



Before the Witches

Karina Cooper

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In America, they didn't care about witches. But all that was about to change.

Katya Zhuvova fled a country that feared her gifts, but her escape to Seattle left her at the mercy of a ruthless man. With no one left to turn to, Katya hatches a desperate escape plan. Undercover Detective Nigel Ferris is determined to bring down a prostitution ring, whatever the cost. In order to get the answers he needs, he attempts to win the trust of one of the prostitutes involved—but one look at the deceptively sultry Katya and the cool, objective cop disappears. Before either can put their plans into place, Mother Nature shrugs: a cataclysm rocks Seattle, and life is turned upside down.

Brought together by chance, Nigel and Katya are in the fight for their lives. Surrounded by death and fear, shattered by immeasurable loss, they have only a bond forged in fire to cling to as they struggle to survive in a world gone straight to hell.

Before the Witches Details

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Author : Karina Cooper

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From Reader Review Before the Witches for online ebook

Ann Lorz says

I had trouble at first getting into this story. I just felt it was to much story in a very little page count. After awhile I found my way and was able to enjoy it. That is until the author started to set up the story line for the books that follow. When I hit that part the tears came. There are a few tug at the heart moments.

Mandi Schreiner says

Katya has grown up knowing she is different. She can tell if someone is lying or telling the truth. Fleeing from Russia because she is an outcast, she decides to take refuge in America, even if that means selling her body. She is now owned by a dirty man along with several other women – some very young. They are sold as prostitutes and kept in poor conditions. Katya has planned an escape – but before she can carry out her mission, detective Nigel Ferris finds her.

Nigel has been going undercover, pretending to be a dirty cop to bring down this human trafficking ring. When he meets Katya, he not only feels helpless that he can't rescue her immediately, but he feels a spark of attraction. Before either one of them can manage a rescue or an escape, an earthquake strikes Seattle. Nigel and Katya along with some other girls, flee to safety. Katya has been dreaming of literally the end of the world – fires, floods, earthquakes. And she starts to fear her dreams are coming true.

Before the Witches is a novella which sets up the world for Karina Cooper's new, Dark Mission series. This novella packs in so much action in such a short book, and is done really well. The world is literally ending. Earthquakes, volcanoes and flooding. But before we get to the total devastation of the planet – let's talk about the romance! Nigel and Katya get together – quick. Almost a little too quick, especially since Katya has just fled a prostitution ring only to get it on with Nigel pretty much immediately. But it is good they got some quality time together because they soon don't have time for smex. They find themselves trying to survive and I think Karina Cooper does such an excellent job writing these action scenes. I could see it all unfold in my mind, and what happens is so extreme – I just wasn't expecting it.

The epilogue goes into a lot of detail and spans a lot of time. I believe outlining and setting up the world for the series. I am greatly intrigued by this world and can't wait to read the first full length book, Blood of the Wicked out May 31st.

Rating: B+

Melindeeloo says

(2** = ok) I was pretty excited about Cooper's new post-apocalyptic witch romance series, so I was delighted to find this prequel short while I was waiting for the Blood of the Wicked to be released. Katya who has been forced into prostitution is preparing her little group to make a break for it, when she encounters Nigel, who is a 'good cop, pretending to be dirty' in order to break up the human trafficking ring which preys on Russian women. And then the entire world goes to hell, literally.

Although there was some good stuff going on in Before the Witches, combining the apocalyptic destruction of the West Coast with a romance was problematic - in order to make the romance work, this would have needed to have been a full length book, but a full length book probably would have been pretty darn depressing.

The things that worked for me: I thought that both of the leads were interesting, and the setup for the relationship as well. There was a certain amount of inherent conflict for the cop - duty vs desire - as he should be looking at the greater good in taking down the ring, instead of letting his attraction to Katya risk the op he's spent months on. I also thought that there were some moving moments amidst the action, while Nigel and Katya fled the destruction caused by quakes, floods and such as the world crumbled around them .

What didn't work for me at all was the 'romance' in particular the transition into a 'relationship' - my comments about this are spoilerish so feel free to skip ahead ...

