



We Are Blood and Thunder

Kesia Lupo

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Two women grapple with their intertwined destinies in a world beset by storms in Kesia Lupo's fantasy adventure, *We Are Blood and Thunder*.

The city of Duke's Forest sealed itself off six years ago after a never-ending storm encircled it and a deadly plague began to spread. Abandoned as a marked child, Lena works as an apprentice to a mortician in the tunnels beneath the city. When she's outed as a mage, she flees into the forest, where she stumbles upon a masked figure who's attempting to break into the city she just left.

Constance escaped the city before the storm struck; she's returned to break the spell that chains the storm to it. She also hopes to regain her rightful leadership role within the city walls. Constance and Lena's destinies become connected, even as their paths diverge: Lena travels on to a temple, hoping to master her mage powers; Constance learns what's happened to her city, family, and friends.

The twinned narrative bounces between Lena's education and Constance's difficulties with dispelling the storm and freeing her father from a madness spell. Lena is tested, and there are compelling hints that non-mages can access power, too. Chapters are short, though, and the emotional nature of Lena's trials is interrupted by jumps into Constance's court intrigues.

While the magic system is fascinating, its lore and mechanics are glossed over. The world building is elsewhere just as sparse; the massive City of Kings feels empty save for the few focal characters, and their interpersonal relationships are underexplored. The book's rapid pacing leaves ample room for developments, though, and a few of them are shocking, as with Constance's ultimate connection to the storm.

Court intrigues and complicated magic systems make *We Are Blood and Thunder* a tempting first entry into a new fantasy series.

JOHN M. MURRAY (March / April 2020)

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