



## Full Metal Magic

*J.A. Cipriano , Domino Finn , Sonya Bateman , Ambrose Ibsen , Al K. Line , Rob Cornell , Pippa DaCosta ,  
Craig Schaefer , more... James A. Hunter ...less*

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Out of print.

**9 ALL NEW** action packed stories from NYT & International Bestselling Urban Fantasy authors.

**THE BULL DEMON KING** by J.A. Cipriano - Mac Brennan just wanted to take his girlfriend to the fair, but the Bull Demon King had other plans...

**THE BLACK DOOR** by Domino Finn - Cisco Suarez is dragged to the depths of the underground Miami nightlife, where seekers of arcane knowledge may just get their wish.

**DANCE OF THE DEAD** by Sonya Bateman - Halloween in Manhattan gets weirder than usual for Gideon Black, who finds himself up against a powerful necromancer looking to raise a lot more than the dead.

**HARD ROW** by Ambrose Ibsen - Demon-hearted brawler Lucian Colt prepares to trace a human trafficking operation to its fountainhead. But will he and his teammates prove a match for what awaits them in the seedy stretch of Hard Row?

**ANGRY SPARK** by Al K. Line - When an old vampire "buddy" calls you in the middle of the night, and asks for a favor, hang up on the them and stay the hell in bed. I was stupid. I got dressed, and nearly got dead soon after.

**FAMILY BUSINESS** by Rob Cornell - Sorcerer Sebastian Light expects his first day as a demon hunter to go off without a hitch, but sometimes family issues are harder to slay than even the surliest of goblins.

**VALENTINE BLUES** by James A. Hunter - As violence breaks out and people start dying, only Yancy Lazarus—bluesman, gambler, mage, and former wet-works man—can put things right. Well, he can try ...

**A DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY** by Craig Schaefer - For Daniel Faust, driving a condemned man to his death dredges up old memories and old ghosts. You can't outrun the past.

**CHASE THE DARK** by Pippa DaCosta - New York's sewers are infested with gators. As Ace Dante investigates, it becomes clear there's something far worse beneath the streets, and it's out for revenge.?

## Full Metal Magic Details

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# From Reader Review Full Metal Magic for online ebook

## Meigan says

Full Metal Magic is a great little anthology of novellas from various authors, some of whom I'm familiar with, some with whom I'm not, and it was certainly a nice introduction to the unknown-to-me authors to get a little sampling of their work.

Being a huge fan of Pippa DaCosta, of course her story featuring Ace Dante was the highlight. But, also included is a short story by Sonya Bateman, another author I enjoy. I've had my eye on Craig Schaefer's books for quite some time, and based on his story in this anthology, I'm most definitely going to take the plunge and start his Daniel Faust series quite soon.

All in all, Full Metal Magic is a nice compilation of urban fantasy stories featuring various supernatural creatures and mythologies. If you've had your eye on any of these authors but have yet to read their full-length novels, the stories contained in this collection are a nice way to get introduced to their various characters and writing styles. Of course, being that the stories ARE short, they're lacking a little bit of depth, but that's to be expected from such short works.

\*\*I received a free advanced copy, with no compensation, in exchange for my fair and honest opinion.

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## Dana aka ♥Belladonna♥ says

Full Metal Magic is a collection of nine series based urban fantasy short stories. As a girl who must read a series in order, there were only two stories in this collection I read, FAMILY BUSINESS by Rob Cornell and CHASE THE DARK by Pippa DaCosta.

### FAMILY BUSINESS by Rob Cornell

I chose Family Business because it was the first in the series and a great way for me to try out new-to-me author Rob Cornell. This little story about a twenty-five year old sorcerer with freshly printed demon hunter license burning a hole in his pocket was a fun, yet surprisingly touching read. While working his first case for the Ministry hunting a goblin, Sebastian must make some tough decisions regarding his work, himself, his family and his future. I definitely will look at more work by this author.

