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From Jaleigh Johnson, the acclaimed author of *The Mark of the Dragonfly*, comes another thrilling adventure in the magical world of Solace.

Lina Winterbock lives in the mountain strongholds of Solace. She's an apprentice to the archivists, the wise men and women whose lives are dedicated to cataloging, studying, and preserving the objects that mysteriously fall from the sky in the scrap towns.

Lina should be spending her days with books, but the Iron War has changed everything. The strongholds are now a refuge, and the people Lina once counted on no longer have time for her, so she spends her days exploring the hidden tunnels and passages of her home. The strongholds are vast and old, with twisting paths, forgotten rooms, and collapsed chambers, some of them containing objects that have been lost and forgotten even by the archivists.

And in one of the forgotten chambers, Lina discovers a secret.

Hidden deep in a cavern is a half-buried airship like nothing she has ever seen before. She's determined to dig it out and restore it. But Lina needs help, and she doesn't know anyone she can trust with her secret.

Then she meets Ozben, a mysterious boy who has a secret of his own — a secret that's so dangerous it could change the course of the Iron War and the world of Solace forever.

The Secrets of Solace Details

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From Reader Review The Secrets of Solace for online ebook

Misty Baker says

Back in April of 2014 I read an amazing novel by debut author Jaleigh Johnson. I loved the book so much that I made a point to mention it to every librarian I knew.

“Be sure to stock this book!” I would say...stars in my eyes like a small child on Christmas morning. “You won’t be disappointed!”

Flash forward to last month, I received an email from Johnson’s publicist asking if I would like to review her newest novel “The Secrets of Solace?” Of course, I jumped at the opportunity (it is entirely possible that I made a total ass out of myself in the process.) Why wouldn’t I? I was so impressed with Johnson’s ability to seamlessly mesh fantasy and steampunk in “The Mark of the Dragonfly” that I couldn’t wait to dive in and see what new and exciting tale Johnson was offering her readers.

Unfortunately (uh oh...there’s that word we all dread so much) “Solace” didn’t live up to it’s predecessor.

Now, before the lot of you go all Hannibal Lecter on my behind, let me explain. (I have notes people. NOTES!)

First, “Solace” was slow out of the starting gate. Though Lina (the protagonist) tried like hell to keep our attention with her ventilation system gymnastics and moss growing antics, I found myself openly sighing. (Yikes!) It wasn’t until page 72 when I read the phrase:

“The shadow figure moved fast across the cavern toward her.”

that my interest was sufficiently piqued and I wanted to continue. From that point on (admittedly) the story got better. Several additional characters were introduced (including, but not limited to a cat that has a tendency to burst into flames) dialogue improved (“Oh, you better believe I would. Every crack and crevice will be filled with the stuff.”) and a static plot finally emerged. (Praise Jesus!) But there were still lulls in the story; moments when I felt the momentum hit a brick wall all for the sake of embellishment. After reading the acknowledgements I realized why. Johnson had come up with the premise for “Solace” after one very memorable late night trip to the Louvre. The admission of this made the “hushed museum” ambiance of the book make much more sense. I’m not saying it excuses it, but at the very least I could understand where the pacing issues stemmed from.

All of that said (because what would I be if I wasn’t contradictory) the last 115 pages were fantastic. All of the qualities I so desperately craved finally started to find their way into the story, and boy was I a happy camper. Lina’s rather awkward rivalry (which was continuously referenced but never explained, and then almost completely disappeared at one point) was finally FINALLY elaborated on. The semi-creepy “Come here little Prince...” assassin made his presence known (by way of cliff diving) and Merlin, well...I can’t give it all away can I? Needless to say, the ending delivered. It was action packed, allowed the characters to embrace growth (both the young AND the old) and managed to tie up most of the novel’s loose ends.

I just wish Johnson could have gotten to the point sooner. While I understand that most of it was probably written the way it was to help build a relationship and endear the reader to the characters, I firmly believe that at least 35% of Lina’s internal struggle could have been omitted due to repetition.

So here is my final take...

It's NOT "The Mark of the Dragonfly" but it's not a throw away novel either. If you have a middle grade reader who eats fantasy novels for breakfast, and is intrigued by the "unknown," they will most likely enjoy this book. For everyone else, it's gonna be hit or miss. If you expect to be entertained 3 pages in, this book is NOT for you, but if you are the type of reader who doesn't mind wading through rough waters to claim your prize on the other side, go ahead and add it to your TBR.

Rane says

Being a huge fan of The Mark of the Dragonfly the debut of Jaleigh Johnson, I could not wait to journey back the the world she built in the first book. Johnson builds the world even more with The Secrets of Solace and while I really missed the crew of the 401, I enjoyed expanding the world with a few more mysteries and and everyone stuck in the middle of war.

