



# Death's Hand

*S.M. Reine*

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## **Death's Hand** S.M. Reine

Policing relations between Heaven, Hell, and Earth is messy and violent, but Elise Kavanagh and James Faulkner excelled at it-- until coming across a job so brutal that even they couldn't stand to see one more dead body.

Now they've been pretending to be normal for five years, leaving their horrific history a dark secret. Elise works in an office. James owns a business. None of their friends realize they used to be one of the world's best killing teams.

After years of hiding, something stirs. Bodies are vanishing. Demons scurry in the shadows of the night. A child has been possessed.

Some enemies aren't willing to let the secrets of the past stay dead...

## **Death's Hand Details**

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Author : S.M. Reine

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# From Reader Review Death's Hand for online ebook

## Victoria Scott says

The quickest review known to man kind:

### Characters

I'm in love with Elise, she's so badass and awesome. I felt like James was a bit flat - his story got really nerve wracking at the end, and I had no fear whatsoever. I would've been sad for Elise if something had happened to him, but not sad to lose him as a character.

I liked the idea of introducing regular people to a fantasy world, but I felt their story was a bit rushed. Not the relationship side of things - the friendships and more-than-friendships were developed really well. But they were thrown into the fantasy part with no prep. I'm not sure if I liked that or not. It made sense, but I also had a lot of questions myself that they could have answered for me. I'm thinking it'll be something that's developed in the next two books.

### Structure

This is what I didn't like about the book. It was split into six parts, and each part was a completely different length. I'm talking going from one chapter in part 2, to ten chapters in part 3. And it didn't seem to be done for dramatic effect, it was just broken up awkwardly. It made the book really hard to get into!

TO BE CONTINUED

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## Cathy (cathepsut) says

The ever changing timeline in the beginning was confusing. Elise was not a likeable character. The author didn't explain any of the demons or other working of her world. Building thereof, not much.

The writing didn't seem so bad early on, but the story was mostly meh for me. James was more likeable than Elise, but I did not connect with either of them and the plot never grabbed me.

The first and only time in this book that I thoroughly enjoy the action, one of the sidekicks was in a fight scene. How can that be?

Around the middle of the book my interest actually picked up a little and I thought, this might not turn out so bad after all! And right after that the writing and the story crashed so badly that I considered 1-starring this silly thing.

Have I mentioned the lack of world building? I actually looked up demon names on Wikipedia, because not a thing is explained. Not. A. Thing. World building: Zero!

The more I read, the more the writing irritated me. Short, choppy sentences, followed by verbose exaggerations. Stating the obvious. Loose plot ends. And some of the descriptions were plainly silly. The writing was actually getting worse as I got closer to the end of the book.

And there are too many editing mistakes in the ebook, mostly missing words.

By the time the story started to build up towards the finale, I couldn't WAIT to be done. I nearly rage-quit two chapters before the end. If I could, I would go back to rage quit now!

I couldn't have cared less, if one of the fiends or zombies had eaten Elise. How can someone so strong and powerful (where did that power come from all of a sudden?) suck so much at fighting and get beaten so often and still win the war?

And I really don't care if Elise turns out to be the daughter of the devil. Whatever. You know what? 1 star it is!

\*~\*~\*

BOTM read with the MacHalos. Got the three-book-bundle for free on Amazon.

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### **Christine says**

I found it a little confusing with the jumping back and forth between years and some background would have been nice in order to understand what was going on. The last few chapters, once I finally had the background and things made sense did I start to enjoy the action and plot. Overall I found for a first book not enough for me to continue with the series. Then I find out I should have read the novella/prequel first and that is difficult for me to understand. I know novellas are a way to get the idea out there and see if continuing is feasible but then once number one is released, give the background etc. because when I start with the first book in the series I expect it to be the start. I am sure that there are others that enjoyed this book but for me it was not enough.

