



Dreaming Death

J. Kathleen Cheney

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In the Novels of the Golden City, J. Kathleen Cheney created a “mesmerizing” (*Publishers Weekly*) realm where magic, history, and intrigue combine. Now, she presents a new world ruled by psychic talents and fatal magic...

Shironne Anjir's status as a sensitive is both a gift and a curse. Her augmented senses allow her to discover and feel things others can't, but her talents come with a price: a constant assault of emotions and sensations has left her blind. Determined to use her abilities as best she can, Shironne works tirelessly as an investigator for the Larossan army.

A member of the royal family's guard, Mikael Lee also possesses an overwhelming power—he dreams of the deaths of others, sometimes in vivid, shocking detail, and sometimes in cryptic fragments and half-remembered images.

But then a killer brings a reign of terror to the city, snuffing out his victims with an arcane and deadly blood magic. Only Shironne can sense and interpret Mikael's dim, dark dreams of the murders. And what they find together will lead them into a nightmare...

Dreaming Death Details

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Author : J. Kathleen Cheney

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From Reader Review Dreaming Death for online ebook

Beth Cato says

I love Cheney's Golden City trilogy, and her new book (out in February) explores a whole new secondary fantasy world. At heart, this is a detective story with magical twists: a policeman is murdered in some sort of bizarre ritual. In the city, Mikael is locked in a dream, forced to experience the stranger's brutal death. Mikael's agony radiates to a likewise gifted sensitive, Shironne, whose abilities are already being used by local authorities to solve murder investigations. Mikael and Shironne don't know each other, but as more people are murdered, they are drawn together to stop the mayhem and figure out their own bizarre connection through dreams and death.

The world-building here is intense. Not only is the magic fresh and new, but the city and its Six Families hint at deep material for more books. I love how Cheney handles the sensory issues around Shironne's blindness. It makes descriptions all the more important.

I'm really excited to read more novels in the Palace of Dreams series. This world has incredible potential, and Shironne and Mikael are fantastic characters to follow.

Jessie Potts says

Enjoyable, a lot of potential, I'd be interested to see where the author goes, great world building. Will be out in the feb RT magazine

Anya says

Really cool psychic powers needed to solve a murder mystery! I loved the fact the heroine is blind but able to help in her own ways. The romance is sweet, and the emphasis on friends and family was great to read. I would have liked more world-building, and the pacing is a bit slow, but the series has fantastic potential.

Sanasai says

Love, love, loved this one. Fascinating characters, a great setting with multiple layers and variants, exciting plot, enough foreshadowing that things made sense when revealed, but without breaking suspense. Just...loved it!

Jennifer says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It's really creative and interesting, and I love the blend between magic, mythology and mystery that exists in this world. The social classes and political alignments are also very

pivotal in shaping the story created by Cheney. Definitely a book I'd like to own for my personal collection. I'm just hoping that the rest of the series is either currently available or soon will be! I'm now a J. Kathleen Cheney fan, thanks to the "Palace of Dreams" series. :)

Sara says

J. Kathleen Cheney's Dreaming Death whisks readers away to a world where some people possess psychic abilities that allow them to sense others' emotions. Shironne is one such sensitive, with powers so acute that they've rendered her blind. But they also make her useful as an investigator for the Larossan army, and able to see the dreams of a young soldier named Mikael - dreams of victims' deaths as they're occurring. When a serial killer begins terrorizing their city with ancient, deadly blood magic, Shironne and Mikael must work with their mutual allies to identify and find the murderer. And what they discover teaches them more about their unique powers - and puts them in unfathomable danger.

I'd been meaning to read Cheney's work for a while, so when I won Dreaming Death from On Starships and Dragonwings (thanks, Anya!), I was excited to check it out. And what a treat it turned out to be! It's a murder mystery robed in fantasy, set in a richly imagined world ripe with culture and history, including one race that lives in massive underground dwellings. My only world-building complaint is that much of it is introduced early on. So, the first 70 pages felt like a slog through info-dumps and lengthy descriptions. But I'd read in reviews that the pace improves after a while, and my determination to stick with the story was later rewarded.

