



## Jinx

*Sage Blackwood*

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# **Jinx**

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## **Jinx** Sage Blackwood

It's not every day that your evil stepdad abandons you in the deep, dark forest of Urwald. And it's not every day that a wizard rescues you from the clutches of gnarly trolls. But for Jinx, this isn't turning out to be a very normal sort of day...

The bubbling cauldrons and coloured potions of the wizard's house are a world away from the life Jinx has left behind. Even the walls are soaked in magic, and it's not long before Jinx begins to unlock his own rare powers.

But Simon Magus is no ordinary wizard. He seems to need something from Jinx - something dark. And Jinx begins to wonder: can he trust Simon... at all?

A dark and mysterious forest, a determined young hero, a quest to reclaim stolen magic: Jinx launches an enthralling new adventure for fans of Septimus Heap, Fablehaven, and The Sisters Grimm.

## **Jinx Details**

Date : Published January 8th 2013 by HarperCollins

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Author : Sage Blackwood

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## From Reader Review Jinx for online ebook

### Margaret Chind says

Absolutely recommended! Dare I say it? But I would recommend this to a similar crowd as to those that enjoyed Harry Potter with a trio of friends and a bit of magic. But it's an entirely different story with unique personalities unlike any I've ever read and yet it makes me want to go back for more Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes as well. Jinx, himself is an interesting boy with a bit of mystery about him. He's an orphan in bitter circumstances that leads off on an expected adventure.

Truly overall I find this book to be about fear, moving beyond the fear and learning not only to like yourself but those around you and realizing what you are made of and capable of in shaping your own life. I'm not sure if all of that was meant to be taken from the book, but that indeed is what I was able to glean. Sage Blackwood is an amazing voice that had me from the very beginning and I immediately was finding myself searching for more. At first I was very much saying alas as to this being the first one, but then discovered under a different name there are some historical fiction novels I can look for (by Karen Schwabach) and while usually historical fiction is my genre of choice, I'm so in love with this book that I really hope there will be more to the story.

I was enraptured almost the entire way through, except for a lull I felt when Jinx's companions were being introduced. However I think that was due to the fact that they were not overly nice to him at first and I had become rather attached and protective of his character. I guess that says something about some good personality in the writing. :)

Absolutely recommended. I read this as an Advanced Reader Copy and I definitely plan to add the real thing to my shelves.

\*Thanks to HarperCollins for providing an ARC for review.\*

scheduled: <http://creativemadnessmama.com/blog/2...>

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### Ms. Yingling says

Library copy

Jinx is living with stepparents in a clearing near the treacherous forest of Urwald. To step off the path there is to invite death, so when his stepfather takes him into the woods and has him sit off the path and wait, Jinx knows this is not a good thing. Luckily, the wizard Simon happens upon them, and when trolls come out of the woods, he cloaks himself and Jinx so they are not carried off. His stepfather is not so lucky. Grudgingly, Simon takes the boy home and puts him to work cleaning and helping out. Dame Glammer, a witch with whom Simon deals, thinks the best course of action is just to EAT the boy. Jinx is not entirely sure if she is kidding or not. Simon's wife, Sophie, is not always around, since she teaches somewhere vague and unspecified, and never arrives at the house by the front door. When Simon performs a spell on Jinx that robs him of the ability to see the color of people's thoughts, Jinx suspects that Simon is evil and takes off through

the forest to visit Dame Glammer to ask her some questions. On his way, he meets Reven, who has an unspecified curse on him, and Elfwyn, who does as well. Dame Glammer is Elfwyn's grandmother, and the witch suggests that they travel to the Bonemaster to ask him about the curses and Simon. The Bonemaster seems nice, but he is highly suspect, and in the end Jinx is put into a terrible situation. How will the three children survive, and will their questions be answered?

**Strengths:** I appreciated that this had a Germanic/Grimm Fairy Tale feel to it rather than a Celtic?King Arthur one, and I think that fans of Delaney's *The Last Apprentice* might enjoy the interplay between good and evil in this one. Jinx is an appealing character, and even Simon has his moments, especially with his fun home and his love of cooking. I can see why fantasy fans like this series.

**Weaknesses:** This brought to mind a dozen other similar books (Prineas' *The Magic Thief* especially), so I would quibble with the dust jacket blurb that says this is "innovative".