Lina Winterbock a apprentice to the archivists, those who study the objects and animals that come from the meteors that land upon Solace. Lina finds searching her home in the stronghold of the mountains more interesting, now that her mentor is tied up in helping refugees from the war torn lands as the Iron War ravages the lands. Everyday is lonely until Lina stumbles upon a long buried object that seems to feel and Ozben that carries a heavy secret, both push Lina's life in a different direction that will change their world.

The Secrets of Solace felt like it was divided into two. The first half had it's slow turns and fast pulls, with the second half taking off like a rocket with page turning speeds in order to keep up. The first part I felt could been wrapped up with less of Lina inner monologue and perhaps more of Ozben of Lina interactions with Merlin the ship.

Now that this wasn't wasted by no means. It gave us a deeper understanding of our two leads in Lina who's hiding from the pain from of losing her parents and later her only anchor pushing her away for unknown reasons. Ozben out pain of being told he was just an extra being forces him to always trying to prove himself. These two build a strong friendship as they come together because of their loneliness this emotion always helps them with the thinking and feeling ship Merlin as they try to get it out of his cave-in prison. We're introduced to even more mysteries through Merlin as we're shown that those at war is only a truly small part of the world with alot beyond the mountains.

The second part of the book shines as your tossed into one action packed scene to another, with alot of revelations that shuns and pulls at one's heartstrings.

The beauty of the story was sometimes we need someone to lean on and help us understand the world, to teach us that there is more then "me" and see others and understand the consequences of the not knowing or understanding before acting. Lina and Ozben open up instead of hiding within themselves. When they took the chance, it helped others open up as well.

While it had it had it's up in downs, I still really enjoyed The Secrets of Solace and can't wait to see more of the world and uncover the mysteries of Solace.

Colleen Houck says

Loved the sentient ship. Such a cool concept. This world is so interesting. I could easily see several more books happening in this place. I'm so curious how it fits into the universe as we know it.

Jim Sibigtroth says

The fantasy world of Solace was previously introduced in the excellent science fiction fantasy novel, *The Mark of the Dragonfly*. It isn't really necessary to read that before *The Secrets of Solace*, but it would provide a more in-depth description of Solace.

The Merrow Kingdom and the Dragonfly Territories have been engaged in a war over the important resource, iron. The Dragonfly Territories cut off the supply because they fear the Merrow Kingdom wanted to use it for weapons to destroy the Dragonfly Territories. The story takes place in the neutral Archivist's Stronghold of Ortana, and the main character is a young apprentice girl, Lina Winterbock, whose parents died some years ago in an epidemic. Lina has no friends and spends her time exploring the underground city (built into the side and heart of a mountain) of Ortana, and working on a mysterious ship in a hidden workshop that was apparently blocked off by cave-ins many years ago. The only access to this workshop is through a hidden passage that is too narrow for an adult.

Lina sneaks around in ventilation shafts and eavesdrops. She also has a habit of getting into mischief. The plot thickens when she finds out about a mysterious boy who is being hidden by a senior archivist (and Lina's guardian).

The book reinforces the ideas that you don't have to be an adult to make a difference, sometimes you need the help of others, it is important to respect the rights of other living things, honor, determination, and other positive values. The writing is easy and natural. The pace is quick and engaging. Characters solve problems through hard work and logical planning rather than unexplained sudden 'miracles'. Not everyone is as they first seem. I look forward to another book in this series (due out in a few months).

Skip says

The story of an unlikely friendship between a rebellious female apprentice archivist (Lina) and a neighboring prince (Orzen) in hiding from assassins. Lina is a free spirit, crawling through vents, eavesdropping, and tinkering in her secret hidden workshop. Ozben is the spare heir to a warring kingdom, and was hidden away in the neutral area of Ortana when his royal family was attacked. Lina has found a ship in her private workshop, but needs someone's help to access it. She and Orzen have their shared secret. The ship itself is a mystery, where it came from and what it is.

The highlights are Johnson's amazing creativity, such as the magical artifacts displayed in the archivist's museum and various living creations: Aethon, the carnelian (view spoiler)cat and the chamelin shape-shifters. And the mystery ship itself. I wanted to give this five stars, but I think the backstories were underdeveloped and took too long to be revealed (i.e., a slow start.) 4.5 stars.

Megan says

As a companion to *The Mark of the Dragonfly*, this novel is all I could have asked for.

Lina should be studying to become an archivist, not crawling through ventilation ducts to eavesdrop or discovering secrets chambers. She should be working, not overhearing dangerous things about the Iron War, running into boys with fake bandages in the middle of the night, or discovering air ships in deep tunnels. And yet, Lina is hardly ever doing what she ought to be doing. She possesses a head for risk and a deep, innate curiosity. Curiosity that gets her into trouble. Despite her better judgement, Lina discovers things in Ortana that could change the war, and all of Solace.

