



## The Conspiracy

*Erica Dakin*

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## **The Conspiracy** Erica Dakin

There is no room for love at the royal court. There is only intrigue and political manoeuvring.

For Veysita, a young half-elf courtier, this has been the reality of her life since childhood. Crown Prince Tionev is her best friend, but never more than that, even if she would like him to be.

When she uncovers a plot to assassinate the queen, her life is thrown into turmoil. Veysita discovers that she has not been trained to be the prince's bodyguard, as she thought, but to be much more. She is to be a spy, thief and maybe even assassin, and she will have to travel into the lion's den with little more than her wits to aid her. As if that isn't enough, there is also the handsome, honey-eyed stranger who keeps showing up whenever Veysita least expects him.

Love may come knocking after all, whether there is room for it or not...

## **The Conspiracy Details**

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## From Reader Review The Conspiracy for online ebook

### Tellulah Darling says

While I really loved The Ritual, this next book in the series didn't grab me the same way. I thought the writing was solid. Very descriptive - an interesting quest, although I thought it could have been editing down a bit. I particularly enjoyed the relationship between the protagonist and the prince and thought she experienced some nice growth.

My main bump was that I the love interest Kai, felt really young to me much of the time. Mostly in how he spoke but sometimes in how he behaved. And that tempered how I felt about their romantic relationship. In the first book, Rin's and Zash's relationship was charged with sexual tension and spark, and I just didn't feel that in the same way here.

Thank you to the author for providing a copy to me in exchange for a fair and honest review.

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### Voirrey says

I really enjoyed this. I enjoyed the first book set in this world, and I think Erica Dakin's writing improved as she wrote - this is a little more complex.

Set some years after The Ritual we can see the effects of the changes to the society the new queen set in place at the end of that first book. In fact the central figure of this book is a member of the queen's court - but one who has been picked out for special training and a specialist role.

There are similarities with The Ritual - again there is a journey with different challenges at each stage. But this is a more complex journey with more, complex, characters - and it is also really good to have the four characters from The Ritual turning up here, in supporting roles, to give some sense of continuity. I was impressed with the way in which the main dangers all seem to have been overcome, the bad guys plot overcome, nothing left but the tidying up and resolving the relationship issues when suddenly there is a nasty, unexpected twist.

Sita and Kai's relationship certainly has its ups and downs, they both have their own baggage to bring into it, and their own fears and doubts - they certainly have sexual chemistry!

I will certainly read the third book set in this world, too.

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### Anachronist says

Synopsis:

Vaysita (Sita), a half-elf orphan, has been palace-bred and trained all her life. Adopted by Queen of Arlis she was made the companion and bodyguard of her son, prince Tio, a very handsome jerk. Soon some extra-curricular subjects were added to Sita's normal daily schedule: lock-picking, burglary, close combat, dagger

throwing and such – not exactly skills expected from a high-born courtier who calls the Queen her Aunt Tima.

One night Sita is sent by her shadowy tutor to rob her own castle's treasury. During the test she meets a real burglar Kailev (Kai) – a handsome young thief, far more skilled than her and with magical abilities as well. His simple, straightforward compliments, so different than the oblique wooing of mercenary court elves and half-elves of noble birth, make Sita blush too easily. Kai is clearly smitten with the pretty burglar girl but doesn't promise himself a lot – she is evidently a refined lady and he lives on the streets. Still soon enough Sita will need his help in a very important mission and he won't be able to say 'no'. How long will the calf love last? Is it really just a case of calf love?

What I liked:

I am very glad to say the second part of Theft and Sorcery was far better than the first book. The author limited the amount of romance (in the previous installment there were two couples of identical twins in love; in this one we get just Sita and Kai) on behalf of world building and her choice paid off. From my point of view the novel was far more interesting than the first one.

The romance itself was also quite well executed – although Kai was instantly in love with Sita it took him plenty of time and effort to understand properly not only his beloved and her feelings but also himself. I really enjoyed how these two had to adjust each other's ideas of relationship to the reality they had to face. I didn't expect much and I was very positively surprised – take it from a regular romance-basher! The fact that Sita had to overcome her previous infatuation with Tio Prince Charming added to the romantic story arc a much-welcomed reality factor and was more than enough to justify the first person narration. Overall well-done!

