



## Blood Hound

*James Osiris Baldwin*

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## **Blood Hound** James Osiris Baldwin

Alexi Sokolsky is not your everyday hitman. Introspective, intuitive, and fiercely intelligent, he is also a mage capable of murder with nothing but his voice and the power of his will. However, arcane ability comes with a price: The same powers that make Alexi indispensable to the Russian Mafia also make him a social outcast, an object of fear and superstition.

When a high-ranking Sicilian Mafioso is murdered with demonic magic and dumped on Russian territory, The Russians blame the only mage they know - Alexi. Then a key contact in the lucrative cocaine trade disappears, and Alexi is the one sent to play detective. He quickly learns that every mage and his dog are searching for a Gift Horse, a mysterious creature rumored to be made of pure magic who carries the secrets of all creation in her flesh and blood... a creature who is calling to Alexi for help.

If Alexi heeds the Gift Horse's call, he stands to lose everything and everyone he's fought and killed for. If he doesn't, the world will be held hostage by whoever finds her first - and given that a demon-summoning murderous psychopath is in pole position, the odds are not in the world's favor.

Magic, mafia and mystery come together in the first installment of the Hound of Eden Supernatural Thriller series. Recieve your complimentary copy of Burn Artist, a 150-page prequel to the series, when you sign up for the Hound of Eden Mailing List here: <https://www.instafreebie.com/free/o2OAA>

## **Blood Hound Details**

Date : Published August 18th 2016 by Gift Horse Productions (first published January 15th 2016)

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## From Reader Review Blood Hound for online ebook

### Fenriz Angelo says

*One of the best books i have read this year. Have been a long time since i wanted nothing more but to immerse myself into a book and being unable to stop reading.*

Sometimes i think i'm easy, just look at most of my ratings. So i thought "okay i love this book because it has two things i love: occultism and mafia". That's, hands down, instalove for me so i feel totally biased about rating this book.

But today with a cooler mind i think about this book and say "no, i don't love this because it has things i love, i love this book because *it IS a fantastic book*.

The combination of organized crime with magic feels real, feels like it's okay in this world so that speaks of a great worldbuilding. The main character, Alexi, is an interesting character with the qualities of every main character of both a fantasy and a mafia book but he doesn't fall into a stereotype. Actually, I liked the characters, they feel round and aren't stereotyped as you might find in most mafia books, specially the women.

The author success in providing a very dark, violent, but nevertheless beautiful atmosphere merging mystery, occultism and a complex plot with unexpected twists, without failing into overexplanations and ridiculous situations. What i liked most is the way the author portrays how complex and heartbreaking the underground world is. You get invested into Alexi, see him struggle, and want to protect him throughout the story and the tragedy is so beautifully raw it leaves you speechless.

Though there are some minor editing mistakes here and there, they are quickly forgotten by the pace of the plot.

This is a work of good research of both russian mafia and occultism, and the compromise to deliver a honest book. I can't wait for book two.

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### Kelly says

Multiple themes of organized crime, cultural experience and magic are interwoven beautifully in this work. While the story weaves in and out of tropes and what could easily be a stereotypical story, the character and plot manage to twist unexpectedly and evolve. While Alexi is the centerpiece of a crossroads of these themes, and an unwitting protagonist, he is someone we can easily relate to - swept up in events he cannot seem to control and making the best of things. The plot allows for extremely rich texture, and while it almost digresses at times, the reader is brilliantly provided with enough understanding while maintaining a deeper mystery and piqued interest. It was engrossing - I read this novel in one sitting in an afternoon, could not put it down.

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## Bisquit says

Review of book 1-3 (series is still ongoing):

These books are something else, alright. I'm not sure how original they are, because I have zero clue about occult and have never read a book with a main focus on that thematic. Needless to say, I was at times confused and I recommend to fresh up on occult beforehand. Or read the books immediately afterward so you don't forget the important bits. As I did. Also, it doesn't matter so much if you are confused at times, the main points are understandable and even repeated sometimes.

