



## Knight's Curse

*Karen Duvall*

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A skilled knife fighter since the age of nine, Chalice knows what it's like to live life on the edge—precariously balanced between the dark and the light. But the time has come to choose. The evil sorcerer who kidnapped her over a decade ago requires her superhuman senses to steal a precious magical artifact...or she must suffer the consequences.

Desperate to break the curse that enslaves her, Chalice agrees. But it is only with the help of Aydin—her noble warrior-protector—that she will risk venturing beyond the veil to discover the origins of her power. Only for him will she dare to fully embrace her awesome talents. For a deadly duel is at hand, and Chalice alone will have to decide between freedom...and the love of her life.

## **Knight's Curse Details**

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Author : Karen Duvall

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## From Reader Review Knight's Curse for online ebook

### Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

*"Chalice is a modern-day knight descended from an order of female knights that existed in the Middle Ages and actually used hatchets to defend their homes when the men went off to fight. In Chalice's twenty-first century world, that order still exists, but the female knights are the progeny of angels. The abilities they inherit are their most powerful weapons..."*

Chalice has no idea why she's different: she'd lost her mother when she was just a baby and she never knew anything about her father so her heightened senses (smell, hearing and sight) were never explained to her. Her senses are so strong that she's forced to wear ear plugs and contacts to protect herself from sensory overload. Because of her abilities, Chalice was taken from the monastery where she was peacefully growing up by a man claiming to be her father. To keep Chalice from running away, the organization that took her, Vyantara, tied her to a gargoyle. She is now forced to steal rare artifacts for Vyantara and keep pretending that the man who took her truly is her father. If she fails to do so, she will turn into a gargoyle herself.

Because of the way she was taken and treated, Chalice is convinced that all magic is bad. But then she meets Aydin, a guy who's in a very similar situation, tied to a gargoyle and working for Vyantara. He introduces her to a hidden world of good magic and benevolent magical creatures.

I must admit that I liked the way the story developed and, what's more important, I was genuinely surprised by the ending. On the other hand, the world Duvall created just wasn't colorful enough and, as much as I tried, I couldn't picture all the necessary details in my head. I can't say I liked Chalice much either, and Aydin was creepy at times.

I have many friends who are primarily urban fantasy fans, just like I am. I think most of them might enjoy Knight's Curse.

I will definitely read the next book in this series.

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### Jenn says

RECEIVED FROM: Net Galley For Review

\*\*\*NOTE MY REVIEWS OFTEN CONTAIN SPOILERS\*\*\*

Chalice is a Vyantara thief, kidnapped as a child from a monastery she has been forced to use her enhanced sense to steal magical artifacts from around the world ever since. The one thing she desires more than anything else is her freedom, a chance to have a life of her own away from her captors and the things they force her to do. She doesn't trust magic, she's only seen the bad side of it. When she meets Aydin another Vyantara thief he opens up a new world to her, a world where not all magic is evil and shows her another side to the world of magic. Together they must discover an escape from the Vyantara so that they can fulfill her destiny, to reunite the Hatchet Knights she was born from and help them to protect the world. But with

evil surrounding them, can they make it out of the organization that has kept them captive so long alive?

The first thing I have to say is that I didn't understand the relationship between Aydin and Chalice. I mean yes he was helping her because he was sworn to protect the order of the Hatchet Knights. But Chalice trusts him and falls for him rather quickly over the spans of what a couple days. DuVall's created this character who was basically violently abducted from a monastery, forcibly bonded to a vicious killer gargoyle and forced to steal even though it goes against all her beliefs. She's never had one person in her life she could depend on her trust. Knowing that it doesn't make sense that she'd let Aydin in so quickly or trust any attraction she might feel for him. I mean yeah I could eventually see a bond forming between them over time, but as quickly as this one did, I just found it very hard to believe and that's one of my major issues with the story. I honestly think with the type of character DuVall has created here it would take Aydin coming through for her multiple times and proving what type of person he was before any sort of trust would occur. Trust is earned, it's not a gift and with a character like this it should take a lot more time and be a lot harder for that trust to be earned than what is shown in the story. My second issue with the book is that though the end of the novel was written with a sense of closure, the story itself seemed less like plot and more like world building. Meaning what we've been offered in this first novel in the series seems more like setting the scene and creating a world the reader can understand. I guess the intent of the plot was for Chalice to get free of the Vyantara so she could begin her destiny of uniting the Hatchet Knights. But while there was a lot going on I wouldn't really call the book fast paced and neither would I call the plot I don't know driven I guess I'd say. It didn't really feel like the story had a beginning middle and end. It more felt like the scene for the world has been set, the main character is being built and suddenly there's an end that does have a feel of closure but I just don't really know how to explain it. While the world was interesting I think this book would have served better as the start to a longer novel, rather than writing the final scenes with a sense of closure it would have served better as a scene transition to a new chapter in the character's life. Also while DuVall has created an interesting world here I don't feel she explained things enough, the history is missing from the story. We sort of know what the Vyantara is, but we don't know how long they've existed or why or really what their purpose is other than to make money. I can't see an organization existing as long as this one is hinted to have existed without a larger purpose beyond monetary gain. Also how does anyone know Chalice's destiny, why was this order of Knights really created? Finishing this novel leaves a lot more questions than there are answers and while I understand that it's the start of a larger series I personally feel it should have offered more in the opening novel rather than only offering enough to leave you curious as to what will happen in future works. The first person novel was well written, but I didn't feel it was really fulfilling. While DuVall shows a talent for world building I didn't think there was enough of a plot for this to be a standalone novel. Now with what little taste she's given us of her world in this novel, I'm certain that this combined with future series world will lead to a stunning series, but as a standalone title in my opinion it falls short.