I love the adventure in these books. The detail. The way the archivist world is set up gives the same feel as I got when reading Harry Potter, with that world I so wished I could get into. Like Harry Potter, this universe is speckled with things that I wish I could see. There are humanoid characters. There are "magical" objects. There are deep friendships. There are bullies. There are disagreeable teachers, and there are gentle guardians. Heck, there's even assassins.

If you like Harry Potter or Percy Jackson, and have a penchant for steampunk, you should like this quite a bit.

This book is clean and great for anyone.

Christine Brodien-Jones says

A huge disappointment. I loved Johnson's first book, "The Mark of the Dragonfly," but this one suffers from too much back-story, and consequently it drags.

The premise is intriguing: In the land of Solace, Lina Winterbock is a loner—and always in trouble. When she learns the true identity of a boy named Ozben and they exchange secrets, suddenly they're both targets for assassination. Slow-paced until the last third of the book.

hpboy13 says

The story of an unlikely friendship between a rebellious archivist and a prince in hiding ended up being a great book. Secrets of Solace is high fantasy, taking place in another world where two countries are at war over iron, while the archivists try to stay neutral even while they harbor refugees. Lina is an apprentice archivist, but has a knack for crawling through vents, eavesdropping, and coming up with harebrained schemes that don't end well. Ozben is the spare heir to one of the warring kingdoms, and was hidden away with the archivists to keep him safe.

The two strike up a friendship, trying to uncover a flying ship buried in rubble, which takes up much of the story. Lina is working through issues with her mentor, while Ozben fears assassination, and the two come to find refuge with each other – not romantically, but as friends (gold star for platonic friendship!). I liked the characters because they're imperfect and realistic, yet lovable. The story, while a touch simple, was interesting enough – especially the parts focusing on Lina and Ozben's capers.

The world-building is solid, if not very extensive. There are whole countries with geopolitical conflicts, as well as some magical meteors that deposit artifacts from another world, but the story takes place inside a mountain fortress that houses said artifacts. Some of the artifacts are magical. There are breeds of animals unique to this world (flaming cats, shapeshifting warriors) and some unexpected objects have sentience. In short, I would love to explore the world of Solace more, and I hope Johnson plans to write more in this

world.

Rebecca says

In the land of Solace, where the kingdoms of Merrow and the Dragonfly Territories are at war, Lina lives in the land of the neutral Archivists. The Archivists have carved vast cities into several mountains, where they study the strange objects that fall into Merrow through a weak spot between the worlds. Orphaned Lina is studying to be an archivist, but enjoys almost as much exploring and mapping the myriad tunnels, rooms, and vents of her mountain home, as well as listening in when she shouldn't. It was on one of these explorations that she discovered her greatest treasure—something some past archivists had hidden away, before one of the frequent cave-ins apparently destroyed it. Since then she has been working away to understand what she's found, as well as continuing her studies and explorations, and yearning for more contact with her mentor, Zara, who had promised to take care of her when her parents died but who has been distancing herself. Then Lina runs into a strange boy, one of the war refugees the Archivists have taken in, and it seems he might have even more secrets than she...

I loved the first in this series, and loved this one too. I love the creativity of it, not just the thought of otherworldly objects falling into Solace and being studied, but that the objects and beings are so unusual and creative themselves. Wow would I love to visit that museum! The whole world is just so well-built, and I really liked the characters, too, even if their situations are not particularly original in and of themselves. The loner/outsider orphan who knows a world inside and out is pretty common (see *Icebreaker* by Tanner, for one, and *Leviathan* by Westerfeld, and *Airborn* by Oppel), but it's a trope I enjoy, and is really well-done here. Steampunk and fantasy combine for a fast-paced, creative adventure.

April says

Lina is a thoughtful, rule-breaking, nearly manic-pixie of a girl who lives below one of the three Archivist mountains in her homeland of Solace. It is cold but it is filled with wonders: machines, technology, and animals salvaged from the meteor fields and brought back to be studied, repaired, improved upon and used. Lina's archivist mentor has grown increasingly distant and one leading archivist seems to hate her; as does his apprentice. So she spends her time hiding away in her workshop; a nearly impossible to get to cavern where she works on a half-buried air-ship the archivists have long forgotten. While the Iron War rages on above her, Lina meets Ozben, the "spare-heir" from one side of the war who is masquerading as a refuge to hide from assassins. Together, they might finally be able to free the ship from the boulders blocking its entrance. Ozben would love to use the ship to get back home. Lina wants to know the ship's secrets. Neither expect the ship to have its own desires... There are fantastical animals, delightful technology, and Lina is a strong and smart girl many will quickly connect with; particularly with her habit of (a bit Harry Potter style) taking things into her own hands a bit recklessly to seek out the truth and the best solution to problems on her own (and sometimes with her new Prince friend's help).

