



The Midnight Gate

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It's been two months since Belladonna Johnson discovered she was the Spellbinder, and she's full of questions about her powers. When a ghost finds Belladonna and her classmate, Steve, and gives them a mysterious map, the friends don't know if they should be looking for or hiding from the one person who holds the answers to Belladonna's powers: the Queen of the Abyss. Throw into the mix that Belladonna's parents, who are ghosts, have disappeared and that her brand-new and maybe even sinister foster family seems to know more than they'll let on, and you have a sequel made of high adventure and intrigue, seasoned with affecting characters and topped with a dollop of wit.

The Midnight Gate Details

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Author : Helen Stringer

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From Reader Review The Midnight Gate for online ebook

Megan says

Oh-em-freaking-zee!!! That was *epic*. I love Steve. He is awesome. And wow! Go Belladonna! That last sentence....ahh!!! Holy cow! That school! AAAhhh! Sorry. I am not really saying much about the book, am I?

K, so the story picks up few months after the whole incident with Dr. Ashe. Belladonna and Steve are back at school and...depressingly for them...everything has gone back to almost *exactly* as it had been before the grand adventure had begun. Life is boring, which aught to be good. Belladonna is still suffering at the hands of (can't recall her name, blast it all, but she is the blonde girl) until one day she makes a fatal mistake: she retaliates. She never imagined what that one small retaliation would lead to.

There was *great* character development in this book, as well as a few new faces as well. Belladonna grows on me even more, and I positively *love* Steve! He is amazing, and I want his ruler. Also, what exactly were they hinting at with how the Paladin is chosen? -.^ Who knows. =P But yeah, there was also a pleasing development in the relationship between Belladonna and Steve. Obviously, as I'm willing to bet you gathered from how the first book went, I'm not saying there was some out of the blue romance. I'm saying that they both realize that they are in this together and that they need to be there for the other. The only negative thing that I can think to say about them is that they don't quite act like they are twelve. But hey, it works so who cares?

The pick up in this book might have been a little slower, but not in a bad way. The plot is developing well. I cannot *wait* to read the next book. There is a little more intrigue added to the plot. Who could that have been? Where could she have gone? What could possibly happen next?! The cliff-hanger at the end...I feel sorry for all people like me who read this and are now going to have to wait who knows how long to read the follow up. >.< Ah! Sorrow...

But anyway...the book was incredible. I *totally* recommend this to anybody who liked Percy Jackson, as well as anybody who enjoys a good story. Good characters, good plot, just enough tension to keep the book in your hands for an after you finish it wondering what will happen next, but not enough to annoy you. A jewel, I think. Thank you Helen Stringer for another *highly* enjoyable book. I, and I'm sure most others who read this book, am eagerly awaiting the further installments.

(*cheers* *bounces up and down gleefully* *claps and grins like an idiot* Ok, all done acting like I am a good and proper reviewer. That was awesome. C= Grazie tante Helen Stringer!)

Angie says

I do like the characters in these books. Belladonna ... you can't help but sort of relate to her feeling out of place at school and with her new Spellbinder responsibilities (whatever they may be). Steve is a lot smarter than he lets on.

"Okay, yes, *this* could be the end of the world. But we can't worry about things we have no way of knowing. Right now we just have to concentrate on getting to the Queen of the Abyss. We'll figure everything else out later." (p 284)

That quote just stuck out at me this week. Working on being more like Steve. As it goes on to say ... "Belladonna nodded. She felt envious of Steve's ability to set things aside and just tackle the problem at hand."

Got a *little* confused on this one but maybe that's more because it's been a while since I read book one and I tend to read things too fast anyway. Didn't quite understand the point of calling the Hunt (foreshadowing something to do with wherever her aunt might be?) or really Sophie or the "last Palandin" in particular. Or who/what the Proctors were.

