



A Darker Shade of Sorcery

William Collins

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The lonely and grieving Evan Umbra is the newest Venator to enter Veneseron, the school for demon hunters.

A Venator is a wizard, a spy and a demon hunter rolled into one. They're taught how to wield their sorcery and enchanted weaponry by orcs, elfpires and aliens alike.

Their missions range from battling monsters and saving countless lives in the multiple worlds, to the more peculiar, like wrangling killer unicorns and calming down drunken yetis. In their free time Venators enjoy goblin soap-operas and underwater bubble travel, but they also understand that every new mission they're given could be their last.

Whilst learning how to manipulate the elements, summon creatures to fight for him and shoot Spellzookas, Evan encounters a dangerous rival and meets a girl who makes him feel nauseous; but in a good way. He makes the first friends he's ever had in the carefree Jed and the reckless Brooke. Whilst Jed gets on the wrong side of a rival Venator, Brooke finds herself falling for the enigmatic demon hunter who brought her to Veneseron, not knowing he isn't quite human. But it soon becomes apparent that Evan is more than just a Venator. Everyone wants to kill or capture him, from demons to Dark-Venators and even people he's supposed to be able to trust.

Evan reckons he probably won't survive his first year at Veneseron.

A Darker Shade of Sorcery Details

Date : Published September 2016 by Amazon Digital Services LLC (first published January 3rd 2016)

ISBN :

Author : William Collins

Format : Paperback 378 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Magic, Suspense, Paranormal

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From Reader Review A Darker Shade of Sorcery for online ebook

Len Evans Jr says

4.5 stars rounded up to 5

OK want to start off by saying that this was a book that I had to literally force myself to put down so I could get some sleep. I started this book around 5pm yesterday read till about 1am, then woke up and immediately set about reading again and finished it a few minutes ago. This book has a few imperfections, none of which lessen the pleasure of reading it. I thoroughly loved this book. I thought the people are wonderfully complex, most were likable, some more than others and it was nice to see that even those who weren't likable had good reason for being so. Of course the evil characters were truly evil and since they did not have the largest part in this first book they were less real feeling than the rest. I think the 2 MCs were well done... Brooke and Even felt very real to me and the fact that they are flawed and need to work to be good was great. As far as worldbuilding, at the beginning the immensity of it was a bit daunting. At times it felt like the author created it as an amalgam of every fantasy world ever created. As the story progressed however, the world gained cohesion and began to stand on its own uniqueness. I truly loved this book and will definitely be reading the rest of the series.

Dianne says

Do you remember your first day at a new school? Will the kids like you, will they be smarter than you, will you find new friends? Evan has been selected to enter Veneseron, the school for demon hunters. Not just anyone can go there, one must have what it takes to become a Venator, a demon hunting, secret spy, wizard who can be trained to use enchanted weapons to protect all of the worlds from dark and evil danger. Welcome to the magical world of **A Darker Shade of Sorcery** by William Collins, where life is filled with unknown dangers, hidden secrets, unusual creatures and crazy-mad feats of sorcery! While it may sound fun to live in a place where you can conjure up just about anything, it is also a world where young warriors are trained and every mission they go on could be their last.

Evan has a painful past, but finds the camaraderie of other students a balm to his pain. Bonds are formed, individual strengths are discovered and even a young romance or two are formed. Someone is gunning for the Venators and they are on a mission to succeed, at any cost. When Evan finds himself locked in a battle of magic with a disturbed young Venator, he discovers the truth of his parentage and that he could be the destruction of all those he loves. How can he ask his friends to risk their lives for him?

William Collins creates a world full of magical creatures, fierce battles and a place where trust becomes a commodity whose value will fluxuate one mistake at a time. Fast action follows great details with characters that feel like the teens we see every day. Don't be surprised by the twists and turns, sit back and hang on tight as the Venators' world comes crumbling down around them and their meddle will be tested to the limits when evil comes to claim what is theirs. Give a child a fantasy world and watch as their eyes light up when they become part of the story, magic and all.

I received this copy from William Collins in exchange for my honest review.

Series - The Realmers - Book 1
Publication Date: January 1, 2016
Publisher: William Collins

Genre: Fantasy | Ages 9 & up

Print Length: 371 pages

Available from: Amazon

For Reviews & More: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

Alaina says

A Darker Shade of Sorcery was a pretty interesting read for me. I liked how it reminded me of some of my favorite books, like Harry Potter and like a mixture of other books all wrapped into one.

