



Jack of Hearts (A Novel of the Seven Courts, #1)

Ricardo Bare

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Slave. Loner. Assassin.

Some boys throw their hearts away. Jack let a witch take his.

He surrendered it long ago to the Lady of Twilight so that he would never feel heartache—or anything else—again. But there was a price. The Lady transformed him into a callous hunter forced to do her bidding, and now she's commanded him to chase down and kill a thieving wizard named Moribrand. Love, hope, and human connection are concepts he can no longer comprehend, painful weaknesses he chose to cast aside. But when Jack meets a beautiful girl trapped in a mirror, the impossible happens—he feels an echo of his distant heart, and the sensation staggers him.

Cassandra, a spellbound girl who can only communicate through her mirror image, awakens something in him more dangerous, more impossible, than he ever imagined: a memory of who he once was and how it felt to care about another human being. She challenges his loyalty to the Lady and shows him his heart might be worth saving. What will it take for Jack to take his heart back from a witch, who has no intention of giving it up?

Jack of Hearts (A Novel of the Seven Courts, #1) Details

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Author : Ricardo Bare

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From Reader Review Jack of Hearts (A Novel of the Seven Courts, #1) for online ebook

Jim says

For me, there's always that scene in a story that grabs me, sucks me in, and makes me want to see it through. In "Jack of Hearts," it was when the giant ate the mule.

Aside from King's "The Dark Tower" series, I haven't read fantasy in 20 years. Bare's "Jack of Hearts" has me wondering what other great fantasy tales I've missed. I can't wait for book two.

Andi says

3.5 stars. I don't read much fantasy anymore, but I enjoyed Jack of Hearts. The story follows Jack's hunt for the magician, Moribrand, at the request of the Lady of Twilight.

But even though Jack has no heart--literally (he gave it to the Lady)--he shows heart in his actions along the way. He discovers the Oracle, Cassandra, held in a mirror, and takes her with him on his journey.

While this reads as a young adult novel, there were some violent things that occurred, like the giant, Minnow, eating a live animal that turned my stomach. I'm not sure the book would be good for the very young.

I also felt there were some similarities with Stephen King's story, The Gunslinger. Jack is like a combination of both young Jack and Roland, as the Lady has provided him with special capabilities. And Cassandra seems much like Susanna, who was trapped in a wheelchair. And he's chasing a magician who has his sights on a dark tower in the distance. Is this really meant to be fan fiction?

Lisa says

I have known Ricardo Bare for many years. I couldn't wait to read this, but I was also a little nervous: what would I say if I didn't like it?

No need to worry! Bare does an amazing job constructing Jack's world. Jack's background is mysterious. He's troubled, but why? (You'll find out.) He also writes a unique and imaginative take on the damsel in distress.

The real test for me (and the reason I waited several weeks between finishing the book and writing the review) is that most books disappear from my mind immediately. It's rare that a book / setting / character stays with me, but this has. Bare's prose is so descriptive that all the settings were indelibly etched in my imagination.

Like many others, I'm anxious to see the next installment! Sadly, I also know how demanding Bare's day job is. I'll be waiting patiently right here.

Sharon says

I don't really reads books where the characters are in their teens as it's hard for me to relate since I'm... well let's just say older. I bought the book when it was the Kindle Daily Deal, since it was a good price and the story line hooked me in spite of the characters being young. Not sure what I was expecting but... Loved it! I am not a writer and can't go into what makes these characters and story a wonderful read from a literary point. I can just say from an avid fantasy reader I enjoyed this book. My only disappointment is that noticing the book was published recently, it will be awhile before the next book is out.

Debra says

3.5 star rating

** Received from GoodReads first reads giveaway.

I loved the description of this book. It sounded very intriguing and interesting. It proved to be both of these things. A very good debut novel from Ricardo Bare. The characters are well written and developed. The story was interesting. Jack gives away his heart to the Lady of Twilight (instantly I wanted to know why? What does he not want to feel?). He is in pursuit of Moribrand and finds Cassandra (a girl trapped in a mirror(how did she get there?)). This was a fun read! I do not want to give away too much information so I will simply say, it was very well done and I recommend it to anyone who likes fantasy books. I will be looking for the next book by Ricrdo Bare.

Katie says

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

I don't generally read books about alternative worlds and magic, but I thought this book looked interesting and I loved the premise. Overall, I enjoyed the story and thought the characters were unique and engaging. I thought Bare did a good job of describing Jack's world and his various encounters and adventures on his journey.

As for the book, I thought that the opening did a great job of getting your attention. It outlined who Jack was and why he was different, and it did a great job introducing you to Jack's world. After that it slows down a good bit, and though the writing is good it took some determination on my part to get through the middle of the book. It takes a while for you to gain any insight into what motivates Jack, which leaves you questioning the point of the journey and to a greater extent the overall story. There are hints dropped here and there, but you are not given any real insight until the last part of the book. But when that does happen, I'm happy to say it was worth the wait because the story picked up and the reasons for why things were the way they were finally started to become clear. I think the end made up for the lag, but it's something to be aware of going into the book.