Spoilers ahead She's a prostitute, who was nearly raped earlier in the day and yet she initiates sex with Nigel to soothe herself, which I thought was unbelievable - oh and of course he makes her feel like no other man ever has. Even worse, they were at Nigel's police station in an unlocked room and removed a great deal of clothing to do it, which completely destroyed my respect for him at all. This totally pulled me out of the story and I actually stopped reading and debated picking the book back up at all. **** end spoiler***

Sorry to be so negative, my overall reaction to Before the Witches was an 'OK', and since I already order it, I will still be giving Blood of a Wicked a shot - and hoping the longer space allows Cooper more time to develop the romance.

Nicole says

Review originally posted here: [http://thebookpushers.com/2011/05/23/...](http://thebookpushers.com/2011/05/23/)

Publisher: Avon Impulse

Publish Date: Out Now!

How I got this book: NetGalley

Katya came to America for two reasons: because they don't care about witches, and so she can make a better life for herself. But things don't always stay the same. Katya arrives and finds herself immersed into a human trafficking ring, forced into prostitution. Her plan to get herself and the girls out leads her to the police station, and directly to Nigel Ferris.

Nigel is working on taking down the ring leader in the trafficking ring, and with Katya's help, now has an inside witness. But, before he has the chance to move forward with his investigation, the world as they know it comes to an end. The entire western part of the United States falls victim to horrific earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and apocalyptic events.

Through the catastrophe, the two form an unbreakable bond, one that just might allow them to continue on when all other hope is lost.

I really enjoyed Cooper's debut novella, and introduction to her new Dark Mission Series. I loved the world

building that was introduced, and can't wait to find out more about witches, and the role they will play in the future of the series. I also really enjoyed how we got a little bit of a glimpse into the events that the series is really based on.

Katya and Nigel were fun to read. While the majority of the novella took place during the actual Seattle apocalyptic events, we still got a chance to get invested in the characters. I loved that Nigel was so strong and dedicated to his job as a cop, to protecting Katya at all costs. Katya was also incredible; living through a horrendous situation and still doing everything she can to protect and care for those around her. I was a little sad for her, especially since she really lost so much in such a short period of time.

The romance was extremely fast paced and intense. While the novella didn't really allow for a detailed love story, I did still feel the connection between the two. If you are looking for a real romantic novella, this might not be the best story for you to read. However, if the Dark Mission Series is something that appeals to you, I think this backstory will go along nicely with the series as a whole, especially with the background information and worldbuilding.

Again, I am anxious to read future books by Cooper, and think that this debut author has great potential.

All in all, I give Before the Witches a B-

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

You may also read my review here: <http://www.mybookishways.com/2011/06/...>

Seattle Detective Nigel Ferris is attempting to bring down a human trafficking/prostitution ring and the Russian mobster in charge of it, Mikoyan. He never thought he'd be so attracted to Ekatarina Zhuvova. During a visit to a brothel run by Mikoyan, Nigel is paired with the lovely Ekatarina (Katya) and expects to have to suffer through sex with her just to get out alive. What he doesn't expect is his immediate attraction to Katya. See, Katya has a secret. She paid a visit to the police that same morning, hoping to get help to save her and the other girls, but there are bigger fish in play, and the police are reluctant to bring down the hired help and risk missing out on nabbing Mikoyan. Katya has also been having visions of fire and apocalypse, and when earthquakes and destruction finally do hit the Seattle area, Nigel and Katya find themselves on the run for their lives, and the lives of everyone they love.

Before the Witches is a novella that takes place before the events in Blood of the Wicked, and the upcoming Lure of the Wicked. I could not put this book down. It's short enough to finish in one sitting, and it had me glued to the pages. Karina Cooper writes like an old pro. Her pacing is flawless and the action never lets up. I'm a relatively new reader of paranormal romance (thank my partner in crime for that), and usually skip over most of the sexy bits in novels, not because I'm a prude, but I usually just want to get back to the story. There is one, count it, ONE, sex scene in this novella and it neither overwhelms or disrupts the story. It's pretty steamy, and it cements the relationship between Nigel and Katya. Trust me, you'll see why. The world is coming down around them, and love can be a powerful bond, and a powerful tool in times of chaos. Before the witches ended way too quickly for me, and I'm really anxious to see where the story leads in Blood of the Wicked and Lure of the Wicked! Also, keep in mind this is a glowing review from a "reluctant" paranormal romance reader, so snap this one up!

