



Heart of Darkness

Lauren Dane

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Someone is illegally siphoning magic from the font of the Clan. When Meriel Owen, next in line to control the largest organization of witches in the country, discovers that it's the hot owner of a notorious underground club, she strokes an unusual deal that may plunge them all into the heart of darkness.

Heart of Darkness Details

Date : Published November 1st 2011 by Berkley

ISBN :

Author : Lauren Dane

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Romance, Paranormal Romance, Fantasy, Paranormal, Witches, Magic

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From Reader Review Heart of Darkness for online ebook

? Irena ? says

2.5

How to write a paranormal romance and keep both main characters smart and together throughout the book? It was nicely done here. I loved these two. There wasn't a single moment in the story where one or the other was acting stupid. I admit the way it started it seemed everything would revolve around them getting together and him accepting her. It wasn't. They got around every issue they had really fast. Their relationship wasn't the focus of the story.

Humans in this world know about weres. They are out of the woods so to speak. Most of them don't know about the Other: witches (clan or outclan), vampires, fae, or any other race which is one of the problems the characters deal with in this book. Someone is killing and draining witches. Since witches can be addicted, they turn and become abominations cut off from the power. The turned have to replenish what is lost and the only way is to take the power from others.

What I didn't expect nor like is the way this story ended. They won in the end, but it was hardly challenging for them. It was more *Oh, this is our enemy. Let's get him. Okay. Done.* I understand the author wanted to do, but this one ended abruptly. It was like someone cut the part of the story.

Francesca the Fierce (Under the Covers Book Blog) says

This review was posted at Under The Covers

I was so excited to get to this book!! Ahhh!!! I've been a fan of Lauren Dane's work for a while and I remember being introduced to the magical world that this book follows back with the Cascadia Wolves and De La Vega Cats series. Of course in those books, the Clans were the bad guys. So it was fun to see that world from their perspective now.

Meriel is a great heroine. She's next in line to rule Clan Owen, in the Seattle area. She's a powerful witch, even though she's young, she's smart, educated, has innovative ideas for the future of the Clan. Her mother has always been a bit tough, but Meriel is not resentful of this, she still loves and respects her mother and her authority.

Dominic on the other hand was raised outside of a Clan. He has very little knowledge about his own powers, other than some basic info and skills. But he is powerful all the same. And oh so sexy!

I have to mention that I recently read a post by Lauren Dane and saw that she pictures Emma Stone as Meriel and Michael Fassbender as Dominic. I can totally see him as the sleek, mysterious, sexy nightclub owner!

OK back to business. The story is suspenseful and full of hot naughtiness. Basically there's a group of mages that have been kidnapping witches and draining them of their powers, thus killing them. Kendra from Revelation was one of the witches this group tried to kidnap, of course she got away. Meriel as an integral

part of Clan Owen is assigned to investigate this.

After meeting Dominic and realizing immediately he is her mate, sparks fly (and clothes do as well). Their connection is instant, hot, like bees to the honey. He wants to take things slow and she is willing to give him that space. But neither can deny their attraction and their love for each other.

With some surprises up ahead and some twists of fate for where their future together will take them, they manage to face the obstacles together. I think that was my favorite part of the story. Dominic is there for her, he doesn't do any asshole type things to push her away. He doesn't fight how he feels. And he is there to protect her.

Another part I loved was the connection between the Clan witches. Meriel's best friend, and sort of boss, Nell. She's a trip and I love them together. As well as Dominic and his buddy Simon. *cue massive drooling for the hot alpha were*

I've mentioned that this is basically a spin off of a spin off series, but don't be alarmed! You can jump in this book and enjoy it 100% without reading the previous books. The magick topics in them was not the main plot, and this is the first time everything was explained in detail. Also, along with the hotness and sexiness you can expect snarky comments, great personalities, and just the type of girl you'd want to hang out with. Ms. Dane is great at that! Now if only we could get Simon's book already! Simon will be book 2. He's a were, and he will be taken for a ride by Meriel's half sister, also a witch. I can't wait!

Brianna says

3.5 stars.

