



Shadowblack

Sebastien de Castell

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The second book in the page-turning *Spellslinger* series for all teen, YA, adult and fantasy readers.

It's a few months since Kellen left his people behind. Now aged sixteen, Kellen is an outlaw, relying on his wits to keep him alive in the land of the Seven Sands. He misses home, he misses family and more than anything, he misses Nephenia, the girl he left behind.

Then he meets Seneira, a blindfolded girl who isn't blind, and who carries a secret that's all too familiar to Kellen. Kellen and Ferius resolve to help - but the stakes are far higher than they realise. A Shadowblack plague is taking hold - and Kellen can't help but suspect his own people may even be behind it.

Perfect for fans of *The Dark Tower*, *Firefly*, *The Hunger Games* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

Shadowblack Details

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Author : Sebastien de Castell

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From Reader Review Shadowblack for online ebook

Victoria Rose says

Kid, one day, if you live long enough, you're gonna figure out that power is the biggest joke of all.

So Spellslinger was a fun, twisty turny adventure with added magic and angst and great characters, with wit and a few darker moments, but not so much of a wild west influence as the cover would suggest.

For Shadowblack, Castell has **upped the darker moments by like 75%, upped the angst by 50%, upped the western style by 10% and kept everything else - the characters, the magic, the twisty turns, the funny bits - about the same.** So you could prefer either Spellslinger or Shadowblack, depending on your tastes.

We left Kellen running from his childhood home with a price on his head, taken in by the continuing-to-be-a-badass Ferius and accompanied by his squirrel cat companion Reichis. Just like Spellslinger, the novel opens with a fight (and a beating. Poor kid), and Ferius showing Kellen how its done. Here begins the change.

I know you're scared, kid, and you've got good reason to be. You want to do the right thing, but your fear makes you look for ways to protect yourself.

Think of Shadowblack like many superhero sequel films. Remember Spiderman 2? Or Iron Man 2? Or even Captain America: Winter Soldier? Shadowblack is all about the classic crisis of confidence, not knowing what to do or where you belong, feeling like you're all alone in a big and scary world. Kellen is a hunted, hated exile, and Ferius is not teaching him what he wants to learn. He's beginning to harbour some resentment, feeling useless and honestly, getting a bit fed up with getting beaten all the time. You can see where he's coming from, as Kellen was just as relatable in Spellslinger, and again, this is a strong element of the novel.

The story, too, is darker. Spellslinger had its moments of animal cruelty and sinister plots, but Shadowblack is easily the Evil Trophy Winner. Our characters get hurt harder and more easily, their friends don't always make it, and winning is not a sure thing. The twists remain, with a couple of fun double-bluffs to enjoy, and some really tense scenes. Again, I'm not really going to expand on the plot very much - its much more fun to go in blind.

Let us make no maps of lands yet unseen.

There are some fun new characters to enjoy, including a mysteriously blindfolded girl and her companion - another Argosi like Ferius. I loved the interactions between the 2 Argosi, which helped expand Ferius' character a little more. There was also an added element of romance in this instalment, which I didn't entirely hate.

There was less emphasis on the magical aspects overall, which I didn't mind since there was so much more emphasis on dark, murderly plot lines which I am always going to enjoy. Overall, it was a great sequel, with a bit of a tone shift that didn't take away from the enjoyability of the series.

The Tattooed Book Geek (Drew). says

As always this review can also be found on my blog The Tattooed Book Geek:
<https://thetattooedbookgeek.wordpress...>

I won a copy of this book through Readers First.

Even though The Greatcoats by Sebastien de Castell is one of my favourite fantasy series I have to admit that I haven't read the first book in his YA fantasy series the Spellslinger series. You all know how it is, too many books and sadly, never enough time to read them all and ultimately some will end up passing you by.?

I was, however, easily able to pick up and follow the story in Shadowblack without any prior knowledge so it's all good. Granted, I only got to know the bare bones of the previous book but it was enough, you learn more as you progress through the book and quite frankly, it didn't detract from my overall enjoyment of Shadowblack at all.?

Kellen of the House of Ke is a sixteen-year-old outcast, an outlaw spellslinger from Jan'Tep on the run who also happens to have the 'shadowblack' – (the shadowblack is a dangerous magical plague that is easily recognisable by the swirling black design around the left eye. That will in time cause the inflicted to descend into madness).