Because once it hits its stride, Dreaming Death is nearly impossible to put down. Cheney's writing took my breath away, and the characters are all wonderful, especially Shironne. Her hyper-sensitivity to other people's emotions and the focus on her four working senses made her POV a unique experience. And while there's a clear psychic connection between Shironne and Mikael, their relationship remains refreshingly platonic. I could say a lot more about Dreaming Death, so just know that it's a suspenseful, captivating tale that will appeal to fantasy lovers who also like a good mystery. The sad part is that Orbit Books has opted not to continue this series. So, whether we'll see a new Palace of Dreams book is up in the air, but I'm even more motivated to read Cheney's other books now.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <http://bibliosanctum.com/2016/01/29/b...>

Last year I read a wonderful novel called The Golden City, the first of a fantasy trilogy set in an alternate early 1900s Portugal featuring sirens and selkies. This was how I first came to discover the work of J. Kathleen Cheney. As you can imagine, I got pretty excited when I found out she was writing a new book! And this time, she's transporting readers to a whole new world full of magic and amazing things to discover.

Indeed, Dreaming Death is a novel of ideas, and it is absolutely delightful. Imagine, if you will, a place rich with history and culture, and in the population, a subset of individuals called "sensitives" are gifted with augmented psychic senses that would allow them to feel others' emotions. But for some, that gift is more of a curse. Shironne Anjir is a sensitive whose talents are even more responsive than most, and when she first came to her full power in her early teens, the constant barrage of emotions and sensations overwhelmed her

and left her blind. However, her ability to pull information out of the objects or people she touches has made her an invaluable asset to the army, who frequently retains her as a consultant to help them solve crimes. For example, a recent string of brutal murders possibly connected to blood magic have left investigators baffled, and Shironne has been called in to see what she can glean from contact with the bodies.

Meanwhile, royal guard Mikael Lee has been affected by the killings in a whole different way. A powerful sensitive himself, Mikael is also “dreamer” whose ability causes him to dream the deaths of others. Lately, the suspected blood magic victims have made his dreams even more traumatic and intense, and Mikael lives with the constant fear that the next time he goes to sleep, he may not wake up again. But unknown to both Shironne and Mikael, who don’t even know each other, their strange powers might be linked, and that connection could be the key to solving the mystery before the murderer strikes again.

It’s no exaggeration when I say I could probably go on forever about the background of this book, because it is just that deep and rich. It did give *Dreaming Death* a rather slow start, because the first hundred pages are full of all the knowledge you have to absorb to get a sense of the setting and story. Within the first handful of chapters, I encountered the names of no less than three to four different factions/cultures and close to two dozen names of characters, both major and minor. I reviewed an advance reader’s copy of this book which did not contain any maps or *dramatis personae* detailing characters and their relationships, but I have to say both would be immensely helpful if they were to be included in the finished edition.

After finishing the book though, I was amazed. Once the story gathers steam, it becomes intensely addictive and hard to put down. *Dreaming Death* is by far the most impressive work from the author yet. She has crafted here a uniquely original world with an exciting blend of fantasy and mystery, complete with a light touch of political intrigue. The setting is truly breathtaking, and Cheney goes all out in providing the exquisite details readers need to bring this place to life in their minds.

The characters also deserve praise. While the two main protagonists are both written extremely well, I have to say the portrayal of Shironne is where the narrative especially shines, painting her as a capable heroine even though she can’t see. She may be aware of her limitations but at the same time she also recognizes her own worth, acknowledging that what she can do is more important than what she cannot. Taking in the world through Shironne’s perspective was also an interesting experience, since her chapters mostly use the senses of smell, touch, and sound to describe her surroundings. Because of her status as a sensitive, there’s also the cool twist of her power to read others’ emotions. Strong impressions of feelings are usually the first things that hit Shironne whenever someone enters her sensing range, thus it’s often the way she “meets” others.

Things get even better when Shironne and Mikael are introduced to each other for the first time. I simply love the relationship between these two. I also enjoyed the special way they communicate, as well as their playful banter. Though the plot might be hinting towards a possible romance, it is not a significant element in this story, but regardless, there’s no denying the powerful attraction they have for each other. Plus, the notable characters don’t stop at Shironne and Mikael either, and in fact the novel is made even better by the presence of a strong supporting cast.

Lastly, though *Dreaming Death* features a self-contained plot on its own, Cheney leaves a multiple dimensions to explore in future installments of the Palace of Dreams series. Personally, I would very much like to see more world-building in the sequel, because even though we get plenty of minute details about our immediate surroundings in this novel, I was given only a vague sense of how these linked puzzle pieces fit in the bigger picture. Things I wouldn’t mind learning more about include societal structure (who are these Elders who determine so much of life for the Families?) or how the magic works (like why are Mikael’s dreams of death particularly attuned to these murders but not any of the other violent or accidental deaths

that must occur on a regular basis in a big city?) Generally, I would also like the next book cover more history, because while this one hints at a world with a long and storied past, I get the feeling we've only scratched the surface. Clearly, I'm looking forward to what else this series has in store!