### CHASE THE DARK by Pippa DaCosta

I've read all of the Ace Dante series thus far and loved every one. So, Ace Dante vs. the mythical sewer gator of NY? Count me in! Of course it's not an "actual" gator, it's the God Sobek with a score to settle with the Nameless One. And let's just say Sobek's not playing with a full deck, if you catch my meaning. But really, what's not to love about a vengeful nutjob/gator God loose on NY with Ace and Shu wading to their rescue? Loved this one. My only complaint is it's not longer. ;)

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## Cheryl says

Very interesting selection of stories! I will have to say Pippa DaCosta is one of my favorite authors and I

love Ace Dante series. The stories were well written and I even got a few chuckles out of some of them. There are nine stories in this book. The stories range from action to those with a different ending which was not expected. Going into detail is not an option for me because the synopsis at the beginning of the book covers it, but I now have some new writers to follow. Note: I was given a free copy of the book for an honest review.

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## Emily Pennington says

>>>> Reviewing “The Black Door” by Domino Finn >>>>

Cisco Suarez was on a fake date heading to an underground magic club with Rachel. The bouncer asked him his “talent” and he blew on a silent whistle. A pigeon flew to him and landed on his arm – a DEAD pigeon, but still perched there awaiting a command. The bouncer turned to Rachel to see her talent, so she held out her hand to display a black shadow swirling around. It was actually Cisco’s magic, but the bouncer was oblivious. They went inside and made their way through the crowd until a man made a pass at Rachel. He would not take no for an answer and did not let Cisco talk him out of his tough guy moves. He escalated his threat until Cisco’s lack of fear made him back away and run off.

They finally made it to a back patio and Cisco told the bartender that he wanted entrance to the black door semi-hidden along the back fence. Then he asked for Derek which got the bartender’s attention. They were led into The Underground where a dark ritual was taking place. Cisco magically pulled up a shotgun to dispatch Derek but was grabbed by the giant bouncer. He pulled the trigger, the cloaked man collapsed to the floor – and the real Derek, a female in a skirt, stood up from the victim on the floor and approached him! How would they escape now? Who had the greater power to overcome the other?

The book has a very mysterious start, although the suspense starts to build immediately. The action moves between describing Cisco’s route through the club and giving us the gruesome backstory involving Rachel, which was their reason for being here. The reader’s understanding becomes clearer the closer they get to the ritual. I was glad that Cisco was confident and fearless from the start, or my discomfort level might have ratcheted up very quickly. As it is, when he was grabbed by the giant, I was on the edge of my seat! I highly recommend this great, suspenseful story with a shocking ending, one of many in this excellent box set. I voluntarily reviewed this book and my comments reflect my honest opinion.

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## Katelyn (Lost as Alice, Mad as the Hatter) says

While I am not a fan of inter-series shorts, I have to say this is a solid collection. Of course, I was so **jazzed** that I was about to read another Pippa DaCosta Ace Dante story that I closed all the windows, battened down the hatches, turned off all social media, and tucked myself in my favorite comforter for a great read.

My only disappointment to this addition to the Soul Eater series was that it was simply too dang short! I loved it! Took me all of 30min to devour her latest. So then I consented to read the rest of the e book.

This is a collection of rather humorous short stories in the urban fantasy realm. I actually **choked** on my tea a few times from the humor. I will update this review with some of the quotes and such taken from the shorts after the book becomes available.

However, for now it should be enough to say that I am now reading bk 1 in the Daniel Faust series by Craig Schaefer!

*ARC provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.*

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### **Montzalee Wittmann says**

Full Metal Magic by J.A. Cipriano, James A. Hunter, Pippa DaCosta, and so many more talented authors....is a book of urban fantasy like no other! Wow, nine stories that had me reading late into the night and I loved it. Each unique story is so interesting that I doubt I could come up with a favorite but.....Ok, I will try. Valentine Blues is my favorite, it is a Yancy Lazarus story so of course I had to read this since I am a big fan of his stories. Yancy goes to a town that has kids that aren't kids. Of course Yancy seems tough but he can't let this go, he has to get the kids back and get rid of the monsters. Great fun. All the stories are like this, great fun! Great book, great job all of you authors!!!

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### **Milena says**

I received free copy from the author in exchange for an honest review. Full Metal Magic is a collection of short UF stories from different authors. One of the stories, Chase the Dark, is by Pippa Dacosta from her Ace Dante series. I love Ace Dante and I like everything Pippa writes so Chase the Dark was a great treat for me while I wait for the next installment of Soul Eater. I haven't read all nine stories yet and I am looking forward to reading them all and discovering new authors.

