



Best Left in the Shadows

Mark Gelineau , Joe King

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A Highside girl. Beaten. Murdered. Her body found on a Lowside dock. A magistrate comes looking for answers. For justice.

Alys trades and sells secrets among the gangs and factions of Lowside. She is a daughter of the underworld. Bold. Cunning. Free. When an old lover asks for help, she agrees. For a price.

Together, they travel into the dark heart of the underworld in search of a killer.

Best Left in the Shadows Details

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Author : Mark Gelineau , Joe King

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From Reader Review Best Left in the Shadows for online ebook

Terence says

A rich girl from the right side of town was beaten and brutally murdered. Her body was found in the wrong part of town and it will surely draw attention.

Best Left in the Shadows was a miss for me largely because it's among my least favorite tropes. Forbidden love, wrong side of the tracks, and detective tale wrapped up into one is a hard sell for me, but I wanted to continue the Echoes of Ascended series so I read it anyway.

The story revolves around Alys and her former lover Dax. Alys is from the wrong side of the tracks, Lowside, she deals in secrets and is friends with questionable individuals. Dax is from a well to do family on the right side of the tracks, Highside, he's also a magistrate and the detective trying to find out who murdered the girl. I'm afraid if my eyes roll any harder they may stay that way.

If you love forbidden love, wrong side of the tracks, and or detective stories Best Left in the Shadows may be for you. If all those tropes make you cringe or yawn then it may be best to avoid this one.

2.5 out of 5 stars

Susan Angela Wallace says

Best left in the shadows by Mark Gelineau and Joe king.

A Highside girl. Beaten. Murdered. Her body found on a Lowside dock. A magistrate comes looking for answers. For justice. Alys trades and sells secrets among the gangs and factions of Lowside. She is a daughter of the underworld. Bold. Cunning. Free. When an old lover asks for help, she agrees. For a price. Together, they travel into the dark heart of the underworld in search of a killer.

And really enjoyable read with great characters. I liked alys and dax. Can't wait for next part. 5*. Netgalley and Gelineau and king.

Mark Gelineau says

Hi everybody! Mark here from Gelineau and King. Joe and I wanted to share our latest novella with you and tell you a bit about it here.

Best Left in the Shadows is our fantasy crime story. It's equal parts murder and mystery, banter and action, lies and betrayal, all coming together in a crazy cocktail. We think there's a whole lot of fun to be had as you meet the cast of crooked and cunning characters that are the denizens of the dark alleys of Lowside.

The series follows Alys, our tough, streetwise, quick-witted, and quick-tongued thief and assassin. She's paired with Daxton Ellis, a nobleman and Magistrate Inspector. They once were lovers. It cost them dearly and they separated, but now they are brought back together again.

They're not ready to fall in love again, but not willing to be separated again either, even as their two worlds pull them apart.

The world of Lowside, and all of the capital city Resa, is a deep, complicated place, and our two protagonists are caught in the middle. It's our version of a bloodier, bigger Romeo and Juliet in a fantasy, crime noir setting.

The complete story is told through a series of novellas. Think of it like your favorite episode-based TV show. Each novella can stand on its own, but when read together, it tells the fuller story.

Best Left in the Shadows is one of the four series in Echoes of the Ascended.

Echoes of the Ascended is a series of series.

It follows the lives of five orphans. Each series features different characters. Each is a different kind of tale.

Read one, two, three, or all the series to customize your own unique, personal experience into the grander story of Aedaron.

So come step into the shadows with Alys and Dax, and uncover the secrets that lie beneath the seedy surface of Lowside.

Mark & Joe

Maya says

ARC received via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I'm quite surprised by how much I liked this story. The first few pages reminded me of reading a Sherlock Holmes story. You have murder (or what seems to be one), mystery, crazy plot twists that I really did see coming, lots of action, badass characters and even a hint of romance.