Dreaming Death is a book of mystery, magic and overwhelming potential, and promises more good things to come from J. Kathleen Cheney. If she's not on your radar yet, it's time to remedy that! Now begins the countdown for the sequel, and I can scarcely wait to return to this strange and wonderful world and its charming characters.

Althea Ann says

Entertaining fantasy with a touch of mystery.

This is a world that is used to dealing with 'sensitives' - those who can pick up on others' emotions and also broadcast their own. But Mikael Lee's 'gift' exceeds what anyone is used to. He might even call it more of a curse. He has periodic dreams in which he enters the consciousness of a murder victim, following them all the way to their death. However, his tendency to broadcast these grisly sensations to those around him has not earned him an excess of goodwill.

Meanwhile, a young blind woman, Shironne, has her own special gift. Although her hyper-sensitivity has made her life difficult, she has agreed to work with the military, helping them identify murder victims: she has the ability to sense things about the deceased when she touches a body.

It's nearly immediately clear that Shironne and Mikael, although they've never met, are connected in some psychic manner. Indeed, Shironne is eager to meet the man she senses in her dreams, whom she half-jokingly refers to as the Angel of Death.

Now, it appears that murders related to sinister 'blood magic' rituals are occurring, echoing a bloody massacre that happened some years before, and which lives on in infamy. Mikael and Shironne must both work to uncover the murderers before more are killed horribly.

Recommended for those who have finished reading all about Carol Berg's or Sarah Monette's angst yet attractive young men, and are looking for more...

I would definitely pick up the sequel to this one! (Don't worry, there's no cliffhanger here, though.)

Many thanks to NetGalley and ROC for the opportunity to read. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

Lisa says

Stayed up all night reading this. It's now 3am and I have to be up in 4 hours for work. Weeee. Really, there's no higher compliment. :)

Bailey Skye says

I received a copy of this publication in exchange for an honest review.

DNF @ 42%

Well everybody, this is it. This is the first time I have ever put down a book and chosen not to finish it. And you know what? It likely won't be my last. If you've been following my reviews for awhile now, you know that I always push through, even when I'm just not that invested in the story. Today I randomly stumbled upon an article titled "*10 Signs You Should Give Up on A Book You're In The Middle Of*".

I'm not exactly sure why it hadn't dawned on me sooner, but I started asking myself "why am I pushing myself to read through these books that I don't enjoy? Reading is supposed to be fun!" A lot of the time I have been using the excuse that, especially when I am reading for publishers, that it's important to give my honest opinion. But when I'm reading a book that I just CANNOT get into, it's going to reflect negatively in my review regardless of the authors writing, or the story. I think the lack of wanting to continue reading the story is enough of an honest opinion. So I'm not going to rate it so as to lower the overall rating for those who may be interested into entering this world.

Now, more related to the book, this is such a slow fantasy novel. There is no action. Being almost halfway through a 400+ page novel, and nothing very interesting has happened. Cheney started her novel just throwing us right into the world, using terms that I didn't understand until I got a substantial way into the novel. It threw me off. The narration switches between different characters points of view, which I don't mind, but it felt poorly done. Sometimes it would take me a few paragraphs to realize who we were focused on. The characters are nothing special, either, and I think that's my second biggest qualm with the novel. I'm not invested in any of their stories, they don't interest me, therefore I don't really care. Hell, I didn't even realize one of the main characters was blind until partway through the novel.

Overall, there just wasn't really anything going on, reading the words felt pretty pointless as we were going nowhere, and I kept looking at the page number to see how much closer to the end I was.

Jaclyn says

Originally reviewed in a joint review at The Book Adventures.

I enjoyed *Dreaming Death*. Similar to Cheney's previous trilogy *The Golden City*, *Dreaming Death* also combines a rich fantasy world with mystery. While there is a great deal of detail about the world that Cheney puts her readers into, at heart, *Dreaming Death* is a mystery and I like that. Anytime an author wants to defy the bounds of genre categorization I'm game. Unlike more traditional mysteries, this one is solved using unique measures, like two people with particular abilities that just so happen to feed off the other, making them quite the duo. Interestingly, Shironne and Mikael have not even met before they start their crime solving.

There is a lot of fear and apprehension surrounding Shironne and Mikael's relationship even before they met. Shironne shares Mikael's dreams and because of that she can help solve the murders he dreams about.

