



## Thief Eyes

*Janni Lee Simner*

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The latest YA fantasy book from *Bones of Faerie* author Janni Lee Simner!

After her mother mysteriously disappears, sixteen-year-old Haley convinces her father to take her to Iceland, where her mother was last seen. There, amidst the ancient fissures and crevices of that volcanic island, Haley meets gorgeous Ari, a boy with a dangerous side who appoints himself her protector.

When Haley picks up a silver coin that entangles her in a spell cast by her ancestor Hallgerd, she discovers that Hallgerd's spell and her mother's disappearance are connected to a chain of events that could unleash terrifying powers and consume the world. Haley must find a way to contain the growing fires of the spell—and her growing attraction to Ari.

Janni Lee Simner brings the fierce romance and violent passions of Iceland's medieval sagas into this twenty-first-century novel, with spellbinding results.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## Thief Eyes Details

Date : Published April 27th 2010 by Random House Books for Young Readers

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Author : Janni Lee Simner

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Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Romance, Mythology, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Thief Eyes for online ebook

### **Jake Rideout says**

I loved this book so much that I read it in one day. I'm always impressed when a book inspires a burning desire to read another book...in this case, it's the Icelandic saga Njal's Saga. Thief Eyes is about a sixteen-year-old girl, Haley, who follows her father to Iceland so she can see the place where her mother disappeared a year previously. There she finds a strange coin that brings her nothing but trouble. Soon she discovers that her mother was caught in an ancient magic--and, by picking up the coin, so is she. Thus begins her journey through Iceland's myths and history.

Haley is accompanied by Ari, an Icelandic boy whose mother works with Haley's father. Together they must navigate a world that they thought was only a legend.

The thing I liked most about this book was the way that Simner made Haley a real person. So many adventure stories show a character transforming instantly into a (sometimes bumbling) hero, but not Haley. She was a completely believable human being from beginning to end, with all the hesitation and confusion that comes with being human. The writing was great, too--and, like I said, it made me want to pick up an Icelandic saga for casual reading. Bravo, Janni Lee Simner.

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### **Rachael says**

When her mother mysteriously disappears in Iceland, Haley and her father are shocked and confused. Somehow Haley convinces her father to take her to Iceland. Hoping for some closure, Haley instead finds herself entangled in what she thought was only Norse mythology and Icelandic sagas. Her possession of an ancient silver coin, a gift from her ancestors, ties her inexplicable to a powerful spell cast long ago by her maternal ancestor Hallgerd, a woman and sorceress who would do anything to escape her own life. Though the spell is old, its potency and potential for destruction has not faded, and it is now up to Haley to break it. To do so, she and her friend Ari embark on an adventure across Iceland's rugged terrain, racing against time to, in all probability, save the world. But in the midst of her own confused feelings, how will Haley know to do the right thing?

Thief Eyes is a fantastic fusion of modern culture and Icelandic sagas. It really is quite thrilling how Simner manages to combine these two so smoothly, and the effect is magnificent. At first, Haley appears to be just your ordinary teen girl confused by the sudden departure of her mother. However, as time passes and the circumstances surrounding her mother's disappearances appear more mystical than ordinary, Haley rises to the occasion. I love the deep degree to which Simner incorporates Icelandic sagas and Norse mythology into Thief Eyes. It transports the reader away to another land and time even though most of the story takes place present day. I commend Simner for making such an obvious work of myth and fantasy so realistic and enjoyable.

I recommend Thief Eyes to readers who enjoy all mythology, particularly fans of Why I Let My Hair Grow Out by Maryrose Wood, the A Great and Terrible Beauty trilogy by Libba Bray, and Guardian of the Dead by Karen Healey.

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## T says

I struggled mightily with this book. Books that blend 'real life' and fantasy typically aren't my cup of tea, but I was willing to give this one a chance because it took place in Iceland. I was hoping that there would be a good blend of Norse mythology/Icelandic sagas.

The author attempted to blend these elements and the results were...not good. The author butchered the saga elements and themes to within an inch of its life (the saying "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" pops to mind). I also found myself re-reading certain passages multiple times because things were just not making sense to me. The characters felt entirely 1-dimensional and there were times (more often than not) where I wanted to smack the bratty main character, Haley. However, seeing what a pill her ancestor, Hallgerd, was portrayed as, it's no surprise Haley was just as obnoxious (actually moreso -- I found myself rooting for Hallgerd to smite everyone and end my misery). Seeing how Hallgerd was lifted straight from the Sagas, it's no wonder that character actually felt like she had a little depth to her.