I believe the books to be very original despite my lack of information about said main thematic, just by reading about the story and what the characters were made to be. We've got really great shape shifters from book 2 onwards, the Silencer thingies and their origins plus the whole worldbuilding with the humanoid fruit and the history of Eden. Also, the main character. One would think a mafia hitman would already be slightly unusual, especially because of the mafia background, but Alexi turned out to be something else.

He's mafia. You experience how he thinks, how he acts based on that. So yes, 100% mafia, especially in the beginning. He's tough, he's competent and he knows what he's doing. And, what makes him absolutely interesting for me is his slight autism. Because you see, Alexi has his problems. He also doesn't relate to people well, doesn't really know how to be social. His small quirks make him a person and a really great character to read about. So, as a matter of course, I greatly enjoyed his dialogue with people he cared about.

Essentially, Alexi is a though bastard who may be compared to an un-dying cockroach. And that he needs to be. There's this famous saying for books that you need to make your character suffer through things to see what they are made of. Well. This book took that advice and went absolutely crazy with it. Seriously. No matter what happens, expect the worst first. It will probably happen. Doesn't mean you can predict the story so easily, but nevertheless, most surprises are never ever good. There are good parts, good events, but overall the bad and the danger outweigh everything else. (It makes one nearly wish the author would give poor Alexi a break! But noo~ on to the next horrible event! We can't let him be lazy, can we now?)

Another important aspect of these books is Alexi's character growth. There's a lot of growing for him to do, and I'm curious to see where the author Baldwin will take him. Over the books he's growing to be his own person, leaving behind the shadows of his upbringing. There's this scene in book 3 I especially love: A scene of his childhood is described where he is still innocent and starting to look at his best friend in a new way (yes, he's gay, no, this is not a romance story) and then reality comes and breaks it apart. Back in the current time line, he lashes out and there's so much pain and he lets it out, not keeping it in any longer. Alexi is a precious character who had to deny himself due to his environment. In book 1 he's only part of himself, starting to discover and accept parts of him over the course of the books. He's learning new things and ways, growing up and becoming true to himself. It's a long process and it's making him more interesting the longer you read about him. And that's important, because these books are about him and wouldn't work without him. He's essentially the backbone of these books and a good part of the reason why I enjoy reading this series. He's an awesome character, enough said.

Also, the one thing I didn't like in book 1, him needing to be a virgin for plot-related reasons, was cleared up a bit more in a side note in book 3, so don't let it bother you either. Also a little note if you want to pick up this book: This book takes part around 1990. It's a bit confusing at the beginning because you know that it's apparently not in the current time period of 2010+ something due to the lack of cellphones and the all-presence of computers, but there's also relatively new things around as well. It's confirmed later on to be the beginning of the 1990, but I don't remember the exact time.

I recommend this to people who like it dark. And I mean seriously dark. Important Relationships get destroyed, a lot of people die, there's torture of and by the main character (love the caramell scene by the way) and overall pretty horrible stuff happens. This is gritty, unpredictable and not a nice book. It's an excellent read so do read it if you liked the summary!

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### **Bkwyrn says**

I'm probably 3/4 of the way through. I read a lot of urban fantasy, I'm hard to impress, and I've also studied the western mystery tradition for about 25 years.

This book is SO MUCH FUN.....in a grim, dark dysfunctional way. Why hasn't anyone used Crowley's Bornless One in an invocation a before? A main character who knows the Goetia and talks intelligently about it?

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### **Jade Fallon says**

I am not a word smith, unlike Mr. Baldwin, so pardon my mortal words. While I got the book via other means, I felt it was necessary to post a review here. I've been sitting on the edge of my seat waiting for this book for a very long time. The characters are amazingly detailed and complex, having their own little quirks that make them truly human. I normally don't like a first person point of view in reading, however I found myself thinking and feeling like I was Alexi every time I opened the book and started reading again. I read it in three sittings (and nearly got in trouble for reading it at school) however it was amazing enough that I am already starting to read it again.