Scooper Speaks says

Favorite Lines: “She didn’t have to fake her tears. One plopped on the burner, sizzled, smoked.” (p. 29)

I recently read a blog post about how suspense writers grab and keep their audience. It’s by zigzagging when telling the story instead of going from point A to Z. *Before the Witches* is that kind of book. It reminds us “of what came before and how it affects the next steps” of the story.

In *Before the Witches* we are introduced to a prostitute and the cop who would rescue her. There is little time to get to know anybody because of the story’s short time frame, but we learn the heroine is not a prostitute by choice. She is a victim of human trafficking. I don’t know that I’d call it a lack of characterization, but how well can you know the person you just met? The story works though because it is filled with non-stop action and a roller coaster emotional ride.

Earthquakes and floods are only a few of the events the Katya and Nigel have to survive. If they survive at all. Wait this is a romance novella, so yeah there’s a happily ever after. It’s not a sweet HEA because really how can you survive the world ending happily? Have I mentioned the scorching sex that takes place in this book? Location is everything. lol You’ll know what I mean when you read it.

Here’s what you need to know: Cooper has a knack for putting the reader at ease before slamming her with a serious, potentially fatal event. She’s not afraid of making tough choices. *Before the Witches* is a story that tells why the world of Cooper’s Dark Mission series is shaped the way it is. It is a book about two characters during the Armageddon. The very Armageddon which the Church blames on witches.

The first book in the series is called *Blood of the Wicked*, it is quickly followed by *Lure of the Wicked*. The books will be released in May and June.

Scooper Speaks

Marq(ReadingRomanceinColor) says

I don’t know what made me purchase this novella but all I have to say is that I am so happy that I did. Wow!

Before the Witches begins with Detective Nigel Ferris. He’s working undercover, trying to bust a Russian prostitution ring. While he’s at the whorehouse, pretending to be a dirty cop, he encounters Katya. He chooses her as the one he wants to have sex with. While in the bedroom, Nigel starts asking Katya questions. Katya plays dumb, afraid that if she says anything it’ll get back to Ivan, her pimp. Katya decides that in order to save her butt, she should seduce the detective. During an explosive and passionate kiss, the ground begins to shake. An earthquake is rattling Seattle.

Katya left Russia to find a better life in America. Her family shunned her because they were afraid of her. They called her a witch because she knew things before they happened. Katya is desperately trying to find to get out from under Ivan’s thumb. She has a plan in place to rescue herself and the other girls when Mother Nature throws a wrench in her plans. Detective Ferris is there to save her but can she trust him? Does he

truly want to help her and the other girls or is he another dirty cop working for Ivan?

I didn't know what to expect when I started reading *Before the Witches*. But I do know this - Karina Cooper knows how to pull the reader in with her words. There was never a dull moment while I was reading the novella. The descriptions are so vivid that I felt like I was watching an action-packed movie. Nothing was left to the imagination. The story was intense and emotional. Under 100 pages, I was taken on an emotional rollercoaster ride that had me clutching my chest. Nigel is the perfect hero and Katya is the perfect damsel in distress. I loved that even though Katya's circumstances were not great, she did not dwell in them. She took control when she could and proved to be a worthy partner for Nigel. The romance between Katya and Nigel progressed rather quickly but because this is a novella, I had expected that. It was believable and fit perfectly within the plot.

After finishing *Before the Witches*, I immediately purchased book 1 of the Dark Mission series, *Blood of the Wicked*. *Blood of the Wicked* takes place years after the apocalypse, where the Holy Order is on a bonafide witch hunt. I am anxious to revisit the new world that was created by the events that occurred in *Before the Witches*.

Before the Witches is the perfect prequel novella. It does a fantastic job of setting the stage for the series as a whole. I finished reading the novella feeling anxious, emotional and satisfied. A all-in-all fantastic read.

Mona says

I don't think I've ever given a book 2 stars but come on how can I not, this book is so depressing. I know its just a novella to start the series but it's still a shitty way to start it. How many people can die in such a short time? The main characters were to focused on running for their lives to fall in love but still managed it. This book had 107pgs of earthquakes, ash clouds, floods and death...seriously :/ I don't know how this is meant to encourage me to read the remainder of the series but if anyone can convince me, your more then welcome to try.

Sophie says

This novella is a short prequel to Her Dark Mission novels, but you don't have to read it to know what's going on in the first book of the series. It takes place during the apocalyptic event that is mentioned in the books, so really it's a front row seat to the destruction. I read the e-book version, as I don't know if there is a print version available.