I think it's a great first novel, and I look forward to reading more books in the series.

Amery Baker says

I was excited to read this due to the reviews, but I am surprised that the reviews were so glowing. It was original story and I did finish it. Along the way, however, I was often bored by the story as the characters were very predictable and the story slow moving. Moribrand was shallow and then at the end has a character shift which doesn't really fit. Jack claims that he can not feel, but if you can't feel how do you know right from wrong?- which he obviously does. And how do you have feelings for a girl in a mirror? Also, his "mysterious" past was pretty predictable. I did enjoy the giant and his part in the story, which was never fully explained. I think it was a decent novel for a first novel, but confusing as it is obviously part of a larger story and there is no mention of a sequel.... Unfortunately, I don't think it held my attention enough to go searching for another installment.

Wendy C says

Jack of Hearts by Ricardo Bare

Jack of Hearts by Ricardo Bare is about a pale skinned boy named Jack who has given his heart to the Lady of Twilight in exchange for not feeling anything anymore. The Lady of Twilight agrees and changes Jack into a heartless, unsympathetic hunter. The Lady of Twilight tells Jack to find Moribrand (a magician) and kill him. Jack of course obeys the Lady. On his journey finding Moribrand, he is captured by men who work for a Salt Baron named Jacosta and they take him to their camp. Moribrand is resting at Jacosta's camp. While there, Jacosta tells Jack that he has an Oracle who told Jacosta that Moribrand and Jack were coming and were going to ruin him. Well, it just so happens both Jack and Moribrand escape and burn down Jacosta's camp. Upon leaving, Jack takes the mirror where the oracle is trapped.

Moribrand runs into a dwarf at a bridge where the dwarf tries to take Moribrand's giant slave, Minnow's, legs. However, in order to take his legs he needs to know his real name and Moribrand doesn't know his real name. Afterwards, when Jack runs into the dwarf, they scuffle and the troll throws the mirror into the water but Jack jumps in after to save the mirror. Jacosta still is following them and after having a conversation with the dwarf, he decides to go after Moribrand because he knows if he finds Moribrand he'll find Jack.

All the while Jack is following Moribrand, Jack starts to feel things again. He thinks about his past and what he has done, but he also starts to think about his present actions. Along with the help of Cassandra (the woman trapped in a mirror), Jack brings these buried feelings to the forefront and starts to think about his allegiance to the Lady of Twilight.

Ricardo Bare writes a unique story that takes the reader on a trek through a wonderful new world. The storyline was inventive and not the same old thing just restated. The flashback scenes enhance the reader's ability to understand Jack's pain and why he asked the Lady to take his heart. Bare also gives the reader alternating perspectives of the characters. He does an excellent job giving each person a different voice. It allows the reader a better understanding of the characters' thoughts and actions. Bare's characters are resourceful, which makes them all the more interesting because you cannot wait to see what they will do next. The development at the end of the story was a terrific turn of events. It will be interesting to read the next book and find out how this story progresses.

Jack of Hearts is a definite must read for any fantasy book lover. Bare has produced an impressive start to a unique tale. Hopefully we won't have to wait to long for the next installment of a great new fantasy series.

4.0 stars

T. Bakutis says

Jack of Hearts is a straightforward adventure story with a small cast, a decision that works in its favor, and the globe-trotting nature of the book gives us lots of fun world building. The lore involving the Courts, magic and hearts, and the flora and fauna of the world was well explained and felt original. I particularly liked Mr. Bare's take on dwarves!

The book is, at its core, a cross-country chase involving the cast. We meet three different protagonists--Jack, the boy assassin with no heart, Moribrand, a man who desperately wants to believe he's a mage, and Jacosta, their ruthless hunter. I really enjoyed the chapters written from Jack and Moribrand's perspectives, but if I had one technical complaint, it would be that Jacosta felt underused.

While I appreciated seeing a few scenes through Jacosta's eyes, I think the book could have worked without his chapters. He never faces any real challenges or gets the chance to develop, unlike Jack and Moribrand, so I would have liked to see him remain a "storm on the horizon" - the other characters would be aware he was after them and might get hints of what he was up to, but he could have remained an off-screen threat (this might also have made him more terrifying).

While Jack and Moribrand are two very different characters, the cause behind their respective predicaments is similar, and I really enjoyed seeing them get into trouble and subsequently get out of it by the skin of their teeth. Part of the thrill of a chase is watching the characters deal with the many obstacles that get thrown in the way, and Jack of Hearts has obstacles aplenty.

Mr. Bare's decision to tell the story through Jack and Moribrand's eyes was a good one, as the important bits all happen to one of them or the other. I never had any trouble following what was going on or where the story was taking me. The POV of both characters felt entirely necessary to the story that unfolded.