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### **Melissa Levine says**

I usually love supernatural/paranormal type stories, but I wasn't a fan for this one. I read another series by this author, Seasons of the Moon, and even though I was able to get through it, it was still pretty bad. With this one, I couldn't even get through the first book and I have all three. Needless to say, although there was tons of action, the story just didn't draw me in, the characters seemed really flat, most I couldn't really even picture. I read up to chapter 17 and with that, all I knew was that Elise had red curly hair, Betty and Anthony were Hispanic, and James was about 10 years older than Elise. Yeah, that's about it for the descriptions. I couldn't figure Elise out either. What exactly was she? Part demon or something? Given the fact that she was seriously injured multiple times, loss of blood, and she was still walking around. She wasn't a very good fighter, but seemed like she fought on a daily basis. How did her skills not improve? In the end, I hate having to force myself to read a story, so I stopped.

#### **Questions/Comments:**

1. At the beginning, James couldn't tell the ground was covered in feathers, instead of snow. Did he forget his glasses?
2. This might be a stupid question, but of course I'm going to ask. When James is warming Elise up, after finding her body among the dead, why did he put one of the hand-warmers on her crotch?

3. Elise is looking under Lucinde's bed. How was it possible for Lucinde to kick out at her...hitting Elise's face, without Elise noticing?
4. So Elise's special power is healing to human speed? That's it? How exactly would that be a special power? How slowly does she normally heal?
5. James and Elise are racing to the cover of trees in the jungle and because the jungle is so thick, the demons don't follow. Huh? The demons are little though, so you'd think it would be easier for them to run through the jungle than the adult size people.
6. I found it strange that the first time 'Dis' is brought up, it's never really explained.
7. How old was everyone? I mean there's the part when Betty is talking to Anthony about how he likes Elise and refers to Elise as a cougar.
8. After being attacked, Elise still goes dancing with Anthony at the club. Yet, it's not until the next morning that she realizes she ripped her stitches out from dancing. How would that have been possible?
9. There's a night when James plans to gather all his coven together the following morning and Elise is present during this. Yet, the next morning she's acting like she has no clue why everyone's there.
10. Why does Augustine get mad when Elise and James come by? I mean his kid did start acting strange.
11. After Lucinde goes outside, Elise manages to get her back to the basement. She gets her into the corner of the room and is holding a cross against her cheek. Why would Lucinde just have been sitting there? There was nothing about her being tied up or anything, so she easily could have just pushed Elise away. Again, being that close to Lucinde, Elise somehow didn't notice that Lucinde was going to punch her. Does Elise need glasses?
12. For some reason it annoyed me that the author keeps switching back and forth between the possessed ones and servants and she was talking about the zombie-like people.
13. Given the fact that James is a high priest, I found it strange that his coven, even knowing about demons and whatnot, all seemed so clueless to the supernatural world.
14. In one of the flashbacks, James is resting in a house after being tortured from the death goddess. Elise checks his temperature...first on his back, then his forehead...why the back? I can't imagine he was all sprawled out, nice and cozy on the bed with his injuries.
15. So Anthony and Betty are Hispanic. Why did the author wait so long to inform us of this? It's like you get a picture in your head of what you imagine the characters looking like, then suddenly it's changed. The only reason I knew they were Hispanic was because Anthony referenced his uncle as 'Tio'.
16. How did Anthony ever find out that Elise was an exorcist? "Elise is the exorcist...She's been injured. She's not talking about why." Huh? Elise wasn't even injured around them, until they were supping up the jeep to go after James. So that part makes no sense.
17. How did Ann know what fiends were, yet, James didn't?

18. During a fight with the goddess, Elise gets her hands on a shotgun, and where does she shoot? The goddess's leg, of course. Yes, because it would have made too much sense to aim for the head or chest area. Again, Elise is not a good fighter or shooter.

19. So Elise was just beaten by Dominic and his goons. She's injured, in pain, and bloody. This of course equals to a perfect time, in Anthony's opinion, to make out with Elise. Seriously? That's worse than when the characters make out right after waking up.

20. When they're getting ready to head over to Ann's, this is after they supped the jeep up, the reader is informed that Anthony is sitting in the jeep with half an inch of water collecting at the bottom. Why hadn't he put the top up then?