**What I really think:** Don't regret purchasing. It will get steady use and last for a long time.

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### **Liviania says**

*JINX* is good. *JINX* is really, really good. *JINX* is an example of everything middle grade fantasy can be, one of those books that will appeal to both parents and their children, as well as other people who just want a good book with curses and enchanted forests and plucky orphans.

Jinx is raised by the wizard Simon after his stepparents attempt to abandon him in the forest. You're safe as long as you stay on the path in the Urwald, but even then it's not an easy place to survive. It's easier if you're clever and kind, but there are many dangers lurking for the unsuspecting. Unfortunately for Jinx, he trusts Simon and ends up losing some of his magic as a consequence. When he goes out to claim it, he meets two other cursed orphans: Elfwyn and Reven. Elfwyn is a fellow child of the Urwald and Reven is an outsider who could bring great danger considering how he never quite manages to understand the place.

Did I mention how good *JINX* is? Because it's great. It's full of moral complexity, from witches and wizards who might be evil to fellow plucky orphans who have motives that might be at odds with Jinx's own. He relied on his ability to see people's feelings when he was younger and never learned to look much beyond that surface. Part of *JINX* is his growing up and learning who to trust and when to trust them. It can be hard, when some people seem more affable and decent than others, but might be nastier inside.

Beyond the subtle, detailed characters is a rich, fertile world. In fact, there's far more to the world than just the menacing, yet nurturing Urwald and Jinx longs to explore it. Sage Blackwood was clearly influenced by a variety of fairytales and other folklore, but she's created a fantasyland of her own. There's a touch of Hansel and Gretel here, a sprinkle of Baba Yaga there, but there's enough invention to make *JINX* feel fresh.

Do you love middle grade fantasy? Or do you just love fantasy, period? Then do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of *JINX*. Blackwood's debut is an absolute standout, and I cannot wait to read about Jinx's future adventures.

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### **Kat Heckenbach says**

This is MG fiction. Fun, well-written, fast-paced without skimping on story and character development. The writing voice really captured me as well. Told with a fairy tale flavor, it had me smiling in so many places.

There are dark bits, of course, as any good fairy tale has, but they're not told in gruesome detail.

The story world has a lot of familiar tropes--witches, wizards, werewolves, etc.--but all handled in unique ways. The magic system is really cool, as are Jinx's particular abilities. I totally connected to Jinx and LOVED Simon the wizard--and the way the author shows the good and bad in all the characters impressed me.

Love the cover art, too!

Highly recommended.

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My YA fantasy series:

book 1

book 2

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### **Camille Adams says**

DNF @24%

I couldn't handle the sad part.

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### **Lauren says**

Review on A Write to Review - <http://lrjohnson13.blogspot.com/2012/...>

This is a refreshing take on a fantasy novel with an intriguing plot and unique world.

Jinx has a bit of mystery surrounding him with a wonderfully fresh personality on an epic adventure. As Jinx struggles through his adventures he, along with the reader, learns important lessons along the way. The concept of overcoming ones fear was very intriguing for me and I enjoyed how it was handled in the book.

Note: I won this book from Goodreads Early reviews

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### **Pam ?Because Someone Must Be a Thorn? Tee says**

\*\* I wish every book written for Middle-graders was this good\*\*

What a delightful book. The story is just great and the characters are well developed for middle-grade fiction

(telling you enough without going on and on), and the voice that the author (Sage Blackwood) has chosen is absolutely wonderful; by which I mean that the story is told with a crisp 'British-style' humor.

The story revolves about Jinx. He has the fortune (or misfortune) to be born in the Urwald. It's the type of place where life is difficult, and even when the trolls and werewolves don't get you, other things do. And so, Jinx finds himself in a family where no one is related to him, because his father died and his mother remarried and then she died, and his step-father remarried. And he's still a little kid.

In any case, one day the father takes him off to leave in the Urwald, and that's where Jinx's life changes drastically, because the pair runs into a wizard.

From there the story takes off, and Jinx gathers up a collection of interesting people that we have the privilege to learn about.

I really like the story. Liked the world-building, and loved that the author didn't write-down to her audience. This is a book that even adults can be engaged by.

**HIGHLY RECOMMEND** this to people wanting a fun, engaging read. If you have a Tween that's impatient and needs things to start off running, then you might want to wait a bit. But overall, this is a well written book.