In search of books with witches, I found this story. It was an interesting take on magic, with some likable characters. Meriel was a strong and capable heroine, who felt like a real person. Dominic made for an intriguing hero, what with his dark past. I loved how relentless he was in pursuit of Meriel though, he was very protective and possessive, but he wasn't a jerk. The two worked well together, and I really liked how the usual dynamics found in paranormal romance were changed here. Meriel was the one who knew about the bond between her and Dominic, and the world of clan witches. Dominic was the one who had to be taught and given space before he could accept it. The plot was interesting, and made for a good book as Meriel and her clan had to try to figure out how mages (basically fake witches who stole power because they were addicted to magic like a drug) were killing and harming witches in other clans. There was an interesting tie to Dominic's past that I kind of saw coming, but I liked it anyway. The thing that really brought this story down for me were editing mistakes and word choices. I found quite a few words that were missing or misspelled, and a couple of times the author used words that pulled me out of the story, particularly in the love scenes. Still, this was a good book, and I'm glad I started reading Lauren Dane here. I recommend it if you like paranormal romance with a unique kind of witch.

Kristen says

I loved this! This book has pretty much everything I enjoy in a paranormal fiction story.

The book is about a clan of witches living "in plain sight" among the humans. I enjoyed that the clan is basically run like it's a corporation. The fact that the leaders are all strong, smart, capable women was extremely cool and a big positive feature for me.

The characters in this are terrific! I loved everything about Meriel, and her friendship/partnership with Nell was also awesome. The banter between the two of them was hilarious, and made me laugh out loud multiple times. Even though both of them are badass powerful witches, they talk to one another as though they are any old girlfriends gabbing over drinks. It inserted an air of "normal" into a story that was anything but.

All the supporting characters are also great. Dominic is the perfect hero, and you can't help but like him, especially as he falls for Meriel. All the other men - Meriel's father, Nell's husband, Dominic's best friend - are just as likable, and added to the story. While the women are unquestionably the leaders in this world, the men are true partners and hold their own with these strong women in partnerships that the real world can only envy.

The plot here is suspenseful, exciting, dangerous and fast-paced. It kept me reading the whole way because I was fully engaged in what was going on and couldn't wait to find out what happened.

Note for the sensitive: this book has sex and cursing, and more than just a little of both. Given the type of world we're in here, neither felt excessive or forced to me, but if either or both of those things bother you, this probably isn't the book for you. These people enjoy sex, and the descriptions of it are fairly graphic here. The cursing is mostly of the "f-bomb" variety, but again, nobody in this story hesitates to use the f-word so be warned.

For myself I totally loved this story, and would definitely read other books set in Meriel's world.

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review Courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: Sexy, sweet and steamy paranormal romance with two very lovable characters, great start up to a new world of witches, but confusing dialogue and a slow start to the real action may turn some readers away.

Opening Sentence: Meriel sat, taking notes as her mother spoke from the head of the table.

The Review:

Meriel Owen is a powerful witch but she has the potential to have a lot more power after she meets her bond-mate. Meriel has no idea that she will find that mate in Dominic Bright. Mr. Bright is also a witch and he has no idea how powerful he can be. He has been stealing power from Meriel's "clan" of witches to protect his nightclub, Heart of Darkness. Their first meeting together is filled with sexual tension and their chemistry just drips off the page.

True witches are being hunted by mages and turned witches for their magick. Witches are being attacked and are disappearing across the country. Meriel and the other witches from Owen have taken it upon themselves to find out who is behind the stealing of magick. They team up with other groups to consolidate their power

and learn new spells and wards to protect everyone better. Unfortunately all roads lead to Dominic's mother being behind the attacks, she has set her eyes on Meriel and Dominic's power, to take as her own.

The first half of Heart of Darkness is all about the relationship between Meriel and Dominic. Meriel is headstrong, knows what she wants and she will fight for it so she believes in taking it slow between her and Dominic. He needs to get used to what it means to be a bond-mate to someone like Meriel. Their relationship is hot and steamy. Their love for each other really carried throughout the book and kept me hooked to what would happen to them next. The second half of the book is all about fighting off the mages and how it affects Meriel and Dominic's relationship. Even though attacks are discussed from the beginning of the novel, they don't really start effecting the plot and action until the second half.

The secondary characters in Nell, Gage and Simon were very entertaining themselves. Nell and Gage are Hunters for the Owen. They protect the witches. Although, Nell has recently been married, I liked her so much I'd like to know what her story is. (Has there already been a short story or novella about Nell and William? I am a new reader to Lauren Dane.) Simon is a sexy werewolf, from the Fae world of Tir Na Nog, thankfully I will get to read more about him in Chaos Burning. I like the attention to these characters and Meriel's relationship with her mother. Meriel is so intimidated by her mother in the beginning but even their relationship grows by the end of the novel.