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## **Choko says**

**\*\*\* 3.75 \*\*\***

### **A buddy read with The MacHalos, who have not given up on the UF Genre yet:):):)**

So, I had never heard of this series and had absolutely no expectations going in. My friends Sara and Maria like it, so this was a good enough incentive for me to read it:) And I am glad I did.

Death's Hand is the first book in The Descent series by S. M. Reine and it opened up with a set of engaging scenes, which had me hooked pretty much straight up. It is a well thought-out story with a different look on the human-demon relationships in a world which seems to be overrun by the hellish creatures. Luckily for the human populations, the real Big Bads have a hard time making it up to the surface of the world and as usual with their types, they crave what we have and plot of ways to achieve it. Our main character, Elise, is involved with keeping the agreed upon boundaries by enforcing the agreements between the Hell citizens and those who represent our best interests. This position or being, I am not yet completely sure, is called a Kopsis and as they are the first defense against Demon aggression and possession, they are also on the top of the demon's hit list.

Elise has a friend, a male which named James with whom at one time they had performed a bonding ritual (non-sexual or romantic), thus making him her Aspis, thus making her the Sword and him her Shield. After some time of being very successful at taming the beasts, they have a case from which they barely make it out alive and decide to call it quits. So, he becomes a dance teacher, while she becomes an accountant:) That actually made me smile - dealing with Demons or the IRS - pretty much the same thing! However, a small girl is possessed and the Kopsis and the Aspis become involved, setting off a domino reaction which threatens to destroy them and all they know...

The book is full of action and intense situations, which kept my interest up from beginning to end. I am not yet completely invested in all the characters, but I loved Elise, who is not a very nice person and kind of crabby, and her roommate Betty, who is one of those that exude excessive energy, friendliness and inquisitiveness... I was exhausted just thinking about someone this perky... But I still liked her:) For the rest - the jury is still out, but I would like to know what happens with them and learn more about this world. So yes, I am going to read them all:):):)

I wish all of you happy reading and I hope demons are only found in the pages of fictional books... They

creep me out!

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**?I?E???? says**

3.5 stars

I have mixed feeling for this book. The pros: Elise as a heroine did not have a god complex. Woohoo! She was accessible without coming across as weak. She didn't rely on the love of a man to make her feel empowered, although she had unrequited feelings for James that left her confused. There was never a dull moment and the action was top notch. S.M. Reine sure does know how to write about demons! The cons: Major lack of development with both the main and secondary characters, also, there was a few too many holes in the story, I kept wondering if I missed something( I've heard many questions get answered as the series progresses). Lastly, Elise is supposed to be the big bad and she knows how to kick ass, but she sure got her ass kicked a lot (view spoiler) and she barely won every fight by the skin of her teeth. I understand the author probably wanted Elise to appear vulnerable and not an impregnable superhuman, but I wished she held the advantage a little sooner in maybe one fight? Yeah? Well, my emotions were all over the place while reading this and to me that's a sign of a good writer, whether I read the next one in this series or not.

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**XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says**

► **The MacHalos didn't LOVE this one so Elise Kavanagh Shall Kick their Shapely Asses and I Shall Annihilate them All Buddy Read** (TMdLtosEKSKtSAaISAtABR™).

*Friendly warning: you don't want to read this non-review, it's spectacularly crappy and totally not worthy of this mostest awesomest series.*

- **Previous rating: 3.5 stars.** But that was for the books 1-3 bundle as a whole so it doesn't count and stuff.
- **New rating: 3.5 stars.** Because I'm biased and stuff.

Okay, so if I wasn't **totally full of crap**, I'd rate this 3 stars. But this is **Elise Freaking Kavanagh**. AND Reine is right up there with Awesome Pippa DaCosta when it comes to **Yummy Demon Stuff**. AND this is one of the **best freaking UF series ever**. So I don't give a freaking damn if this is a \*whispers\* weak first instalment. Descent is, to this day, one of the **most original** UF series I have ever read. And the last few books in the series are bloody **mind-blowing**. And **nothing short of awesome**. So I don't give a damn what you people think.