If it comes to the world building I really, truly adored the Tizar household of Nayev and his family! Far better than Rivendell and Elrond's home, I am telling you – not high fantasy of course but who needs high fantasy when you are having fun?

The cover art is simple but I like it. At least you don't have to look at another plastic naked, headless torso.

What I didn't like:

Once again the whole plot sometimes made me nonplussed to say the least because the mission of prince Tio and Sita was close to suicide. The longer I thought about it the less pleasant epithets I had for the Elven Queen and her outlandish ideas of spying on those ugly, plotting elven lords. Let's face it, she endangered two important people close to her just to get some proof which could have been bought with gold and favours – what a prodigality! Of course you might argue that if not for the mission Kai and Sita would never got to know each other so well.

Final verdict:

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I like a series which gets better and better; I am pleased to say this is one of them. Light read perfect for the summer with elves, half-elves, magic, theft and a lot of steamy romance – if you don't have anything against the genre I recommend it and no, you don't have to start with the first part in order to get your bearings.

## **Pauline Ross says**

This is the second in the 'Theft and Sorcery' series. I really enjoyed the first book, 'The Ritual', and this one is even better. It's not serious or grimdark or heavy or profound, but it is a whole lot of fun. It wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea, let's get that straight right from the start; there's a fair amount of graphic sex, although nothing kinky or disturbing to my eyes, and there's swearing of a similarly earthy nature, so anyone who's bothered by that should steer clear.

Although this book is essentially a stand-alone, it is directly connected to the first book, but set some sixty years later. The two main characters in 'The Ritual', Rin and Zash, turn up again here in a minor role. Being half-elves themselves, a sixty year gap makes them still young and active, not pensioners. The main leads, Sita, the first person point of view, and Kai, both half-elves, are new characters here. Last time, Rin was the thief and Zash a sorcerer, but this time both Kai and Sita are thieves, and Kai is also a sorcerer, a nice twist. The two meet while both are trying to burgle the royal palace, the joke being that Sita actually lives there, but she is being trained on the queen's instructions in various nefarious pursuits, as well as forms of combat.

This is a romance, first and foremost, but that doesn't mean that the fantasy element is perfunctory. The world-building has ramped up somewhat from the first book, where it felt decidedly sketchy. This time, the author fleshes out the political element, and a conspiracy by the various high magistrates (kind of like dukes, ruling a domain of their own) to assassinate the queen. Sita is part of a group sent off with the heir to the throne, Tio; his role is to make a royal tour of the kingdom and cosy up to the magistrates, and hers is to uncover evidence of the conspiracy. As they travel through the countryside, there is some interesting detail of the economic strengths of each one. It isn't very complicated - the coast has fish, the mountains have mines, the warm south has vineyards - but it serves to make the world feel more fleshed out and realistic.

The other aspect that I found interesting is the three races - elf, human and half-elf. In the previous book, elves ran everything, humans filled the equivalent of the middle classes and half-elves were mostly slaves. The end of the story saw a change, with the incoming queen giving all the half-elves citizenship. In this book, we find (unsurprisingly) that not everyone is happy with that situation (hence the assassination plot), and that things are a lot more complicated than they seem. Since elves have low fertility, humans breed like the proverbial rabbits (contraception seems to be unheard of) and half-elves are infertile, there's a lot of potential for sexual exploitation. Male elves in this world are horny devils, and have a thing for human women, hence the numbers of half-elves. This book explores some of the uneasy relationships between the races.

The plot rattles along beautifully. There's plenty of action, some truly dramatic moments and a scary twist at the end - one of those phew-we're-all-safe-oh-no! moments. And yes, of course there's a happy ever after at the end (this is a romance, after all), but there were quite a few heart-stopping, page-turning, gotta-keep-reading incidents along the way. The magic is nothing unusual - muttered incantations, hand-waviness, almost anything goes, although the user gets tired so there is a price to pay. I liked some of Kai's illusions, though; the coloured light thingies sounded lovely. So as a fantasy, this holds up very well.