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### **XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

*Disclaimer: there are nine short stories in this collection. I only read two of them. Pippa DaCosta's and Craig Schaefer's. Because I'm disgustingly selective and stuff. And because DUH.*

► **Chase the Dark by Pippa DaCosta: 5 stars. Surprise, surprise.**

This is an **awesome short story** from the awesome Soul Eater series. Please don't tell me you've never heard of it. No, really, even if that's the case, you do not want to tell me about it. Because if you do, I will have to **unleash the murderous crustaceans** on you. And believe me, you do not want me to do that.

But anyway.

🔪 **Question: how can you go wrong with...**

- **Severed body parts**, aka yum yum yum.
- Ace Dante, **High Security Harem Top Notch Material** (HSHTNM™), slightly conflicted Soul Eater, and, alternatively, "Osiris' little bitch."
- Shu, Ace's **Somewhat Reluctant Kind of Awesome Demon Sidekick** (SRKoADS™), who will gladly

eat your tongue if don't shut the shrimp up.

- Sobek, aka the "**prehistoric asshole**," aka yet another delightfully sociopathic, deliciously batshit crazy Egyptian god.
- New York sewers and "**rabid, magically enhanced Nile crocs**."

↘ **Answer: you can't.** Especially if your name is **Awesome Pippa DaCosta is Awesome** (APDCiA™). Because that means you're awesome and failproof and **can do no wrong** and stuff.

» And the moral of this **Super Short Non Review Thingie** (SSNRT™) is: I rest my case and QED. And stuff. **Ha.**

*ARC kindly provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.*

- **Book 1:** Hidden Blade ★★★★★
- **Book 2:** Witches' Banes ★★★★★
- **Book 3:** See No Evil ★★★★★
- **Book 4:** Scorpion Trap ★★★★★
- **Book 5:** Serpent's Game ★★★★★
- **Book 6:** Edge of Forever ★★★★★
- **Short-story:** Chase the Dark ★★★★★

➤ **A Drive in the Country** by Craig Schaefer: **4 stars.** *I know, I know, only 4 stars. What can I say? This one sucked big time.*

This is an **awesome short story** from the awesome Daniel Faust series. You know how this goes, right? Do not tell me you've never heard of it, blah blah blah, **murderous crustaceans**, blah blah blah, you do not want to do that, blah blah blah.

Moving on.

↘ **Question** : my Danny Boy, aka Book Boyfriend #1, aka my **High Security Harem's Undisputed Unequalled Irreplaceable King** (HSHUUIK™) asks you to go on a country drive with him. **What do you do?**

- Decline** because you know if you accept I will unleash the **murderous crustaceans** on you. Which, in all likeliness, will result in your dying a slightly slow, kind of horrible, somewhat painful ? **death** ?.
- Decline** because you have a **bad back**, and therefore will not be able to put your **Magnificent Own-Grave Digging Skills** (MOGDS™) to good use. Such a shame.
- Decline** because you ~~smell something decidedly fishy in the air~~ have an important **doctor's appointment** you just cannot miss. About your bad back. Obviously.
- Decline** because MY Danny Boy can display **Mad Homicidal Maniac Skills** (MHMS™). Sometimes. Like, when you screw with him or his **Family of Dubious Morals** (FoDM™).
- Decline.** Because all of the above.

**Perplexing, isn't it?** Come on, my Little Barnacles, put ~~your two~~ all your grey cells together and think! Yeah, I know, it's a tough one. **Arduous Decision Time** (ADT™) and stuff. So? **What will it be?** No need to rush, take your time. Okay, don't take too long to answer, either. **It's not like I have all day.** Things to do, ~~exasperating nitwits to annihilate~~ places to go and all that crap. So? What's your pick? Answer e? **Good choice!** Now you might just live another day. Maybe. Who knows. The murderous crustaceans are **getting restless**. Not sure I can hold them back **much longer**.

- **Book 1:** The Long Way Down ★★★★★
- **Book 1.5:** The White Gold Score ★★★★★
- **Book 2:** Redemption Song ★★★★★
- **Book 3:** The Living End ★★★★★
- **Book 4:** A Plain-Dealing Villain ★★★★★
- **Book 5:** The Killing Floor Blues ★★★★★
- **Book 6:** The Castle Doctrine ★★★★★
- **Book 7:** Double or Nothing ★★★★★
- **Book 8:** The Neon Boneyard ★★★★★

[Pre-review nonsense]

### **Monday morning maths :**

*If*

**a** = ~~there is a freaking Pippa DaCosta ARC in your inbox~~ today is your day off.

*and*

**b** = ~~there is a freaking Pippa DaCosta ARC in your inbox~~ there are only 27 days left before you get a three-month holiday.