DuVall did a decent job with building characters. Being in the first person Chalice is obviously well developed. Though some of her actions don't quite fit with the history and life created for her she does have a nice depth of feeling as well as obvious strength and flaws. She promises to be a very interesting character in the series to come. Aydin was less developed but we definitely got a good sense of him in the novel. Considering his fate at the end I'm not sure if we'll be offered the opportunity to learn more in future works or not. Gavin was a cross between well developed and one dimensional. While he did come across as a fleshy character, no reasons were offered for his motives and his only real character traits were that he was demented and evil. The thing is no matter how good or bad a person is no one is completely one thing or another and Gavin needs a little bit more to his character though it's pretty much a given that's not going to happen. Other characters were given enough to be distinctive from one another but we didn't really get a sense of knowing them which is common in a first person novel.

Overall I think I'd recommend the book to fantasy readers, but I would probably also advise to wait and get more than one title in the series before reading it since this book more serves as a series introduction than it does a fleshed out and fulfilling novel.

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## **Dark Faerie Tales says**

Review Courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

**Quick & Dirty:** Dark Urban Fantasy where the bad guys always have the upper hand and a heroine that just wants to be good. A decent story but too many plot devices detract from the overall plot.

**Opening Sentence:** Sticks and stones may break my bones, but I'd see them coming long before they hurt me.

**The Review:**

I am a little on the fence about my review for Knight's Curse. I love history and I really like it when an author takes something out of history books, especially something I've never heard of, and puts their own spin on things. Chalice was born the daughter of an angel and a Hatchet Knight. Hatchet Knights are basically female descendants of angels. They are born with special powers that they use to help defeat the evil in the world. Chalice's mother died due to strange events at the time she gave birth to her daughter leaving Chalice to grow up in a monastery until the age of thirteen, when she is kidnapped.

Chalice is then raised by a very bad man, Gavin. He is a powerful member of the Vyantara, a secret society of sorcerers and thieves. Gavin takes advantage of Chalice's unique abilities of hyper-senses to be a thief for the Vyantara. Gavin has Chalice bonded to a gargoyle in order to keep her under control. She can only be away from the gargoyle for three days before she begins to turn into one of them.

She has been dealt a bad hand but she tries her hardest to be good. She wants nothing more than to break her curse, get away from the Vyantara and claim her birthright as a Hatchet Knight. Her only help comes from her long lost father and her only ally in the Vyantara, Ayden, an immortal warrior who has been with the group for over 800 years and who is also bonded to a gargoyle.

The world-building in Knight's Curse is simply done. There is no huge info dump, in fact, for two organizations that have been around for over one thousand years there is surprisingly little told about them. I think how little is revealed works for this story, just enough information is revealed to move the plot along.

Knight's Curse is completely told from Chalice's point of view. The plot moves along at a steady pace for the most part. There is a lot going on with the story that it did have me wondering how the story would end and which conflict would be resolved. I did feel the tone to Knight's Curse was dark and despairing, it may not intentionally have been this way, but I felt Chalice was in way too deep with the enemy to get out. Her curse alone is bad enough but her only ally is also in deep with the Vyantara. The tension definitely runs high.

Knight's Curse is a decent urban fantasy debut with a new twist on a historical group, truly evil bad guys and a heroine who just wants to do the right thing. It's not a bad read but it is not spectacular either, it had potential but does fall a little flat at times. Knight's Curse was a book that I normally wouldn't have picked

up off the shelf but I am pleased that I read it.

Notable Scene:

“Come on,” Ayden said, and took hold of my arms to help me out. My back hurt so badly that I couldn’t stand up straight. He grabbed my scarf off the floor of the SUV and draped it over my head, forming it into a hood that hid most of my face.

“That bad, huh?” I asked.

“Let’s just say we don’t want to upset the neighbor.”

A middle-aged couple walked by and after one look at me, they shrank back, their faces leached of color. The woman’s gaze locked on to me and she took a cautious step closer. “Honey, I’ve got some cream that will clear that right up.” She handed me a business card, snapping her hand away the second I touched it. “Give me a call.”

I looked at the card. Avon.

I touched my face, fingertips running over scales the size of pennies. I wanted to scream, but my voice was locked in my throat. I’d never come this close to changing before. Agitation chewed at my nerves and I knew that if I could relax, I’d be able to slow the transformation process.

The Knight’s Curse Series:

1. Knight’s Curse

2. Darkest Knight

FTC Advisory: Harlequin/Luna provided me with a copy of Knight’s Curse. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

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### **Tahlia Newland says**

‘Knights Curse’ is rich with imagery, magic and strange things like people becoming gargoyles and a bodiless head that is still alive and talking. It’s a tightly woven tale that keeps you reading with its unpredictability.

Chalice’s world is a dark one, enslaved to a cruel man, cursed to become a gargoyle or a gargoyle’s dinner and without family or friends, until she meets Aydin. Even then, she’s not sure if she can trust him, because her master does. Nevertheless, he shows her things and gives her information that revolutionises the way she sees the world and offers her hope for the future, if she can just get out of the curse that makes her return to her master every seventy two hours or turn into a monster.