Caitlin says

One of the best things about book blogging is that I get the occasional middle-grade chapter book to review. I don't always like them, but some of them are favorites that I'll never forget.

Spellbinder, the first in Helen Stringer's series, was delightful. Goth and quirky and funny without being condescending about any of those things and about kids who seem real, who have real problems, who make mistakes, who aren't templates of childhood perfection. Wonderful book - I gave it away immediately to a friend with a daughter.

Since I loved the first book, I was really excited to get a copy of the second, *The Midnight Gate*. I was trepidatious because second books aren't always where they should be. They're just hard to write well no matter who you are. Still, I plunged in and the water was fine.

The Midnight Gate is another wonderful, age-appropriate, non-saccharine kids book with ghosts and mysterious others, childhood revenge and places that aren't what they seem and a world where the environment can be turned against you. Throughout it all the friendships that remain at the center of the book are clear and strong and liberating. While no single child could overcome the obstacles set in Belladonna and Steve's path these kids prove that by working together, no obstacle can stand before them. And, by the way, adults aren't infallible (just in case you were wondering).

This is a delightful series for kids of all ages, but especially those struggling through those middle school years. Belladonna is a great heroine who suffers from being different, but perseveres while her friend Steve becomes more and more open minded about difference as the friendship grows. Scary, exciting, and funny, this book delivers.

April says

Belladonna and Steve return in a new race to save the world. Belladonna's grandmother disappears and she is taken into foster care. Her foster parents seem nice but there are a number of unexplainable incidences. Belladonna and Steve must save the world from the Empress of the dark spaces. Elsie helps in their quest. It is a well written book. You definitely need to read the first book to follow this one. I liked this one better than the first.

There will be more adventures to come because the ending leaves us with unanswered questions.

Kristen says

Why I read this: I really enjoyed reading *Spellbinder* and was happy to read on into the second novel.

Plot: Another intriguing plot, where Belladonna and Steve once again have to save the world from the evil powers. I really enjoyed these tales, with all of its supernatural awesome mixed with witty British humor. They go on quite the adventure with tests involved and are almost killed, quite a few times actually. And I definitely laughed when they met the Queen of the Abyss because it was completely unexpected. Most definitely unexpected. These are definitely great books that I will be putting in my elementary library for my students that love supernatural and adventure stories.

Characters: I absolutely love Belladonna and Steve and their chemistry is very funny. Steve reminds me a lot of my next door neighbor who I grew up with and liked to be around me, but when his friends were around, he'd totally ignore me. Maybe I see a bit of Belladonna in myself as well. Definitely a book full of great supporting characters and interesting villians.

Relatability: Fans of funny, spooky and adventurous stories will really dig into this series.

Cover Commentary: I like this one a lot more than the first book. It's got a perilous edge to it that I think kids will be drawn to.

Diana says

I have mixed feelings. Perhaps the rating is closer to a three, but not a full on three. The story didn't really pick up until the last several chapters (which is where the "mixed feelings" comes in because they were pretty good); before that it was agonizingly slow and the main character was being so dim! I was very disappointed because the first book was wonderful. But this one felt less edited? Less controlled and shaped? There was a ton of "telling" rather than "showing" of emotions etc. and oh my gosh I commented out loud several times out of frustration of the main character and her lameness. She was just being so dopey and kept second guessing things and being wishy-washy and being acted upon. There was no character arc whatsoever. I did not feel this way about her in the first book which I read directly before this one (and enjoyed very much), which means the main character's personality/character actually devolved where it should have been evolving. I wish the series was really the Adventures of Steve and Elsie, and Belladonna can just go off to the side somewhere if she's going to continue to be disappointing. I am going to finish the series though, when it's available, because I like the world Stringer has created and I like the other characters. There are a few mysteries that I'm curious to find the conclusions to. And I do have hope that Belladonna gets her (freakin'!) act together.

