



Game of Souls

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Your soul is your magic. The nobility will stop at nothing to steal it.

Keedar Giorin still remembers the night soldiers killed his mother. The Night of Blades. He was three, but the memories are written in his mind in blood, flames, scales, and his mother's mad cackles.

Assigned by his father to save two young noblemen or risk a repeat of the massacre on his home in the Smear, Kasandar's most lawless district, Keedar dives headlong into the mission. He uses his most secret skill, a magic that could bring the King's Blades hunting him, a magic that could be a death sentence if reported to the wrong ears.

But even that risk is part of his father's calculated plan. A plot to determine who was behind his mother's death, while securing a new ally for their guild, and seeing their people rise from squalor and oppression to strive for the identity and power they have all but forgotten.

Plans, however, do not always follow the path drawn out. What will Keedar do when a count takes interest in his magic? Where will he run to when the hunt begins? Can a young man now growing into his power find a way to defeat the most ruthless of assassins?

Game of Souls Details

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From Reader Review Game of Souls for online ebook

Gerald Black says

To begin, I am already a fan of Mr. Simpson for his previous work. That being said, I liked this book even more. Mr. Simpson has been honing his craft. The superlative writing, fast pace, great dialogue, and well thought out characters are everything a fantasy novel is supposed to be. Add the twists and surprises and it was a most enjoyable read that every fantasy lover should read and enjoy. Well done!

Masquerade Crew says

Reviewed by Bella. Her review can be seen [here](#).

Caleb Blake says

This review is cross-posted from Papyrus Independent Author Reviews
(<http://papyrus.calebblake.net/2013/07/19/game-of-souls-by-terry-c-simpson/>)

As he watches the accursed Day of Accolades take away more children from the Smear, Keedar promises that one day he'll stop the nobles' exploitation of the under classes. On the same day, he encounters Winslow, a noble risking the Smear to win a chance to train with the King's Blades. Together they become caught in a dangerous game of power, the Game of Souls.

The world the author has created in *Game of Souls* is fairly well sketched out. In the continent in which the story takes place there are several racial groups or kingdoms that are either at war or uneasily at peace. Our story is set mainly in the city of Kasandar in the kingdom, Kasinia. A map is thoughtfully included for the times when place names and races become a little confusing.

The author has focused on Kasinia and has managed to provide quite a bit of detail about the people, the politics and the magic system. It's quite impressive that so much has been imparted to the reader about this culture without resorting to the infamous info dumps sometimes employed by authors. As I progressed, I found that I understood the parasitic ruling class and those who would oppose it.

The magic system doesn't initially seem fleshed out and at times it felt like the author was just adding a detail to get himself out of trouble. However, there is a small summary of "soul magic" at the end of the book and reading this gave me confidence that the author had fully realised the magic system in advance and had applied it logically throughout the storyline.

The plot is a very involved one, steeped in intrigue. The ruling houses of Kasandar move ever toward the next Succession Day, a bloodbath signaling the climax of Far'an Senjin (Game of Souls), a devious and ruthless game of power.

Although I wouldn't necessarily call the story gritty, it is quite dark. The machinations and power plays and the bystanders caught in the crossfire almost always makes for an interesting tale, and this story is no exception. There were a couple of times I felt thrown. The arch 'frenemy' of the king, Count Cardiff, makes a pretty big jump to a different area of the continent, which didn't really ring true to me - neither his absence

from the city, nor the apparent lack of awareness of his departure. It was also difficult to get an impression of how much time passed which added to the disjointedness. Additionally, once Cardiff's plans came to fruition, some of his scheming remained a little opaque to me. It gave me less of a pay-off than I would have liked.

Although I've only ever watched *Game of Thrones* on television, I think this story shares more than just a similarity in titles. There is something about the nature of the Game of Souls that reminds me of the power struggles in the other, and the Dracodar bear more than a passing resemblance to the "dragon lords" of Martin's work. That's not to say that this novel is derivative - it definitely has its own direction. It just seems to give one or two nods to its almost namesake.

Protagonist duties in the story are shared between two adolescents, Keedar and Winslow. Keedar is the son of a guild member living in the Smear, basically the home of the under classes. Winslow is the son of a Count, one of the most powerful families in the realm. The two boys are paired by luck and the machinations of Keedar's father and we see their lopsided relationship develop throughout the story.