What's a spellslinger you might ask! Well, let me tell you! A spellslinger is a derogatory term used by the people of Jan'Tep and means that Kellen doesn't have much magic (the six different forms of magic are Iron, ember, breath, blood, sand and silk. Kellen, due to having the shadowblack has been permanently counter-banded which means he is unable to ever use five out of the six forms of magic. The only one available to him is breath and he only knows a couple of different variations of one singular spell) and has to resort to his own wits, guile and a variety of other tricks to supplement his meagre magical ability and to help stay alive.

His two companions are Reichis, a two-foot-tall nekhek (squirrel cat) think Rocket from Guardians of the Galaxy only far more murderous with an even worse attitude and his favourite food just so happens to be that delicious delicacy human eyeballs, nom nom nom! Actually, with Reichis bad attitude and my love for the classic 1980's show The A-Team I think he should be referred to as Bosco "B. A." Bareichis!?! And, Ferius Parfax, a red-headed Argosi card wielding (think of a female version of Gambit from the X-Men) wanderer and gambler.

After the initial action-packed opening featuring Kellen, Reichis and Ferius the addition of Seneira who is accompanied by Rosie (another Argosi) really opens up the story (which is a great story) in Shadowblack and is the catalyst that allows the plot to start unravelling and the mystery and adventure to really begin.

I liked Seneira as a character and I enjoyed learning more about the wanderers that are the Argosi too. The addition of Rosie by de Castell worked well and she was a good counterpoint to Ferius helping show the differences between the various paths that the Argosi choose and then spend their life following.

Kellen, as the main character and narrator can at times be quite naive, doesn't really know his place, who he wants to be or even where he fits in but during Shadowblack he goes through some self-discovery, coming to

learn more about himself and by the ending, he has matured and has a far greater understanding of who he is.

The story in Shadowblack is definitely Kellen's. But for me (whilst I liked Ferius as both a character and a companion for Kellen) the star of the book is definitely Reichis who is an outstanding character, shining everytime he's on the page. The banter between him and Kellen is topnotch and I also found Reichis to be the perfect comic relief as at times Shadowblack can be quite dark in tone. Whenever Reichis goes hunting he doesn't refer to it as 'hunting' oh no! Reichis goes 'murdering' and really, that tells you all you need to know about him. He's just a fantastic creation who thinks he's the mack daddy of everything!

The setting for Shadowblack is the Seven Sands, an outback, frontier type region that gives of a western vibe to it and it's pretty cool.

While the 'big bad' behind the overall scheme in Shadowblack remain largely unknown (until the end). There's a decent bad guy to act as the foil against Kellen, Reichis and Ferius throughout the course of the book who uses sinister and menacing means to enact their plan.

Castell is a superb writer who knows how to tell a story. Shadowblack is easy to read, decently paced, gives you twists and turns aplenty in the story to keep you engaged and characters that you care about too. The back of the book states 'sorcery is a scam' but Shadowblack dear readers is the real deal.? As a writer, de Castell is also a dab hand at incorporating both the deeper moments of emotion and the lighter moments of humour into his books and you will often find yourself smiling throughout the course of Shadowblack.

I stay away from the YA genre, I'm not discriminating, it's just not for me. I like my fantasy to be far more on the grittier, bloodier, grimmer and darker side with flawed amoral protagonists rather than the standard light v dark and good guys v bad guys. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed Shadowblack and feel that it transcends its YA fantasy label to something that fans of both YA and adult fantasy will enjoy as there's truly a lot to like in de Castell's creation.

I found Shadowblack to be a fantastic fantasy western hybrid and a rousing adventure. I am definitely looking forward to continuing the story in the next book.

Oh, read and buy de Castell's The Greatcoats series too! It's finished, exceptional and I highly recommend it!?

Kaitlin says

[now an outcast from the (hide spoiler)]

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4.5 of 5 stars <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/08/20/...>

The Spellslinger series is starting to take shape with this second volume, and I'm liking where it's going. Ex-magic student Kellen, having chosen the path of exile, has become transformed into a roaming outlaw of sorts, and I'm feeling these wonderful Western vibes seeping in. Best of all, traveling with our characters mean we get to discover a whole wide world of endless possibilities.