Pam T~

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### **April Franklin says**

Wow. It's hard to even get across how much I loved this book. It was a perfect mix of powerful magic spells, peculiar wizards and witches, interesting realms and a likable character at the center of it all - that concoction is almost guaranteed to be a favorite of mine if it's well written, and this was. It was very much like reading something by Diana Wynne Jones, who I utterly and completely adore. It's also well worth a read for any fantasy fan or any fan of excellent middle grade books. It would make a wonderful read aloud as well.

So, what did I love so much? The plot was engaging, the characters were nuanced, and the writing was excellent. The book starts with Jinx, a child living in the Urwald, a dark forest full of trolls, werewolves, and wizards and witches. I don't want to spoil much of the plot, but Jinx is taken in by a mentor whose motives keep the reader guessing. Simon, who raises Jinx, is both good and bad: he's a complex and real character. He is also a wizard with lots of ambition. As Jinx grows up in Simon's home, he gradually learns a lot more of his world: magic is more complicated than he had thought, there is much more outside the Urwald than he would have guessed, and he himself is more unique than he knows at the book's start. I can't wait to see where book 2 takes the story!

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### **Kat (Lost in Neverland) says**

Starts out strong, with strong characters and concepts, but slowly deteriorates into a boring, uneventful mess with no conclusion.

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### **Monica Edinger says**

Great fun. Interesting world, delightful characters, and intriguing plot. More than once thought of Diana Wynne Jones; for example, wizard Simon's crankiness had a tinge of Howl. There were a number of throwaway lines in the style of Princess Bride. All in all very entertaining; I look forward to the next one.

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### **Amy Forrester says**

The Urwald is the only place Jinx has ever known. Dark and mysterious, the tall trees of the Urwald are home to menacing werewolves, werebears and trolls, devious witches, and sinister wizards. Even as a young boy, Jinx knows about the Truce of the Path: You are protected as long as you remain on the path. But one day his cruel stepfather takes Jinx off the path, intending to leave him to fend for himself. Just as Jinx is about to give up hope he's saved by Simon, a cranky, yellow-eyed wizard. At first Jinx is intimidated by the cantankerous wizard, but as the years pass he learns more than just magic from Simon. Although he is kept safe and well-fed, Jinx longs to explore the world beyond the Urwald and so he sets out on a quest. Accompanied by the charming thief Reven and brutally honest Elfwyn, Jinx's life-changing journey takes him from the safety of Simon's castle to ominous Bonesocket, home to the evil, bloodthirsty Bonemaster. Who is good and who is evil? Who is honest and who is deceitful? As Jinx's story unravels he finds the truth isn't exactly what he imagined.

This gripping fantasy is written in third person from Jinx's point of view. Blackwood expertly builds a rich world, allowing the Urwald to unfold through dialogue and narration. This keeps the focus on propelling the story ever forward, rather than pausing to step outside a character to describe elements. The characters are well-rounded and multi-dimensional. Each character has flaws and strengths, which adds a touch of realism to this magical story. The plot has as many twists and turns as a path through the Urwald. Subtle foreshadowing leads to several surprising revelations. Although the ending resolves the major conflict, it also unearths information that complicates other aspects of Jinx's life and sets the three children off on another journey. The ending is an obvious set up for a series of books, leaving the reader wondering what will happen next.

Full review at Chapter Book Explorer: <http://chapterbookexplorer.blogspot.c...>

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### **Emily says**

This was an incredibly charming and clever middle-grade novel that is very reminiscent of Diana Wynne Jones (my highest compliment!) and Patricia Wrede, but it has a flavor all its own. I loved Jinx, the young protagonist of this book, who sees feelings as colors and grows up as a wizard's apprentice in a dark, dark forest. I also loved Simon, the wizard, who manages to be both a flawed and interesting adult, and Jinx's friends, who join Jinx on his journey to the castle of the appropriately named Bonemaster. The writing is whimsical, but still captures the emotional and messy business of growing up. Very highly recommended.

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## **Jen says**

I LOVED Jinx. I was hooked in the first paragraph:

"In the Urwald you grow up fast or not at all. By the time Jinx was six he had learned to live quietly and carefully, squeezed into the spaces left by other people, even though the hut he lived in with his stepparents actually belonged to him. He had inherited it after his father died of werewolves and his mother was carried off by elves."

Hold onto your hats! What follows is his stepfather trying to abandon him to die off the path, and being taken in by a possibly evil wizard. There is so much magic and flights and suspense and heart and nonstop action in this book. And though there will clearly be a sequel involving a promise Jinx makes with the trees (thank goodness!), it stands alone. I really appreciate this - I get so frustrated with books that leave you hanging with a zillion balls in the air. I highly recommend it to lovers of fantasy.