So Brooke and Evan, who are the two main characters, go to school to become demon hunters. Now at first, you definitely feel really bad for them. They were both taken from Earth all the way to Venerson on the same freaking day. Now what are the odds of that ever happening people? Well throughout their time spent at this school, they learn to develop their "powers" and explore their new world.

Now everything is happy go lucky, cool and awesome at this point. I'm enjoying the book and meeting the other characters and such but the one thing that kind of annoyed me was how quickly Evan learned his powers. Or I guess how quickly he could control them in a way? I don't know I hope I'm making sense but either way he learned them way too quickly for someone who was seen as "weak".

Other than that I really enjoyed the book. I could totally see myself diving into the second book. It was enjoyable, even though there were some slow and kind of predictable parts in the book. I want to know what's going to happen next for everyone as soon as possible!

Kyle says

This novel was provided free of charge by the author in exchange for an honest review.

Despite its parallels with Harry Potter, it was worth the read.

Students going to a school to learn magic only this time to fight demons. The plot was entertaining right from the beginning and, although there were a few slow spots that had to be pushed through, was fun throughout. The struggle I found was when the action ended for the description of environments or monsters or whatever. It's the great author that can do all that and continue the action uninterrupted.

I found all the characters interesting and well developed. Evan was most definitely my favorite. They all behaved as you would expect them to. Teenagers behaving as teenagers and so forth. Although the quick acceptance at being kidnapped from family and friends to learn magic to kill demons was a bit hard to believe.

I think it was a really great first novel. Well worth a read. Just barely rises to the level of four stars.

Kat says

This is simply a fantastic read. Evander and Brooke are abducted from their ordinary human lives on earth and taken through portals into another realm in order to protect them from evil demons and dark realmers. (And can I just say I was a Brooke and Arantay shipper from that first entrancement scene? Yes, please.)

Collins' world-building is top-notch. You get a universe packed with supernaturals of every sort, the evil, the ones fighting evil, and the lovely gray area in between. Every realm is wickedly creative, deadly and completely un-earthlike. As Evan and Brooke work to develop their magical powers at demon-fighting school (this book will appeal to anyone who loves boarding school-type series like Harry Potter and always wanted more fight scenes and awesome weaponry—the action scenes are amazing) they develop new friendships and potential romances. And as I write that, it's easy to make a comparison and say "oh this has similarities to (blank) but really, it's a completely original, fully-fleshed world that feels like you could open your eyes and picture it swirling all around you. The author does a great job in vivid descriptions, world-building and detail. One of the best-described fantasy worlds I've read this year.

There's everything you would expect in a fortress filled with teen supernaturals learning to use their powers for the first time—including power struggles, friend groups, and drama. Classes and weapons/magic training all have a completely new spin. The whispers about "what is Arantay, really?" and wistful, slightly creepy dreams were snuck in nicely. You would think in a school filled with vamps, zombies and demons, whatever he was couldn't be THAT big a deal, so that they were all freaked out really amped up the tension in addition to Brooke's attraction. But all may not be well. Evan still seems to be in danger, from forces that no one can explain, and as the attacks continue, will they be able to identify who is behind them before he is abducted or killed?

Please excuse typos/name misspellings. Entered on screen reader.

Empress Reece (Hooked on Books) says

A Fantastical World of Demon Hunters...

I really enjoyed the opening of this book. It reeled me in so that I wanted to hear more. I also think the premise and the world building have a lot of potential. Once I got about midway through though, the story became weighted down with a lot of unnecessary filler and I started losing interest.

I recently read a book where the writing didn't align with the projected audience and I think this is another book that fits that bill. The characters, the fantastical elements, the plot and the simplistic writing style are all more appropriate for the children's middle grade genre but the length of the book, a lot of the dialogue, the cursing and the violence are all geared toward older teens and young adults. So I honestly just think this book would benefit tremendously from an editing overhaul and alignment toward the targeted audience.

*I received this ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review! Thank you!

Sarah says

Downloaded for free from Amazon.co.uk

This was a YA paranormal/fantasy story, about a kid training to hunt demons.