Chalice has our sympathy from the very beginning of this book when at thirteen years of age, she is kidnapped from the only home she’s ever known and forced to become a thief of magical artefacts. When we meet her again many years later, she is a likeable young woman trying to do the best of a terrible

situation and when Aydin befriends her, we are delighted. He's just what she needs, a lovely handsome guy, with an interesting past who wants to help her. Of course, plans do not go according to plan, and Chalice's improvisations and others interventions have unwanted side affects which her and Aydin have to deal with.

The end is excellent, leaving us with a resolution to one problem, whilst setting up another one but without resorting to a cliff-hanger. Rather, we are left with a new beginning - a hopeful one - and a promise to rectify the remaining problem. Since we know there is a solution to the problem (all be it a rather tricky one), we are not left bereft, but trusting that Chalice will do what she swears she will and all will eventually be well. That story will make an interesting read, presumably in a sequel, and I'll certainly be reading it when it comes out. I give it 5 stars and recommend it for all paranormal fantasy lovers. There's nothing too hot and heavy in it, but it is a cruel world.

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### **Michelle, the Bookshelf Stalker Queen of the Undead says**

*I can't be too wrong about this book (ok, I can, but I hope not) since Publisher's Weekly has it on its Top 10 Picks for Fall 2011.*

#### **The rambling intro that has no real purpose in my review**

I'm not known for my long reviews. I HATE writing and I love reading. If I am writing, I'm not reading. Plus, except for a few select reviewers who write excellent long reviews, I generally don't read long reviews. If I want to read more than three paragraphs, I'll read a book. However, I'm the first reviewer for this book on Goodreads AND I loved the book so I feel guilty if I don't do my job as a reviewer & do a complete, thorough review. Guilt makes me do a lot of things (just ask my manipulative hubby and kids that can work me over using their damn "puppy dog" eyes and don't even get me started on the ACTUAL puppy dog, she pretty much rules the damn house..ok..so off subject here).

#### **The start of the actual review (maybe)**

*Before I started the book and solely based on the cover*

Ok. So I have no clue why I picked this book. What is up with this cover? Is that glass floating in the wind? If so, it did not come from the stained glass window since that looks intact. Is that a girl or a pretty looking guy? What is up with those jeans? Why is she just standing there? I wonder if she is making the wind? Who knows... why not read the book and find out?

*First an introduction of Chalice*

Chalice is different. She has senses that are extraordinary. She can hear like a....like a.... dolphin (yeah, I had to look up an animal that has super good hearing). She has vision like a hawk (figured that one out on my own) and the sense of smell better than the bear (again.. all on my own). Her senses are so good, they are debilitating. She has to wear earplugs, nose plug, and contacts just to withstand the everyday overload of stimuli.

## **Now really, the story**

As a child, Chalice is living in a Monastery. Not by choice, but because that is where she was born. Chalice thinks her mom died giving birth to her (the key word is “thinks”). While her life is simple among the Monks, it is her life and she lives it.

When Chalice was still a child, a man named Gavin comes to the monastery claiming that he is Chalice’s dad. The monks have no reason to doubt him since he has ways to prove his fatherhood. Chalice instantly knows that Gavin is lying (she heard Gavin talking to his men from miles away before he approached the monastery). Chalice vocalizes her suspicions and in the end, Gavin takes Chalice and kills the monks that raised her.

Fast-forward 12 years. Chalice is bonded to Shui. Not by choice. Shui is a gargoyle and he was one vicious human being before he was turned into a gargoyle. Shui continues his viciousness in gargoyle form and there is no love lost between Chalice and Shui. So why is Chalice bonded with Shui? Because Gavin controls Shui, and unless Chalice makes contact with Shui every 72 hours, Chalice will turn into a gargoyle as well (trust me, these gargoyles are dangerous scary creatures, not the little stone gargoyles you may be used to). Gavin uses this forced bonding to control Chalice and Chalice is forced to use her senses to be a kick ass thief (she can hear when people are approaching from miles away. She can hear the pins in a combination lock as it turns; she can see not only what is in front of her, but also what was in the room previously. She can smell not only blood but also whose blood it is).

Gavin, a member of the Vyantara, uses humans, demons, angels, gargoyles or whatever supernatural he can get his hands on to do his bidding in stealing priceless artifacts, artwork or other curiosities. In return, he sells them and makes a huge profit. As long as he can control his supernatural servants, he has the perfect gig.

Chalice has been trained by Gavin (and other instructors controlled by Gavin), in knife fighting, combat, stealth, and deception. She is good at her job and she hates it. She hates that she has to hurt people, lie to them, and steal from potentially good, honest people. However, due to her indentured servitude, she can’t do a damn thing. Or can she?

Aydin comes into the story when Chalice thinks she is going on just another job. Aydin, like Chalice is bonded to a gargoyle named Shojin. Again, like Chalice, Aydin will turn if he does not make contact with his gargoyle within 72 hours. However, Aydin has been around a long time and has quite the story. He has a history that brings to the story more questions than answers, and some conflict that creates some interesting twists.

Chalice hates magic. She hates magic because the Vyantara use it to hurt people and force their hand. However, Aydin shows Chalice another side to magic. He introduces her to wide range of characters that opens Chalice’s eyes and more importantly gives her hope that one day she can be free of the servitude placed on her. But, at what cost?

## **The other characters**

What makes this book so outstanding is the multitude of characters. Usually I hate many characters because, well, I get confused. That does not happen here. There are bad “guys” like Zee, Shui, & Gavin but there also a huge cast of great characters such as Shojin, Quin, Elmo, Ling Ling, and my absolute favorite- Ruby.