Anything you didn't like about it? A few plot points which seemed to be strung along nicely for most of the book are a bit haphazardly and disappointingly info-dump-style explained/resolved in one chapter near the end. The world may have been more deeply developed in the first book set in this universe (*Mark of the Dragonfly*) but there does not seem to be a lot of character overlap; the book reads well as a stand-alone but likely would benefit from having read the first one to know the world you're stepping into better.

To whom would you recommend this book? Readers who enjoyed Mark of the Dragonfly but also readers who love a good bit of light fantasy with a hint of steampunk styling.

FTC Disclosure: The Publisher provided me with a copy of this book to provide an honest review. No goody bags, sponsorship, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Pam ?Because Someone Must Be a Thorn? Tee says

Le sigh.

As an adult who very much enjoyed the first book in this series, MARK OF THE DRAGONFLY, I felt let down with this one. It was a little disappointing that we were starting up with new characters, but you know, I good with that. It indicates a longer story cycle so that can be a good thing.

The problem was the level of plotting and the story just weren't as high a quality. There were fewer storyline original concepts and more that seemed drawn from the common genre.

I think the book will still appeal to middle-graders who liked the first book, but I think the older you are, and the more you have read, the less novelty you find herein, and if you're like me you won't find the book all that intriguing.

~review copy
~book #14 for 2016

Chloe says

Book review

I like the book The Secrets of Solace because of all the descriptive writing, this book is by Jeligh Johnson; and when you read the book you can see it all in your head. The book is about a girl named Lina that has no parents and tutor bales on her, then she finds a ship, but the ship has a mystery to it. she meets a boy named Ozben; who has his own little secret, but Lina hears about it; in the book they explore all sorts of places and they both have trouble ahead of them... Especially Ozben. My opinion about this book is that it is a great book if you like mystery and action, “this book has a lot of that.” “I think this book is appropriate for tweens and older.” I also think it is great if you are a young reader like me. Like if you are doing a report on this book, it is very easy to describe, and picture it all! My favorite character is Lina because she is adventurous and never gives up, she is strong and determined; and is very creative. And I know this about Lina, because in the book she always wants to know more, she makes maps and can basically predict a few options of what might happen next. My favorite part of the book is in the beginning of the book when Lina first meets Ozben she was eavesdropping in his rafters not knowing who he was, then they talked and bonded over all sorts of things. And that is why I think this is a great and amazing book for tweens and older and for young readers like me. This book is outstanding and amazing!

Sophie Riggsby / allthingsequilateral says

Review posted on Page Turners Blog on 3/18/2016

The first book in the series, *The Mark of the Dragonfly*, has sat on my TBR shelf for over a year. I am so glad that I had the chance to read the companion book in the series, *Secrets of Solace*. Jaleigh has structured a world so rich with details that you easily fall into it especially because the voice of our main character, Lina, rings so very true. Lina is an apprentice archivist who catalogues foreign objects that end up in her world. I really enjoyed her job. Imagine having permission to explore and satisfy your own curiosity on a daily basis? She soon finds an object and a boy with a secret that lead her on an adventure which was enjoyable and riveting.

If your children are looking for a fantasy, steampunk style read or if they enjoyed *The Magisterium* series by Holly Black and Cassandra Clare, make *The Secrets of Solace* their very next read. This story is a good read book to read aloud to children younger than 10, but those older will easily devour the story. Just a quick aside for adults who enjoy reading well-written, middle grade books — be sure to put this one on your list. As for me, I'm now moving on to *The Mark of the Dragonfly*.

BOOKSandCaffeine says

3 stars, I read *The Mark of the Dragonfly* and loved it so much I had to buy it. Two years later, I pick this up expecting it to be book two.... NOPE.

Jaleigh Johnson wrote this series so interestingly. You have to read each book in order to understand the order of events, but each book has new main characters- and doesn't mention the previous main characters (from the other books) at all!

Now that would usually make me very angry, but the author wrote this book so well. It was impossible for me to not love the new characters- even though I only wanted the old ones.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?!?!?!?

In addition, the plot and obstacles were so captivating- and things you didn't see coming at all! I never would have guessed quite a few things that happened in this book.

I wish I could rate it 4 stars, but I was very upset that it was basically a book two- but not, and with no mention whatsoever of my favorite characters from the first book.

But if you actually give it a chance, it's rather slow at first, you can't put it down.

katsok says

A magical journey back to the world of Solace. I wish the book didn't have to end. Is it greedy to ask for another book in the series?
