

Tiger's Quest

Colleen Houck

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Young women yearn for romance, for prince charming, and sometimes for more than one suitor. Those fantasies are reality for Kelsey Hayes, an eighteen-year-old American college student, who in an earlier book in Colleen Houck's Tiger series, became involved with a pair of unusual brothers. The handsome young men are princes under an ancient spell that causes them to spend more than half their days as tigers.

Kelsey is in love with Ren, the romantic and poetic white tiger brother, but has great fondness and confused emotions for Kishan, the black tiger brother, who makes clear his passionate desires for her. In *Tiger's Curse*, Kelsey spurned Ren, and now she has decided to return to the United States after her internship in India. To her delight, however, Ren arrives and jealously competes for her affections when he learns she's been dating. Shortly after Kishan appears, the evil Lokesh, who is responsible for the curse, begins to pursue Kelsey and the brothers and manages to capture Ren.

Kelsey and Kishan, aided by Mr. Kadam, embark on an incredible search for Ren. They follow a riddle-like prophecy that takes them through India to Tibet and Shangri-La.

Houck's knowledge of literature and mythology from many cultures becomes part of the high-action drama. In lesser hands, the combination of sweet sylvan faeries, giant bats, iron birds, and a Divine Scarf that can weave anything in an instant, would flounder in absurdity. Houck, however, pulls these elements together and even educates readers as old myths and stories become part of her imaginative tale. For example, the Norse god Odin had pet ravens that stole things for him, including thoughts and memories. Shortly after the characters discuss that story, they encounter thieving ravens and the myth becomes part of the plot, as do others, such as Odysseus' bag of winds.

The story is enlivened by creative similes. For example, Houck writes, "[leaves as long as my body] slapped against the branches like stiff clothes on a clothesline," and, "Something was dragging across the surface of my mind like a squeegie over soapy glass."

Although the lengthy story is charged with action and stolen kisses, there are moments of humor as Houck describes the brothers' tiger-like appetites and behavior, as well as a fairy makeover.

The smart characters often have reflective moments and discussions about the difference between types of love and friendship between men and women, and what qualities cause a person to love one individual over another. Cat lovers will understand the moments of tiger love that Kelsey has for the brothers when they are not in human form.

Houck masterfully integrates key elements from her first book into this one. The final chapters are a surprise, cleverly paving the way for the next book in the series. *Tiger's Quest* is indeed magic.

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