*and*

**c** = ~~there is a freaking Pippa DaCosta ARC in your inbox~~ there is a freaking Pippa DaCosta/Ace Dante is Mine (ADiM™) ARC in your inbox.

*and*

**d** = ~~there is a freaking Pippa DaCosta ARC in your inbox~~ the freaking Pippa DaCosta/Ace Dante is Mine (ADiM™) ARC also contains a freaking Craig Schaefer/Daniel Faust is MINE (DFiM™) ARC.

*then*

**a + b + c + d =**

*and also:*

*and also also:*



and also also also:

Obviously.

**Thank you, Pippa, you just killed me dead.**

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## **Sarah says**

Anthologies like **Full Metal Magic** can be a great way to try out a whole bunch of new authors and potentially add a huge number of books to your to read pile (you'll probably find yourself hooked on 9 new series by the end of this one so be warned LOL!). My main reason for wanting to read this anthology was for the Soul Eater short story by **Pippa DaCosta**, she's the only one of the authors that I'd read before and I'm a huge fan of her work so I'd recommend this book for that story alone but I was excited to have the chance to try out so many new authors too.

Overall this anthology includes a great mix of different supernatural creatures and magical abilities, the stories are varied and fun and it's ideal to dip in and out of because you can easily finish each one in a single sitting even if you don't have much time free. At the current price (£0.99/\$0.99) it's a total bargain and a great way to test out a whole bunch of authors to decide which series you're interested in continuing.

I'm including the official blurb for each short story below followed by my thoughts about them all just to give you a bit more information about what to expect from the anthology:

**THE BULL DEMON KING by J.A. Cipriano** - *Mac Brennan just wanted to take his girlfriend to the fair, but the Bull Demon King had other plans...*

This is part of the Thrice Cursed Mage series but I'm not sure where it fits into the timeline. This is a fast paced short story with plenty of action but I have to admit I didn't love Mac's voice. He goes on and on about how hot is girlfriend Ricky is but seems to think the fact that she's a werewolf who is the alpha of the entire state is hardly worth mentioning. The banter between them was missing something and I'm not sure if they're in a new relationship but they hardly seem to know each other and I didn't really feel the chemistry between them. This wasn't bad for a short story and I'll still try the series at some point (especially since I already own the first book) but it didn't leave me desperate for more.

**THE BLACK DOOR by Domino Finn** - *Cisco Suarez is dragged to the depths of the underground Miami nightlife, where seekers of arcane knowledge may just get their wish.*

Part of the Black Magic Outlaw series, again no idea where it fits in the timeline. I enjoyed this story much more than the first one, mainly because I really liked Cisco's voice. This story was cleverly plotted with a nice twist that I didn't see coming (it may have been more obvious if I was familiar with the series but it was still cleverly done) and it definitely left me wanting to read more in this world.

**DANCE OF THE DEAD by Sonya Bateman** - *Halloween in Manhattan gets weirder than usual for Gideon Black, who finds himself up against a powerful necromancer looking to raise a lot more than the dead.*

This is part of the DeathSpeaker Codex and takes place just after events in book 1, **Wrong Side of Hell**. Gideon is fairly new to the supernatural world, he only found out about his half-fae heritage recently and is still learning to use his rare ability as a DeathSpeaker but he puts it to good use in this short story when he comes up against a necromancer. This was a fun Halloween themed story and it added another series to my wish list.

**HARD ROW by Ambrose Ibsen** - *Demon-hearted brawler Lucian Colt prepares to trace a human trafficking operation to its fountainhead. But will he and his teammates prove a match for what awaits them in the seedy stretch of Hard Row?*

Part of the Demon-Hearted series but where it fits into the timeline is unknown. This was another story I enjoyed enough to want to carry on reading the series (this anthology really was bad for my poor to be read mountain!). Lucian was an interesting character, he was given a demon heart in a transplant after being attacked by witches and it's given him some unusual abilities that he puts to use working for a supernatural type of police agency. This story sees him go up against werewolves who have been trafficking children to the underworld.