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## **colleen the convivial curmudgeon says**

Jinx is an interesting little tale.

One thing I liked about it was how it sort of evoked various different folk and fairy tales. Hansel & Gretel is evoked twice - once by step-parents leading their children into the forest to abandon them, and then a more direct reference to gingerbread houses. Ellwyn's red hood and her travelling through the forest to get to her grandmother obviously evokes Red Riding Hood. The witches travelling by butter-churn reminded me of Baba Yaga and her mortar and pestle and, conversely, also has interesting parallels in the idea of witches preventing butter from being made.

So on and so forth.

Another interesting thing was the level of moral ambiguity. Some of the shades of grey touched on in this book are not always found in adult books, let alone books at this grade level.

And, aside from all that, it was a pretty decent adventure story which kept me interested enough to keep reading.

But there still felt like there was something missing. Maybe it's because it takes awhile from the story to start. Not to say that I was ever bored, 'cause I found the early bits with Jinx interesting enough if a bit unbelievable - I mean, it's one thing for the forest or magic to speak to you, but to be able to quickly pick up multiple languages because the book speaks to you? - but it's not until about 2/3 through the story that the adventure part takes off, and then those bits felt kind of rushed.

But the biggest thing was that I just never really jived with any of the characters. There were moments but, overall, they were sort of there to fill their roles in the story and never really seemed to amount to more than that.

I'm not sure I'll read a sequel, assuming there is one. (It's certainly left open enough for there to be one.) I'm not adverse to reading it, per se. I'd even go so far as to say I might recommend it to some people. But I'm

just not sure it left enough of an impression that I'll even remember about it in a month or two, let alone a year or more...

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### **Barb Middleton says**

The Chinese narrator's words emitting from the television are nonsensical to my thick ears until I hear "Niu Rou." This means "beef" in Mandarin but my western brain hears the Roman emperor's name, "Nero." The sound comes from the back of the throat and whenever I try to pronounce it I either elicit a laugh or quirked brow. Such is my language life. Not so for Jinx where learning languages is like breathing in and breathing out. He's fluent in months and has taught himself six languages in about five years. Sigh... don't you love fantasy... you can do the unthinkable! Of course, Jinx has magical powers within himself that grant him this unique ability.

Jinx can read people's minds by seeing the colors of their thoughts. When his stepfather brings him to the Urwald forest to abandon him, Jinx is rescued by Simon, a crotchety wizard, who cares for Jinx and welcomes him to his home. He's absent minded and his motives for taking Jinx are questionable at times, but he's not cruel to Jinx and feeds him in exchange for his assistance. When Simon takes Jinx's magic from him without asking, Jinx goes on a quest to a powerful wizard to get it back along with the help of two friends, Reven and Elfwyn, who also need the wizard's help from curses of their own. This powerful wizard is evil and their success depends on how clever they are in manipulating him, but he has his own plans with no qualms at killing three kids.

I thought the start was slow. Jinx's stepfather is carted off by trolls and Simon is gruff and prickly. He's ornery toward Jinx. He's married to Sophie but they don't live together and she travels in a mysterious way to and from Simon's home. When he takes Jinx's magic it is unclear if he is an evil or good wizard. This adds wonderful tension to the plot. Simon doesn't do the right thing and it is not really clear until the end why he did. The plot twist was nice and the untrustworthy adults with magical skills.

The stepfather scene where he crops up later is not resolved. The ending suggests a sequel and maybe it will be addressed then. I can't really get into the details or I'll spoil the fun but it is left hanging. Elfwyn's curse is like Ella Enchanted but not nearly as funny. I thought the author could have made her situations more humorous.

This entertaining book ends on a strong note with the pacing and tension picking up and some unexpected character revelations. While it has flaws, the world building exists and the characters are distinct. The witch is a strong supporting character using nicknames such as, "chickabiddies," and "chipmunk" for the children with a creepy grin that suggests she wants to eat them she teases about cooking them in the oven like the famed, Hansel and Gretel.

I'm always embarrassed by my poor language skills and am fascinated working with students who know two or more languages. They are like sponges when they are really little and it always takes longer to read than speak. The four and five years suck up the words like vacuums, not saying much at first. Then their brains sort it out and they start putting the sentences together. I wished I had been able to learn a second language at a young age. Maybe Jinx can give me a bit of that language magic. Lord knows I need it. Sigh...

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