



Nolander

Becca Mills

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Nice girls don't believe in monsters. They're wrong.

Amateur photographer Beth Ryder is in trouble. She's taking pictures of things she can't see, things that aren't human. Beth has her own dreams, but people like her don't get to go free. She's seized by a dangerous organization dedicated to keeping Earth's shadow world -- and its frightening inhabitants -- a secret. Forced into otherworldly politics and uncertain whom to trust, Beth must come to terms with a radically altered future -- one in which her own humanity seems to be draining away.

Nolander Details

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From Reader Review Nolander for online ebook

Jen Minkman says

I was a bit hesitant to download Nolander first, because it is part of a series. I have read way too many books in this genre that are part of a trilogy, and consequently, NOTHING happens or comes to any kind of conclusion in the first book (probably intended to draw readers in and make them buy the second book, but that's not how it works for me, unfortunately). However, this book is different. Nolander is just a very, very good read. I couldn't put it away, and the many twists and turns keep you guessing in a GOOD way and not a frustrated 'oh-my-god-what-the-hell-is-going-ON!!' way. The writing style is fluent, there's lots of humour in this book, the main character is sympathetic, the supporting characters are not black-and-white or two-dimensional, and there's a great plot. Don't pass this one up. Wonderful book!

Jade Moore says

At first I wasn't sure that I could really get into this book. I'm used to reading books with strong women protagonists and it was obvious from the get go that Beth was going not that. Beth suffers from severe anxiety and panic attacks and it causes her to retreat into the shadows when faced with a difficult situation rather than confront it head on. However, the more I read I found her to become rather endearing. She sort of grows into her own a bit and I feel as though as this series progresses she may turn into the strong female lead I am used to.

There were several times in this book that I found myself screaming at the top of my lungs at her to stand up for herself and stop feeling sorry for herself. But over all I really enjoyed the book and am totally looking forward to the next installment!

C. says

I have a confession to make: I am a serial book unfinisher. I feel no qualms with getting three-quarters of the way through a book and deciding, "This is annoying, I'm not finishing." I don't need to know the ending, I just want to quit wasting my time.

So although I download, borrow or buy at least one ebook a week, I finish, errrr ... quite a bit fewer.

So when I finish a book, I'm pleased. However, when I find a book I can't tear away from, when I find myself reading it in the three minutes between when I get to my son's school and he's let out, that keeps me awake all night, I'm overjoyed.

Nolander, by Becca Mills is such a book. The world envisioned by Ms. Mills is so rich and imaginative you can dive right in without noticing your suspension of disbelief. She has created a universe inhabited by humans and more-than-humans, but one in which humans aren't helpless playthings of the gods (a personal gripe, and something that will make me dump a book faster than stinky cheese).

The characters are richly drawn and believable. The "human" female protagonist is refreshingly

vulnerable—I like kick butt heroines, but sometimes it's nice to see someone “ordinary” doing the extraordinary. All the humans are great—I liked that the very religious girl wasn't portrayed as evil or an idiot—and the “gods” are very alien by virtue of their near immortality (another pet-peeve for me is when 1,000 year old beings have the same outlook as 20 year old humans). And the other worlds? They are fantastic. I won't give too much away, but if you love magical beings and animal human encounters, you'll love them.

Nolander is a unique gem in the world of urban fantasy. The plot is familiar for the genre, the confrontation between humanity and god-like beings, but the perspective is unique. There is no good and evil here, there is a healthy dose of science mixed with the “magic”. Nolander is published in serial style, but the first installment is free (and long!) and the second in the series Solatium, ends on a very satisfying note that leaves you wanting more, but not disappointed.

Cherise says

I read this and the sequel, Solatium, in just a few days. The whole time, I was dreading the read being over, while at the same time tearing through pages to find out what would happen next!

The characters are diverse and well rounded. They aren't just diverse when it comes to race, but also gender and creed, which I found refreshing. No matter who you are, you will find someone to relate to. And you can relate on a deeper level than just looks. We get a sense of where each character is coming from. We get their background info over time so it isn't cumbersome, and yet we get enough so that we feel like we know them all in real life. Even some of the bad guys.

The plot unwinds in an ever growing spiral that took me on a wild ride. It starts out so simple, just about the main character's life in a small rural town in Wisconsin. How her last date with this guy was a disaster. How she has anxiety disorder so she had to leave college and move back home. How her mother died and left her with just a brother, three nieces, and a sister-in-law who hates her guts. From there, fantasy creeps in ever so slowly and with so many twists and turns that there's a surprise in every chapter.