Sara Thompson says

This book reminded me of Harry Potter. Not in the broad sense, they aren't witches but in the smaller sense that a young child is forced into a position where they have to be so much wiser and older than their years. Poor Belladonna is still only 12 years old - this story is only months away from the previous. The adventure is far more dangerous. The sad part is that those who have put Belladonna in this position really don't care if she lives or dies, she's replaceable as the Spellbinder. She has people who love her and want to protect her but they are not in positions to really help her.

There were things I loved about this story. Belladonna and Steve take their missions very seriously but there seems to be loose ends from one book to the next. In the first book, the oracle gives them two riddles to solve and they only solve one. That second riddle doesn't come up in this book. Aside from that, it's very good.

Belladonna is forced to live with foster parents but her new family is not what they appear to be. So many things happen but I worry about spilling any of the surprises. Early on you figure there is something wrong with her foster family and you find yourself very suspicious of hot chocolate but what is going on has so many details and twists that you can't guess it all.

I love the way Helen Stringer mixes in all types of mythology. There's so many more creatures in this book than in the last one. I really need a good mythology book but that will have to wait until after I finish my growing reading pile.

Barbara Ayes says

The Midnight Gate begins two months after the events in Spellbinder (Book 1). Twelve year old Belladonna has discovered that she is the Spellbinder, "destined to prevent the Empress of Dark Spaces from entering this realm and allowing chaos to reign." Belladonna is assisted by her classmate Steve, the Paladin who must protect her from harm. They are learning about their magical powers, struggling to master them on their own. Belladonna's parents tragically died two years ago, but have returned to live with her as ghosts. They can talk and see each other, as well as other magical creatures. Now that her ghost-parents have disappeared, Belladonna's secret is discovered by the class bully and she is sent to live with a creepy foster family. While on a school trip to an old monastery, Belladonna and Steve meet a ghost who gives them an ancient parchment and a cryptic message about the coming of the evil Empress of the Dark Spaces. Lots of fantasy, adventure, suspense, ghosts and magic. A good scary summer read!

Melissa Michelle says

Found this book series on Barnes and Noble Nook or was it Book Bub? Anyways I loved this series and look forward to her third book. Thank you Helen Stringer!!!

Michelle K. *Get off my lawn!* says

I loved the first book in this series, Spellbinder, very intensely; I had never heard of it until I stumbled over a copy in a Goodwill shop, so it seemed like such a stroke of luck when I went into it with no expectations but finished it wanting to know everything about Belladonna (the MC).

In the end, this installment just didn't have a very tight plot and the driving force behind it lacked urgency. There's nothing compelling me forward. I don't hate this book, I've actually finished books I had more negative feelings towards. I just feel so intensely disinterested; when I finish "bad" books, I'm usually waiting for a payoff that never comes, but right now, all I can say is I don't care. **I do not care.** I would be forcing myself to finish this and I don't want to.

Ronald Roseborough says

This a very good followup to Helen Stringer's earlier novel, Spellbinder. In this latest episode, Belladonna Johnson, a twelve year old is wondering what comes next. For a girl who lives with the ghosts of her parents

and has traveled to the Dark Side and back, life that is defined by middle school classrooms is not very exciting. Her biggest problem is how to avoid trouble with Sophie Warren, who reigns as the class bully. Trying to stay one step ahead of her isn't easy. After a run in with Belladonna, Sophie alerts child services that Belladonna is apparently living alone in her parents house. Belladonna obviously can't admit that she shares the house with her loving, but ghostly parents. When she is placed in a temporary foster home, she has a bad feeling about the older couple who take her in. While on a school trip to an old monastery, Belladonna and her friend, Steve, meet a ghost who gives them an ancient parchment accompanied by a cryptic message about the coming of the evil Empress of the Dark Spaces. As more days pass with Belladonna still in foster care, she becomes increasingly tired and haunted by bad dreams. Can these incidents be related? You'll have to follow Belladonna on her adventures to search for the answers to this and other questions. This book is fast paced, full of magic and adventure. The book should appeal to tweens and young adults. It may be a bit intense for younger children, although the lessons of friendship, teamwork, and perseverance are good for all ages.