I always love reading a book with a strong female main character that knows what she wants and what's more important, she makes stuff happen. I liked Alys's personality a lot, though I admit she can be a bit pessimistic about her view on the world she lives in. It's a harsh and dark world but she's a fighter. She and Dax share history and I would have loved to know about it. Sadly, the author did include more details about that in this story. But we can always hope for it to happen in the next book that coming.

A great read for sure!

proxyfish says

Reviewed on my blog - Books by Proxy

4 Stars

Gelineau and King take precedence over my reading pile as once again we return for a flying but highly satisfying visit to the world of Aedaron. Following the story of Alys, we are treated to another sub-genre shift as we enter Prionside in this fantastical detective noir, where the inhabitants of Highside and Lowside are divided by more than just distance.

Following my ever increasing enjoyment of the previous novellas, *A Reaper of Stone* and *Rend the Dark*, I had high hopes for another different but equally dazzling exploration of this dark and varied world. And *Best Left in the Shadows* does exactly this; with a feisty heroine and gritty urban setting, this short and satisfying read ticks another box for these talented and instantly addictive authors.

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Best Left in the Shadows follows the story of Alys, an intelligent and street-wise young woman who earns her living trading secrets amongst the underworld of Lowside. But when a daughter of the Highside nobility is found murdered on the docks in Prionside, and the magistrate called in to investigate is a man whose past is entangled with her own, Alys must lead him through a maze of canals, alleyways and underworld politics to solve the case and find justice for the murdered girl. But with a complicated past and secrets of their own, there is more to discover than just the author of this crime.

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This latest novella introduces yet another aspect of the diverse and rich world of Aedaron, where this time we venture into a city of crime and vice, providing the perfect backdrop to this detective noir. Twisted and narrow alleyways, dark and dirty canals, sewerworks and sumpworks, brothels and taverns, all play an intrinsic role in building up this grimy, industrial landscape where if its not for sale, it can and will be taken by force. With a knife in the back or a bolt to the neck an ever present possibility, the narrative conjures a dangerous setting for any criminal investigation.

Gelineau and King once again do not fail to impress with their effortless depiction of this slum-like city; one which is entirely different to its predecessors but an intrinsic part of the whole. Their descriptions are effortless, their humour ever-present, and the introduction to new characters in a new corner of the world make for an excellent, if short, read. The brief but enticing mentions of Highside also leave an intriguing impression and will no doubt come into play during future novellas. I certainly cannot wait to see a clash between these two opposing sides of the city and society.

Whilst the myriad ne'er-do-wells of Prionside make for a colourful cast of characters that intrigue, excite and lend more than a handful of tension and drama to this fantastical crime novella, it is the protagonists of this tale which truly shine. Alys has a fantastic and almost comedic voice; her tone conveying a light-hearted side to a novella which would otherwise seem much darker. Along with Dax, our investigating magistrate, the two play off one another to leave an impression of two fascinating characters whose tangled web of history and secrets provide an intriguing aside to the main narrative and which are slowly revealed over the course of the novella. And with a great deal more still to discover about the pair, we're left with an enticing hook for the next Alys novella.

Best Left in the Shadows is another fantastic addition to the authors' repertoire and, with the creation of

another distinct and well-realised aspect of an already impressive world, had me hooked on Alys' story from the very start. Whilst the thought of formulating an intriguing detective story over so short a read seems nigh impossible, Gelineau and King manage to craft a mysterious and satisfying tale which wraps up neatly at its conclusion and leaves enough personal intrigue to draw you onto the next novella. As a lover of crime and detective fiction, I can only hope that this theme is here to stay.

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If you love being able to slip into a world in a multitude of sub-genres, experience it through the eyes of different characters, explore its different towns and cities and meet its varied inhabitants, then I couldn't recommend the *Echoes of the Ascended* novellas enough. *Best Left in the Shadows* is another fantastic addition to this highly enjoyable series and can either be read on its own or as part of the whole. Once again, I've come away impressed and even more addicted to this dangerously compelling world, and I cannot wait for my next adventure with Alys!

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths.