**ANGRY SPARK by Al K. Line** - *When an old vampire "buddy" calls you in the middle of the night, and asks for a favor, hang up on them and stay the hell in bed. I was stupid. I got dressed, and nearly got dead soon after.*

Part of the Dark Magic Enforcer series but again I'm not sure where it fits into the timeline. Unfortunately this was my least favourite story in the anthology, it's probably a personal thing but I just really didn't like the fat-shaming that was going on. The main character Faz gets a call from an old friend who is in some kind of trouble, from the beginning we're told how fat his friend is and how weird that is for a vampire since they normally look after themselves. Then we get a lot of awful descriptions of the friend's floppy skin because he's lost a lot of weight in a short space of time (thanks to being cursed) and finally the friend recovers and we're supposed to be amused that he's now ginormous again. Like I said that's probably a personal issue that might not bother other readers as much but frankly I found it offensive and it doesn't leave me with much interest in reading more from this author.

**FAMILY BUSINESS by Rob Cornell** - *Sorcerer Sebastian Light expects his first day as a demon hunter to go off without a hitch, but sometimes family issues are harder to slay than even the surliest of goblins.*

This is part of the Unturned series, I think it's a prequel but I can't be 100% certain of that. Sebastian is a sorcerer who has only just got his demon hunting license but his first day on the job definitely doesn't go to plan when he realises his target might not be guilty of committing all the crimes he has been accused of. The real question is should Sebastian just blindly follow orders or should he trust his gut and go with his instincts? I think this was probably the funniest story in the anthology and it definitely left me wanting more.

**VALENTINE BLUES by James A. Hunter** - *As violence breaks out and people start dying, only Yancy Lazarus--bluesman, gambler, mage, and former wet-works man--can put things right. Well, he can try...*

Part of the Yancy Lazarus series but I'm not sure where it fits into the timeline. This was a retelling of the Pied Piper which was unusual and made it memorable. It wasn't quite long enough for me to get to know the main character very well but I like what I've seen so far and wouldn't mind carrying on with the series.

**A DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY by Craig Schaefer** - *For Daniel Faust, driving a condemned man to his*

*death dredges up old memories and old ghosts. You can't outrun the past.*

Part of the Daniel Faust series but I'm not sure where it fits into the timeline. I have a lot of friends who love this series so apart from Pippa's story this was probably the one I was most interested in reading. I wanted to see if it lived up to the hype and I'm happy to say that it did and it's made me more eager than ever to read the rest of the series. I have a feeling I'm going to love Daniel, I definitely loved the story he told here and the way he got his revenge on someone from his past.

**CHASE THE DARK by Pippa DaCosta** - *New York's sewers are infested with gators. As Ace Dante investigates, it becomes clear there's something far worse beneath the streets, and it's out for revenge.*

Part of the Soul Eaters series, will work well as an introduction to the series but technically fits into the timeline after the second book, **Witches' Bane**. Obviously this story was the whole reason I wanted to read the **Full Metal Magic** anthology. I absolutely love this series, it's full of crazy Egyptian Gods roaming modern day New York and causing mayhem for poor Ace wherever they go. This story introduces us to Sobek, the Egyptian God of Crocodiles (among other things) and he's been rather busy in the sewer system underneath Manhattan creating a hoard of mutant crocodiles that he's planning to unleash aboveground. It's up to Ace, and his trusty demon sidekick Shu, to try and stop him but Sobek and Ace have history and things are about to get complicated. Another fantastic story from Pippa, definitely my favourite of the anthology (no surprise there!) and it's left me eagerly waiting for the next instalment of the Soul Eaters series.

**Source:** Received from Pippa DaCosta in exchange for an honest review

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Thoughts before reading:

A new ARC from Pippa - with a SOUL EATER short story!! My week has been made. Throw in 8 other stories from new (to me) urban fantasy writers and I'm going to be in heaven. I'm a little concerned my TBR pile might just explode from all the new series I'll be adding to it soon but too many books is a problem I'm happy to live with LOL

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## **Cheryl La Pa says**

I have only read *Chase the Dark* by Pippa DaCosta and *A Drive in the Country* by Craig Schaefer so far, and I loved both of them. Riveting and well written. Its amazing how much punch can be packed into a short story.