Jack is a sympathetic character with a cool sword and a magic cloak (what's not awesome about that?) and I enjoyed the way his origins were revealed slowly throughout his journey. As our main window into this new world, I felt Jack had an interesting personal journey and I'm looking forward to seeing what happens to him next.

Moribrand is not a villain so much as a buffoon with an over-inflated ego. He constantly gets into situations way over his head, largely due to his own hubris, but seeing the story through his eyes helped build sympathy for him that would otherwise not have been present. I liked how Mr. Bare allowed us to slowly start to root for Moribrand despite his obvious shortcomings. I found his characterization refreshing.

A young girl named Cassandra and Jack's "Lady of Twilight" also play significant roles in the book, but neither has any POV chapters, and for good reason. Both are mysterious characters in unusual situations, and I think giving us a POV chapter with either would have spoiled their mystique. That said, I hope to see a little of what Cassandra is experiencing in the next book! The way her relationship with Jack grows over the

story is one of the best parts of the book.

Overall, I enjoyed Jack of Hearts and the world it created in my head. There is a great deal of mystery and intrigue yet to unravel, and speculating about what's really behind some of the events in the book is part of the fun (I certainly have my own theories). My only warning would be that the book does end on a cliffhanger... but so long as you are okay with some unanswered questions, there's more than enough resolved for a satisfying read that will whet your appetite for more.

Lisa says

Held my attention. Had to stay up until I finished which is one of my criteria for a good book. Good pacing. Fairly nice character development, although Moribund the Wizard was a bit overdone. But I'm looking forward to the next book.

Angie says

Jack's story is exciting, heart-breaking, and mysterious. The creative, diverse characters completely come to life throughout this epic tale - the girl in the mirror, the giant, the Salt Barron... Absolutely loved reading Jack of Hearts and can't wait to see what happens in Book 2!

C.E. says

Jack of Hearts by Ricardo Bare hooked me with its beautiful cover art and the tagline - "Some boys throw their hearts away. Jack let a witch take his." Yes, I bought the book for its cover which is never a good idea unless you will be satisfied with owning a small piece of art, however, in this case, the contents of the book lived up to the promise of the cover. Lucky me!

The book is essentially a chase scene as the titular character, Jack, at the behest of the Lady of Twilight pursues the wizard, Moribrand. The Lady's reason for wanting the wizard dead remains unknown to Jack, nor will he ask her. He lives by the simple credo - obey the Lady, but do not act like the Lady.

During the course of their travels, Jack's and Moribrand's fates become increasingly entangled with each other and a small cast of characters including the Salt Baron Jacosta, the giant Minnow, and Cassandra, a young girl imprisoned in an unknown location who communicates through a mirror that Jack finds and carries with him. Each character feels well-developed and as richly drawn as the world they inhabit. Bare did a particularly good job with maintaining Jack's numb detachment as the heartless boy while at the same time revealing small cracks in his emotionless demeanor. Through a series of flashbacks, Bare relates Jack's painful history which lead him to give his heart to the Lady of Twilight, and if your own heart doesn't ache for the boy, you're made of sterner stuff than I.

The idea of Jack giving his heart to a witch reminded me of ABC's "Once Upon a Time," and there are several traditional Snow White elements at play within the book. Jack of Hearts, however, is not a retread of the old, familiar fairy tale. It is wholly original, standing firmly on its own as the beginning of a great tale. I look forward to returning to the land of the Seven Courts and spending more time with Jack and his

companions.

Niffer says

I received this book through a Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

I really enjoyed this book. It was a good, solid fantasy with well crafted characters and an interesting and unique plot. I've read a number of books recently that were not nearly as well crafted and this was truly a breath of fresh air. Definitely recommended.

Carrie says

I picked this up as part of the Kindle Daily Deals, and I'm glad I did. The story was engrossing and enough was kept a mystery and enough revealed at different times to keep you interested.

The main character is a young boy, though I wouldn't really call this a YA novel. The world it was set in seemed quite interesting, though it wasn't fully fleshed out over the course of the story and I'd look forward to hearing more about it in future books. The system of magic is interesting and unique, though again, I'd like to hear more about it.

This book clearly had seen an editor's desk and was polished up to a nice shine. The characters were all differentiated and interesting with clear motivations for what they do. Though there are clearly more stories to be told in this universe, the action of this book (the chasing of the wizard) is mostly resolved and the book doesn't end on a painful cliffhanger, but the sort that leaves you wanting more without feeling robbed.

All in all, I'd recommend this book.

Format: Kindle

Price Paid: \$1.99

Recommended: No

Value: worth standard book price

Will I Buy the Next: Absolutely! Looking forward to it.

Michael Manning says

A wistful and intriguing story about a young man named Jack. I thoroughly enjoyed the tale and I look forward to see what the future has in store for him, whether he meets his fate, or finds his destiny.