Mr. Baldwin paints a very real picture of what occult horror could be in the modern world. I felt like he peeled back the protective layer of religious belief and showed the sometimes ugly and mind breaking side of what lies underneath in a world where metaphysics are actually dealt with. The description of how people might actually react to dealing with true magic vs. the attempts that 'mundanes' use that they call magic was stunning.

I eagerly await the next book in this series, and even if occult-dark action-horror isn't your thing, give it a shot.

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### **YullSanna says**

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### **Heather Halloran says**

This was a dark, powerful read, and the prose alternates seamlessly between gritty and sensual. The process

of getting to know the protagonist was a strange but surprising one, as though he's letting the reader know more about himself than he had intended to reveal. Alexi's isolation (even within his own community) renders the Lovecraftian threats all the more horrifying and devastating, and as a Pagan myself, the occult themes and imagery were particularly tantalizing. Though there are some minor editing mistakes here and there, they are quickly forgotten by the end of each chapter's cliffhanger.

To be honest, I usually find male protagonists in macho cultures to be boring and hard to relate to, but this was an incredibly satisfying read and I was genuinely on edge and scared for Alexi and those he holds close once the real danger started to kick in (though there's an overlying sense that they are never not in some kind of danger). I'm still pondering the themes, imagery, and hints well after having finished it, and it's the first book that has ever made me want to re-read it so quickly. I'm practically salivating for the next installment.

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### **Dana Carrigan says**

Gritty, complex, different. I enjoyed it. Alexi is a bit odd and it makes me wonder if he has a mental handicap. I don't mean that in a bad way. But I'm wondering if the author gave me Aspbergers, or made him a high functioning autistic. He's cold, but not evil, he doesn't understand subtle emotions, he has a lot of the cues that someone with those do. Which means he's doubly well written.

I really enjoyed reading more about Alexi than even the world. He's diverse, complicated and not a common hero/anti hero you see.

I found this in the back of a book a girl friend gifted me on kindle, Dangerous Ways, which was also great.

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### **Nora Talbot says**

At the end of Dangerous Ways by R.R. Virdi there was a list of reads he suggested while waiting for his next. This was among them.

I loved it and tore through the first two books and the novella which is notably a prequel.

It's a different, slower writing style but that is not a knock against it. It's still wonderful writing.

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### **Minx -The Genre Minx Book Reviews says**

What.the.hell? Need to consider this one.

08/02/17 update:

:D The "What.the.hell?" was actually how I felt when I ended the book, it is not a bad thing. More of a how did I feel about this book thing. The story had such a broad scope that combined complex elements and I did have some trouble understanding the magic system. It may be because it was the religion that provided the rules that the magic abided by and I did not clearly understand the religion.

The writing is very visual and absolutely gave me the intended emotional impact: (view spoiler) O-M-G on

that nightmare, shudder, and I LOVED that the word "slowly" was added there just to take it to emphasize the action taking place, sooo good! The interplay between Alexi and Vassily was perfect and heartbreakin. I appreciated that when someone was hurt it was realistic, they did not just "walk it off." In the end I think for me it was an enjoyable read but I felt that the story had such a wide scope that I got a little lost in some areas.

This book was my suggestion for this month's read at my local book club and I am excited to see everyone's views on Blood Hound. I think with a roundtable discussion on this book there are going to be many different impressions and take-aways. One thing is for sure, we will all be able to agree that Alexi is a one of a kind Anti-hero!

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### **Amanda Kratz says**

Rating 2.5

Overall I wasn't the biggest fan of this book. I didn't find it "bad" but I personally didn't enjoy it much. This was a book club read for me and probably wouldn't have been a book I would have ever picked myself. (So take this review with a grain of salt). It is Mafia themed, very dark, very gritty, lots of blood, lots of deaths. By in large just not my cup of tea.

