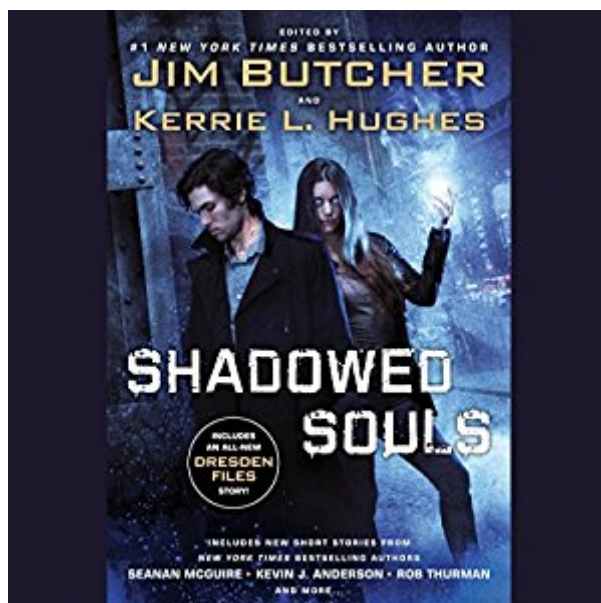


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Shadowed Souls



Synopsis

In this dark and gritty collection - featuring short stories from Jim Butcher, Seanan McGuire, Kevin J. Anderson, and Rob Thurman - nothing is as simple as black and white, light and dark, good and evil.... Unfortunately, that's exactly what makes it so easy to cross the line. In number-one New York Times best-selling author Jim Butcher's "Cold Case", Molly Carpenter - Harry Dresden's apprentice-turned-Winter Lady - must collect a tribute from a remote Fae colony and discovers that even if you're a good girl, sometimes you have to be bad. New York Times best-selling author Seanan McGuire's "Sleepover" finds half-succubus Elsie Harrington kidnapped by a group of desperate teenage boys. Not for anything weird. They just need her to rescue a little girl from the boogeyman. No biggie. In New York Times best-selling Kevin J. Anderson's "Eye of Newt", Zombie PI Dan Shamble's latest client is a panicky lizard missing an eye who thinks someone wants him dead. But the truth is that someone only wants him for a very special dinner.... And New York Times best-selling author Rob Thurman's infernally heroic Caliban Leandros takes a trip down memory lane as he deals with some overdue - and nightmarish - vengeance involving some quite nasty "Impossible Monsters". Also includes stories by Tanya Huff, Kat Richardson, Jim C. Hines, Anton Strout, Lucy A. Snyder, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Erik Scott de Bie. Full cast of narrators includes Jon Lindstrom, Sumalee Montano, Mozhan Marno, Karissa Vacker, and Macleod Andrews.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 3 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Penguin Audio

Audible.com Release Date: November 1, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01IRRNJOG

Best Sellers Rank: #25 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Anthologies #73 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fantasy > Contemporary #173 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Private Investigators

Customer Reviews

Overall this is a good anthology. Review by story:1. Cold Case. 5/5It's a good story even if it does

have some continuity snarls. It helps show some of the ways Molly has changed now that she is Winter Lady.

2. Sleepover. 6/5 This story is the surprise MVP for me. I have never read anything by Seanan McGuire but after reading Sleepover I have ordered a few of her books. Now to the actual story; it's very well paced with a whole lot of world building hooks which allow the story to seem like it actually inhabits a real setting. The characters are likable and the plot relies more on the characters than on flash or fighting.

3. If Wishes Were. 3/5 The story is a little bit cliché. The main character seems somewhat overpowered to me. I will admit the story did not interest me enough to research if it takes place in a larger setting where the character would be justified to be as powerful as it is. Other than that, the main's love interest is flat, the initial antagonist seems like just an excuse to start the plot. And finally, the main antagonist while being extremely powerful (for reasons, and in a way, that makes way more sense than the main character) it is still defeated without difficulty via deus ex machina.

4. Solus. 3/5 Simple description? Men in Black meets The Dresden Files. Only problem is, it feels like you're following around the B team from either setting. It's a bit wacky mixed with Magic A is Magic A.

5. Peacock in Hell. 4/5 This one is a weird one to go into without any prior knowledge. It's like someone took the Bartimaeus Sequence series of books and gave it a pack of cigarettes to make it more edgy. Don't get me wrong it's done well, but it seems like it's trying a bit too hard to be grown up when it's not. Also, maybe placing this story right after the wacky story in the anthology might not have been the best place for it as far as tone is concerned.