Evan and Brooke were both okay characters, although I felt more for Brooke than I did for Evan. Not really sure why. I did feel sorry for Evan when he was being victimised by bullies though.

The storyline in this was about Evan and Brooke going to this school for demon hunters, and it did remind me a bit of Harry Potter at points. I found this story quite hard to get into though, and I kept wanting to put this one down and read something else. I don't know why this was, but this book just didn't click for me unfortunately, most likely just a case of wrong-person, wrong book.

6 out of 10

Evgeny says

Evan was a normal guy from Great Britain. He lived in an orphanage and his biggest problem was to deal with bullies. Until the day some supernatural creatures tried to kill him. Similarly, Brooke was a normal US teen girl living a life of a typical US teen girl. Until one day she met a tall, dark, and handsome stranger at a party. To make a long story short both ended up in Veneseron, a school for demon hunters.

Venators, or demon hunters were supposed to be good at magic, proficient at any form weapons - from bare hands to swords to high-tech guns, and generally be badass. Thus both Evan and Brooke had their hands full trying to get in shape, learn magic and weapon handling. They also managed to find time to make new friends, alienate a weird student, and fall in love (not with each other). To make their lives even more exciting - and here I thought it was not possible - some troublemaker demons kept popping up in Evan's general vicinity: in the middle of a fortress full of people trained specifically to dispose of such guests, mind you.

It did not help any and that local Dumbledore (I mean the main Master of the place) disappeared and was not heard from for some time in the best traditions of his more famous colleague I just mentioned.

Yes, there is a strong Harry Potter vibe present. No, the book does not feel like a carbon copy of that series.

I mentioned love. It presents, but not in quantities to qualify for PNR genre; although Brooke's part comes really close. To put it in different perspective the plot never stopped moving to make place to romance. Both Evan and Brooke feel like normal teens with their hormones messing up their mental processes - only at times!!! As I just said the plot was moving fast, but not to the point where you feel like you really need to catch your breath - a good pace.

After all is said the overall rating is **3.5 stars**. I rounded it up, why? Because of the author's imagination. Veneseron was inspired by Hogwarts, but it felt very much different, alive, and bizarre with all the alien creatures, wonderful and spooky rooms, mysterious corners, and generally just fun place to be. Dangerous at

times, too. Nobody bothered to send me an invitation to Hogwarts

I wonder if Veneseron still hires?

Lia (a paper pigeon) says

It occurred to Ethan why all these races lived harmoniously with one another, because they all fought for the same cause, against the demons, the Veneseron.

me while reading this book:

First of all, a huge thank you to author Will Collins for sending me this book in exchange for a review that I'll be more than happy to write!

I wish all the authors were this nice!

Enough with the pleasantries, already.

I really liked this book. Sure, it's not the best book I've ever read and it definitely isn't the most original, but it was interesting, funny, and entertaining enough to keep me reading even when the inconsistencies and clichés made it almost impossible to stop my eyes from rolling.

I liked the writing. It's very visual, almost script-like and deliciously sarcastic, with chapter titles that reminded me a lot of Rick Riordan's little masterpieces. I'm convinced that this book would work perfectly as a movie. Seriously, Will, give it a thought!

I know some reviews say that this book is basically a mix of Harry Potter and The Mortal Instruments with hints of Percy Jackson sprinkled on top and, to an extent, I must agree. We have, in fact, the orphan kid, the bitchy rival, the demons and their respective hunters, the magical school, the bad guys, the magic and the weapons...

BUT!

But...there is something about ADSOS that is all of those things and, at the same time, it's not. Yes, there are similarities and, yes, one might find it hard to separate the various books, but I thought Collins did a pretty good job at making his world unique in its own way.

For one, the author doesn't stick to one route only, and chose to add many more species and figures all together to his story. It's not hard to find ogres, for example, but also aliens and androids! I know, I know...it sounds a bit tacky and messy, but I promise it's not. Everything makes total sense. Even if the author doesn't waste too much time in explaining things in a deep way, everything (even the little flaws!) flows perfectly from start to end.

There's, in fact, a great concept behind the entire novel and I can tell fans of everything wizard-y and magical-y will enjoy it and maybe even consider it the new fantasy frontier.