The fantasy world - the second emanation - is like the alternate realities in the old TV show 'Sliders'. We go through these alternate states of Earth through gateways, kind of like in Stargate but all on Earth so far. But it is very much fantasy and not science fiction.

The magic system is similar to that in the game Mage: The Ascension -- with two major differences: 1) Only a select few can 'work essence'. 2) Each essence worker is born with a gift for working one particular element or law of physics exceptionally well.

I love this book!

The author needs to hurry up and finish the third book!

And I hope there will be ten or more in the series!

I've had this book on my Kindle for years. It came up the other day when I sorted by author for a fresh look

at my list. I had seen the cover around a lot and had always had the intention of reading it 'some day'. I am so glad I did!

Renaë Rogers says

I'm working my way through a collection of stories and it's been a very mixed bag so far. This book, however, stands out from the rest.

It begins in a very controlled way. We get to know our MC in the course of her regular life, as she goes about her business. The story begins to unfold at a steady pace, with us being caught up in the events happening even as we don't understand what's going on any more than the MC does.

Interesting and new(-ish) ideas are sometimes sorely lacking in a world of ebooks that just keeps rehashing the same old things over and over again. This is different. Well, to me, anyway. It's a fairly long story, I grant, and there was a point of the book where an early objective seemed to have been achieved and a lot of other authors would have stopped there and broken the story up into more parts. No. Becca Mills has used that moment as a mere waypoint for something much bigger. With such a long story, you get a fairly realised world and yet, at the same time, the sense that we've barely scratched the surface. The idea that there is a lot more potential for this series is, quite frankly, an exciting one.

I've read a few reviews that seem to be for earlier editions of the book, as they've not been that favourable. I suspect some tweaking and tightening has occurred across time and the book is all the better for it. Definitely give this one a go. I recommend it.

T.E. Shepherd says

This is a book with a very interesting premise that somehow fails to deliver. I absolutely loved the use that Beth makes of 35mm photography and developing her own black and white prints, and how this introduces the idea of S-Ems in our world, but for me she ended up finding out too soon what was going on.

The story then quickly departed our world - Beth joined up with the mysterious organisations far too quickly for my liking - and the story started to inhabit a world that I did not know and didn't have any way of latching on to what was happening.

The second half of the book was clearly building up to a series, but I doubt whether Beth will return to her photography and that subtle fantasy that I had been so attracted to at the start.

Marie says

Nolander is a story about a young woman named Beth who inadvertently captures otherworldly creatures in the photos she takes. She then becomes unwillingly involved in the events of the Second Emanation, the place where these creatures are from.

What could have been a decent book was ruined by a few things. For one, I think this story could have

greatly benefited from having an omniscient narrator, or at least a third person point of view, rather than being told in a first person point of view. I say this not only because I think Beth is incompetent, but also because there are more interesting characters that could have enriched the story with their perspectives, in addition to the eye-rolling clumsiness the first person POV induced when trying to describe events that occur when Beth either isn't around to witness them or is unaware. For example, these excerpts are in the point of view of a character called Ghosteater, but with the way it is written, Beth is, for some reason, quite cognizant of its thoughts, even though she doesn't know of its presence or state of mind:

1. From the silence, Ghosteater watched me kiss (view spoiler). He could smell our arousal.
2. Graham was unfamiliar, but he [Ghosteater] recognized me as blood kin to the other humans the wind had shown him. That made sense--it was me the wind had brought him here to see.
3. Ghosteater could tell his anxiety had to do with me--it was blended with lingering notes of desire. Perhaps he feared for me. But why? I whom the wind had named.

How could she possibly know all this and as the reader, how can I be asked to accept that she is privy to this information? It's simply awful and awkward to read.

Though Beth is apparently a person of interest in the Second Emanation because of her untapped great potential, she is an inept character that continually frustrated me. Ironically, I found her more interesting when she was living in the real world (also known as the First Emanation), suffering from panic attacks and struggling with daily life. She felt more real then, whereas in her new life in the Second Emanation, she seems to be pretending when she's actually in her element, now that she knows that she has these hidden abilities.

Oh yeah, the idea of rape is also thrown around a few times, and there is statutory rape. It wasn't described in detail or anything like that and it had happened off-book and in the past, but reading this passage still made me cringe:

"Did you really seduce (view spoiler) when she was fifteen?"

A second later my brain came back on line. Why the hell had I said that?

"Yeah."

He shrugged, as though it was no big deal.

"Because you wanted to control her?"