The world building is a little confusing in the beginning. Especially learning why some witches are attacking other witches, the differences between magic and magick. Learning about the different groups of witches and why they hate or like each other. As the novel progressed, it became easier to understand this world. I do like the prospect that there are other dimensions to this world but there was no visiting them in this novel.

My only real complaint with the writing is that I had a hard time with the dialogue. I couldn't follow who was talking in quite a few of the conversations. For me, it wasn't obvious who was speaking at all times, this could be just a problem I had, but it made me go back and re-read conversations again to try to figure out who said what. It was even more confusing when three or more people were talking. People would jump into the conversation and you could tell it wasn't who was originally talking but there was nothing saying who the line belonged to or if it did it was acknowledged several lines later, hence the re-reading.

Overall, I like the way Lauren Dane builds up the relationships in this novel and her characters. Heart of Darkness is a beautifully thought out story and I can't wait to see what is next for this world.

Notable Scene:

"She can't get in again." Meriel got in his face, his shirt gripped in her hand. "Listen to me, Dominic. She can't. Nothing and no one else can. I'm there now. I cut off that bond to her. I cut it off and cauterized it and then I put my own energy there. She can't get in. You're not going to go anywhere but home with me."

"How do you know?" God, he couldn't bear it, couldn't bear to think on hurting her. How could she ever trust him again? Would she be scared of him forever?

"Because it's my spell and your mother is a punk-ass bitch in the magick department. Oh, that's right." Meriel was pissed off, he realized. Not upset with him, not afraid of him at all. But murderously pissed off at Gloria Ochoa.

Simon eased back and sat on the corner of the desk as they settled in to watch Meriel.

“I got her number. She’s a fucking amateur wearing a costume of a powerful witch. She will not get in because you are mine and that is that. She can’t best me. Not ever. I am badass, Dominic. I know most people don’t know it, but you better believe it. I will tear her apart when I find her. You can’t bet on that. I. Am. Not. Having. This.”

FTC Advisory: Penguin/Berkley provided me with a copy of Heart of Darkness. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Katie Michaels says

I had high expectations going into this book –A– because I have heard great things about Lauren Dane and –B– some of my other bookish friends gave it generally positive reviews. While I didn’t actively dislike it, unfortunately, this wasn’t a winner for me. The worldbuilding is solid and pretty interesting, but I failed to connect with the characters and I didn’t feel invested in their romance.

Meriel is a powerful witch and the heir apparent to her family’s clan. The only thing that is holding her back from reaching her potential is the fact that she has not found her bondmate and ascended with him. Finding her magical other-half happens pretty quickly, though, when she goes to investigate a loner witch who is using her family’s magical font without permission.

Dominic was never part of a clan and has no desire to change that. He just wants to run his club and be left alone. But when he and Meriel cross paths, there is no denying the instant attraction. They know they are bond mates right away, but they choose to take some time before they ascend together, so Dominic can get used to the idea. In the meantime, they get thrust into an investigation involving rogue witches and mages who are draining the magic out of others. So they work together to solve that mystery as they fall deeper for one another.

I read in another review that the reader liked how mature these characters were about their bond, and yes, they were mature, but for me, they were also boring. In theory, they both have good stuff going for them. Dominic has a mysterious past and he’s dominant and sexy, while still respectful. And Meriel is powerful and confident without being conceited or overbearing. But it all fell flat for me. I didn’t care if they were being mature because I just didn’t care about them. There were sexy times to be sure, but they didn’t titillate me because I felt no tension. It all just... was. They’re bondmates — no real conflict, no angst, just a very straightforward path to HEA.

The mage threat, meanwhile, was weak and the personal tie to one of the characters felt convenient and contrived.

I just wasn’t feeling this one. But many others enjoyed it, so it may be better for you.

Rating: C+

Rva Booklover says

I was so excited to win a copy of Lauren Dane’s Heart of Darkness in a GoodReads contest! She is one of

my favorite authors. I love the way she builds her characters, and HoD was no exception. Strong hero and shero, great secondary characters, and a strong beginning to a brave, new world.