The Book Reader Supreme says

Belladonna is a spellbinder, a spellbinder is a person who can see ghosts and say these strange words called The Words Of Power he/she can will also be able to become The Empress. Belladonna WAS living with her ghost parents until Some Person Called Mrs. Tattletale told the Children's Department(CD is made up but anyways)(CD) That Belladonna lives alone, because she can not see ghosts. There is this place which was already was broken down but A KERE made EVERYONE think that it's there but it's NOT. They are trying to bring back the EVIL EMPRESS! Belladonna has to get to the all knowing person but there are these seven guardians the friends in the first set but at the end there are some real bad stuff. Read the book for more info.

Phoebe says

Belladonna and Steve continue their supernatural adventures in this second book. The authorities discover that Belladonna is still living at home, seemingly alone, after the death of her parents. Grandma Johnson has mysteriously disappeared. So Belladonna has no choice but to stay with her foster parents, the Proctors. But then she finds out that the building in which they live was demolished years ago, and the Proctors themselves are not what they seem. What part will Belladonna, the Spellbinder, play in their strange plans, and how can Steve, Elsie, and Belladonna stop the re-entry of the Empress of the Dark Spaces? This rich and wonderfully written fantasy will hold readers until the exciting ending. Highly recommended to those who enjoyed the first book in the series. 4th grade and up.

Alfred says

I ended up reading the second book first, but I found that not reading the first book didn't leave any unanswered questions. Unlike some authors, Terry Goodkind being a prime example, Ms. Stringer didn't feel the need to repeat or explain what happened in the previous book to the point where it became annoying. She would make a very brief aside which was blended into the plot, so I didn't feel like I was hearing the same information over and over again. I really enjoyed the book, even though its target audience is kids.

Nikki (Wicked Awesome Books) says

The *Midnight Gate* starts off not too long after *Spellbinder* concluded and while it begins with a much slower pace, the story unfolds cleverly and with ease. Belladonna's troubles couldn't have ended with Dr. Ashe being carted off by The Hunt, that would have been far too easy. But her troubles double, triple, just get really, really bad. Yet Belladonna is still Belladonna. She copes remarkably well for a twelve year old girl with dead parents and an ever-mounting pile of bad on her doorstep.

Belladonna's perseverance is one of her many characteristics that make her, and this series, stand out. She's tough and intelligent, but still only a young girl. She knows that. She's unafraid to ask for help, and is more than willing to accept it from her Paladin, protector, and maybe-friend Steve. Just as before, Helen Stringer puts Belladonna and Steve through the ringer and places them in more than a few unsettling positions – Belladonna's venture into foster care being only one of them. These two are able to work through it though and, from their uproarious banter with ghost girl Elsie, a huge story unfolds.

The Midnight Gate is a bit slower than *Spellbinder*, but there are heaping, bountiful bouts of backstory that are captivating. The good and evil – *Spellbinder* vs. *The Darkness* – aspect jumps to life with dragons, other worlds, mythical creatures, life and death situations, and even some ancient Sumerian. The ending comes together flawlessly; with small details from the story working into a big showdown that provides the action and adventure young readers crave, but also adding to the series as a whole.

Unexpected twists and turns abound in *The Midnight Gate*, bringing Helen Stringer's story about a girl who can see ghosts, into an entirely new light. Mythology runs heavy throughout the pages, leaving the ghost aspect on the backburner, to tackle the new responsibilities that Belladonna is only now realizing she has. *Spellbinder* is much more than just a nifty title for her and she quickly discovers that she holds a lot of weight in the fight between good and evil, light and dark. This series will entice readers both young and old, with a fantastical element that delights, characters with heart, and a strong backstory that ties each adventure together.