He looked at me as if I was nuts.

"No, because I wanted to fuck her. Isn't that why that kind of thing usually happens?"

Wow, classy, I thought.

"She was just a kid. It's statutory rape."

"Not where I'm from. Look," he said, sounding exasperated. "I probably shouldn't have done it. Whatever. It's all water under the bridge, now."

Well, needless to say, I won't be continuing with this series.

Dianne says

Becca Mills' **Nolander** has enchanted me by daring to be a unique concept in the paranormal genre! Beth Ryder, our heroine comes from a small town where nothing is private, and everyone knows she suffers from debilitating panic attacks. Part of her coping mechanism is to dabble in photography, but when strange creatures start showing up in her pictures, she finds herself thrown into a parallel world filled with a menagerie of dangerously powerful creatures and magic! Beth is a Noland, one of a gifted humans able to see into this other world with powers she never knew existed and who may become a valuable asset to the power struggles within. Lord Cordus, her seductive "master" plays an intriguing role, as does another Noland, Graham, who cannot be defined as just good or just evil. And who would think that the quirky and prim church lady or Beth's nasty sister-in-law maybe part of this world, too? Maybe there ARE some secrets in a small town!

Becca Mills' writing style is fluent, peppered with the humor, snark and earthy wit of the main character's POV, flipping occasionally to the POV of the creature, Ghosteater. I found myself thoroughly enjoying Beth's personality, thought process and ability to make things happen! For me, **Nolander** is an excellent first novel in this series, baiting and setting the hook with an intriguing new world, then reeling me in for more with those tantalizing loose ends! Seriously, how could I NOT like a world that has tree-dwelling octopi?

Readers' Favorite

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Irene says

Oh my gosh. This is the best book I've read in ages! I'm really shocked that it was a free Kindle book, since most of those are pretty bad, but this is the diamond in the coal mine. This lady can actually write, and she actually has a story worth telling.

I thought that all the good story ideas were already taken, but apparently I was wrong. Enter Noland, a novel about a parallel monster universe unlike anything I've read before. If this story idea has been used before, I've never seen it, or it sure hasn't been done this well.

I really liked the world, the build-up of events, the complex and flawed characters, everything. Hence the fact that I read the whole thing in less than a day, despite my busy schedule! This story spoke to me in a way that nothing else I've read in a long time has been able to do. Five stars, no doubt about it! And I can't wait to get the second book and dive even deeper into the Emanations.

I would recommend this to everyone who has been disillusioned by popular novels of late, who wants a fresh perspective, or who just likes fantasy novels. If you haven't downloaded it free to the Kindle app yet, you need to! Trust me on this one.

Kilian Metcalf says

I subscribe to four services that notify me daily of free or low-cost Kindle books. 99-44/100% of the titles are dross, but there are occasional flecks of gold. It's those flecks that keep me scanning the notices. Winston Churchill's 6-volume history of WWII for \$1.99 each? Gold. Barbara Pym for \$1.99? Gold.

In addition to writers I'm already familiar with, I have met several new authors that I never would have come across without their decision to put their books up for free or 99 cents.

This book is one of the flecks of gold in the pile of dross.

Agoraphobic Beth Ryder uses her camera to put space between herself and the world. No need to engage when you're busy framing and shooting, right? Her troubles begin when images that weren't in her finder start turning up in the films she prints.

This small problem turns out to be the beginning of a series of experiences that pulls Beth into a series of increasingly disturbing events that reshapes how she views the world, her family, and herself. Watching her world expand is like watching a flower bloom.

Very enjoyable read. I will buy the next in the series when it is published and hope that Mills gets the attention she deserves.

Gillian says

This book started a little rough to me. I had trouble with the dialog, it felt choppy, not naturel. The world she created was a lot to absorb in a short amount of time, but I kept going and am glad I did. Each author has their own style, and I just had to get accustomed to this. I ended up being thoroughly brought in and enjoyed the story set in small town northern WI. I could completely relate to the author's descriptions and the character's small town problems. I enjoyed the author's unique paranormal world she creates in Nolander. I ordered the second book immediately after finishing Nolander.

Ardellaine says

I'll have to say upfront that I didn't finish this book. I barely got through to page eighteen.

I became aware of the author through a blog post and downloaded her first book. The blurb sounded fascinating, the cover was plain gorgeous and it had reasonably good reviews, so I went in with high hopes. The trouble is it just turned out to be very amateur-ish. I don't like to sound cruel but this is the sort of writing you see on wattpad.