**What? Were you expecting a review?** So sorry. Things to do, crap to read and all that. I'm sure lots of **delightfully clever** readers have written **wonderfully enlightening** reviews about this book, though. So please go ahead and check them out. No, no, really, I insist. **You have my blessing** and all that crap. These reviews obviously won't be as good as the one I would have written, but they'll still be informative. I think. **Hopefully**. Somewhat. Don't read anything below a 4-star rating, though. Because **haters gonna hate and stuff**.

» And the moral of this **Crappiest of Crappy Non-Reviews Ever Review** (CoCNRER™) is:

**Obviously.**

- 🔪 **Book 2:** The Darkest Gate ★★★★★
- 🔪 **Book 3:** Dark Union ★★★★★
- 🔪 **Book 4:** Damnation Marked ★★★★★
- 🔪 **Book 5:** Dire Blood ★★★★★
- 🔪 **Book 6:** Defying Fate ★★★★★
- 🔪 **Book 7:** Paradise Damned ★★★★★

*Original **Crappy Boring Review** (OCBR™) from when I had no life, no friends, and didn't know gifs existed can be found here. Read at your own risk.*

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### **Sandra says**

I wanted to like this one more than I did. People whose opinion on books I respect recommended it highly. But it just didn't grab me. I found the constant battle with fiends tedious, the flipping between past & present annoying and the lack of explanation about pretty much Elise and James entire back story frustrating. Why have the prologue of Elise discovered in Russia with the bodies and the mark on her hand if it isn't relevant to the story? How did J & E become kopsis & aspis? Why? What happened to her parents? Why does James not want a relationship with Elise? What happened in Russia? Who is the mysterious Him that marked Elise. And for a super kick ass kopsis who was famous among demons she sure got beaten alot. While I am curious enough to want answers to my questions, based on this story I doubt they will be forthcoming any time soon so I am not sure if I will be continuing on with the series.

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### **Steelwhisper says**

This was a freebie of 3 books in the series, but I only partially read the first and won't read the others. I was fighting off a snore. Too much action, not enough reason to care for the characters.

Nailed in this review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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### **Chris Copley says**

Looking at the other reviews for this book I feel a little guilty giving it only the one star.

The truth is I couldn't bear to read past the first chapter. I found the style of writing so off-putting that I was



constantly distracted from the story by what I perceived as poorly-constructed sentences. The section that drew the line under this book for me was when a seven year old girl is handed a pair of swords for her birthday then slays her first demon. This was followed by the following words:

"Later, they will say this day marked the beginning of the end of the world. This is only half true."

What does that even mean?

So I stopped reading purely because the style of writing was screaming at me from every page, which is disappointing because I am sure the story has the potential to be fantastic - and surely it must be because how else would it receive so many positive reviews?

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## **Erin Zarro says**

I'm going for non-spoilery, so bear with me here. Okay, it starts with a bang — a scene in the past with the two main characters, Elise and James, who were powerful hunters of evil. Something horrific happened and they retired. We are thrust into the present time, where Elise and James are living out their very normal lives. That is until they end up trying to exorcise a little girl.

It gets worse.

As an aside, I have to say: I'm not familiar with actual exorcism or demonology. I believe there are some elements in Elise's exorcisms that are taken from true exorcism. I was impressed with it. It was simple, clean, and rang true for me whether or not it's actually real. But most importantly, it made perfect sense within the context of the world Reine created in *Death's Hand*. Also something else I liked was the bond between Elise and James. It's actually a magical bond. I don't believe they are in love or anything like that, but are close friends that would die for each other. I thought it was refreshing to see something other than a soulmate/mating-type bond between a man and a woman.

Okay, back to the story. There's this goddess of death that Elise encountered before who swore she'd come back for Elise. And she's in an object that is wielded by a powerful witch/necromancer. You'll never guess who it is (I knew from reading a previous draft, but the way it's laid out will surprise you). \*winks\* So between the possessed girl, the workings of the death goddess, the newly-risen dead (zombies?), Elise and James have their hands full. They're forced out of retirement.

What happens is twisty and dark and awful, but it ends happily, I assure you. But you'll have issues putting it down. The last 100 pages flew for me, and I was technically proofreading, except I kinda forgot to keep an eye out at that point. I admit that. It completely riveted me to the point where I was sitting at work counting down the hours until I could go home and read more. It's nuts.