Here is a pic of what I think Ruby looks like (she is a “cursed” gem encrusted thimble sized frog with a heart of gold and endless love for those that are good).

## **What I loved**

*Aydin- not the normal alpha hero.* He isn’t perfect looking and he isn’t super strong with a ton of muscles.

*All the other characters.* The author really thought out each character, and how the individual characters were important to the story and their relationship to Chalice.

*The story.* It had action, mystery, and just a small touch of romance (very small, this is definitely not a paranormal romance novel).

## **What I didn’t like**

*The cover.* Chalice has very unique eyes and you can’t even see them. In fact, Chalice is so far away, you aren’t even sure if it is a woman on the cover at first glance. Furthermore, Chalice is an expert at using a specific type of knife. Why not show the knife in her hands? It seems silly to have such a strong female character but than represent her as this tomboyish looking simplistic girl with unknown skills and/or talents.

*The book summary.* When you read the book summary, you think there is a lot of romance in this book (at least I did). There is not. This is definitely Urban Fantasy at its best.

## **Overall**

Except for my dislike for the cover, everything else was pure love. Not only did I love this book from the beginning but I maintained the lovefest throughout the entire novel.

## **5 out of 5 stars!**

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## **Karissa says**

I got an advanced reading copy of this book through NetGalley(dot)com. It was an okay book, but I had trouble enjoying the characters and picturing the world.

Chalice is a half-angel who has been trained from the age of nine to knife fight and steal. Her mother died during childbirth and her father is a Fallen Angel. Chalice has been bound to a viscous gargoyle and is being used by her guardian, an evil sorceror, to carry out their dirty work. Things change when she meets Aydin, who like her has special abilities, and (like her) is bound to a gargoyle. Chalice is now twenty five and wants her freedom; she will find out that freedom has a cost and along the way she will have some tough choices to make.

There were some things I really liked about this book. The whole theme of angels and gargoyles is unique and interesting. The world built here is complex, yet incomplete.

I had some problems with Chalice as a character. I didn't understand the need for the flashback prologue, I think the story would have been better without it. Chalice always came across as kind of bland to me, she was vindictive but didn't have a lot of dimension to her character outside of that. At many points in time Chalice comes across as much younger than twenty five; she seems like a teenager or even younger. I am not sure if this was intentional, but it was frustrating. She would complain about wanted freedom like a true adult but her actions and complaining would be very childish.

Her love interest in the book, Aydin, was also bland to me. He was kind of funny and cute, but was never very engaging as a character. Aydin and Chalice as a couple were pretty lackluster. The heat between them seemed one-sided (Chalice obviously was into him) and never really got anywhere; I never found myself rooting for them as a couple or really enraptured by any of the scenes they featured in.

Chalice's Fallen angel father, despite his brief appearance, was probably the most interesting character in the book. Followed by a side character who can talk with angels, hopefully he features more in the next book too.

While I found the idea of a world filled with angels, gargoyles, and magic alluring I had trouble wrapping my head around the world in this book. The settings, place in time, and surroundings were hard to picture. Even when the story was in Colorado I had trouble remembering we were in Colorado. I also had trouble making sense of the magic system; it was a blend of super hero like angel abilities, wards, spells, and curses. I could never quite figure out the rationale behind any of them, the rules behind the different types of magic, or really which type of magic was what. It was something that should have been explained better, especially since Chalice is immune to some types of magic but not all.

The plot was mysterious and well done. I did like the inclusion of many different races (Eeves, gargoyles, angels, etc). I enjoyed reading about Chalice's fighting abilities. I also enjoyed Aydin's ghosting abilities. I like the quirky idea of a Saint who is living parceled out in pieces.

Basically I enjoyed a lot of the ideas in this story, just not how the ideas were executed. The story ends well, some things are wrapped up but you can tell Chalice's adventures are just beginning. Definitely the first book in a new series.

Overall an okay read. Some of the concepts in here are very neat: love the gargoyles and bindings, the half angel children, and other magical stuff like that. I wasn't big on our two main characters Chalice and Aydin; they weren't likable or engaging and the chemistry in their relationship felt forced. The world is a bit confusing as the different types of magic are never explained very well; the descriptions were a bit lacking...I kept forgetting where the story was taking place. I personally won't be reading any more of this series, although I will keep an eye on it to see if subsequent books are better. If you are big into angel mythology you might enjoy this, although I would recommend the Remy Chandler series in place of this one.

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## **Bonnie says**

Knight's Curse was kindly provided to me by Netgalley for Harlequin.

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[Storyline](#)

Chalice is an extremely gifted individual with heightened sight, hearing, and smell. After she is abducted from her home in a monastery she is trained as a thief by the Vyantara, '*an international organization of nefarious magic users who profited from the sale of charmed and cursed objects I stole for them.*' She knows very little about why she is who she is or who her parents are but after finding out information about her who her mother is, Chalice is desperate to break the curse that keeps her a slave to the Vyantara.

### Thoughts

This was an intriguing read from the very beginning, but once the storyline progressed and added new elements I was a bit thrown. (view spoiler) Plus with the weird details of her slavery and the gargoyle neck licking thing... well I've probably said too much already. Suffice it to say it was different, but not necessarily in a bad way, and was still interesting enough to keep me reading.

