

A REVIEW OF CHARLAINE HARRIS' "DEAD RECKONING" **by Debbie Kuhn**

Family secrets, an explosion, knock down drag-out vamp battles, a crazy assassin – all of these can be found in this eleventh installment of the Sookie Stackhouse series. Our protagonist is always chin-deep in trouble, which is what we want, of course. It makes each of these books a fun, fast read. While "Dead Reckoning" can be considered a stand-alone novel, there's no doubt that a person would enjoy it much more having read the previous ten offerings.

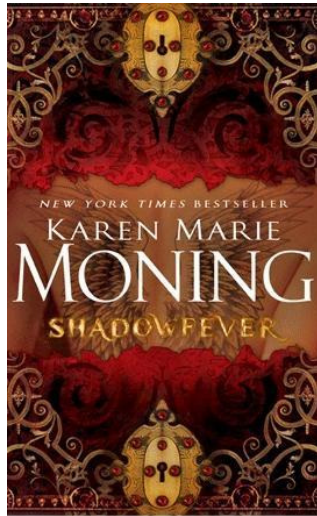
When the book opens, Sookie is hoping for a calm spell, but it's not meant to be. The first disaster occurs when Sam Merlotte's bar is fire-bombed. Sookie's boss is a shape-shifter, so perhaps it's a hate crime, she thinks. But Sookie has many enemies of her own – as she soon finds out when shortly after the fire, armed hoodlums show up at Merlotte's looking for her.

Her normally over-protective vampire lover, Eric Northman, seems distracted these days, due to business and politics, and he and his "child," Pam, are constantly at each other's throats. Sookie is frustrated that they refuse to explain why. Turns out Eric wants to kill his new boss, Victor, the Regent of Louisiana. Eric and Pam pull Sookie into the deadly scheme, and things get really complicated really fast.

Sookie's world is also rocked by the discovery of an important family secret that her grandmother never got around to telling her. This discovery has the power of changing Sookie's life forever – and that of a certain loved one. Sookie also gets to learn more about her "fairy side" from her great-uncle Dermot and her cousin Claude – who now live with her in her grandma's farmhouse.

To me, this book seems like a pivotal one in the series, one that could be marking a turning point in Sookie's life – especially if Harris is planning to end the series after another two or three books. Everything must eventually come to an end, and although I hate to see Sookie wander off into the sunset forever, I am anxious to see how the author ends her story – and which lover Sookie finally chooses to be with forever – or not.

If you liked all the other books in the series, I think you will appreciate this latest installment, filled with the usual eccentric characters, unconventional romance, and fast-paced action. Go Sookie!



A REVIEW OF KAREN MARIE MONING'S "SHADOWFEVER"
by Debbie Kuhn

"ShadowFever" is the fifth and final book in the urban fantasy Fever Series. If you haven't read the first four novels, you need to wait and catch up before diving into this one, which has 507 pages. Otherwise, you'll be lost. For the rest of us fans of the series, we finally get the answers and payoff we've been waiting for.

"Pink fluffy Mac" – the young southern belle who first traveled to Ireland to find out why her sister was murdered - is gone forever. Meet Mac 5.0 – a badass warrior. MacKayla Lane is still fighting the dark Unseelie Fae and searching for the Sinsar Dubh – an ancient Fae book that contains the key to the Song of Making, giving the finder the power to create life.

This book is an emotional roller coaster. All sorts of questions will be answered (although there are a few mysteries left at the end, for the purpose of Moning's new spinoff series).

I did not see at least two of the twists/answers coming. I was flabbergasted – and that rarely happens to me. The biggest surprise was finding out the identity of Mac's sister Alina's killer. Wow. And instead of obsessing over who/what Jericho Barrons really is, I realized that I should have been wondering who Mac really is as well.

And who is the concubine, and where is the Seelie Queen, and the Unseelie King? What happened to Christian MacKeltar? Why does Mac keep dreaming about the White Mansion? What terrible thing is hidden under Barrons' garage?

I hate to give anything away, even to the few remaining people who haven't yet read this book. I don't think any of you will be disappointed. It was well worth the wait.