Indeed, Shadowblack is a sequel that greatly expands the world-building. In this book, Kellen and his companions Ferius the Argosi woman and Reichis the squirrel-cat are trekking through the wild and lawless borderland—a far cry from the more structured and civilized Jan'Tep city in which our protagonist grew up. Unable to use magic without bringing any unwanted attention to themselves, Kellen finds himself way out of his element. However, despite their precautions, trouble winds up catching up to our trio when they are ambushed by bounty hunters who nearly get the best of them. Battered and weakened, Kellen has no choice but to trust a pair of strangers who come to their aid, one of whom is an Argosi who seems to be acquainted with Ferius.

But it is the other traveler, Seneira, who astonishes Kellen the most. Like him, she is afflicted by the shadowblack, a deadly magical ailment which causes terrible headaches, disturbing visions, and swirling black markings to appear on the skin around the eyes. What Kellen can't figure out is how. All his life, he has been taught that the shadowblack only affects magic users, but Seneira is no mage and has no magical ability to speak of. Drawn to the mystery, Kellen and Ferius agree to travel with Seneira and her Argosi mentor (who reluctantly goes by "Rosie") to her home city, where to their dismay, they find that the plague is even more widespread than they had feared.

Shadowblack was everything I loved about Spellslinger, with a bit of added adventure. The characters are back and they're as captivating as ever, especially Kellen, who finds himself way out of his depth in this new environment. His sheltered days are over, and he's learning to get by without relying solely on magic (not that he was a very good mage to begin with), hoping that Ferius will teach him other ways to survive. But thus far, the Argosi woman is keeping her tricks close to the vest, and meeting Rosie has revealed just how secretive Ferius is by comparison. She's an enigma, and something tells me her plans for Kellen go beyond simply wanting to help him find his way. Happily, there's also Reichis, there to cut through all the bullshit. With him, what you see is what you get: a bad-tempered little squirrel-cat with an obsession with clawing out people's eyeballs. Since the expectation is that Kellen will be growing and changing a lot over the course of this series, it's nice (and even a bit comforting) to know that there are certainties you can always rely upon, such as Reichis' propensity to say and do outrageously hilarious things.

For the most part though, this series is evolving. The ending of this book establishes a pattern which has been confirmed by the author, who has stated that each volume will take Kellen to new places where he will encounter new forms of magic and intrigue. This structure reminds me very much of a TV series where each episode might be self-contained, but together they make up an overall story arc that tells the journey of the main character. The downside, of course, is the sad implication that we won't be returning to past places. In fact, Shadowblack ends on a strong sense of goodbye to this part of the world, as Kellen and his companions look ahead to their next destination. That said, it's hard to see this as a true negative, especially now that I know what to expect. While I'll keep my fingers crossed that we'll meet some of these side characters again, at the same time I can't really say I'm all that torn up about moving on to another chapter of Kellen's adventure. I had a great time with this novel, and now I'm just even more excited for the future of this series.

Knowing Sebastien de Castell, he'll have another incredible sequel in store for us. So far, I have been very impressed with his YA series; he seems to be able to excel at any kind of story he wants to tell. Every time I pick up one of his books, I know I can expect his great sense of humor, fast-paced plotting, attention-grabbing characters, and nonstop fun. If you enjoyed Spellslinger, you will absolutely want to pick up Shadowblack.

Drexingirl says

I loved this book! I love this series. Everything about this book was great. The plot was intriguing and

mysterious and definitely kept me hooked. I also like how while it was a contained adventure it also led into a more overarching plot. The character development was great for everybody, Kellen, Ferius and even Reichis had wonderful moments and finding out a little more about Ferius is always welcome as I adore her. Cannot wait for more from this series.

I was sent an advanced copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Edited to add: I still love this book and adore the characters and storyline :)

Siobhan says

3.5 stars?

I enjoyed the storyline, but some of the characters annoyed me quite a bit. Reichis the squirrel cat was the best part of the book by far!

C.G. Drews says

I like this series in a very very lowkey way. Which is unfortunately apathetic but like I feel it's mostly ME standing between liking it vs loving it. It just doesn't grab me emotionally at all? And the only character I care about is Kellen (even though he's about as intelligent as a reheated waffle) so yes.

Anyhow here's the link to my review of book one if you wish it.

+ I do think it has a fun voice!

It reminds me of Skulduggery Pleasant with a smidge of The Lightning Thief...and it's younger YA too, which I actually really approve of because we need ALL types and styles of YA books! Kellen is 16 but a *young* 16 which, again, I like, because I personally was a young 16 myself. Anyhow. It's quirky and lively and has a self-depreciating and mocking tone.