Chalice's enhanced senses were an interesting concept, but her being able to 'slide' her contacts in and out was highly unrealistic. Where does she put them when she's not wearing them? In her pocket? What about pocket fuzz? Don't they dry out and shrivel up or anything? Where's her travel bottle of opti-fresh or her mini travel case? Yes, I put a lot of thought into this even though it's pretty inconsequential and they probably aren't you average type of contacts anyways. I am a contact lens wearer for over 15 years though so I understand that contacts don't slide in and out. And they do shrivel up. Okay, probably put far too much thought into it but whatever. It bothered me.

I enjoyed the various characters that were presented in this story... definitely added to the originality. The jewel-encrusted frog named Ruby was a cute addition. The 'jewel-encrusted lie-detecting frog' was a bit overkill though, but I did still enjoy her part in the story. Also, I loved the concept of the shape-shifting animal named Ling-Ling, but all I could think of when they said her name was 'Ling-Ling the giant panda bear'.

I think the world building was lacking which is always a problem for me, especially when there were SO many supernatural creatures. There needed to be some development of some sorts, rather than just leaving it as the world we live in with supernaturals thrown in for good measure. The main characters weren't extremely likable either and pair that with the lack of world-building and I wasn't entirely overjoyed with this book. Okay, so in retrospect, I was being a bit knit-picky with this one but there were a lot of things that didn't sit well with me. It was interesting enough but I'm not sure I'll be continuing the series.

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### **Ann says**

This one was yet another great read for me. I loved the writing style, plot, characters, pacing, and the world. (SPOILERS INCLUDED)

I appreciated that despite being an urban fantasy of sorts this book ventured into areas not often portrayed in other books of the genre. Gargoyles are prominent and I enjoy that the world of faerie is explored in different ways than simply Seelie/Unseelie or Oberon and what not. The different colored veils are spoken of and I really liked when they brought up white magic because this reminded me of my gaming days, like in Final Fantasy when mages could use white magic to heal and such.

Some of the reviews I read concerning this book mentioned how they didn't like Chalice or Aydin as characters that much. However, I really liked their personalities and their interactions with each other and others. Chalice is a rather tough girl and even though she was supposedly trained in martial arts since nine

and the Vyantara kidnapped at the age of thirteen, it was believable to me that she wouldn't be able to fend them off by herself. Some people had issues with this but I felt that despite her training Chalice had never met the Vyantara before or Gavin, had never witnessed their power/magic, and after seeing her mentor and only friend Thomas die she became rather incapable of acting. I can understand that. She was in shock and it seemed more than believable that she would end up captured.

Aydin's history as a Turk and his fight in the First Crusade was very interesting. His previous relationship with Geraldine was also fascinating and how he helped Chalice without making her some damsel in distress really made me happy. He worked with her and gave her plenty of room to voice her opinions and ideas. He and Chalice played well off one another and near the end of the book I had grown attached enough to their relationship that I felt sad when they were separated. Their relationship is something that takes time in the book to build and I thoroughly appreciated this. Despite their initial attraction Chalice is slow to trust him and I felt this was appropriate. When the two finally admit their feelings it is realistic.

The side characters like Quin, Gavin, and Elmo also enchanted me. Gavin especially played the role of bastardly evil guy well.

The only thing I had a bit of an issue with was how easily Chalice came to trust her father Barachiel. I know that he saved her life and that means something but even she said herself that despite that she should remain wary of him. Soon after this comment though she begins saying that she can't not trust him. I found that a little weird but not too bothersome.

The mythology behind gargoyles in this book was another major plus for me. It did something different than other stories I've read thus far. Shojin and Shui were pretty cool and when Aydin became a gargoyle I could really sympathize with his decision, despite the fact that he looked utterly cool!

I recommend this book and the series to all who love urban fantasy and want something new out of this genre. The Hatchet Knights seem like a really fascinating historical group of women warriors and I can't wait to get to know them better in the next book.

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### **Jen Davis says**

Let me start out with a warning that this is not a romance. I thought it might be from the blurb... but it's really an Urban Fantasy with a hint of a vague promise of a wispy tendril of a romance.

Chalice is something more than human. She has extremely sharp senses and she knows that whatever she is, her mother was the same. Unfortunately, the woman died moments after Chalice was born, so she never really understood her heritage. She was raised by monks in her early childhood, but then kidnapped and forced into slavery by a nefarious group of magic manipulators, called the Vyantara. Her handler is Gavin, a cruel and powerful man who has tied her life to a gargoyle... and through that tie, he forces her to steal magical artifacts. If she refuses or runs away, she'll turn into a gargoyle herself.

Her latest assignment puts her in the path of Aydin, another supernaturally enhanced being forced into servitude by the Vyantara. But he knows so much more about magic... even about Chalice herself. He helps her break through some of barriers she has built and the prejudices indoctrinated in her by Gavin and his

cohorts. With his help, she learns about her heritage and her destiny and allows herself to finally hope for a better future.

The world-building was interesting here. It definitely felt fresh and unique. But I found myself always waiting for more. More resolution. More satisfaction. More between Chalice and Aydin. And I didn't get it. By the time I got to the end of the book, I felt more like I had just read a long a set-up than a complete novel. Don't get me wrong, it was entertaining, but it was equally frustrating. All the build, build, build and then it's over. It didn't even feel like a cliffhanger so much as that it just stopped midway through the story. Grr.

I guess it's telling that I want to find out what happens to Chalice. I want to find out the deal with her dad... whether that disembodied head will ever be reunited with its body... and what's up with the guardian angel. And of course, whether Chalice and Aydin will ever get PAST FIRST BASE. Maybe in the next installment. 3 1/2 stars.