Another highly entertaining entry into the *Echoes of the Ascended* novellas series by Mark Gelineau and Joe King, *Best Left in the Shadows* proves yet again these authors have big plans for their fantasy world, are talented enough to fulfill those dreams, and are far from a one trick pony, as each series is a unique story all its own.

Here Alys is a tough, streetsmart Lowsider. Selling secrets to the various gangs and crime bosses of the seedy underside of the capital has given her a comfortable life and made her a respected member of the underworld. Nor does it hurt that Alys is more than capable and more than willing to cut a throat or two whenever the need arises. So, when an old lover knocks on her door needing help with a delicate situation, she agrees . . . for a price.

In fact, Magistrate Inspector Daxton Ellis is investigating a murder. Not that another body showing up in Lowside is anything special. It happens everyday after all. What has sent Dax slumming in the undesirable section of town (and asking help of Alys of all people) is that the corpse in question was of a true blood girl: a direct descendant of the First Ascended. And when the children of important people die (especially in Lowside) someone is going to pay.

The investigation which follows is a twisting, turning affair, filled with lies, schemes, and tension. The aristocratic and idealistic Dax quickly finding himself out of his element, led into the hidden sanctums of crime lords, shadowy brothels, and neck-deep in a community filled with desperate, downtrodden people who would be more than happy to kill him — if he wasn't being protected by Alys. And through it all, our unlikely team uncovers more than a few secrets, heals some old wounds, and discover than old feelings (even juvenile love) does not completely abandon us even when we are old enough to know better.

Descriptions for why I thoroughly enjoyed this novella are too numerous to list, but I'll try to just keep it brief.

1) Interesting characters who also happen to have chemistry. (Yeah, this has a fantasy romantic comedy feel,

and Gelineau and King do pull it off.)

2) Yet another brush stroke in the amazing portrait of the *Echoes of the Ascended* world, which further develops this complex land.

3) A tight mystery plot which delivers twists, more than enough action, and many comedic moments.

All of which meant I flew through *Best Left in the Shadows* during my free time last night (You know, after the wife and kids are asleep.), and I can't wait to follow along with Alys and Dax's continuing adventures.

I received this book from the authors and Netgalley in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank both of them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

Marjolein says

Read all my reviews on <http://urlphantomhive.booklikes.com>

The Echoes of the Ascended is a series that follows four different characters in stories set in the same universe but not all in the same genre. Of the book in this series that I've read so far, this was my favourite.

A noble lady has been killed and is found at the lower parts of the city. It's simply a case of bringing the murderer to justice, but these things are never simple, unfortunately.

First of all, it read like a Victorian murder mystery. If it had stated this took place in London, I would have believed it. I really liked how there seemed to be a lot of story (and detail) for the very limited number of pages in this novella. It was impressive really. I'm really looking forward to reading more of this particular part of the series!

Thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Leah (White Sky Project) says

Swashbuckling mystery! Nope, there are no pirates in this book, but the word "swashbuckling" came to mind while I was reading it. Must be because the story has scenes in docks, canals, dark alleys, and brothels. Plus there are battles involving swords, knives and a big ass scythe being handled by a kickass heroine.

Like with the previous Ascended books, I really love the characters and their dynamic. The female lead Alys is different from the heroines in *Reaper* and *Rend the Dark*, but she's just as complex and strong. The male lead Dax, though no pushover, is a good contrast to her personality and their chemistry is fun to read.

The blurb pretty much sums up what the book is about, but of course there are also intriguing secrets and exciting twists that hit you as you read along. The ending kind of left me wanting, but I still can't wait to know more about what happens with Alys and Dax in succeeding novels in this series. If you like fantasy noir, you should definitely check this book out.

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. I was not compensated nor was I required to provide a positive review. All opinions expressed are my own.

This review first appeared on White Sky Project.

Cora Tea Party Princess says

5 Words: Crime, friendship, loyalty, poverty, dark.

I think I'm in love with Alys.

She's dark and dry and darkly funny in a dry way. And she's vicious, both with actions and words.