Plus, this is supposedly a teen book. What was with all the cussing? Maybe I'm just old school and too far removed from what's cool with the kids these days, but, this responsible adult says cool it on the F-bombs.

You're better off reading the *\*actual\** saga this book was supposedly based on -- 'Njal's Saga'. And if you haven't yet read that, don't let the subpar story of 'Thief Eyes' scare you off. This was like bad fanfiction gone horribly awry.

(And yes, I do realize my last sentence was redundant.)

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## Miyong says

I started reading this book without expecting too much. The plot sounded okay, but other than that, I didn't even think I'd like it.

The book's pretty good. The storyline focused more on the plot itself, which is a relief, otherwise I'd be closing this book and placing it under "dropped" rather than reading through so many romantic scenes. Not much swearing, either. Maybe about three to five times only.

Simner also did a good job with maintaining the characters with their personalities, though I can't be too sure if it applied to everyone.

(view spoiler)

As I said, I liked the book, but I can't say I'm very willing to buy this book. And if I'm going to be reading this a second time around.

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### coffclass says

I found this book confusing. About Haley's ancestors and everything--was it because I have no background on the Iceland legend this was based on? If that's the case, then it's a huge drawback for readers. There were so many things that were not normal, and they weren't explained, and Haley wasn't even that surprised about them. I mean, if I was Haley and I was suddenly in this weird situation, I'd be shocked. Haley wasn't.

I'm not sure if it was the pacing, but even until the end, I wasn't so sure why things turned out that way. There wasn't much revelation in the course of the plot--just more and more weird events happening. I also thought the paragraphs were weirdly (I'm too lazy to look for a synonym) put--like the start of the paragraph would be Haley thinking about something, the middle describing the surrounding people/places, and the end of the paragraph would be *more* thinking. I felt there were too much unnecessary details put in. It distracted me.

The dialogue and character development were also weird sometimes (yes, I'm lazy). (view spoiler)

The ending was kind of wrapping up nicely. Just kind of, though. (view spoiler)

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### K. Lincoln says

Thief Eyes starts out in a rift valley in Iceland. Haley has accompanied her father on a research trip, but truly she's there to see for herself the spot where her mother disappeared a year ago.

Haley is a genetic descendant of Halgerd, a girl who learned sorcery from her Uncle and used it to cast a spell on a coin to exchange places with a future descendant so she wouldn't have to marry against her will in her own time.

Haley's mother picked up the coin, but dropped it, messing up the magic so that she was consumed by the fire of the fire giants who first helped Halgerd with her magic, and leaving an opening into our world that is causing Iceland's volcanoes and earthquakes to act up.

Haley finds out her father isn't as innocent as he seems in her mother's disappearance, and in her grief, takes the dropped coin and rushes out into the Icelandic landscape only to find herself in a cave with creatures from myth: Muinin and Freki.

Haley soon finds herself on the path towards destroying the coin, and along with the son of her father's research partner, Ari who is polar-bear shapeshifter, they will have to find a way to heal their own hearts from parental wounds, and find a way to keep Iceland safe from the fire giant magic.

Great things about this book are the characters, the parental issues that managed to include a general sense of the difficulties of ties to imperfect family members and the realizing/forgiving of those imperfections, as well as the Norse/Icelandic mythology.

I have to admit I got a little tired of the Ari/Haley tromping around in a psuedo-mythological landscape with the coin that never seemed to matter that much, but in the end I appreciated the emotional journey the two protagonists underwent.

This Book's Food Designation Rating: Plain Bagel with cream cheese and lox for the Northern European flavor on top of a bland-at-times vehicle.

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### **Kilian Metcalf says**

Taking the Icelandic myths as a jumping-off place, Simner weaves a tale of enchantment about a contemporary teen separated from her father, searching for her missing mother. Helped along the way by a raven, a fox and a shape-shifting bear, Haley braves danger to find out the truth and her way back.

I really liked the fox character and wished he had more of a role to play in her search, but he was there when it mattered.

I once wrote a historical novel. It was August in Tucson, and I was stuck in town. So I did second best. I chose a place far, far away. I set my novel in Maine in winter. At least I could mentally escape. Simnel, a fellow Tucsonan, may have felt a similar urge to escape by choosing Iceland for her setting, far away from the desert heat.