*Chase the Dark* is from the Soul Eater series of which I have read the first two books and absolutely loved. Set in a New York where ancient gods roam, Ace is a soul eater who has been kicked out of the underworld and tries to help others in an effort to redeem himself from his past sins. In this novella, Ace's investigation leads him to the sewers which are infested with gators and something much bigger and much more troublesome. This is a fast paced, brilliantly written, action packed, entertaining ride. Ms DaCosta is a gifted writer and brings Ace's world to life. I love the relationship and banter between Shu and Ace, and even though he is far from innocent, I can't help but cheer Ace on and hope that it all works out for him.

"I quit." I spat mud to the side. "Tomorrow, after I get my sword back."

"I thought stupid was more of a calling and less of a career choice."

“Five centuries, Soul Eater.” He said my name with a throaty hiss. “I blunted my claws scratching the name of my enemy into the walls of my little stone cell.”

“What name did you use?” I asked, looking up at the god bearing down on me. “I have a few.”

*A Drive in the Country* is from the Daniel Faust series (which I haven't read yet). Daniel is a sorcerer who works for the criminal underworld, and in this novella he recounts an ill-fated heist to a condemned man whilst driving him to the site of his impending death. It is a beautifully crafted tale, full of twists, magic, fleshed out characters, witty banter with a surprise ending. I found Daniel a likeable character, and even though he is on the wrong side of the law and has no hesitation in handing out justice to those who betray him, he is loyal to his friends and lives by his own code of honour. I will definitely be giving the series a try.

I will review the other stories as I read them.

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## **Lisa says**

I'm leaving my reviews as I read so I will be adding to this review.

5 Stars

The Black Door by Domino Finn

This was such a delightful read. There were a great number of emotions I felt while reading. I want to tell more about it but I don't want to spoil anything. I would've never saw the little twist coming. Very clever Mr Finn! It was also nice to see the bad guys get what was coming to them.

5 Stars

Chase the Dark by Pippa Dacosta

As always, this author never disappoints. If you've never read any of her books, you don't know what you're missing. She has the super ability to draw you right into the story from the first paragraph. So talented. These were a cast of scary characters. I loved It! And the world. Just imagine being in the sewers under New York with a massive magical crocodile lurking around somewhere. But that's not all Ace has to worry about. Old secrets and actions have come back to bite him in the butt, maybe literally this time.

5 Stars

Dance of the Dead by Sonya Bateman

Wow! I loved this book. I bought the first one in the series a long time ago but never had a chance to read it. After this one, I'm moving it up on my TBR list. I loved these characters. They were well developed. I especially liked Abe. This was a great concept for a book! (And no, I'm not related to the author) or I don't think I am. Lol. Wish I was, I would try to bribe her out of revealing stories she hasn't written yet.

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## **Cyn Armistead says**

I was clued in to this anthology by a mention in J.A. Cipriano's newsletter, which is worth subscribing to (hey, the man sends you free reads, and they're good!). Anyway, Cipriano and company are all dark urban fantasy authors who have written these stories specifically for this volume, so you won't find them anywhere else. The book is available via the Kindle Unlimited program. In fact, every related book that I checked on is available that way, so I'm wondering if this thing was sponsored by Amazon or something. If so, why doesn't

it say so? Anyway, on to the review.

"The Bull Demon King" is Cipriano's story, set in the Thrice-Cursed Mage universe. You don't need to have read those books to appreciate the story, and it serves as a nice little introduction if you're curious about the series (I've really enjoyed them). I think the story is set between the second and third books, but I won't swear to that and it isn't vital. We get to attend the Texas state fair with assassin mage Mac Brennan and his girlfriend Ricky, the local alpha werewolf. Of course, mayhem ensues, because that's Mac's lot in life - and what kind of story would we have otherwise?

Domino Finn contributes "The Black Door" which is noted as "A Black Magic Outlaw Story." This story had me guessing right up until the end, which was delightful. The writing is wonderful, the world of an alternate magical Miami nightlife is very fully realized, and central character, Cisco Suarez, is extremely well drawn. I will be pointing my partner to Finn's work, for sure (he loves the macabre), but I think it may be a little too dark for me.