I loved the way the characters were portrayed. Teenage me *sighs nostalgically* related a lot to Evan, Brooke and all their friends (a big yay for the diversity, by the way). There were subtle talks about equality of races, deep insights and retrospectives about the wrongs of prejudice and, why not? About the eternal chase and fight between what's evil and what's not.

Another thing I absolutely adored, were the pop culture references that the author managed to twist at his own pleasure and use, and that were everywhere. Naming a couple, I choked with laughter at the various

Silence of the Satyrs, and that freaking reality show *Wizards' Wives* that had me snorting coffee out my nose. Sooooo great! And sooooo magical! I loved it to pieces!

And, oh, in case you're wondering, there's a teeny tiny bit of teen romance, too. * wiggles eyebrows*

Arantay, you old fox!

The negative sides are not that negative, if you ask me, but alas, they're there and I can't not talk about them. For starters, the similarities to the already mentioned and famous novels were at times too heavy and evident. Sometimes it really felt hard to separate the various books and stories from one another, and it really felt like reading fanfiction, instead of original work.

And ugh, damned inconsistencies. I mean, they go unnoticed if you're not that picky, but for a bookish snob like I plead myself guilty of being, they were quite annoying.

I'd honestly prefer a book that focuses less on the surprise effect and more on giving the reader the chance to understand better what they're reading about.

Another thing that could bug you, especially if you don't like numerous casts, was the amount of info and characters you're presented with, all at the same time.

I liked that most of the facts were narrated through dialogues by one or more of the characters, but there were things like many of the physical descriptions that can appear a bit boring when explained word by word, as if you're doing a police identikit.

Also, there really is *a lot* to remember. A lot of names, a lot of places and a lot of characters. Which is good, in some way, but also quite annoying if you have to go back and forth through notes to know who's who.

In conclusion, I think this book (I don't say this series because unfortunately I only read this first one) still needs some work, but is overall a really pleasant read that will entertain you for days.

ACTUAL RATINGS 3,75/5

Emma?? (Bookishfix) says

I received a copy from the author in exchange for an honest review

*I have mixed feelings about this book, although this felt like **a mix between Harry Potter, The Mortal Instruments, and the Elder Scrolls** (Xbox game) two series and a game I have really enjoyed, I am torn between what I should rate this. On one hand, there were a lot of things I liked and enjoyed, on the other, I struggled to get through some parts of it and then the ending had me like 'WHAAAAT!?' making me want the next book asap.*

This review will probably be all over the place, but as always my opinion is my own but don't let me deter you from giving this book a go if it sounds like something you might really enjoy to read.

Evan has recently lost his 'grandmother', and by grandmother, I mean elderly women who found him in the woods and took it upon herself to raise him. Now living in an orphanage, still dealing with the death of the only person who loved him, Evan is being bullied daily. When one attack goes too far and Evan begins seeing black smoke rise from within him, he is unsure if what he is seeing is real, or the results of his mind playing tricks on him.

Brooke, on the other hand, leads a pretty average life, her family has too many issues to concentrate on her and she often feels forgotten, without any rules or guidance at all.

When things start taking a turn for the weird for both Evan and Brooke, they are taken to the hidden school known as Veneseron, a school for demon hunting and sorcery. To become a Venator, each student must distinguish their magic/skills, fighting strength/strategy, and knowledge to make their way up the ranks, eventually going on missions such as demon hunting, undercover work, saving realms and always protecting humans and other races in need, over many worlds.

Evan and Brooke must make a decision whether to stay at Veneseron and forget the life they knew before, or return to the life they knew and have every knowledge of Veneseron's existence erased from their minds.

First, I'll start by saying the start of this book was epic, it had everything I love in a good book; fast pace, a little bit of mystery, danger/action and interesting characters. Even once Evan and Brooke get to Veneseron the plot is still quite strong and I cannot wait to see what happens, where the book will lead and what secrets there are to uncover.

I don't know at what point I felt myself losing interest in what was happening, but it felt like a lot had changed since the beginning. The pacing felt slow, the book felt like it took a different feel/turn completely! Honestly, it could have just been them settling into school, their classes, their friends, school politics and the hierarchy of things, because don't get me wrong, there still were some action packed parts in between all this had held my interest. Maybe it was just the worldbuilding that I struggled with because I do like these characters and the storyline.