However, the downside of this bond is that Mikael can influence Shironne and make her feel things that she just might not want to feel. Because of the nature of their bond, Shironne and Mikael have been kept separate but remain aware of each other. And therein lies my only frustration with *Dreaming Death*: how long it took for Shironne and Mikael to actually connect in person. The first half of the book keeps Shironne and Mikael separated. Readers get both of their points of view, but it's not until much later that they actually interact. For me, it was when Shironne and Mikael finally met each other that the pace started to pick up. I had liked the story up to that point, but it was when these two met and started to explore their bond that I became truly hooked.

Separation of the main characters aside, the concept of individuals being bound to each other was really interesting with rather serious ramifications to individuality. Mikael is used to subduing his emotions since it discomforts the other sensitives that physically surround him, so in some ways he is more prepared for his bond to Shironne. Mikael is afraid of unduly influencing Shironne and forcing her to become someone that she's not. Shironne, partly due to her blindness and her gender, has been shaped into a specific kind of person already, and again, Mikael recognizes this when he asks "Who are you when you're alone?" (p. 233). Shironne does need to create her own sense of self as she has been very much shaped by her role in her family. Shironne's relationship to her family isn't a negative thing, but it does not allow Shironne to fully explore her abilities. By the end of the book, I think Shironne has come a long way to claiming her independence and I'm curious to see how the author explores Shironne's personality considering the seemingly vulnerable position that she's in. I think this concept will be much further explored in future books as Shironne and Mikael work with each other on a regular basis.

If you enjoy mystery, detailed world building and great characters, *Dreaming Death* will be a fun read. Shironne and Mikael are more subdued than you would expect of main characters, but I think it serves a purpose in the author's questioning of fate and individuality. I can't wait to see where this goes next!

Amy A says

3.5

Originally posted at Vampire Book Club

Shironne Anjir is a touch sensitive. Her powers, which manifested when she was twelve, have now grown so overwhelmingly strong that she's gone blind. Not letting that hinder her, Shironne helps the Larossan army in various ways. She can tell someone's innermost secrets just by touching them skin-to-skin. For all its advantages in helping her track down criminals, there are the obvious drawbacks. Then there are the dreams.

Some nights Shironne has vivid dreams. Always of death. It didn't take her long to realize that these dreams are not her own. She's pulled into another's dreams. A male who witnesses death through the eyes of those being murdered. Despite sharing his dreams for years now, her superiors have been against the two meeting, citing some vague sense of danger.

Mikael Lee's dreams vary in their clarity. Oftentimes he can only remember small pieces of information, but these most recent dreams have Mikael bearing the injuries of the dead in his waking hours. As the dreams come more frequently it's acknowledged that there's a murderer on the loose. In order to stop the killer and figure out their motivations, it might finally be time for Mikael and Shironne to meet.

When I first started reading Dreaming Death I felt like I was on world-building overload. There's A LOT dealing with who did what to whom and when that's thrown at the reader all at once. It came to the point where I just kind of compartmentalized and focused on the main storyline. This worked in that the essentials of the story—the police hunting for a murderer using Shironne and Mikael's connection—were pretty straightforward. It didn't work in that, while things did get clearer, there's still plenty I'm left a little foggy on and in Dreaming Death it's very clear we're only dealing with one part of the realm. I can only hope the actual released copy will feature a map or possibly a genealogy chart—if not, just be prepared. I also hold out hope that this will be a setting that as I read more of I will understand better.

Now what I think J. Kathleen Cheney did really well was the bond between Shironne and Mikael. It is literally a bond and it has a very driving force about it because from the first mention of Shironne never having met the man she's dubbed the "Angel of Death" I knew, of course, they had to meet. Yet J. Kathleen Cheney doesn't just throw them together. The story slowly works towards this inevitability. It would also have been easy for their connection to make way for insta-love, which most every other character in this story believe is set to happen, and they very well could end up romantically entangled down the line, but both Mikael and Shironne are very aware of wanting to preserve their sense of self. They don't want to influence each other untowardly. Instead, there's clear devotion between them. They won't deny their link, but they both have growing up to do regardless of the atrocities they've seen.

While, the setting and world building was bit overwhelming for me, I still like what has been started in this book. There's no doubt that I will read the next installment. If you've read Cheney's previous series The Golden City, you'll find the same style here.