Now, I'm having trouble rating AND reviewing this story because...well, I loved it, but I have to admit that it isn't perfect. So in the interest of fairness I'll pull the old Good vs Bad style of review.

The Good Stuff:

This is an unbelievably intense short story. It made me gasp, tear up, blush, and filled me both with dread and hope. It is an incredibly engrossing and very rewarding short read. The pace was fast and the drama is the kind of heart-wrenching thing that makes you cover your mouth and shake your head as you keep turning the pages to find out what happens next. There's only 150 or so pages to meet some 10-12 characters and

each one feels real and believable in the very short time you know them.

The Bad Stuff:

Despite that I enjoyed myself immensely, there were things that confused me. For one, the action. While intense, it isn't always comprehensible and I wasn't always sure what was happening. The larger problem is that "Witches" and any actual witchcraft have very little to do with the story. So if you are expecting some supernatural elements, you will only find the barest hint of it. You could take the whole witch thing out and still have an incredibly good story. As a matter of fact, it might make *more* sense if there were never any mention of witches at all.

So the long and short is that Karina Cooper is excellent at three things: Mood, Emotion and Characters. Her world building however, needs a lot of work. Luckily, this doesn't make the story any less enjoyable. If Karina's novel addresses the problems in the short story she might just have converted me into a PNR fan. I've been more on the Urban Fantasy bench until now.

Jen Davis says

You won't find a boring moment in this action packed short story. The whole thing is only 78 pages long, but Karina Cooper packed those pages with enough story that it felt like more. There was sex... death... explosions... and dammit, I even cried.

Nigel is a cop trying to bust a Russian slavery/prostitution ring. When he infiltrates a brothel, posing as a dirty cop, he meets Katya. She is prostitute who is looking to escape and find freedom for the other women. The two make a fast connection. Fast forward a few pages and the earthquakes are ravaging Seattle. Nigel rushes back to the whorehouse just in time to rescue Katya and her friends. Most of the other women go their separate ways but Katya returns with Nigel to the police station. It's there that the apocalypse really kicks into action and the two of them are on a mission, simply to stay alive as the world falls apart around them.

The story has a lot going for it. The sexual tension and the romance action were great... and so were the fantastic scenes of destruction. In a very short time, the author had me caring about these characters --even the secondary ones. I could see the sequence of events playing in my mind like a great action movie.

But there were two moments that jarred me out of my complete immersion in the book. (view spoiler)

Those two things aside, it was a fantastic read. I'm very excited to start *Blood of the Wicked* to see how the rest of the series plays out. 4 1/2 stars.

P.S. If you're wondering if there are any actual witches in this book, the answer is yes... sort of. Katya has a little bit of premonition and some consider her a witch. But most of the witch-reference is in the Epilogue, where the author explains that many go on to blame witches for a hand in the apocalypse.

**ARC Provided by NetGalley*

Alisa Kester says

I decided to check out a piece of this author's work after I met her at a Steampunk festival, and I'm really, really glad I did. I probably otherwise would have rejected her novels as being 'too romance-y' and missed out on some terrific, edge-of-your-seat writing, awesome plotting, and yes...a romantic story. But I can get into this type of romance, since the hero isn't an unsexy idiot like most romance book heroes are (even when I did read romances I never liked the men in them!)

I will definitely be getting more of her books!

Parajunkee says

A teaser of sorts, BEFORE THE WITCHES is a novella, covering the events that happened before the world of the DARK MISSION series. BFW did it's job and definitely whet the pallet for more. I'm intrigued to read more of Karina Cooper's work and see what more she has in store for us in her DARK MISSION series. Her story was compelling, action-packed and emotional. BEFORE THE WITCHES was edge-of-the-seat good and I couldn't stop reading until I was finished.

Review:

Katya did whatever it took to escape Russia and come to America, including selling her body. Forced into prostitution by Russian mafioso types, Katya is doing everything it takes to survive and hopefully help her and the other women escape with their lives. She almost has everything in place when what she assumes is a dirty cop walks through the door to buy some action. He chooses her to her dismay but when she kisses him it tastes real. Her gifts have always been a part of her, one of the reason she fled her native country. They don't believe in witches in America. Nigel Ferris says he won't hurt her and it is truth, but good cops don't buy prostitutes.