My blog  
The Interstitial Reader  
<https://theinterstitialreader.wordpress.com>

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### **Kater Cheek says**

Thief Eyes is a YA adventure novel steeped in Icelandic culture. Haley, an American teenager, persuades her father to take her to Iceland on his research trip. Both of them are haunted by the mysterious disappearance of Haley's mother a year earlier. Haley's father thinks her mom just ran away and had an accident, but his colleague, Katrin, thinks that Haley's mother was the victim of sorcery. As it turns out, Katrin is right. Simner ties in Haley's adventures with Norse mythology and Njall's saga, specifically about the story of Hallgerd, an evil (some would say misunderstood) woman who caused the death of at least one husband. What I liked most is that Hallgerd is not evil so much as selfish, and doesn't think through the consequences of her actions. The sorcery messes everything up, and works in ways that she doesn't understand. I also loved that the mythical characters in this novel each have their own agenda which is sometimes at odds with Haley's, and sometimes in concert with it. Strong, neutral characters with independent motivations make for realistic and fascinating plots.

My one complaint with this was that I would have liked more setting details. I couldn't visualize the landscape very well, despite having been to Iceland, and some scenes had so few details they were nothing but dialog. Still, it's a tightly plotted, creative adventure with some nice characters and a sweet G/PG romance. I think that teens and adults who like paranormal YA but want a change from the standard vampire/werewolf fare will find this a fresh change of pace.

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### **TheBookSmugglers says**

Original review posted on The Book Smugglers [HERE](#)

Thief Eyes opens as a young woman called Hallgerd casts a spell, raging against her father and a broken

promise. The spell – cast with fire and coin – takes Hallgerd through time as she searches down the line of her female descendants, trying to find someone who would trade places with her. But each and every one of her daughter's daughters, knowing the effects of such a magic spell too well, turn their backs to Hallgerd. Until a thousand years down the line, a descendant without any knowledge of magic runs from the fire and is consumed by it. And then, it is her daughter's turn to face Hallgerd's offer.

It's been one year since Haley's mother disappeared when visiting Iceland with her husband. Haley and her father have now returned to the place where she disappeared from, in search of answers but there is no sign whatsoever of her mother, no clues, no nothing. But she knows that her father knows more than he is willing to say which is something that becomes clear when they meet up with a local friend, someone who seems to believe that magic is a part of this mystery. It is then that Haley comes across a silver coin – the very same coin that Hallgerd threw down the ages and by picking it up, Haley becomes part of this ongoing saga. Together with a boy named Ari, she embarks on a journey to try to break the spell and to save the very future of Iceland.

Thief Eyes draws inspiration from the medieval Icelandic story Njal's Saga which tells the story of Hallgerd, the one with the "eyes of a thief", and of her three husbands and then combines it with Norse Mythology. The result is tremendously well done: the fantasy aspect of this story is intriguing and it circles beautifully around time as the repercussion of the spell cast a thousand years earlier are still felt down the line. The Norse mythology elements are also incorporated beautifully in the story not only by introducing characters but also their relationships with the gods and for example the impact of Memory, its loss and how it affects people.

In fact, memory is one the central aspects of this story. For example, there is Haley's memory of her mother and how it keeps her going or Haley's memory of her boyfriend, back in America which keeps her from pursuing her feelings for Ari. Above all, there is perhaps, the memory of Hallgerd herself which lives on in the historical saga, a saga that maligns her as a husband-killer. The question of how much of it has been misinterpreted or changed as the years went by is an interesting one. There is also this great exploration of time and history and I thought this was by far the best thing about Thief Eyes and I enjoyed how Haley was a part of it and how things came to an end at the book's close.

However, on top of these Fantasy elements, the book also has a contemporary facet, which deals with Haley's feelings and relationships: from her grief at her mother's disappearance and her anger at her father, to her feelings for her boyfriend back home and the boy who is with her right now. The aforementioned saga is used to make comparisons with Haley's situation especially with regards to her and her father's romantic connections. One thing that Haley asks herself when the book opens concerns love and if it is possible to love more than one person at the same time. She is struggling with what happened to her mother and how that was a direct result of her father's love life outside of marriage and that mirrors her own situation as she develops feelings for Ari, the boy who is definitely not her boyfriend. Although I have to give kudos to the author for presenting an unusual resolution to the love triangle (one that I have never seen before in a YA novel), I think that the love triangle, the comparisons between the two situations felt slightly forced to me. In fact, quite a lot of the contemporary happenings felt... off. On one hand there were these great fantasy elements happening but on the other hand, the side effects of those very fantastic elements on the minds and lives of these two modern kids required a lot of suspension of disbelief when it came to their reactions.