MAGIC! *Seriously, I love almost anything with magic/sorcery and this didn't disappoint.*

There were so many different kinds of magic the students could wield that I wanted to see everything from your normal Earth, Water, Air and Fire, to Healing, Transmutation, Enchantment, to Astral Projection and Dream wielding, plus many more. This is where the Elder Scrolls came to mind because I played the shit out of that game, the way the Venator's fight too, with magic and with weapons, yep definitely had some Elder Scrolls vibes going on.

In all honesty, I thought I would feel more connected to Brooke than Evan at the beginning, but as time went on, this isn't the way it went down here. Evan's character just drew me more to him, there is more mystery surrounding him and honestly, I felt more for him than Brooke, which I think is the biggest reason why I enjoyed his character more. I felt bad for this kid, on a really deep level. Maybe because my brother was bullied at school and I've seen the effect that has had on him?

Now, by saying this that doesn't mean I didn't like Brooke because I do but part of me felt like the most interesting thing about her was how she came to be in Veneseron and Arantay.

*Arantay, would have to be my favorite, his backstory, his appearance, his 'secret'. Literally, everything about him intrigued me, I was literally like **YEEEEES!** everytime his name came up on the page and I knew we would be interacting with him again.*

*Also we have some **f/f, m/m relationships** here so that's a plus in my book, I would have like a little more on it but I don't think a lot of these types of novels includes different sexualities, so I didn't expect it but I did like that we have more than the m/f thing going on.*

*The ending was one of those that makes me **want to read the next book ASAP**, which I have a feeling will be even more action-packed and suspenseful than this one. This could be one of those things where the first book is the weaker of the two, this generally happening because so much needs to be added to build the world and the characters for the rest of the series, and there is only so much that can be included in one book. Plus if this is the first novel by Will Collins, this could also have something to do with it. I never expect anyone's first book to be 100% perfect, as writing does improve and that is generally the way it goes. I will say that the storyline was awesome, the middle dragged but the ending was once again amazing and left me wanting more.*

Take from this review as you will, this book has some major strong points but to me, there were a few parts that were a little slow for my liking, making it drag a little.

The characters were all unique, besides maybe Evan's life feeling a little Harry Potter at times, but then we have the ending and it totally changes the opinion on that.

The magic was awesome, as it always is and I liked Veneseron as a whole, it's the kind of magic demon school I'd love to attend!.. well, if it actually existed.

My rating is based on the fact, I liked this novel but didn't love it, mainly because I did struggle through some of it, so there is room for improvement there. But in saying this, I'm interested in reading the second

book, especially because of **THAT ENDING** and I need to know what happens to Evan, Brooke, and Arantay, like right now.

Recommended for: Fantasy/YA/Suspense/Paranormal/Romance

Fafa's Book Corner says

Review posted on Fafa's Book Corner !

Beware spoilers ahead!

DNF

I received this E-ARC via the author in exchange for an honest review.

When I got the email from Collins asking me to read A Darker Shade of Sorcery I immediately said yes! I love fantasy and paranormal books! This sounded right up my alley. Unfortunately I did not enjoy this.

The book begins with Evan mentioning that his grandmother recently passed away. He is constantly haunted by her death and has nightmares about her. It doesn't help that he has bullies bothering him everywhere he goes.

While trying yet again to outrun the bullies a monster appears. At first Evan doesn't notice anything as his back is toward the monster. But the bullies faces go pale and one of them is murdered by the monster. Then Evan turns around and finds himself face-to-face with a horrifying monster. The monster speaks to him and kidnaps him.

This was a case of 'It's not you but me.' ?As I continued to read I felt no connection to the story. While the pace was fast and it was engaging I felt nothing. I should've felt really bad for Evan but even when he mentioned his grandmother it didn't pull on my heart strings. I have given this book a two star because the premise sounds interesting.

Overall this book was not for me. I recommend it to anyone looking for a good fantasy series.

Mel says

This book is free on Amazon right now if you want to read it!:

<https://www.amazon.com/Darker-Shade-S...>

Upon further reflection I would give this book a 3.5/5 instead of a 3, just because there is a lot in here to love!

I enjoyed the story definitely. It has the usual boarding at a magical school type vibes without feeling like

Harry Potter and I really liked the plot and story. The writing was fast paced and easy to read. I also love that from literally page one we are thrown into the action! The world building is quick and entertaining, not drawn out, and the world itself is very intriguing!