P.S. (Click here if you have already read the book.) (view spoiler)

*\*ARC Provided by NetGalley*

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### **Vintagebooklvr says**

Fast paced. An interesting take on guardian angels.

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### **Rane says**

I love it when a author puts a new spin on an old tale, more often then not it's something that's been done before, but there's those hidden little gems that come up and surprise you like they did with me in Knight's Curse by Karen Duvall.

Duvall builds a great world around Angels, Fallen and likewise, magic god and bad an a heroine Chalice whose just trying to survive and gain her freedom.

At birth Chalice is born with super senses, to the point of having to use nose plugs, ears plugs and special contacts for her eyes just to function. These gifts are not unknown to the world at a tender age and raised by monks most of her life, Chalice is kidnapped and sees the monks whom raised her killed by Gavin who works with a dark organization Vyantara, that wants to take all the magic dark or light to use for their gain. Gavin being the perfect greedy asshat takes over Chalice young life. Later Chalice is made a thief to steal all these treasures by being bounded to a Shui a gargoyle whom wasn't a nice person before changed into a gargoyle. Unless Chalice makes it back to Shui in 72 hours, she becomes a gargoyle painfully or has Shui rip her apart.

Chalice life takes a sudden turn when she comes across a mummy's hand and hears the voice of her mother and later is given a gift her mother left her. Others like her that are part angels, women with special gifts whom protect the world from darkness. Gavin wants to find not only Chalice's sisters but also her father whom became a fallen angel when decided to have Chalice. More of what Chalice was raised to believe is turn again when she meets up with a fellow Vyantara thief and double agent Aydin whom teachers her not all magic is bad and while to bounded by a gargoyle, shows that all creatures are bad and many like humans are bad and good.

Chalice is up against the clock as Gavin and Vyantara start getting closer to those Chalice wants to protect and only she can save.

The author places just the right amount of everything in this book to keep the reader in the world. I zoomed through this book and didn't even realize it until I happen to see what page I was on! With wonderful characters with no one being totally bad-ass but having their weaknesses and faults. Chalice isn't bad-ass but she can kick-ass when the time comes. Under Gavin's thumb it's hard pill to swallow how she has to answer to him all the time, but when you have Shui a big ass gargoyle hanging over your head ready to rip you up, well? I did feel Chalice was a tad whiny at times, I took a step back as a reader and looked at it from another view. Gavin has always made sure to keep Chalice isolated from everyone. Emotionally this might make her seem a tad off, which the author did a good job of portraying as a growth of the character story wise by emotion and spiritually. For her it was understandable why she acts the way she does and why she holds those she grows to care and love for so close like Elmo, Ruby the cursed jeweled frog with a heart of gold and will steal your heart and the size of a thimble and Aydin.

Aydin, is my perfect type of hero. Not some big ass Alpha male or kind Beta but a mix of both. Showing Chalice is a gentle way that not all things are black and white as she's been taught. Aydin helps Chalice grow and open her eyes to the world around her. I fell hard for him. While there was a dash of romance in the book, it wasn't anything in-depth but I hope to see grow as the series goes on.

**AYDIN:**

actor/model Burak Özçivit

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The world of angels and the women whom give birth to the next gen of Knights was very interesting the author leaves a lot up in the air as to why? At the same time giving the reader something to look forward to. A true UF book that has me hooked and waiting eagerly for the next in the series!

### **Shelley says**

\*Rating\* 4.0

\*Genre\* Urban Fantasy

\*Review\*

Knight's Curse (Knight's Curse # 1) is the first book by author Karen Duvall that I've had the pleasure of reading. Duvall's story is told in the first POV by Chalice a character who is so much more than she truly realizes. She is forced to wear eye, ear, and nose protection because her senses are superhumanly enhanced.

Chalice spent the first 13 years of her life with the Maronite Monks in Lebanon who not only trained her in their ways, but also told her that her mother died during childbirth in order to protect her from the real truth. After Gavin Heinrich shows up claiming to be her father and subsequently kills all the monks who protected Chalice, she is forced into a slave/owner relationship with Gavin.

Flash forward 12 years, and Chalice now wears a tattoo on the back of her neck and is linked to the ever

nasty gargoyle assassin named Shui. Shui, who was a piece of work as a human, is even worse as a gargoyle. Chalice can only be away from Shui for 72 hours before needing him to lick her neck to prevent her from becoming a full time gargoyle.

Gavin uses this forced bonding in order to control Chalice into doing pretty much do whatever he asks of her. Gavin and Vynatara (international organization of nefarious magic users) trained Chalice into being one of the best thieves in the world who is able to use her superhuman abilities to get into pretty much any location where an artifact is located.

A surprise revelation takes place when Chalice is attempting to steal a hand that is said to belong to Saint Geraldine from a wealthy collector. Upon touching the hand, she hears her mother's voice saying "Remember, little one, our people need you. Find them. And whatever happens to me--know that I love you always."

Duval later reveals with the help of Aydin Berkant, that Chalice is really a Hatchet Knight like her mother. The Hatchet Knights are a group of women, formed during the Crusades, who have special abilities and were conceived between human women, and fallen angels. That, in essence, makes Chalice part angel. \*In other books, they would be called Nephilim.\*

Aydin is also bonded to a gargoyle named Shojin after making a deal with a demon during the Crusades after failing to save Geraldine. Aydin has the ability to become a ghost, and is thief just like Chalice. Unlike Chalice, however, Aydin seems to actually like his gargoyle.