My initial feelings are that this was kinda like Mafia meets Dresden Files. It still feels like that. The main character Alexi is a hit man for the mob and has been sent out to find a missing person. He is also a "spook" or mage. Lots of occult references. Some were well explained others those made little to no sense. The author almost seems to assume you've read this genre before and have a basic understanding of occult magic. (Either that it didn't feel it important enough to describe it)

One of the main themes through out the book are the mob families. Lots of names and relations to keep track of. It also doesn't help that there are many words or phrases throughout that are Russian. Some are later translated for you, others are not.

I also had some issues with flow in the book or transition areas. It jumped around a bit and many times I was confused on where I was or what just happened. Forcing myself to go back and re-read and see if I missed some vital info (nope).

I won't continue with the series.

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### **Leslie says**

WHOA! WHAT A RIDE!! New York gets another wizard, and this time, there's a bit more Eastern influence, as Alexi is a Mage enlisted by the Russian Mafia. I really enjoyed most of what went on in this book. My only objection is the heaviness of the dogma involved, the religious aspects that provide the rules by which the magic (and thus the Mage) must function. It might just be me, and the fact that it's much more of a different culture than I'm used to in other series such as Dresden Files (more of a Catholic influence) and Grave Reports (where the "religion" errs on the Protestant mythology of things), but I just felt like the parts

of the story that got really deep into the "ancient lore" were more garbled and hard to read. The rest was great, though. It played out like a TV show in my mind (which is major kudos to the writing style of the author! It takes very deliberate application to get the right response out of a reader who is most often a total stranger!) and I couldn't stop reading once the mystery got going! The plot twists kept me guessing the whole time. I really enjoyed the variety of magical beasties explored, and the character interactions were great! An awesome debut, and a great start to a promising series!

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### **Gwen says**

Definitely a good sign when you finish a book and you are left wondering where is the next book ?? I must admit that male leads haven't featured highly in my book lists as of late I just haven't been in the mood but for some reason I just had give this one a go (probably the price), and I am glad to say I wasn't disappointed.

A very nuts and bolts mob book but heavy on the occult, with Alexi working as a low level magician for the Russians as a hitman come cleaner to work off his debt to them.

But things never are as they seem and soon everything goes to hell in a handbag, Alexi reminded me very much of a paranormal version of Adrian Monk, struggling to gain the respect of the mob which I really enjoyed.

But don't be fooled by this review this book is not a soft and fluffy book, it's a hard nosed story of blood, violence, of loyalty tested , betrayal and loss, and I loved every minute of it.

Highly recommended to those who enjoy gritty reads.

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### **Raven Orthaevolve says**

Speaking from the perspective of an occultist who has been practicing for two decades as well as a lover of fantasy and science fiction, this book hit the spot. It is elegantly written and engaging but also brutal as befits a work about a hitman magician. The intricate working of magic in the book satisfied my inner occultist who always wants to know how the magic in the story works. Violence in the book is not just shrugged off, it does genuine injury that takes time to heal from, and pain and horror leave their mark on the characters. I was also quite intrigued by the fact that Alexi has either Autism or Aspergers and the descriptions of synesthesia and sensory overload had me wincing in sympathy as a migraine sufferer.

Innocence is in short supply in this dark book, but when it and beauty and grace show up, they are breathtaking in contrast with the dark, gritty world setting. The sheer weirdness of the world contrasted with that innocence and the persona of the main character kept me turning the pages and unable to put it down. The ending was not trite or a cop out but really brought home just how vulnerable beauty is in our world and the one he writes about. I am vastly looking forward to the next installment and highly recommend this book to you.

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## **Chris, the Dalek King says**

huh.

I honestly don't know what I feel about this book.

It is a good story. Certainly kept me glued to my kindle.

But it is also a very complex and not very well explained world that left me kinda confused.

Also, that ending.

Has me curious enough to consider going on in the series, though.

Yeah. So not sure how to feel about this one.

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