



Shadow of the Alchemist

Jeri Westerson

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“Creative and enthralling . . . If you enjoy authentic Medieval history combined with modern suspense, this one’s for you.” —John Lescroart

Once a Knight of the Realm, Crispin Guest was stripped of his title and his lands and must now earn his meager living through his wits. With the help of his young apprentice, reformed thief Jack Tucker, Guest is known to certain populations as The Tracker, the man who can find anything—for a price. It is for that reason that Guest is sought out by Nicholas Flamel, an absent-minded alchemist. Both Flamel’s wife and his apprentice are missing, and he wants Guest to find them and bring them home.

Before he can even begin looking, Guest discovers that Flamel’s house has been ransacked. Then Flamel’s assistant turns up—dead, hanging from the rafters with a note pinned to his chest by a dagger. It is a ransom note that promises the safe return of his wife in exchange for the Philosopher’s Stone, which is reputed to turn lead into gold and create the elixir of life. And the kidnappers aren’t the only ones after it. From the highest nobility to Flamel’s fellow alchemists, everyone is seeking the stone for themselves. Guest must rescue the missing wife and find the stone before it falls into unworthy hands, in Jeri Westerson’s *Shadow of the Alchemist*.

Shadow of the Alchemist Details

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From Reader Review Shadow of the Alchemist for online ebook

Kate says

Very good entry in this series, mysteries solved by Crispin Guest, a disgraced and disinherited former knight. Currently known as The Tracker and excellent at finding things, Guest resides in a disreputable section of London in 14th century England. Here Crispin is hired by a French alchemist of note to find his kidnapped wife/partner. The ransom is The Philosopher's Stone, the secret to making the Elixir of Life and turning dross objects into gold. Possibilities abound, as do the clues - puzzling messages carved into doorways and hitching posts. Can Guest and his intrepid apprentice Jack find the woman in time before her kidnapper destroys her? Can they rescue the Stone? And what does Henry of Lancaster have to do with all this?

Rick says

Just finished reading Shadow of the Alchemist (A Crispin Guest Medieval Noir) by Jeri Westerson. I highly recommend all of her novels. This was intense action and mystery, still wondering about a few things myself. I know this was the intention...or I'm pretty certain Jeri wanted to leave us wanting more. I look forward to the next Crispin and Jack adventure.

Sharon says

I didn't like this story nearly as much as the ones before it. I especially didn't like the way Crispin treated his deaf/mute "love" interest in this installment. He slaps and calls her bitch and whore several times. What the heck! Doesn't exactly endear the character to me a woman reader. The fact that it's the 1300 hundreds is no excuse. I hope in the next book he mends his ways. The plot was meandering and didn't hold my interest as the others have. I'll continue the series and hope for better things next time.

Blair Hodgkinson says

Jeri Westerson once again weaves a tale that blends gritty medieval violence with high adventure surrounding an object of supernatural significance. This time, Crispin Guest must unravel the mysteries connecting an alchemist's missing wife, the watchful gaze of a secret brotherhood, mysterious deaths, baleful sheriffs, political intrigue and conspiracy while hoping against hope that his old friend, Henry of Derby, is not involved in the worst of the unfolding events which threaten the peace and stability of London and the realm. As usual, Westerson keeps things moving quickly, with action and chases aplenty and high stakes for all involved. Another fine rollicking adventure.

Ann says

Just like the previous five books in this Medieval Noir series, Shadow of the Alchemist has Crispin Guest,

the former knight, tracking what he has been hired to find. This time his client is Nicholas Flamel, the famous French alchemist. Thrust into the secretive and little-understood business that is alchemy, Crispin needs to call upon all his smarts and experience in observation to uncover the truth, even from his client. Jack Tucker, Crispin's apprentice, continues to show promising signs of being able to continue in Crispin's footsteps and the comradery between two is brilliant.

Jeri's humane depiction of her characters and attention to providing as much historically accurate details as possible enables the reader fall into the characters world with great ease. The mystery keeps you guessing and there is always something you didn't see coming.

I think this plotline is a slight side step from the previous books, but it definitely stacks up and has left me wondering more than ever just what Crispin will get pulled into next!

Debra says

Crispin is a cool, badass dude who just has to be drop dead gorgeous, right? Only he missed out on the "stay out of trouble" gene. I love his adventures, and his sidekick Jack.

And (no fair peeking ahead) this one has a really satisfying ending tidbit.

GEPL Staff Picks says

This medieval mystery continues to be fun with engaging characters and time period detail. This is the most recent addition to the series so start at the beginning (Veil of Lies) if you want to get the whole story!