Keedar is a strong character, talented in soul magic, pragmatic, determined and with an unshakable loyalty to his father. Winslow is not quite as strong but is filled with pride and the determination to develop his soul magic for the service of his kingdom. Given the class disparities the two don't enjoy an immediate bond, but I was happy to see how quickly they put these aside to work together. A story full of wounded pride and temperamental tiffs would have grated.

The other character that is reasonably well developed is Count Cardiff, Winslow's father. He is the antagonist and his devious plans are what drives most of the story. His selfish need for power is absolute. The only sympathetic element to his character is his love for his long dead wife; everyone else is disposable - even his son.

There are some other characters of interest: Keedar's father and his uncle, a few warriors and an assassin. They are not developed deeply but they definitely add interest and twists to the story. Some of them look like they will be fleshed out further in future books.

I didn't encounter any real problems with the prose. The writing is neither too simplistic nor too sophisticated. I can't recall any major errors or clunkiness in expression. There might have been a typo here and there, but nothing that stayed in my memory. Basically, I found the writing to be of publishable quality.

Game of Souls is set to be a trilogy and, in my opinion, it's going to be a good one. The ending delivered a couple of twists and left the story where my interest was definitely piqued. The only problem is that this is an author with quite a few projects on the go. So the second and third books don't seem to have any guaranteed release dates at this stage.

If you're the kind of reader that doesn't like to wait too long for your fix, this might be an issue and it might pay to wait at least until the second book is released. However, if you like a fairly dark and intelligent fantasy and you don't mind delayed gratification, I would recommend this book. The story is told smoothly overall and the world and premise are well constructed.

Mark says

I must take serious issue with the author Terry C Simpson for his ability to fire out large, detailed, and elegant fantasy novels in such a short space of time -- and to such a high standard.

Frankly, as an author, I am jealous. As a reader, I say -- keep it up!

Simpson, to my mind, has already demonstrated himself a leading figure in the Indie writing world with his Shadowbearer series, but he's taken time out from that series to embark on another epic-scaled fantasy series, beginning with Game of Souls, and added more power to an already strong hand. What can I say? What a show-off!

Simply put, Game of Souls is high calibre fantasy fiction: written in a confident and accessible style, with great characters, and a clear eye for politics and intrigue.

This is intelligent fiction for the discerning reader and very much a feather in the author's cap.

Bookwraiths says

After a few days of reflection on this book, all I can say is that I enjoyed it without really knowing why. Well, that isn't completely true. I think I know why as I intend to explain, but the why is difficult to espouse without pointing out the reasons not to like this book, because there are many.

The problems with Game of Souls begin right out of the gate. Our tale starts off with an assassin contemplating his latest job, but Mr. Simpson changes it up a bit by having our assassin hoping his latest target will actually give him a challenge. To make this rather hoo-hum story pull us in Mr. Simpson has our assassin's target do something totally unexpected; this puts a whole new wrinkle in the tale and teases us with a set of mysteries that we now want answered. Yet just as you are anticipating this confrontation and how our assassin's story will play out, these two characters just go poof and disappear, and the story jumps forward in time by a decade and a half at least.

After this, a whole new set of characters are introduced quickly, and when I say quickly I mean you are bombarded with names of people to the point you honestly need a lineup to understand who is who. Then the author innundates you with history about this empire, the ruling elites games of power, and the downtrodden people and their position as shunned citizens. Now throw in a magic system which - while different and full of possibilities - is very confusing, and you can see how I was getting ready to put this story on the "tried but not for me" list here on Goodreads.

However, Mr. Simpson navigates through all these problems by using his main characters. These antagonists and protagonists suck you in once you get their names straight in your head, and you find yourself wanting to read more about them. Even when they are one dimensional and behave completely against their stated belief patterns, you still like or dislike them. When days, weeks or months seemingly vanish without warning between one chapter and the next, you overlook it because you want to know what happens to your favorite character. And as the tale winds down, you even find yourself overlook contradictory plot twists or character behavior because you just have to see where the story ends.

And that is why I liked Game of Souls. It wasn't the magic system or the ruling elite intrigue or even the mysterious plans of a near extinct people; it was the two, main characters, whose unlikely friendship kept me flipping pages on my ebook reader.

Brandon says

IABookReviews.com:

Game of Souls is the first book in a brand-new epic series called, The Quintessence Cycle. The book is set in a very medieval type of setting while cast in a world of fantasy. There are eight known cycles of using the "soul". A soul is something that every person has but only some can call on it's ability to do what they will. Those type of people are called Melders. These melders can possess abilities far above a normal man or woman.