Meriel Owen is the heir apparent to her Clan of witches. Loved everything about this character. No too stupid moments. She is tough as nails, but not a ballbreaker. She is smart about people, and she seems to have an instinctive knowledge about how to best handle conflict with the people in her life. Her mother, Edwina, a definite ballbreaker, is the current head of Clan Owen, and is a micro manager times 10. Meriel, we are told and shown, goes along with her mother's edicts when it suits her and when she absolutely must, but is not above avoiding her mom when direct confrontation is not in Meriel's best interests.

From the first time we meet Dominic, we learn he is a bad boy, mostly reformed. What a dream hero. He is cocky, self-assured, a little naughty...*sigh*Dominic has come to Seattle to open a nightclub that caters to both human and Other clientele. He "borrows" magic from the Clan font to set up wards at the club. Bad boy. He likes to be in charge, but is smart enough to know when to ask questions, and take direction. He loves that even though Meriel is a strong woman, she lets him open her doors, hold her jacket, etc. because he likes to. But as GQ and urbane as he is, our boy can more than hold his own in a fight. He is the total package.

Meriel, in her official capacity as a lawyer for Clan Owen, confronts Dominic when the fact he is helping himself to the Clan's magic font comes to light. Meriel, having grown up in the Clan and surrounded by the magical culture, knows immediately that Dominic is her bond mate. Dominic, having been raised by his foster father to distrust all Clan witches, has no knowledge of the bonding phenomenon, but feels the pull to Meriel. As bond mates, their magic is designed to function better together. Despite the threats to her Clan and her personal safety, she refuses to rush Dom into a decision about accepting the bond, even though the strength of their magick would grow exponentially if they were to bond.

There is very little conflict between Meriel and Dominic. The conflict in the story is external in the form of a threat to the Clan, and to other non-affiliated witches. I liked the way Dom and Meriel worked together, letting each take the lead depending on what skills were needed to solve problems or complete tasks. Meriel and Dominic functioned as a team almost from the beginning.

The romance here is so hawt...and so sweet. These two connect and their bond continues to grow. They support each other, defend each other, love each other...Again, they come across as a team. I loved them separately and together.

Secondary characters abound. We get exactly the right amount of information about all of them, as required to further the story. Dominic's partner, Simon, is next up. I can't wait to read it!

Heart of Darkness reads as a PNR more than a UF. There is a lot of world building, as we learn the rules of this new venue. The world has enormous potential, as all manner of paranormals inhabit it. I can't wait to see where the journey takes us. A very enjoyable read!

Hbeebti says

WOW First Reads Winner!!!!!! Whoop!!!!!! Sorry just excited is all. Thank you for picking me!!! lol

Ok so this is a first in a new series and it was really good. I love books about witches and this was right up my alley. Dominic was so wonderfully alpha male and so sweet . I loved that he didn't caved right away and join Meriel's coven. That made it feel more real. Loved Meriel, she was feisty, smart and never was afraid to show Dominic how much she loved him even when he was pushing her away. She may have been a little to understanding. lol Is anyone really like that?

This was about a coven of witches. But also about witches being hurt , abducted , drained of the magic to mage's who were stuck (addicted like drug addicts). My only real issue with this book was that for me there wasn't enough action. I would have loved more ass kicking. Since Meriel was so tough. I loved how at first I wasn't to sure of Meriel's mother. She seemed kinds mean and stuck up. But by the end you see her a little differently. Loved friendships in here as well. Meriel and Nell... they were so funny together. Simon (YUM) and Dominic were so great . I cant wait for Simon's book. Yummy Wolfy Simon.... Man I bet his book is good. He always was straightening out Dominic when he was being thickheaded .

Rhonda says

Heart of Darkness by Lauren Dane
Bound by Magick, book 1

I absolutely loved this book!!!

Lauren Dane has created a story with a lot of the elements I love. A great story / plot, romance, suspense, action, and oh so sexy. Dane puts us in a world where Vampires and Were have come out of the closet... so to speak, but witches still remain a secret. There are different types of witches and the most powerful of them are the council witches especially after they find and bond with their bond-mate. There are different clans across the country and Clan Owen in Seattle is the focus of our story.