I really enjoyed this book. I enjoyed it because it focused on Chalice's struggles to get away from Gavin and Shui, and later her relationship with Aydin that comes out of knowing and caring about one another and shared experiences of being bond to a gargoyle.

I liked Chalice as well. She just doesn't sit around throughout the book whining and crying about her circumstances. She actually fights with everything she can and learns more about her mother, and father, as well as her membership in the Hatchet Knights so that she can break her bond with Shui once and forever.

Duval's world is different from others in that the Fallen were former Guardian Angels and now they have to make a choice between remaining on the good side of things, or turning evil and working with people like Gavin.

I want to learn more, obviously, about the Hatchet Knights and their abilities to use their special gifts to protect the world from darkness. Thankfully, I already have the next book in my queue, and plan on reading it really soon.

I normally hate cliffhangers, but, in this case Duval actually sets the stage for the next step in Chalice's growth and story and in becoming a full time member of the Hatchet Knights without leaving me gasping for air and wanting more now!

Darkest Knight (Knight's Curse #2) releases March 20, 2012.

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## Olga says

Chalice is a descendant of an ancient order of knights and her powers are great but she is a prisoner of a vicious wizard who belongs to an ancient order of his own and will stop at nothing to make her do his bidding. She has a great destiny but she must embrace who she is and free herself from her curse before she can truly make a difference.

This was a fun and easy read filled with magic, incredible creatures, plenty of action and a heady mixture of present day, myth and biblical legend. The book got off to a relatively slow start with a lot of explaining of what and how and who, setting the scene for the relationship between Chalice and her captor, but once that was established and the author got on with the story it was actually able to keep my interest throughout. The book ended with a satisfactory resolution to the major conflict and without a cliff-hanger but the premise for the next book is thoroughly set up in the final chapters so the reader knows in what direction the story will progress in the sequel.

I enjoyed the varied world of ancient magical beings living side by side with the unsuspecting public and keeping their existence secret. Duvall gives us barely a glimpse of majority of them but the ones that get the attention are developed with much thought and the secondary characters like Elmo and Zee often become scene-stealers. It would be interesting to see what she would do with the rest.

Character development seemed natural and realistic - Chalice has trouble accepting that the things that have been ingrained in her for years aren't actually true, she's wary of everybody she meets and her transformation from someone who believes that all magic is evil to a person who accepts that there's a good side to it too refreshingly takes more than a chapter. I also enjoyed that Chalice's sudden, overwhelming attraction to her warrior protector Aydin isn't set up as a natural thing that happens between two people who barely lay eyes on each other and Bam! they're in love. It is rooted in their magical natures and Chalice's struggle between believing that it's real and wondering whether it's something that wouldn't even exist had it not been for their curse and gives an extra angst dimension to her character.

There were a number of things that made this book not nearly as enjoyable as it could have been and are the cause of me not particularly hurrying to find out when the sequel will be released. My main gripe is with the fact that Chalice has been Gavin's slave for over a decade and yet in all this time she hasn't wondered how to break herself free, what kind of person her mother really was or how Gavin controls the gargoyle that binds her curse (she must've been paying zero attention to that little detail despite the fact that she has to come into contact with it every three days and Shui is far from tame), she apparently somehow has had no interaction whatsoever with anyone outside of a few members in Gavin's organization and has done no research at all to find out more about her situation. Give me a break, not like the girl was drugged or kept in a cell, she actually has her own apartment. She may be watched, but she's not chained to a guard 24-7! All this could've seemed realistic if she had been a prisoner for months, maybe a couple of years (extensive training, they didn't trust her and didn't leave her much alone time, etc.) but not for over a decade. Besides, she's smart and feisty, sitting around being scared of the consequences of her snooping around is very much out of character for Chalice.

All in all this was a fast-paced and entertaining book with a good story and a few plot twists to keep it going and if you're looking for an escapist read that won't keep you up till 3 in the morning because you just can't put it down you might want to check it out.

ARC of this book was received from Luna Books via NetGalley. It is now available in stores and on Amazon.

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## Tracy says

### Didn't Quite Work For Me

She was raised by Maronite monks following the violent death of her mother. For thirteen years they taught her and sheltered her, serving as both guardians and family for the girl with the most acute senses, a girl hypersensitive to light, touch, sound, smell, and taste beyond that of even the most attuned mortal. But then, Chalice is not exactly mortal.

Despite her abilities, she was unable to protect herself when the man came to take her. Gavin Heinrich claimed to be her father, then stole her after butchering the monks of the order in which she was raised. She became his slave, his thief. And for the twelve years since the day of her capture she's been bonded to a homicidal gargoyle and forced to do what her faux father tells her to do. Which is almost exclusively to collect precious magical artifacts from whomever owned them and turn them over to the group Heinrich works with, a dark, secretive magic sect known as the Vyantara.

Somewhere among those artifacts she touches, those pieces of magic and history he sends her out to retrieve, lies the truth of her heritage. The truth of a line of warrior women, hardened by battle, almost erased by circumstance. Chalice may be a thief, but she's a thief with a destiny that, in the end, could show her a path that will ally her and her kind with angels...or see her set upon and destroyed by demons.

It's been a while since I was able to sink into a new urban fantasy series and get lost in an author's fantastic imagination. Sure, there are several wonderful UF series I follow and thoroughly enjoy, but there is just something special about that first glimpse, the initial introduction to characters you'll fall in love with, the first experience with a fresh voice spinning a new tale of the supernatural, paranormal, magical, and/or mystical world he or she created, that just sets my reading-addicted heart to racing. I was nearly desperate in my hope that I'd find that sort of excitement and thrilling read from Duvall's debut. Unfortunately, I can't say that I did.