Renee Babcock says

This is a new novel by Cheney, in an entirely new world and I was so happy to be able to get a copy before the release and read it! I've read the 3 novels in her Golden City series, plus two other published novellas (one also in the Golden City world), and I've become quite a fan of her story telling. Her writing reminds me a lot of Sharon Shinn's - there's a quality about it that makes it so easy to get into the story, you get to care about her characters, and you can really feel a part of the environment of the story.

Dreaming Death is the start of a new series. A few others have mentioned that the beginning is a little slow, and I agree, but only because Jeannette is doing a great job of her world building. This is a complex society that she's created. But she's also telling a really good story. Mikael Lee, a member of the Royal Family's guard, witnesses murders in his dreams. Other sensitives in the palace find his dreams disturbing, since he can't help but broadcast his dreams. So he takes to getting really drunk and sleeping away from the palace in a tavern to help deaden the pain he feels during these dreams and to keep from broadcasting to the other sensitives. He finds himself dreaming of a series of ritualistic murders, and each time he dreams of one of these deaths, he finds himself getting closer and closer himself to succumbing and never waking up, even taking onto his body some of the wounds of the dying.

A young woman named Shironne Anjir picks up on his dreams as well, although she's never met him. She works for the Larossan Army as they investigate the murders. She has a unique ability as a touch sensitive, because she can tell much about a person, including their final thoughts, just by touching them. Which is her way of dealing with the world, since being a touch sensitive has made her blind. It becomes clear as the city is dealing with a serial murderer of a kind not seen in their land before that Shironne may be the one person who can help Mikael deal with his dreams, while also helping to solve the murders, which are getting closer

to the royal family with each one.

One of the things about magic systems in fantasy that at times bothers me is that it is often so effortless, and is used at little cost to the practitioner. It seems like a cheat to me when I see that in a story. I've always thought the use of magic/extra-sensory powers should come at a cost. And that's one of the things I really liked with this book - Mikael and Shirrone have paid a heavy price for their abilities. Mikael's body mirrors the injuries of those he sees dying in his dreams, and Shirrone has completely lost her sight as the result of her special abilities. She also can only tolerate certain foods, certain cloths against her skin, and very little physical contact. It's not easy to be these two, but they want to do the right thing, even at the costs to them.

I highly recommend this book to people who enjoy good fantasy with complex world building, well-realized (and flawed) characters. Also, try not to get too attached to all the characters.

Ruth says

This is a three and a half star read, but I'll probably round it up to four for a few reasons.

The first four or five chapters of this book are a mess of infodumping and overly detailed character descriptions that I couldn't keep straight. It was a bit of a struggle to get through that, but once I did, I really enjoyed the rest of the story.

I found the idea of touch-sensitivity really fascinating. I'd never thought about what it would be like to live like that. Sort of a sensory processing disorder times 1000.

I was intrigued by the idea of the Above and the Below as a division between two cultures. There are whispers that those below fortresses are more than meets the eye, which I hope is followed up on in subsequent books. Also, the very regimented life of the Family was interesting. There's a lot of interesting worldbuilding going on, but at times Cheney was so fascinated by her setting that she gave more information than was strictly necessary, interrupting the flow of the narrative.

One thing that I did unequivocally appreciate was (view spoiler)

So yes, 3.5 rounded to 4. I'll be interested in seeing how book two flows now that a lot of the world-building is out of the way and she doesn't have to spend as much time on that.

Barb in Maryland says

The blurb gives a good idea of the basics of the plot, so I won't bother with a re-cap.

As a long-time SFF reader, I recognize the whole 'experiencing, in your dreams, deaths as they happen' as a fairly standard motif. The author adds the element of a second person who unwittingly shares the dreams-- just to make matters a bit more interesting.

The story combines the police procedural mystery (the who, why and how do we stop them), with a hefty helping of palace intrigue and cultural politics.

The world building is great--the different social/ethnic/power groups were well explained (without going into

tedious detail). The city is a fairly generic one: palace-check, old town-check, a river-check. But that's okay as the city isn't the star of the show.

I loved the characters and came to care for Mikael and Shironne, their families (Shironne's mother is wonderful), Mikael's boss, the investigators (especially Col. Cerradine). Almost everyone who had a speaking part was a person, not a place-holder. The villain came the closest to being card-board; not a surprise as he had so little actual time on page.

There's a lovely romance brewing between Shironne's mother and the Colonel and hints of a possible romance between Shironne and Mikael.

The immediate mystery is wrapped up by the end of the book. However, there are several revelations towards the end that will probably figure in the next book. Which I will grab as soon as it comes out. While I'm waiting, I think I'll check out the author's backlist...