This is a very different side to the Echoes of the Ascended world. This book was the least "fantasy" of the lot, it could almost have been set in historical London if it wasn't for the Razor making an appearance.

I absolutely loved this and can't wait for the next one!

I received a copy of this for free via NetGalley for review purposes.

Debbie says

"Best Left in the Shadows" is a short story--a fantasy that contains a mystery. A well-born girl is found dead in the slum area, so a well-born magistrate comes looking for answers. He's guided around by a low-born gal with whom he has a romantic past. They're an interesting contrast to each other--one is idealistic, the other very practical. Both can fight well, and they get the chance to do it. They ask questions, follow clues, and unravel the truth.

The characters were interesting, varied, and played well off each other. The fantasy world was reasonably well developed for a short story, and I could always follow what was going on even though I was unfamiliar with this world. I enjoyed this story and look forward to reading future stories in the Alys series.

There was a fair amount of bad language (half of it relating to excrement and the other half cursing words). There was no sex. I was surprised and pleased by their depiction of a brothel, which focused on the people, not their sexual appeal. Overall, I'd recommend this fun, short story.

I received an ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley.

Jacquie (Rattle the Stars) says

I really like the Echoes of the Ascended series Mark Gelineau and Joe King! The more of the novellas I read, the more complete the world of Aedaron is. While A Reaper of Stone focused on the marches, this novella examines class, poverty and the criminal underworld of the capital city, Resa. It reads like a gritty Victorian murder mystery with enough twists and turns to keep you excited to the very end, which is why I cannot wait

for the second part.

I am really enjoying the strong and intelligent female leads crafted Gelineau and King. This novella follows Alys, a street wise thief and assassin who has been employed by Dax Ellis, a Magistrate Inspector, to find out who murdered a noble born woman. Alys and Dax have a history and throughout the story you get bits and pieces of what tore them apart and I really liked how they interacted with each other. The secondary characters were also quite interesting and well written. The authors do not waste words and their description of each character allowed me to fully visual each scene and further connected with the protagonists.

I highly recommend this novella and the series. I cannot wait for another adventure with Alys and to find out exactly how, or if at all, these stories are related.

Find more reviews at Rattle the Stars.

Norah Una Sumner says

This was one hell of a ride.

Alys seems like a very complex and intriguing character and I certainly want to know more about her. She is a bad-ass lady with a righteous heart, even though she's probably not aware of this.

Daxton investigates the murder of a young woman and needs Alys's help... To say that there's some chemistry between them would be an understatement because there is so much chemistry between them that the chemistry itself seems to be a character on its own.

The story is very interesting and there are some pretty amazing twists. I loved how the authors focused more on the human aspect of Aedaron, even though I still like the supernatural aspects of this world. And that ending! Loved it so much. This novella is my second favourite so far. I really enjoyed reading it and I can't wait for the sequel!

You can read this review on BookishFever.

E-copy provided by the author/publisher in exchange for an honest review via Netgalley.

Daniel says

Zabavni karakteri sa ocitom prosloscu koji su ponovo spojeni zbog resavanja ubistva. Ostalo sve mi je dosta meh: sam svet, likove koje srecemo pa i sama misterija oko ubistva. Nije lose ali vec vidjeno i nekako dosadno.

A ocekivao sam da ce mi se ovo najvise svideti u ovom serijalu.

Galleywampus - says

This is the third novella from Gelineau and King. There are four distinct series under the Echoes of the Ascended banner, all taking place in the same world. Each has a different feel. The first three series, those featuring Elinor, Ferran, and Alys take place somewhat around the same time. The fourth, which is a YA series that begins in December, jumps us back five years and follows Roan and Kay, along with the protagonists from the other three series.

It's an unorthodox approach, but I applaud the audacity of the creators. And there is no reason that books with different influences shouldn't take place in the same world. I would be interested in reading a grim, monster-hunting novel in the Harry Potter world, or the hard-boiled detective novel lurking in the streets of a city in the Malazan Book of the Fallen series.