I loved the concept and was thrilled by the idea of the Hatchet Warriors and Saint Geraldine, but I struggled with the plot of the book and had trouble connecting to the lead character, Chalice. I felt the plot was a bit disjointed and clumsy, the narrative plodding, and it all seemed like quite a lot of trouble for not a whole lot of gain by the end. The world wasn't as fleshed out as I would've liked. I never really understood the Vyantara organization or their...mission statement, so to speak, beyond them being a group of magic collectors and dark magic users. Nor did I fully grasp Heinrich's position within that organization. I got that they were the bad guys, but they were mostly faceless and unknown.

Despite the issues I had with the plot and the world building, I still would have found the book interesting had I been able to relate to or enjoy Chalice. Sadly, I can't say I did that, either. Instead I found her character hard to pin down and prone to wildly vacillating yet superficial thoughts and emotions that translated as unbelievable and unnatural. After a one-day acquaintance with Aydin, for example, she flickered back and forth between blindly trusting her new friend and possible ally, then, when it appeared he had lied, feeling deeply betrayed and hurt and riddled with disbelief. Such intense but disparate emotions after so short an acquaintance wasn't believable, and after awhile, Chalice's predilection for that sort of emotional roller coaster got downright annoying.

This is a character who was raised by monks and kidnapped at the age of thirteen to be turned into a thief and a slave by a power-hungry man with megalomaniacal and homicidal tendencies. I would've thought, at the age of twenty-five, she'd be a bit more cautious and cynical, jaded by her experiences. I also would've found

her more believable if she'd found a way to secure for herself some boundaries with Heinrich in the twelve years she was with him, by fair means or foul. She is so quick to rebel and fight against him now, but if that's her nature - and it seemed to be so - I kept wondering why she hadn't tried sooner.

I also found her to be distressingly naive, disturbingly close-minded, and ridiculously self-involved. In that last regard, her relationship with Aydin failed to spark any sort of chord with me, and failed utterly as any sort of romantic thread. Chalice was just too wrapped up in her own agenda and needs to really see or know Aydin, as evidenced by her "solution" to a problem that comes late in the book. For more detail (view spoiler)

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There was potential in this book but it just didn't work for me, and I think the main character needs to be a bit more refined to be able to be sympathetic and likable. I really enjoyed Saint Geraldine - both her character and her backstory, and though I'm not sure I completely understood the angels and their roles in the big picture of the series, nor fully grasped the underlying conflict between the Vyantara and the Hatchet Warriors, I think there is still a large amount of potential for the series. I wish nothing but success for Duvall as the series continues.

*Disclosure: An ARC of this book was provided to me by Harlequin via NetGalley. This rating, review, and all included thoughts and comments are my own.*

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Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

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### **Gabbi Calabrese says**

I don't read a lot of adult books. There's not much of a reason for it except that I'm a teen and I like reading about teens. But I read (Read: Stalk) Karen Duvall's blog and I'll admit, I was ferociously excited for this book. When I saw it on NetGalley, I sort of flipped and had to get it.

Now, this book definitely has a debut feel to it. I'm not saying that debut books are bad or any worse than books written by an author who has multiple books under his or her belt. I'm just saying that this book has a lot of room for improvement and progression that will be achieved by experience.

From the very beginning, I was very intrigued by the premise and Chalice's, the protagonist, abilities. Throughout the entire story, though, I felt like something was missing. It wasn't until the very end that I realized what it was. There's sort of a lack of tension in this book. Sure, Chalice faces tons of obstacles but I feel like the solution is just two easy and there's not enough consequences. The other thing that felt wrong, to me, about this book was that the world was a little lackluster. I could tell that there were loads of awesome aspects of the world, like a living person that is in pieces and talks, but I didn't really feel their awesomeness.

I loved the plot. I loved it. Loved it. Loveeeeeed it. I thought it was super original and fun. I mean, how many books do you get to read about gargoyles!? There were some parts in the book that I honestly wasn't

expecting and I was absolutely stunned by the different ways that Duvall incorporated some unique supernatural aspects.

As for the characters. I feel like there was a lot of growth for Chalice, but to me it seemed like every change was sort of nonchalant. She finds out this big news and she struggles with it for a little while but then she just accepts it. That kind of fits in with the lack of tension. I liked her a lot, though. She was spunky and tough and smart. All good qualities in a heroine. Now Aydin. Hmm. I loved him. I'm not particularly fangirl for him, but he was a really good character to read. He's sweet and smart and nice. All good qualities in a love interest.

This book didn't really keep my undivided interest. It could be because I was reading it on my computer and I kept getting distracted by that shiny little thing called the internet. But I did want to find out what happens and how it ends! I'd say it's an even-paced book that was light and easy to read.

I wouldn't say this book blew me away, but I'll certainly be looking out for the sequel! I feel like many people could enjoy this, but to me it seemed just a little bland.

#### **REASONS I LIKED IT:**

- Gargoyles. I cannot get over that. They weren't just random, either. The gargoyles had a major part in the plot, considering Chalice runs a huge risk of becoming one. I've never ever read a book with gargoyles in it before.
- Consistency. Chalice has unique abilities and Karen Duvall doesn't forget that. Those abilities come in handy for almost every scene and while they help her a lot, they can also be really inconvenient.

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