

Bladeseeker: Convergent Fates

Roy Blackstone

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A strong standalone start to a fantasy series, Bladeseeker: Convergent Fates focuses on compelling relationships and intense action to make a lasting impression.

Roy Blackstone's *Bladeseeker: Convergent Fates* is an energetic young adult sword and sorcery fantasy novel and coming-of-age story in which two teenagers' powers are unleashed as the world hovers on the brink of war.

Ancient magical weapons called the Soulblades have reappeared, and the king of Nemea has offered a handsome reward for their recovery and return. Twelve-year-old Tyr, a knight's son whose family lives hand to mouth after the death of his father, sets out in search of the relics, hoping to use the reward to care for his mentally ill mother. He stumbles upon a golden sword and connects with the sword's spirit, Lumina, unleashing its power in battle alongside the king and prince of Nemea.

On a parallel journey, Kai, an orphan slave girl and gladiator, is drawn to an enchanted scroll as her weapon of choice in battle. Specter, the scroll's spirit, helps Kai escape her master and sends her on a quest to conquer a treacherous mountain. But the problem with magical weapons is that everybody—humans, seraphs, and dragons included—wants them, and the price for their magic is the wielder's soul.

The story is character driven. Tyr and Kai are fleshed out and given time to develop and mature while on their respective journeys, with their spirit guides leading them. Kai, especially, is dimensional; her violent past and dubious origins are used to explore a range of emotions and intentions. In contrast, Tyr had a more idyllic upbringing, even though his family suffers financially. Tyr idolizes the Nemean knights and their chivalrous deeds. His wide-eyed innocence and worldly perspective is colored by the misdeeds and behaviors of the adults whom he observes during his travels. Still, Kai and Tyr approach decisions in a similar way, letting their new experiences inform their standing knowledge before deciding on a next course of action.

Prince Vandar and Princess Cecilia Scarlet also move the story forward, although their development is less dimensional. Vandar is the golden-haired heir to Nemea; he serves as a mentor and role model to idealistic Tyr, and as a mirror of how adult Tyr might be imagined.

The story's narrative action is brisk and energetic, and interior exchanges between the Soulblades' spirits and their wielders are well balanced with exterior conversations and exposition. Kai is set up as an antihero, ruthless as she slashes her way through opponents to get to her final destination. Tyr is set up as a hero-in-training. The story builds in momentum and intensity as it moves from the sleepy backstories of its characters to the kingdom's unease, first by examining the alliances they forge and then during the clashes of battles. Its progression is natural and logical, and its sentences are succinct to reinforce its movement.

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NANCY POWELL (September 11, 2020)

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