It is said that only a rare species can harness all eight cycles of the soul, and they were hunted into extinction. The story line is full of action, adventure, and of course magic. A boy, my reality's terms, named Keedar Giorin was saved by his mother long ago by hiding him from a land tradition where the king sends out men to determine the strength of children's soul magic and takes them from their families as a tribute. Keedar watched his mother be murdered in front of him at the age of three, but he remembers it quite well.

His, and his father's, quest for revenge on his mother's death during the Night of the Blades (Blades are the stolen children raised to harness their soul as weapons to become soldiers) knows no bounds as they plot to take vengeance on the king and his counts. When Keedar meets a nobles' son named Winslow, he becomes oddly attached to him and saves his life several times through out the book. Winslow quickly finds that the dregs, the poorest of commoners but also seemingly has all the children with power, aren't exactly who he was brought up to think they were.

My Rating: 9.0/10.0

Review Notes: This book made me a fan of Terry Simpson's writing. It was beautifully written, and the story really opened your imagination to an entirely new world. When I finished this book, I immediately looked on Amazon for the next. Unfortunately it's not out yet, so I will have to wait it out, but I really hope Simpson continues this story for quite a long time! From adventure to acceptance this book has it all! The twists in the story was unseen until it happened, and I absolutely love that!

Christine Frost says

So far, the Quintessence Cycle has been my favorite series by Terry Simpson. The writing style, the plot, the nuances of the story all came together in a way that pulled me in from the first page. It's a meticulously created world, and the characters are well-developed. The division between societies is illustrated very well--from the impoverished Smear to the luxury of Ten Hills, but I also appreciated that the lines were not as starkly drawn between the residents of these areas. There's a lot of grey here, and there are little details that offer great insight into character motivation and how this world *feels*. It's easy to visualize, and it's one of those worlds that left me thinking about it long after I finished reading.

Toward the end of the second book in the series, I knew what was coming--at least I thought I did--there were some great twists and turns that left me howling for book three by the time I got to the end. It's not often I almost miss my subway stop because of what I'm reading, but in this case, it nearly happened more than once. Am greatly looking forward to seeing how the Quintessence Cycle continues. While the influences are evident, this series offers a unique approach to epic fantasy. Definitely a stand-out work. Highly recommended.

Mia Darien says

I found this to be a very good book, hamstrung by issues that could've been avoided by some good beta readers and an editor with a eye for streamlining and smoothing prose. I know that many reviewers rate lower for poor editing, but I don't, when it's a matter of proof reading—spelling and grammar. This wasn't the case here, however. I will elaborate as I go.

First off, the prologue was very good. I found it to flow well and be very gripping. And the opening of the first chapter was also great. This is a good writer with a wonderful grasp on imagery. Later on in the story, the post-auction scenes were succinct but powerfully chilling.

The magic system (and its racial relevance) and religion created in this fantasy world was also fascinating, and well presented. Our author did not just “info dump” the whole thing on us, but spaced it out so we could learn it gradually. I really appreciate that in books.

The characters were, on the whole, good. They were interesting and engaging, and our younger characters showed a lot of growth through the story, which given what they were subjected to, was necessary and realistic. While the more focused and obsessed, older and set-in-their-ways-and-goals characters, obviously didn't do as much growing. But that was okay.

There were many intriguing elements introduced in this world, things that I really enjoyed. It dragged a touch here or there, but over all, it was a very engaging read. If these had been everything to it, it would have been an easy 5.

Unfortunately, there were a lot of places where the prose was very rough. It's not grammatical inaccurate, but it does not flow smoothly. There are areas that it's awkwardly phrased and arranged, or is repetitive. Repeating words or facts too much makes you feel like you're stuttering while reading, and that pulls you out of your experience.

The other issue I had—and why I mentioned beta readers—is that I stumbled over a few places that felt like continuity issues. One seemed to be a character being one age in one chapter and then suddenly two years older two chapters along, when two years had not passed in the story. At least not that we were told. There were a few other things, but continuity in such matters is important to me. I don't like having to flip back to make sure I didn't misunderstand something.

Given the above issues, however, I can't call this a 5. But it is a solid 4 Fireballs and I would recommend it to readers who enjoy high fantasy.