The first novella, *Reaper of Stone*, had a high-fantasy face, and followed Elinor, a clever, disciplined, hard-hitting soldier. This fits more closely to the typical epic fantasy feel that many fantasy readers are used to.

The second novella, *rend the dark*, is a monster-hunter driven book. It fits along the basic concept and feel of works like the movie *Van Helsing*, or Rick Yancey's YA title *The Monstrumologist*, or heck, the video game *Bloodborne*.

This third novella, *Best Left in the Shadows*, is an interesting fantasy noir title; in some ways, it feels like a police procedural. *Castle in RIFTen*, maybe. It is, at heart, a detective novella. But it owns the setting and trappings of your typical urban city fantasy work. Don't confuse that with "urban fantasy" because this is not UF. The setting shifts from the docks at night, to narrow alleyways, sewerscapes and waterways, and a seedy brothel.

Alys trades in information and favors. Due to a shared, complicated past, she assists a magistrate in the investigation of a murder on her local turf. She's not usually the sort to help the authorities, and it isn't good for her reputation. This provides some good conflict between the protagonists.

I do wish that the work was longer. Novellas fall into an interesting space between short stories and novels. Short stories, the good ones, make every word count. Novels have the ability to stretch out scenes, build atmosphere and tone, give us foils and time enough to live there. Novellas don't provide the length to feel lived in, nor staccato precision. I want to live in these works long enough to fully understand the characters, setting, magic system, monsters and creatures and politics. I suppose that's why it is good that these novellas continue on.

This is one of those stories that left me thinking, "I want to play this video game." I enjoyed the overall tone, setting and character sketches. Conceptually, this is the best fit for me as a reader. Ultimately, though, I think I've enjoyed *Reaper of Stone* the most of the first three entries. But the first three novellas have combined into an intriguing patchwork quilt of story. And I'm excited to finish the short edge of the quilt with book four in December.

*I received a review copy from the authors in the hope that I would write a review for my website. I made no promises and the thoughts and perspectives are uninfluenced by the means of acquisition and are entirely my own.

Rachel (aka Ms4Tune) says

Thank you to Netgalley and the publishers for a chance to read this book in exchange for an honest review!

My review can also be found on our blog [Paein](#) and [Ms4Tune](#)

I can't help it! I'm addicted! Best Left In The Shadows is the third book in An Echo of the Ascended and my third book in three days. This novella series is all set in a fantasy world called Aedaron, but each book follows different groups of characters in different stories. I love that this book had a completely different feel to the previous two. While A Reaper of Stone and Rend the Dark were more medieval knight/ epic fantasy stories, Best Left In The Shadows had a more Victorian Murder Mystery feel to it! It's incredibly clever how Gelineau and King have managed to create very different characters and settings and yet somehow still manage to bring them all together and make it work as a set. If I had more than two thumbs they'd all be up! :P

Best Left In The Shadows follows a Magistrate (a detective of sorts), named Daxton and his investigation into the murder of a young women. The body of this young upper-class daughter has been found on the grimy streets of the crime infested Lowside, and Daxton finds he needs help if he is ever to uncover who's responsible. Alys is the last person Daxton wants to ask for help from, but ask he does and together they search for the truth.

I think this was my least favourite of the series so far. That's not to say I didn't enjoy it, oh no, I definitely still loved this, its just to say I didn't love it as much as the previous two. I missed the supernatural creatures that gave the first two such an amazing magical feel. But what Best Left In The Shadows lacked in supernatural qualities it made up for with a deeper look at the darker side of humanity itself. The story was filled with gritty characters and dirty back streets, lies and deception. There was also this great sexual tension between Alys and Daxton that created a witty banter, which was so much fun to read.

I loved that their roles were reversed. Daxton, the male, was the slightly naive one, hopeful and believed in love and happiness where as Alys, the female, was very cynical and street wise. It was very refreshing. The mystery itself was ok, but not the thing that kept me reading, that was mainly the relationships between the characters.

I'll be interested to see what will happen next between Alys and Daxton, and hopefully they will link up with perhaps Ferran, Marieia and Riffolk??