6. Eye of newt. 1/5 Nope. I got through 4 pages of cringe and decided this story is not for me.

7. What dwells within 2/5 Who doesn't like a telepathic Ferret as a main character? Me it turns out. I am guessing this story is part of a larger series but it does a really bad example of getting a new person involved with the setting.

8. Hunter healer 4/5 This story reads like a day in the limelight for a background NPC. It has good execution, and when read from the point of view that it's a minor character getting some development the story is good.

9. Baggage. 5/5 This one is good, even if it is ostensibly about superheroes. Sadly it is not part of a larger series instead the author has floated the characters/setting out on a few anthologies and is planning on trying to make it a comic if there is enough interest. It's a bit modern noir mixed with a thriller.

10. Sales. Force. 4/5 This story is good, but if it was a full book it would probably outstay its welcome. The main character is a monster, not in the literal sense but rather she is a psychopathic killer with little regard to normal human characterization. That kind of amoral killer that is sometimes fun to see in limited, Controlled, settings along the lines of yes, but she's OUR monster. That being said there doesn't seem to be much in the terms of control or humanization here.

11. Impossible

monsters 5/5 THIS is how you do an amoral psychopathic killer right. This is a monster aimed at other monsters. It also part of a larger series *Æcal leandros*. Overall it does a good enough job of explaining the character and world that it's understandable to a new reader. Additionally, it has enough character and world setting to really pull a new reader in.

To be fully honest I was interested in this book mainly because it had a story by Jim Butcher and I am always happy to find a new Dresden Files story. This is an anthology that contains 10 short stories all based around the same theme. Each story is based on the idea of good and evil, two aspects of the character and how complicated it can be to live as one or the other. The rating is based on the average of all 10 stories.

Cold Case by Jim Butcher: 3.5 stars The story is about Molly Carpenter in her capacity as the new Winter Lady. Mab has sent her to collect a tribute from a small group of Fae, the Miksani, in Unalaska. There is something odd going on in the town and it may cause trouble for what she needs to do. Carlos Ramirez also happens to be in town which makes it even more clear that there is a problem in the town that could make the Winter Ladies job even harder. The characters are just as well drawn here as if they were simply pulled away from their lives in Chicago and the never-never. The new characters are a little hazy and their place in the Fae world are not very clear. The story is enjoyable if a little slower than expected. There is also no appearance by Harry, this is strictly about our Molly and the lesson that Mab has to teach her.

Sleepover by Seanan McGuire: 3.0 stars Elsinora 'Elsie' Harrington is half human/half succubus in a world that does not really know that supernaturals live among them. Elsie is at a roller derby match rooting for her cousin when she meets a pretty girl and does something totally silly, she follows her out without telling anyone. Before she can formulate a thought she is drugged and taken away by a group of teenage boys who want her to get back the sister of one of the boys. The characters are a little dull and boring but they still manage to keep you reading. The story has not real snap to it but you can push through and find something interesting in what they are doing. Not sure it really fits the theme.

If Wishes Were by Tanya Huff: 2 stars Vicki Nelson is a detective who also happens to be a vampire, though this does not seem to have any bearing on anything. When a woman comes to her about a lamp she has found which contained a Jinn, she wants help to set things right. The problem is that she is tricked into doing just what the Jinn wants. Vicki makes an attempt to handle it on her own with less than satisfactory results. Truth be told this was one of my least favorite stories. I could see potential but it never materialized. I was bored with it almost from the start and it never got better for me.

Solus by Anton Strout: 2 stars The Department of Extraordinary Affairs-Other Division goes to investigate the claims of ghosts in a castle. They found

the ghost of a lonely young woman, Agatha Sedgwick, who was haunting the castle. I was so bored I cannot even remember anything much about this story. I actually went to sleep while reading it so draw your own conclusions.

Peacock in Hell by Kat Richardson: 3.5 stars Emily Ann Peacock is half dead and a master thief. She is sent into Hell to rescue Lenny Red Mane for a sketchy character named Peter Fiori. What she finds is though Lenny may be the one in Hell she is working for a devil. The thing is what can she do about it. I really liked this story and the characters. They held my attention and made me like them and the situation they found themselves in. This is a good one.