My minor issues stemmed from wishing that the book was only in one character's POV and a personal preference that I am not always a huge fan when days/weeks go by in a couple pages as I feel I am missing things and live for the details!

I am in the process of rereading this though just to see if reading it quicker would help. I spaced this out a lot since it took me 3-4 months to read and wonder if that affected my view of both of those things. But I do definitely recommend it as a fast paced story!

Nina says

*** 2.5 stars ***

Thanks again to the author for sending me a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

When the author approached me and asked me if I was interested in reviewing his book, I was very intrigued by the synopsis of it and felt like 'A Darker Shade of Sorcery' would be a book that would absorb me and keep me on the edge of my seat. I continued thinking that at the beginning of it because it started out being really interesting. You get to read about the world he created in these books and I felt like the idea of this book has a lot of potential. Overall, it's also very well written and I really enjoyed Will Collins' writing style.

But those are the only positive things I can actually say about this book. I soon got a little bored with it because the first 80% of the book are only world building. He almost solely described the demon hunter school the main characters went to, which generally wasn't a bad thing because I liked the idea of the school. But at some point, it just started being too much and I could barely remember all the information that was given in the books.

Every day he wrote about new classes the characters took, new things they had to learn and new places they went to in the castles and I just couldn't remember all of it. Due to all the descriptions, there also weren't many moments that gave the reader the chance to start feeling connected with the characters which is why I also wouldn't really care if anything would happen to them. I must admit that I was a little fond of Brooke but I think it was mainly due to the fact that she was a teenage girl just like I've once been. Evan on the other hand, who I think was supposed to be the actual main character, was a character I felt absolutely no connection to and I sadly didn't care about him at all.

There were also a few things that didn't really make sense. For example, at one point they're told that they'll soon take their 'apprentice trials'. Brooke is supposed to take them 2 weeks from that day and Evan another week later. But at the beginning of the next chapter it is said that a month had gone by and I thought they had just taken their trials during that time. But instead they were still a couple of weeks from their trials which would've been fine if there had been an explanation as to why their trials had been postponed but instead the story just continued as if nothing had changed. Once the trials then took place, I must also say that I was a little disappointed by them. More than half of the books was just about them working towards those trials and then they were done with them within three or four pages and I also didn't really understand how they were supposed to work or what their actual tasks in the trials were.

Due to all the things I unfortunately didn't like about this book, I also started losing interest in it the closer I

got to the end of it. That also didn't change when things started to get a little more action-packed during the last 10% of the book even though there were a couple of interesting things happening then that I didn't expect to happen.

All in all, I would describe 'A Darker Shade of Sorcery' as a mixture of Harry Potter and The Mortal Instruments. It's a book that generally has a lot of potential but in my opinion, it would've been a lot better if there had been less world building and more moments during which the reader would've been able to build up a connection with the characters. That's why I can only give 2.5 out of 5 stars to this book and I don't think I will pick up the next book in the series.

William Collins says

Hey everyone,

This is an awesome community, I'm glad to be a part of it. :)

Just announcing that the cover with the white background is the actual frontcover.

Also, only the Amazon UK link seems to be above. Here's the US one.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01A...>

Thank you.

Eryn says

No Rating

I'm going to be blunt and say: This was not a book for me. It didn't grab my attention from the beginning and it pretty much stayed that way the rest of the novel - I kind of felt like I was trudging through snow: tired and bored. Quite honestly, I'm not into stories that move at such a quick pace and have ample gory scenes throughout - it's just not for me, unfortunately.

All right, so a *big* thing that bothered me was how quickly Evan obtained his power. It was like one moment he was a "weakling" and then the next he was shooting fire through his hands? (What's going on here?) I just thought that was *such* a sudden shift in the novel, leaving me to feel horribly disorientated for the remainder of the story. And it really didn't help that it happened around page 30 - the rest of the novel just felt wrong to me afterwards.

Overall, I felt detached nearly the entirety of the novel - I never could picture anything going on! All I saw were words, words, words, trying to force an image into my mind. Well. It didn't work. Honestly, I'm not rating this because I also realized that I wasn't in the mood to read this sort of novel, so that could've heavily factored into my opinion. Who knows.

Thank you to Will Collins for sending me the pdf copy of this, in exchange for an honest review.