Mary Keesling says

Fantastic reading, I've read the other in this series, and by this point I'm well and truly spoiled! Crispin Guest, our protagonist, has a brilliant mind, a fine moral compass, a great heart, and an amazing past-- he was once a knight of the realm!-- but no longer. He's barely getting by in late 14th century London, solving crimes and locating lost items (and/or people) by his wits. He has a very bright and very real apprentice, Jack, an orphan who scraped by as a pickpocket. I am absolutely hooked on these books and eagerly await more!

Lissa Notreallywolf says

It was this title that got me involved reading the Crispin Guest medieval noir series, because I have a soft spot for alchemy. I like to read books about alchemy, even popular novels and see how it is framed in the author's view and in the historical location of the novel. I was pleased to find Nicholas Flamel and his wife Perenelle as Crispin's clients. He finds alchemy suspiciously allied with sorcery, and is disinclined to take a missing wife case from someone he equates with a besotted and betrayed tradesman. But poverty notwithstanding he does take the Frenchman's case, and meets up with his enigmatic deaf mute servant, a white haired woman who seems fey. Flamel's English apprentice, at first thought to be Flamel's cuckold, is found

hanging by his foot from the workshop ceiling. If for no other reason to love the novel, I loved the description of the alchemy workshop, although the hanging boy, impaled with a dagger anchored note is a grisly touch. This brings the bumbling sheriffs into the picture again, and Mme. Flammel is gone four days before the hunt concludes, revealing a sordid backstory. The end of the novel, where Crispin reluctantly parts from his paramour is nicely done. Chess also takes a role in the novel, and I wish I liked the game more, but this storyline makes one question those addicted to competition and games.

An addendum-I neglected to comment on how alchemy figures into the book-Pernelle is kidnapped not only as a trophy between her husband and a thwarted suitor, but also as sor mystica, a female alchemical adept. The term is not employed in the book. Alchemical symbols are used by her abductor to toy with Flamel and Guest, but ironically mean little in the context of alchemy. Arsenic is used as a poison for London's water supply, something inimical to the pursuit of alchemy, a reality which pours forth from the mouth of a hedge preacher. Flamel gives a nice rendition of the real aims of alchemy on page 123 "...it is a sacred duty, a keen responsibility for the initiated, and I take that responsibility very seriously." He has been speaking about the difference between gold transmutation and the pursuit of immortality, the pancea. Westerson doesn't dig very deeply into alchemical philosophy, yet it is the philosophers' stone that serves as the relic in this novel.

Denise says

Very enjoyable. The plot got a little convoluted towards the end, but the characters and the historical detail were believable and captivating. This is my first book by Jeri Westerson, I'm looking forward to reading more.

Barbara says

OK but I don't know enough about the period to understand the politics so it didn't hold my interest.

Petrea Burchard says

Jeri Westerson really knows how to put you there. 14th Century London comes alive in Westerson's books, and her main character, Crispin, is sexy and introspective. A flawed, tough man trying to be a good one. I've read two of these now and really enjoy them.

Susie says

Real rating - 4.5. I love these Crispin Guest "Medieval Noir" mysteries. This one is especially good. Crispin and Jack are stronger in terms of their character growth as well as their working relationship. I don't know what is next for Crispin Guest but I do know I check Fantastic Fiction and Jeri Westerson's website for updates on future novels with some regularity and I'm always the first to request the newest installment.

Ken Kugler says

First thing I have to say is that I love this series. This latest addition to the series is #6 and Jeri Westerson, the author, clearly loves her characters and the time period. I swear I can smell the filth of the streets and the poor side of town that Crispin Guest and his apprentice Jack live in. The Cheapside is a long fall for a former knight and one who fell by believing someone he had looked up to for guidance. Only through luck and Crispin's skills as a Tracker (detective) has he been able to survive.

Shadow of the Alchemist features Nicholas Flamel, the legendary alchemist is the focal point of this story. His assistant has been murdered and his home has been ripped up by someone looking for something. His wife has been abducted by someone wanting the Philosopher's Stone. Nicholas is frantic to get his wife back but also wary about giving up the Philosopher's Stone.

As often happens to Crispin, people from his past keep turning up to complicate his life and career. In a nice turn of events, Jack, his apprentice, really comes into his own and forces Crispin to look at the goings on more clearly and re-evaluate information and clues into why children are dying and Young Henry, the son of his former mentor, Lancaster shows up, maybe looking for the Stone too.

The twists and turns and romance, along with the realness of the world that Jeri Westerson has created makes for a fun time. I cannot wait for the next installment and the new promised series that will feature Jack.

Elizabeth says

Westerson's blending of history and her own imagination creates a medieval London that is rich and fascinating. Crispin Guest is a great hero, and the historical characters come to life quite believably. The stories are always interesting and never quite turn out the way you think they will.
