

Shadow Bound

Erin Kellison

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Urban fantasy has bloomed in popularity in the last five or so years. Writers such as Kelley Armstrong (Women of the Underworld), Charlaine Harris (Sookie Stackhouse) and C. E. Murphy (The Walker Papers) are established “career” writers now, based on the series they’ve each written.

Urban fantasy can be defined as fantasy fiction in a contemporary setting, involving humans and mythical and/or paranormal beings, where the lead character is most often a strong female with certain powers. The relationships are complex, often involve at least one romance, and range from a single couple to an extended family or group. Erin Kellison has stepped into this area of fantasy fiction with her debut novel, *Shadow Bound*, and manages to present something fresh. That is no easy feat.

Talia O’Brien, PhD is trying to land her first job after graduate school when her life turns completely sideways. She has a special talent: she can draw shadows to her and use them for camouflage as well as for controlling objects within the shadows. Her mother died giving birth to her, and she was raised by an aunt. Her father? She’s never met him. But she suspects that the Shadowman—Death, and a prince of the fae, or Faery—may be connected to her in some way.

Adam Thorne created the Segue Institute to study wraiths, exceptionally strong and fast-regenerating beings who have exchanged their mortal lives for immortality. They feed on human souls. Adam’s brother Jacob is one of them, and Adam has been trying to find a way to reverse his brother’s affliction. Then he discovers Talia’s PhD dissertation online, and her work leads him to think that she can help him.

However, Talia has been hiding her power most of her life, and is unaware of her true heritage. When she and Adam meet, they begin to change each other, and in the process Talia learns more about herself than she thought possible. Her heritage is one of the keys that will help humans defeat the wraiths and their master. But what Adam learns about his brother’s fate and the choices of some of his non-Institute colleagues nearly kills both of them.

Using Celtic mythology, Christian theology, ghosts, and fairy tales, Kellison has crafted a very readable tale of two people whose particular talents are revised and expanded by the relationship between them. They are thrown together by circumstance; neither is interested in romance at first, and they are on edge most of the time due to their unique circumstances. Both are in need of redemption from the choices others have made.

Readers of urban fantasy will be drawn to this book for its interesting take on the paranormal and how it operates in our world—as well as for the romance between Talia and Adam. The second book in the series, *Shadow Fall*, is scheduled for August release.

J.G. STINSON (July 16, 2010)

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