When the world begins crumbling around them, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, Katya has no where else to turn but to Nigel and together they must fight to save themselves in a world gone completely insane.

The book was a little crazy, for just a novella it sure crammed a whole bunch of stuff into it's bitty package. The whole END OF THE WORLD to be exact. But, because of it's novella shortness things did get a little out of hand as far as skimming over events and reactions. I got a bit confused at points, but just because they had so much going on. But, that being said, I did find Katya and Nigel very intense and their quick whirlwind romance was quite believable for it's hurried pace. I'm very interested and ready to read more. The next books happen a lot further in the future and I thought it was smart how this prequel covered the apocalypse, while the books in the future will be the dystopian setting. You don't find this a lot in paranormal romances.

Recommends.

I recommend this for fans of paranormal romance and readers transitioning into paranormal romance.

Angela says

18 March 2015: \$0.99 on Kindle

Becky says

The Author begins the "book" with overly aggressive characters who were unbelievable and continues with a wild story, not explaining enough to allow the reader a clear picture of what is really going on. The most frustrating thing to me was the sex scene. A person who has just been rescued from a forced prostitution ring, beaten and almost raped that morning, survived a huge split in the earth that almost swallowed the building she was in, is not going to be interested in, much less start a romantic encounter with a police officer at the station out of lust! Just ridiculous.

The book ended too quickly, with the description of what had happened occurring too quickly for my liking. I did not see the point to most of the story, and didn't agree with how little time the characters were "grieving" for their loved ones. Even if there was no time, more emphasis could have been placed on the characters thoughts and feelings regarding their loved ones. Especially considering how much description and emphasis was placed on their lust and attraction to each other. Would not recommend this book

L.A. says

Posted first on The Romance Reviews

Karina Cooper brings us a story full of pain and suffering, yet exploding with sensuality and a searing sexual tension that takes your breath away. Ekaterina Zhuvova known as Katya is one of the many young women forced into a life of depravity, giving her body to men with little care for where or who these young women are. Nigel Ferris is an undercover officer trying to bust the man behind the human slavery ring ready to rescue these women from their fate. But Katya has another secret as well, one that could very well get her killed.

As tensions increase, all hell breaks loose when an earthquake begins to shake the building. Having been through a few in the Seattle area in the past, Nigel is nevertheless surprised. Using his own body to cover Katya, trying to save her from harm, further fuels the flame of their desire. Leaving the building for his own sanity as well as further instruction, the land continues to rumble as the fault continues shifting. Creating traffic difficulties and deaths, the danger surrounds the area, creating hazards and casualties at every turn. Finally making it to the station, Nigel reports his recent finding to the department. Looking for the kingpin in this organization, he is having trouble with the Station Chief. She does not necessarily believe they will find the man behind the atrocities.

Finally getting agreement, he heads out to find further clues when he is directed to an area of disaster. It appears to be coming from the very brothel where he had just left Katya. As he approaches the building, he finds that the structure is crumbling, and all the young women are outside, all that is, except Katya. Hearing a gun shot, he enters to find Katya in dire shape, and even as he begins her rescue, the earth continues to shift. The quakes are coming faster and destruction more wide spread. The whole area is set to implode and they must make their escape. Knowing he must not let her out of his site, he allows the others to go their own way, but Katya must remain.

Karina Cooper builds a story of destruction that is eminently believable. The landmarks are real and the possibilities of volcanic eruptions in the area are not without some background. The Characters are very

strong and exciting. The young women in the brothel are not yet beaten down by their profession and yet they are used to the expectation of pain. It is both uncomfortable and unnerving.

The passion and sensuality are riveting, the heat between Nigel and Katya, is a force of its own. She has weaved in an endearing quality in both characters, making them very likable and extremely human. The story is quite wonderful; it builds and creates an unbelievable tension. As friends and family, begin to die in the endless madness, you look for answers. What is happening and where will it all end?

The buildup is exceptional and quite creative, and yet I was disappointed on how it all worked out. Confusion seemed to ensue, and the story did not bring the pieces together for me. The story line was a good one creating high hopes from the beginning. It began with an explosion and yet did not hold true to the ending.

This Book was received as a free download through Net Galley. All opinions are my own based off my reading and understanding of the material.