Haley, prior to this trip, had no inkling that magic existed and yet her acceptance of these magical occurrences is extremely easy. There is hardly any questioning, or any real powerful emotional reaction to what I can only call very extreme experiences from her or from Ari. The two deal with memory loss, memory gain, talking animals, shape shifting, time travel and not to mention the terrible truth behind Haley's

mother's disappearance with such a carefree, accepting attitude that I found hard to understand or accept. It is as though they were detached from their story and that sense of detachment was so strong that it leapt from the pages and unfortunately the consequence is that it affected me: as much as I enjoyed a lot of the book, I didn't really love it. I would definitely love to read more stories inspired by Icelandic sagas though and am happy that I read this one.

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### **Peppers says**

To be honest, this book scared me a bit to pick up and read. I really like the author's book before this, "Bones of Faerie," and I was wondering what she was going to do with this one.

At first, I thought it was just going to be a retread of the other story: girl hero, missing mom, daddy issues. But, as I got reading, this actually turned out to be much more original and different than I expected. There ended up being quite a few things about this book that I loved.

The use of Norse mythology for one. And yeah, it may be a stupid turn off for some, but I liked how these elements were used in the narrative and the fact that the author did lots of research on the subject. The characters in the story, I felt, were better defined than in "Bones of Faerie;" I saw a little more into the main protagonist of Haley. She's an angsty whose pretty much gotten shoved out of the loop concerning as to why her mother ran off in Iceland a year before. Also, there's a bit of a love triangle used here that I thought was actually good use of one (an I usually hate those). It kinda added to the conflict more and I wish it had gotten a more in-depth exploration. Also, I enjoyed the fact that characters had to make choices and did stupid things that they had to pay for. Dump some gifted wine on the ground when told not to? Well, you'd better get ready to run (or walk away really fast).

Overall, I liked this story. There were a few weak spots, but I found it very enjoyable and interesting.

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### **Sarah says**

A wonderful book, and one that I plan to read again.

This fantasy entrancingly brings the reader into a fun combination of modern day and Nordic mythology. In addition to wonderful developed and realistic characters, this book is like a visit to Iceland. Simner captures the setting perfectly.

So many great writing craft things in this book: characters, use of endowed objects, fantasy techniques. Also of interest is the use of intertextual references to modern books and film. As I said, *Thief Eyes* is well worth reading more than once.

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### **Kelly says**

(4.5 stars) *Thief Eyes* begins with a spine-tingling scene of sorcery, in which Hallgerd, a young girl in ancient Iceland, calls upon dangerous powers in order to avoid an unwanted marriage. With this scene, Janni Lee Simner sets an ominous mood, gives us some background information, and provides a few tantalizing hints

about what might unfold later.

We move then to Haley, a young American girl of today who has just arrived in Iceland with her geologist father. A year ago, Haley's mother went missing on the island, and she has accompanied her father in the hopes of finding out what happened. Uncanny events start to occur when she discovers a strange ancient coin, and then she learns in heartbreak fashion that her family was not as happy as she thought it was.

Distraught, hounded by Hallgerd's spirit, Haley takes a dangerous tumble into Iceland's mythical, magical underside. Her quest is to keep Hallgerd's spell from unleashing volcanic disaster. Her closest allies are Ari, a boy who is also descended from a powerful magical legacy, and Freki, an utterly adorable talking white fox (he's supposed to be a wolf, he tells us, but there are no wolves in Iceland).

I really enjoyed the characterization in *Thief Eyes*. Every character is nuanced rather than "good" or "evil"; you never know when a "good guy" might make a mistake or a "bad guy" might surprise you by doing something honorable. Haley is a terrific heroine, a strong, bright girl who questions authority and doesn't just do things because a supernatural figure tells her to. She faces temptations — both romantic and vengeful — but tries to do the right thing even when it isn't easy.

The plot is complex, dealing with several timelines at once, and Simner brings it all together in a climactic scene that's clever and touching. I also like the way the romantic subplot is handled at the end. It seems true to the characters' ages and where they are in their lives.

*Thief Eyes* paints a vivid picture of Iceland and alludes to many of its myths. You may find yourself wanting to travel there or to read the classic sagas. I know I did! This is a well-researched and thoroughly enjoyable young adult novel, not to mention refreshingly original. (No vampires!)

