

Shadow King

Susan K. Hamilton

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Shadow King is an intriguing fantasy that balances the darkness and light of the Fae.

Love, passion, and the struggle for power threaten to tear the Fae world apart in Susan K. Hamilton's fantasy novel, *Shadow King*.

Six hundred years ago, an event known as the Desolation destroyed the realm of the Fae. To survive, the Fae fled to the world of the humans and sealed the portal between their two realms forever. Struggling to adapt in their new world, the Fae left the conflicts caused by the Desolation unresolved.

A long overdue power struggle comes to its head when Seireadan, a web designer and part-time fortune teller seeking revenge for the death of her family during the Desolation, and Aohdan, the crime patriarch of Boston who is in open opposition to the king of the Fae, fall in love. Unless Seireadan and Aohdan succeed in the imminent collection of old debts, the Fae may be torn apart once more.

Seireadan and Aohdan balance the darkness and the light inherent in the Fae beautifully, making them true characters of the shadow world. Equal in strength and determination, the couple is the nexus around which the entire story revolves. Surrounding them are colorful characters including Seireadan's best friend, Lia, and the captains of Aohdan's crime network.

The story starts in the middle of an event; its character introductions are rushed. As it gains momentum and the characters become more familiar, their footing becomes stronger. By the time the story proper really takes off, there is no doubt as to who is who and which side each character is on.

Conflicts are realistic in their moments, if they're not set up well and are quickly resolved. The focus remains on the main story, though, and the subplots never take over. Seireadan's discovery of Aohdan's true identity is sudden, and an argument between Aohdan and his second-in-command, Galen, is gripping until the men abandon their hurt feelings as if nothing happened.

Flowing language and solid worldbuilding make for easy reading, as do convenient lists of the major characters and the proper pronunciations of their Irish names. A glossary covers different types of Fae creatures.

Seireadan and Aohdan's relationship develops naturally. The build up to the climax is slow and steady, but its aftermath is rushed to get to a happily ever after. An epilogue hints at darker events lurking and provides some late balance.

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ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (April 3, 2019)

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