The basic premise is interesting: a girl finds her way into another world hidden amongst our own through photographs, or at least that's what I got from the blurb and the little I actually read.

So the main character Beth is stuck in her tiny hometown because of her panic attacks. Their frequency and severity forced her to drop out of college, not to mention that apparently leaving her familiar town of Dorf unsettles her badly enough that her attacks come way more frequently. So she's resigned herself to stay, despite a life long ambition to leave.

The only thing that settles her anxiety is photography. And that's where all the trouble (that I never got to) starts. She takes a picture of what she thinks is just a building, but the negatives tell a different story. Apparently a short, stooped, and naked man walked right into the photo without her noticing.

Now ghosts/creatures we can't usually see appearing in photos is a pretty well worn trope, and it's pretty obvious that dude is somehow supernatural and a lot of shit is going to happen because she can *see* them. The panic attacks will also probably turn out to be because of those supernatural dudes.

These are all well worn tropes. I eat up tropes. So this should be horror/urbanfantasy trope heaven for me.

The problem is I wasn't interested at all. Most of my beef is with the writing style, but the dealbreaker was the poor scene construction. Specifically one scene at church. The narrative speeds through the whole scene and just throws information at me without actually establishing it.

I suppose this would be a good example where the oft repeated "show don't tell" mantra actually applies.

The writer took a very simplistic approach to setting up for conflict:

*This is Beth, here to see her brother and his children at church.

*This is Justine she's mean, devout, and uber strict, she also inexplicably hates Beth.

*Here is a long string of names, these are Ben and Justine's children.

That's basically exactly how the scene began. Just add in some longer explanations, change it to 1st person, and add in some needless thoughts about how things were different when her mother was alive.

Then the actual conflict begins:

One child talks to Beth about a talking dog and how it told her Justine was going to leave them. Justine goes berserk, yells at child, calls Beth a bad influence and warns her to stay away from them. Ben, trying to keep the peace steps in.

Things devolve into name calling and broken record arguments . . . that don't actually happen, but definitely will once they're away from the public eye. And that's that.

In theory this is actually a pretty good scene outline. It's interesting (like the rest of the book) but what's lacking is proper execution.

We don't get any cues from the way the characters behave as to what they're feeling. Every single bit of information is filtered through Beth's thoughts. She literally is just giving us a play by play explanation of her life. This isn't written like a book, it's a spruced up journal entry.

This tendency is actually why 1st person POV isn't really favourable at the moment. A lot of writers apparently don't know how to get out of the main character's head. It's almost stream of consciousness, but it's trying to be objective about it.

And it's just not worth my time. I'm sure there are a lot of people who don't mind the style --the number of reviews is proof to that-- but call me a snob, this just isn't something I can get into, at all, if I'm being honest.

Steve says

This was one of those books that had so much potential.

The premise is unique and well thought out. The writing style flows through the story with excellent pace. The characters are comprised of a wide variety of backgrounds and mesh well together. The fiends are fiendish. The good guys are hard to distinguish. There is magic, and mayhem. Even a character named Ghosteater.

But even with all that, this story just falls flat. Nothing happens. There are so many loose ends at the conclusion of this book I felt like my Kindle ate some of the content. There just wasn't enough substance to even drive me to pursue the next book in the series.

Marina Finlayson says

This was a lot of fun: I really enjoy those books where the protagonist is discovering the world is a very different place than what they always thought, and their place in it is undergoing rapid revision. Beth thinks she suffers from panic attacks, and leads a very small life as a result -- small even by small-town standards. But when things that weren't there start appearing in the photos she takes, she suffers a terrifying introduction to the world as it really is. Turns out that she doesn't suffer from panic attacks, and a whole lot of other things she thought she knew go out the window too, like who her sister-in-law really is, and what that bland guy she met in the cafe is really capable of.

Her adventures are entertaining (love the arboreal octopuses!) and enough loose ends are left hanging to make me glad that the next books in the series are already out. I can't wait to see how Beth's powers develop. And what's with the mouse??

Definitely recommend it to lovers of urban fantasy.

Amy Braun says

I liked this one quite a bit! The world that was created held my interest, was well thought out, and opened that door for lots of questions to peak the interest. Beth is a great character that the audience can relate to, and I'm curious about what she's capable of. The side characters are really good, though I had a major problem with Williams being a major asshole to Beth for literally no discernible reason. There wasn't a lot of action but the story kept changing so my attention was held. I literally had no idea where it was going to go next, which was a little jarring at times. Definitely a good set up for what appears to be a strong series!