+ The plot of the book was "what do we do while we wait for bk 3".

WHICH HAPPENS A LOT WITH SEQUELS hah haha hah...oh wow. Look they're solving the mystery of this random town which has the Shadowblack curse in it. So like a whole book featuring Shadowblack, I kind of hoped I'd get more of a feel for what it is?? But Kellen doesn't seem affected by it AT ALL!?!?!? He talks about visions but we barely see that? And he's supposed to have this darkness exploding in him, but where is it, m8. I have questions. I want to see.

+ I do like that the grumpy-old mentor is a woman...but Ferius is so irritating.

I mean, she basically ended up with the: "WAX ON, WAX OFF" thing going down. But she legit never teaches Kellen anything?!? I'm with Kellen on the opinion of, wtf dude. He has to find his *path* and I hope Kellen figured it out by the end because I'm still confused. But **Ferius' whole point of the book was to (a) tell you nothing, (b) be very very cryptic, and (c) be absolutely useless in all other ways.** I need to lie down.

+ The romance was...not working for me.

Kellen has NOT A ROMANTIC BONE IN HIS BODY. Like just let the kid be, ok, the book carries on fine without him crushing on the only single female character the book will show. And she's always devoid of personality so I see no chemistry. Not every book needs romance. Halp.

+ I'm getting more into the swing of this magical Wild West.

Trying. *tRYING*. It's still super weird, but fun! And my only drawback is I feel like it's heavily drawing on Native American culture, but *I might be wrong*, so I don't want to really critique that. But if it is? I feel a bit strange about that.

+ I still freaking love the talking racoon.

Or squirrel cat. Whatever. He's hilarious and snarky and the scene where he takes a hot bath and eats butter biscuits and snarks is actually my favourite scene ok. What this says about me, or the book, I'm not sure. Let's leave it and move forward before this gets awkward.

(HE IS ROCKET OUT OF GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY I WILL NOT BE SWAYED ON THIS.)

ALL IN ALL? Well I seem to have more critiques than likes haha (MY BAD) but I do think this is a fun and quirky book. It was fast to get through and had goodly paced action and it was interesting exploring the Shadowblack and the evil magic there. It did feel a bit like filler BUT it was fun! I love the humour and the quips. I'm just an unimpressed cabbage about a lot of other parts. Yes. I'll go now, shh. Cabbage soup for me.

Melanie says

1.) Spellslinger ★★★★★

Em says

me: i have absolutely zero interest in reading this book since i didn't even like the first one

also me: but *goddammit* the cover would look so pretty on my bookshelf

Roy says

3.5*

A solid follow up to book 1. The 3 main characters in the group are back and go on an adventure. Meet up with some new characters at an Academy, the story starts to get intriguing from here. However, didnt feel as excited or engaged whilst reading this as compared to book 1. I think the development of the magic system in book 1 was what made it pretty cool. Plot was something standard you'd find in a YA fantasy novel, but still had great dialogue. Will probably finish the next book if its a trilogy and has an ending.

Bradley says

I don't care who knows it, I'm a fanboy. Yes, it's fantasy YA, but after the first novel and having loved the

flow so well and where it wound up, there's nothing that might convince me to stop now.

On the road.

Everything about the characters is fun. Sorry. It's just super easy reading and what's not to love about a wisecracking thieving racoon-cat who is the nightmare of every mage alive as your best friend? Or having a wily dancer/charmer showing him the ropes on the road in a permanent exile? Or how about solving the riddle of a plague of shadowblacks overwhelming a far-off city?

This one is mostly about living off the land and surviving in it, enjoying the characters so expertly developed in the first book, and learning a bit (or a lot) about oneself in the process.

The exile is coming into his own! Evil or not evil? We shall see. :) :)

Totally looking forward to the new audiobook this month for book 3! :)

Melissa says

Reichis is my favorite "business partner", ever! He is so much like Rocket Raccoon, and I am living for it! He is the best comic relief for all the shit stuff that happened in this book. So excited to see what more shenanigans the gang is going to go through in the next book.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

They best be making this hardcover available for pre-order! I don't want no freaking kindle. Come on Amazon!

Ivonn says

Castell just became one of my favourite authors. He casts magic like no one else.

Mitriel says

Give me the next one now! Preferably with a nice hot bath and butter biscuits.