What about the romance side of things? Short answer - terrific. The relationship between Sita and Kai is perfectly believable, the obstacles (an essential component of any romance) were realistic, even the instant attraction is nicely done. I have to say that Kai is one of the most charming heroes I've ever encountered, with none of the smug arrogance that so often characterises the male lead these days. There were moments when Sita was pushing him away and I was muttering: look, if you don't want him, dear, send him my way. You just don't find blokes as nice as that too often. I had slight issues with him turning out so well after the

sort of experiences he'd had, but let's not quibble over that. The sex was well written without being over the top, and there were some moments of pure romance that were perfectly lovely (sigh...). One other aspect that struck me - even though our athletic heroes spent a lot of time screwing each other silly, and the early encounters were given in great detail, the author was restrained enough to skip much of the graphic description for the later episodes, so it never became overly repetitive.

I do have some issues with the morality question. In the first book, the main characters were thieves almost by necessity, since the alternative was slavery. Here, Kai is a thief from choice, and although he attempts to justify that (he only steals one or two items from those rich enough to afford it), it's still fairly questionable. More seriously, there is a point when our heroes decide to kill a number of guards in order to free a lot of slaves. The author doesn't avoid the issue, showing the characters' unease with the decision, but it still made me uncomfortable. The guards were, after all, just paid employees following their boss's orders, not the enemy in a war, and it seemed extreme to kill them. I would have liked it better if a more subtle way could have been found to free them. But it's a minor point.

This was a hugely enjoyable read that had me grinning from ear to ear at times, and was also an exciting page turner. It's not deep, and the characters fall neatly into the good or evil columns (no shades of grey here, moral ambiguities aside), but it's a lot of fun, and both the romance and fantasy elements work very well. Recommended for anyone who enjoys their fantasy entertaining and fast-paced, with a hefty dollop of sex thrown in. A good four stars.

[Edited to remove spoiler - oops!]

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### **Lindsey says**

Sequel and second novels always make me nervous. I can't stop myself from worrying... What if the previous book was just a fluke? What if something bad happens to my favorite characters? Etc. I especially worry when the first book happens to be a book I adore, so understandably my knees were shaking a bit when I hit the download button for Dakin's newest book, *The Conspiracy*. In the past 6 months I have treated *The Ritual*, Dakin's first book in the *Theft and Sorcery* series, as the literary equivalent of a snuggie. It has joined the ranks of a handful of e-books I keep on my iPad at all times to comfort me and cheer me up whenever I'm feeling a little blue or am just in the mood for a little romance/Rin and Zash in my life. I just can't stop myself from reading certain parts over and over and over again...

But, anyway, with high hopes I downloaded *The Conspiracy* and then... spent the next three days devouring it!!! I'm going to need to know release dates at least 2-3 weeks ahead of time in the future so I can request vacation time because trying to work/sleep/eat/maintain a somewhat normal life with this book just a click away was absolutely unbearable. This book was everything I could have possibly hoped for and more! In fact, I think it's now my favorite...

The time gap between books one and two threw me off a bit at the start, but don't worry, folks... You'll still get a satisfying dose of Rin and Zash in book two! And the two main characters in this book, Sita and Kai, are so amazing you may soon be saying "Rin and Zash who?" Dakin delivers another fantastic strong female character in the clever and beautiful-but-deadly Sita, and Kai... Well, Kai just makes one melt. Seriously - He's like the most adorable puppy in the world combined with the hunky boy from next door! You may want to surround yourself with pillows, because just about every other sentence out of his mouth will make you sigh, look off dreamily into the distance, and have your legs folding underneath you. Need some proof in

quote form?

Exhibit A: "I don't always need to make love to you, Sita," he replied, sliding in after me and pulling me into his arms. "Sometimes..." His voice broke and I heard him swallow. "Sometimes all I need is to hold you, and fall asleep next to you."

And... I'm now on the floor in a Kai-induced coma!

But, seriously... I was thrilled to discover that this book's plot was just as unpredictable and original as the first in the series. Heart-warming characters, humor, adventure, kick-ass fashion, and some very sexy scenes... It has it all! If book one is my snuggie then book two is definitely my hot chocolate - Warm and comforting but also rich, sweet, and decadent at the same time. This is definitely joining my favorites/comfort list!

One last thing... Haven't read The Ritual yet? 1.) WTF is wrong with you? 2.) Sorry I just cursed at you. 3.) This book can serve as a standalone if needed, but seriously... 4.) WTF is wrong with you? 5.) Read both! 6.) You won't regret it!

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