This review originally published at Fantasy Literature's Janni Lee Simner page.

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### **Kari says**

A magnificently weaved tale of magic and lore, *Thief Eyes* spins a new twist on sorcery. Pulling in several elements in unexpected ways, Simner has created a piece that is both refreshing and engaging. Set in Iceland and heavy on the culture and land, there are numerous unique aspects of this book.

Starting with a prologue that will capture the reader's attention and spark many questions, the book spends only a small amount of time settling in before the action picks up and the plot really begins. Though she came to Iceland to try finding her mother who disappeared a year earlier on a visit with her father, Haley ends up learning far more about her mother's disappearance and her family tree than she ever imagined possible. Throughout, the reader learns each new element at the same pace Haley does with little clues in advance to give insight.

Haley's character is one that can easily be understood and though the story picks up before the reader can really come to know her, the basic facets of her personality come out with each new event and obstacle she faces. This brings in a distinctive feature of the book, as the reader actually meets Haley in times of stress and completely foreign situations rather than seeing a shift between how she acts in a comfortable setting before being thrust into something new. The overall result is a strong heroine who isn't afraid to show fear

and is full of doubts yet still finds reasons to push forward. She is a character who doesn't roll over but is also not overly confident.

Ari is developed in the same fashion, allowing the reader to learn about him under the same taxing circumstances as Haley. Though he does hold some of the same traits, this is borne out of their common situation rather than lack of insight from the author. They find strength in each other and keep the other going, forming a strong bond and companionship that could only be forged under the circumstances. Had they spent more time together prior to being thrust into this world of magic and confusion, the final outcome of their relationship could very well have been different.

The plot is well developed and thought out and though the pace is start and stop there are plenty of curveballs thrown. Romance is mixed in, cropping up at unexpected moments and providing some relief in the midst of the rough situations. Simple in nature once exposed, Simner's writing keeps much of the secrets hidden until revealing at perfect times to surprise the reader as well as keep the pages turning. With vivid descriptions and a highly imaginative world intermixed with modern Icelandic geography and culture, Simner has built a piece that will stand out and is a must read.

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### **~Tina~ says**

(2.5-3stars)

**Thief Eyes** leads us to the unstable geological planes of Iceland where Haley tries to uncover the truth of her mother's disappearance. When she finds out that sorcery is the reason her family is broken and she is also in danger of the same doom her mother had faced, Haley has to break the pattern that was set over thirty generations ago...

While I absolutely love the concept of legends, magic and madness I'm afraid this was poorly delivered in terms of writing pace, character development and plot. I would be intrigued one minute, bored the next and I found myself skimming to just get through the book.

However, even though I didn't enjoy this book as much as I thought I would, and don't feel comfortable recommending it, I would like to say that I found the legend and concept quite fascinating, but in the end this was just an okay book.

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### **Sherwood Smith says**

This book shares a lot in common with the basic structure of *Bones of Faerie*: an angry but powerless dad, a daughter who doesn't communicate with him, a runaway (magical) mom, the daughter has to go find her. How the first person she meets is the possible boyfriend.

That said, Simner addresses the issue of a broken family from a different angle, always with the eye on the teen view. Haley and Ari are both from broken homes, something they talk about on their adventure, as they try to figure out how they plunged out of the world into a strange existence where white foxes talk, ravens' wings communicate words, and one of Haley's ancestors is the infamous Hallgerd of the old sagas, who refused one of her husbands a couple strands of her hair to string his bow so he could defend himself. (A scene we see.)

Some readers might feel that the coin Haley picks up and can't get rid of is a bit of a plot token, and that Haley and Ari spend a lot of time slogging around without getting anywhere, but I encourage readers to persist. The two are understandably wary of strangers, they need to spend time getting to know one another before they can trust, and there are good reasons that trust doesn't come easy. When they bond, it's believable, and satisfying. As for the plot, when the two find themselves back in Iceland, only as ghosts, the story takes off at high speed straight to the end.

I loved Haley and Ari, who felt like real teens, talking about real problems. Dealing with magic and a universe gone mad the way teens would. The parents are sketchy, but I think that is a deliberate choice, in order to keep the eye firmly on the teens--who try to figure out the adults' motivations.

I've liked all Simner's books, but this one is my favorite yet. I loved the use of Norse mythic elements, I loved the characters, and I loved Haley's voice.

I also got a kick out of the meta references to volcanoes at the beginning, which resonated with events in Iceland right now!

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