On to Manhattan for our next piece, "Dance of the Dead," which Sonya Bateman tells us is a "Deathspeaker Codex Short Story." It takes place just after the events of the first novel in that series, according to the author's note. Gideon Black drives bodies from crime scenes and the like to the morgue. Apparently he's not 100% human, and he's just learned that he can speak to the dead. That's very important to the plot. For some reason this story didn't grab me. I don't relate well to stories that deal with the dead, like zombies and so on, so it's probably a failure of imagination on my fault rather than anything wrong with Bateman's story. If I find something she writes in another setting, I will give her another go.

Ambrose Ibsen offers up "Hard Row: A Demon-Hearted Story" for the collection. Lucian Colt works with other special enforcers to keep the threats from Beyond from encroaching on the mundane world of Detroit, and when he learns that there's a shipment of kidnapped children being moved, he's definitely down for tracking down the bad guys behind the trade. The fallen angel whose heart he carries is just glad to get a chance to throw down. The gimmick doesn't really carry the story here. It feels like Colt is too overpowered in comparison to his allies, as if they are a mismatched RPG party.

Okay, I'll admit it: Al K. Line's name just annoyed me. So I had to get past that to give "Angry Spark," set in his Dark Magic Enforcer world, a fair reading. Then the use name of the main character, "Black Spark," hit me wrong. The guy's real name is Faz Pound, but obviously magic men don't go about giving their real names to all and sundry, hence the use name. Then I didn't like the remarks about a corpulent character. So I finally just decided to leave off on this story. Maybe someone else can give you a review of it.

Rob Cornell's "Family Business," which is apparently a prequel set in his Unturned series' universe, is set in another alternate Detroit. Fortunately nothing annoyed me about this one, so I was able to read it. It's a wee bit hackneyed, but a bit sweet, too. It's sort of like when you hear a song and you know how the melody is going to go because the chords and the melody progression already feel familiar. I might check out more of Cornell's work, but it won't be at the top of my to-read list.

On the other hand, "Valentine Blues" left me truly hungry for more of James A. Hunter's work, and wanting to read more about Yancy Lazarus right now. This minute. Not soon, NOW. Lazarus is a traveling blues man with some interesting talents who takes an interest in the very strange behavior of the young people in Valentine, Nebraska. You can find the most interesting things on the road! I will most definitely be reading *Strange Magic: A Yancy Lazarus Novel*, the first book in this series, SOON.

I know that I've read something about Craig Schaefer's Daniel Faust series somewhere before, but I've never

actually read any OF the series until "A Drive in the Country." It's set in and around Las Vegas. I have no idea where in the timeline of the series this particular story is set, but it's well-written. It pulls you into the gritty, noir world of gangsters plus magic and makes you feel the dark. If that's your thing, Schaefer's your man.

New York is the setting for Pippa DaCosta's "Chase the Dark," set in the world of her Soul Eater series. I am highly intrigued, as I don't believe I've ever run into an urban fantasy series that draws upon Egyptian mythology the way DaCosta is here. The name of the main character, though, Ace Dante? Even though it's obviously an assumed name, it's terrible. I hate it. I'm jarred every single time my eyes come across it on the page. It kept pulling me out of what was otherwise a really good story, and is making me wonder whether or not I can handle reading Hidden Blade, the first book in the series.

Now that I'm finished with the book, I can't help but notice a few things. There wasn't a single main character that was female, and while it's possible that Cisco Suarez is a person of color, his cultural background wasn't made clear in Finn's story. If any of the other protagonists were POC, that wasn't obvious (I'm not sure what to consider "Ace Dante.") I'm pretty sure all these men were cisgendered and heterosexual, as well. I don't think it's too much to ask that there's a little more diversity in such a volume.

All in all, a decent collection of stories and a nice introduction to some new authors, but a disappointment in some important respects.

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### **Pippa DaCosta says**

The supernatural stalk our city streets...

and that's just the good guys.

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### **Jujubee says**

Read first four stories...The Black Door and Dance of the Dead turned out to be stellar reads! 5 stars for sure ;)...now to keep reading for more gems!

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### **Marianne says**

An awesome collection of short stories from a talented group of authors. I mainly purchased this anthology because I'm a fan of Pippa Dacosta's Soul Eater series -well, all of her works, really - but there is something for everyone in this novel. Great buy, currently on sale for only 0.99. Go get it while you can:-)

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