Another thing, too. This is a very unique take on demons, exorcism, witches, necromancers. There is a lot of that out there, but you'll find *Death's Hand* refreshingly different. I like the elements of the paranormal and the grittiness of dark fantasy. It really, really works.

So, whatcha waitin' for? Check it out.

Also, this is the first book in SM Reine's *Descent* series. It is a complete story, but there is one teeny tiny

little thing at the end that will flow into the next book, which I believe is called The Darkest Gate. I can't wait to read that. I'm kind of addicted — uh, actually I am addicted to these stories. ....Yeah.

Red Iris Publishing is new to the game and I believe they will become one of the finest publishers out there. With writers like SM Reine, it's a certainty. So check them out.

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## **Beige says**

### *2.5-demon-exorcizing-stars*

This wasn't the typical UF story, I haven't read any horror but I wonder if this is maybe closer to that in tone. I appreciate the author tried to unveil the characters and their world in an untraditional manner, but the execution was jarring and in need of a good edit. However, violent action scenes were where this author shined, some moments were on par with the strongest UF authors I've read.

Intentional or not, Elise, James and the demons are still a bit of a mystery by the end of the book, which I'm ok with. I thought the roommate and cousin were strangely out of place, they seemed goofy and their scenes had a Buffy the Vampire feel, which was at odds with the rest of the story.

The author has potential and some of my fellow readers felt the series greatly improved. Curiosity has the better of me and I will continue :)

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## **Casey says**

**MacHalo Group** Book of the Month for September, let me know if you want in on this action if you're not already a member.

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## **Delitealex says**

### 3.5 stars

Good start for the series. I loved all the action and information on the different demons. Can't wait to continue to see what happens next.

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## Rabidreading says

Holy hell. What a ride!

The story begins several years after the events in the novella, *Death's Avatar*. After saving the world, the demon-slaying duo, Elise and James, are now retired and doing their best to lead normal, quiet lives. Elise is, of all things, an accountant, and her witchy companion, James, has a dance studio. The biggest concern Elise has is keeping her business afloat....until James asks her to meet with the Martinez family, whose young daughter, Lucinde, may be possessed by a demon. Elise is understandably reluctant to get involved. She doesn't hunt demons anymore, doesn't perform exorcisms. Those days are behind her. But James is determined to help the Martinez family, and so Elise grudgingly agrees. Little do they know, there is a lot more at stake than the life & soul of a young girl. The fate of the world itself hangs in the balance.

*Death's Hand* is a perfect blend of urban fantasy & horror genres. Told from alternating third person POV's, it features a genuinely kickass heroine, some seriously brutal action sequences, and more than a few creepy moments. When it comes to world-building, the author seems to follow the "less is more" policy. It's a risky move on Reine's part, and one that may alienate some readers. In my case, it didn't. I didn't need to know every little detail of Elise's world and backstory, and frankly, I enjoyed the hints, teasers & flashbacks much more than if everything had been laid out for me in all its gory detail.

There's a tiny bit of romance in the book, but not between Elise and James. I'll admit, I was a bit disappointed by that. Here they are, bound as *kopis* & *apsis* (demon hunter and witch), with over 10 years of shared history, and yet, as far as I could tell, they've both stayed firmly on their respective sides of the relationship line. I thought a few times that one of them (I won't say who) might be open to something more, but the hints were very subtle and there's a good chance I was reading into it. Or not. I honestly don't know. Their relationship is very...murky. There's a wierd intimacy between them that even now, I can't quite capture in words. Sometimes they act like father and daughter (James is 12 years older), other times like comrades-in-arms, and then there were those brief and tantalizing moments when everything else just sort of fell away, leaving just the two of them in their own private world. I suspect my hopes of an Elise/James romance are doomed to be dashed, but for once, I don't mind. They are so utterly fascinating, I simply must keep reading about them.

5 stars.

*\*\*Note: If you plan on reading this series, I strongly recommend you read the novella, *Death's Avatar*, first.*

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