make matters worse.

The magic in this book is probably not the type of enchantment you'd expect in novels of this ilk. There is no battle magic, for example. No fireballs, lightning, or earth spikes. Instead, the heroes make potions out of household objects. They light special candles to help people sleep, to stop bad secrets, to provide strength or affection, or to give clarity. Laurie Stolarz developed this bestselling series, which began with *Blue is for Nightmares*. Script art director Barbara Kesel is a long-time writer for Dark Horse Comics and DC Comics, and her editorial credits include *Hellboy*, *Star Wars*, and *Aliens*. This is artist Janina Görrissen's first published project in the United States, but she has works published in Spain and France.

Their collaboration is a quick read. While the pacing is uneven in spots, the book is written and illustrated well enough to keep reader's attention. *Black is for Beginnings* is an intriguing and creative work about lovers, magic, dreams, and new beginnings.

JOEY A. KANE (September / October 2009)

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