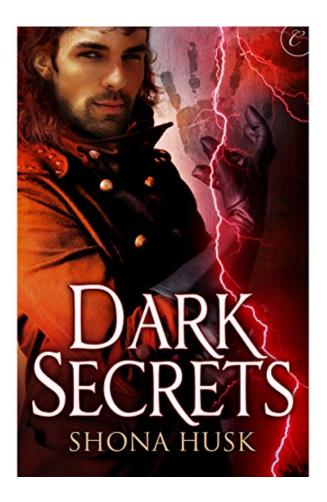


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Six years ago, Haidyn Mast left his home and his betrothed Anisa to follow his magical calling. Too weak to join the Arcane Guild and too ashamed to return home, he has made a life as a prostitute - to all outward appearances. In truth, he sells his mind but not his body, using magic to let his clients experience their most secret fantasies while his hands stay clean. Even the Lawman, the arbiter of justice in Reseda, is one of his clients, but Haidyn would rather not know the extent of that man's depravity.

Though successful, Haidyn is shunned as a whore and his lack of formal training is causing his power to grow out of control. He's ready to retire and leave the city, but when he sees his Anisa standing at the Lawman's side, he knows he must rescue her from the abusive enforcer. Risking his life and his sanity, he devises a plan, knowing that failure will mean death for him, and a lifetime of torment for her....

For more Arcane stories, download Dark Vow today.

- Sales Rank: #93161 in Audible
- Published on: 2013-02-18
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 236 minutes

Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A Great Character

By FWM

This is the second book in Shona Husk's Arcane series; however, I haven't read the first book, Dark Vow, and I don't think you need to either to enjoy Dark Secrets.

This book is touted as a "Western-style fantasy". I wasn't entirely sure what to expect of that categorization. I mean, I don't particularly like Westerns. Or really, y'know, at all. Reading Deadwood (which is what comes to mind when I think of Westerns) was nothing short of painful for me. So there was trepidation. But this book seems to have taken all the best elements of Westerns and left the more annoying traits behind. You've got lawmen that are unchallenged powers, taverns full of sin, sympathetic prostitutes, demure womenfolk, codes of honor, normalized violence, and a Wild West setting. With magic. And apparently there's this whole genre of "weird Westerns" that wasn't even on my radar, which makes me wonder if I could learn to like cowboys, after all.

Something to consider. For now, I'll just focus on Shona Husk's writing because I know I at least like that. And do I, ever. When I first read the synopsis of the book, I was immediately intrigued. (The whole Western element didn't become apparent until I already had the book.) And this is one of those happy occasions when I can report that my enjoyment of the story completely met my expectations, and then some. What I liked most was the thorough and intricate world-building. There's a complete reality presented here–?one with its own language, customs, and social structure. The details are everywhere, yet their placement in the story is so matter-of-fact that you don't question their exoticism. Which is my favorite way to approach a fantasy setting. I appreciate the fact that the author doesn't spend too much time explaining this world; rather, she lets the descriptions and explanations unfold naturally in the course of the story.

The other strong suit at work is Haidyn. He's a very compelling protagonist and an effective narrative lens. It's impossible not to sympathize with him. Like a downtrodden prince, he has a dashing personality that just barely masks a wealth of regret and world-weariness. Moreover, his self-reproach is poignant and endearing. He's a man that's made bad choices, and he knows it. But even when life is kicking him in the teeth, he refuses to go down completely. And he never stops being a good person, no matter his circumstances.

As you may be picking up, this isn't an entirely happy book. While I wouldn't go so far as to call it dark fantasy, there's a definite edge at work that keeps things uncomfortable. It's a constant thread of fear and degeneration coursing through every character, every scene. Nothing to shy away from, mind you. Rather, it keeps the sense of urgency going strong until the very end, when everyone–?reader included–?feels like they can finally take a full breath.

This book was received courtesy of NetGalley and Carina Press in exchange for an honest review. Originally posted at Strange Bedfellows: PNR Reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Edgy Wild West Fantasy

By Jenny Schwartz

First up, the cover is perfect for the story. It's told first person by the hero Haidyn. Or maybe he's a bit of an anti-hero? Either way, he has that brooding sexy look of the cover.

The story is dark, intense, but a romance. I had to read on and know how things turned out. *By romance, I mean love is motivational and there is a happy ending - I hope that's not a spoiler?

Because I'd read "Dark Vow", I knew the world of "Dark Secrets". It's an intriguing and unique world. Wild West with a fantasy edgy steampunkish vibe. The book has style.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Light on the romance, heavy on the personal growth By Ginny Lurcock

I've read six books in the past week, three of which are being released today and I now have to review. And because my procrastination likes to have real world consequences, two of those books I really wish I had more time to think about.

Dark Secrets is the first such book.

I read Dark Secrets first, partially because I liked the premise of the book, partially because I was in the mood for fantasy, but mostly because I lurve Shona Husk. If you have a chance to read her Shadowlands series, do so, because that series is off the bleedin' chain.

So going into this book I had high hopes for a quick little romance read set in a fantasy world with magic and patron gods and miscellaneous other good things.

Allow me to spare you some confusion. This book isn't really a romance. I mean yes, the main characters

actions are prompted by his love for what was basically his high school sweetheart, but that's basically it. You get a few interactions, and his sucker punch realization that this is the woman he has always and will always love. Very little in the way of developing hearts and budding flowers.

Does this take away from the story?

Not even a little bit.

Instead you get this fascinating look at what one man who's sold his morals to the highest bidder and what he does post sucker punch. You get to look at the workings of this flawed government system. Of its dirty officials, skewed morals, and rather err... flexible laws.

Was it the romance I wanted? No. Was it a fantastic fantasy (yes I giggled when I typed that) that I thoroughly enjoyed? Heck yes.

3.5 Stars. Mild romantic elements with heavy mind altering magic use. Fun for the whole family. If your family is okay reading about pleasure houses.

• • •

Actually... Forget I mentioned families.

As a side note, I picked this up without reading book one in the series. There were parts where I was like "the effe..." in reference to the world and it's magic, but not so bad that I wasn't able to piece things together.

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