Eye of Newt, A Dan Shambles Zombie P.I. by Kevin J. Anderson: 2.5 stars Dan Shambles has a new client, a newt named Geck who comes to him because there seems to be a hit out on him. He was attacked and one of his eyes was taken out. He needs help and Dan goes on the case. This was a nice story with a different kind of hero and a different kind of world.

What Dwells Within by Lucy A Snyder: 3 stars Jesse Shimmer, a magic user and his ferret familiar Pal are outlaws in the magic community. When a friend of hers is compelled to kill himself and his girlfriend is taken Jesse steps in to help. She is very good at killing devils and this one needs it more than most. Nice short story that holds your interest and makes you want to know more about the characters.

Hunter Healer by Jim C. Hines: 4 stars Julia Chapel ran from a life that she could not live any longer. Now she is a Healer who has an assistant who is a hearth fairy, Hob. Terrence Chapel is Julia's father and a Hunter, he is also the reason that Julia ran away. Julia had a twin sister, who was a very good Hunter, but now her sister resides within her making Julia double souled. When a Harvester comes to her it is only to gain her attention because it also leads a rogue hunter named Shard to her, and he wants to be the only one with a double soul. Good story that draws you in and sets up the back story in a quick and effective way. The characters are well fleshed and give you a good look at who they are and can be. I enjoyed this one a lot.

Baggage by Erik Scott de Bie: 3 stars Vivienne Cain, aka Lady Vengeance, former demon possessed super-villain turned edgy it-girl superhero turned fugitive from vigilante justice. She is a high functioning alcoholic who uses the drinking to keep her powers under control. V has been going to a gym working through some of her frustrations for a while when she senses a demon lurking about. As V becomes friends with a girl at the gym the demon gives glimpses of itself but never fully shows itself. I really like the character of V but she is never as fleshed out as I would like her to be. None of the other characters are very fleshed out either and the story is a little thin. But it was still a good read.

Sales Force by Kristine Kathryn Rusch: 3.5 stars Kaylee loses her fiancée, Dex, in a car accident after he has sworn that they would be together forever. Kaylee had not worked very much while she and Dex were together, her job is killing evil supernaturals. Kaylee goes back to work after only a week and her boss gives her an

assignment that is not exactly up her alley, she is sent to investigate, not kill. When she looks into a love potion it may be the best thing for her. Good story premise with characters who are likeable and make me willing to see more of in a longer version. Impossible Monsters by Rob Thurman: 4 stars "Infernally heroic Caliban Leandros takes a trip down memory lane as he deals with some overdue-and nightmarish vengeance involving some quite nasty Impossible Monsters". Caliban has two lists, one that his brother made for him in order to keep him from doing something unforgivable and inhuman. The other list is one he has made for himself that has the names of people who have done things he feels are wrong but that he wants to give them a chance to change. It's time for him to start working on that second list. I totally like the Caliban and plan to read the books which can give me a closer and deeper look into who and what he is. Like with most anthologies this one has good, bad, and iffy stories in it. What did not work for me might work for someone else just as what I liked might not be as good for another. I would recommend this to anyone who likes urban fantasy.

A shadow can't exist without light, but if there's too much light the shadow is gone, That isn't a problem with these stories. If you like dark, then this is for you. I got this book for Cold Case, and it's worth it for that alone if you're a fan of Jim Butcher. I don't know where he'll take Lady Molly's story in the future, but the potential is there for it to become a very dark story. Way darker than the rest of the Dresden Files. This short story of Molly's first week as a Queen of Winter shows a hint of how dark it might get for Molly down the road. It also offers a ray of hope that it won't go there in the end. The remaining stories in the book are quite good. I was only familiar with a few of the authors, but all of the stories were enjoyable. Some are darker than others. Kevin J. Anderson's Dan Shamble, Zombie P.I. story is almost lighthearted, except for the minor fact that the protagonist is dead. Some of the stories have, well almost have, happy endings. The rest... don't. Regardless I enjoyed them all.

A Dresden's world story and several other goodies. I miss Dresden, but this keeps me going and gives me a couple of new authors to look into. There's not much of a central theme, like all Christmas, or all love related, but they're a welcome taste of urban fantasy.

Even though Jim Butcher's name is placed front and center he only contributes Cold Case (well, he also did editing duties along with Kerrie Hughes, and also wrote a nice Foreword)... but fear not, you'll get yer \$\$\$ worth. Each story is its own little gem of a read. Each story was worth re-reading to see it from different angles. And that's all you really need to know when it comes to my opinion of

this collection. Enjoy.

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