Meriel Owen is sexy, smart, funny, independent, protective, ambitious, confident, and is a kick-ass powerful witch who is next in line to run Clan Owen. Meriel is an attorney, and after finding out that the new club in town Heart of Darkness has been stealing power from Clan Owen's font to strengthen his wards at the club, she heads to the club to handle the situation with the owner. As she comes face to face with the club owner Dominic Bright, the sparks start to fly... literally. Dominic is a smart businessman, a sharp dresser, a brawler, protective, possessive, and damn sexy! There are some surprises in store as far as Dominic is concerned, some good, some bad. Meriel and Dominic were so much fun to read, the chemistry was great between them and they balanced each other out so nicely. Whatever situations arise, they seem to give each other a different perspective on things instead of seeing things one sided. One of the things I liked most about Dominic was that he has no issues learning new things about his magick, and learning from women. It was fun seeing a woman being the dominant power too.

As the story unfolds there are "stuck" witches causing all sorts of problems. (the stuck witches would be the equivalent of a rogue vampire) Witches across the country are turning up dead or missing. These stuck witches have teamed up with mages and some humans and are siphoning magick from witches for the addiction of the stuck witches. Now they have shown up in Seattle and the Owen Clan must take them out before one of their own gets hurt, or killed.

Let me give props to the great cast of secondary characters as well; Simon, Nell, and Edwina, and Tim, they were a great compliment to the story.

I enjoyed this book so much, in fact it was my first ever Lauren Dane book, and definitely won't be my last. Lauren Dane has gained a new fan, and I can't wait to read the next book in this series.

Ang -PNR Book Lover Reviews says

Lauren Dane is Freakingfantastic!

I loved this book from the start to finish, and when it ended i wanted more!

Im Going to write about how much I loved this Book Heart of Darkness.

"Are you going to remain prickly so that i have no other choice but seduce a good mood back into you.?"

Loved the main characters,Meriel and Dominic they were perfect!! The sexual tension between these two was on fire,it was so so funny.

Meriel's bff Nell she is awesome! I loved the relationship between them..

"I'VE got something." Nell walked into Meriel's office. "Really now? Can you clear it up with a cream?"

Nell's serious face fell and she snorted. "Ha! Thank God William used a rubber before me. No creams needed, though dude, my mother happily informed me yesterday that I'm going to leak. Super glad I told her I was pregnant." Meriel moved back. "Like how?" Nell laughed. "Thank God for you, Meriel Owen. Milk. From my boobs. Though you can leak amniotic fluid. Which, ew."

I Loved it so much i would totally re read again, like all Miss Danes Work!!

Loved everything about this book,I havent read a fantastic witch book in so long and i just love lauren dane but this was perfect. love the feeling you get when you read something so good you cant put it down,she had me smiling and laughing and swooning over Dom,I can not wait till June so we can read about Simon and Lark!! Loved it.

Melindeeloo says

3.5 stars -I liked Heart of Darkness, this is a nicely steamy read, but even though there is a 'bond' which establishes an intense immediate connection to draw the leads together there is a solid reason for them to hold off a bit and that builds the sensual tension nicely and gives them - and us- a chance to know each better before the smexiness ensues. Both the leads are good Meriel is strong, magickally powerful, intelligent, and sensual - basically everything you'd want in a leading lady and Dominic is gorgeous, a bit dangerous, with loads of magical potential and just a touch of vulnerability - so a perfect match for her.

Since Dominic is not part of the formal clan portion of the witch world his introduction to the way things work, works well to bring us up to speed on the universe of the series, with hereditary witches, magik with a 'k', shifters, mages and turned witches. And there is a bit of a background story to give the pair something to deal with outside of their numerous steamy times together.

So bottom line... Heart of Darkness was a 'choose it or lose it' pull off the TBR pile and I liked it well enough

to 'choose' to read the next one.

Cecile says

I am not new to Ms. Dane's work, that I can say. However, what I can't say enough of is how much of a wonderful story teller Ms. Dane is. She is an Ace above the rest and this new series will show you just that. She will cast a spell on you that will make you fall in love with the story she has crafted for you. You will become completely mesmerized by this tale of the world of the witches she has brewed up. This is not your Mama's story of witches... In fact, Ms Lauren makes those stories look like dust in the wind.

This is a fabulous start to a brand new series and I am fortunate that I got an early peek in that world and believe me..... Now I am going to try to cast my own spell to have the next book in my hands~ right now. It is just that good. I am looking in my scurry bowl.... I will have it one day.....

Let me give you a peek into the world of The Owen Clan... This is a powerful group of witches. But they are not your normal soft, sweet cuddly little witches that only come out for Halloween. Nope, not these women! These women kick some serious ass with just one flick of their finger. I tap on computer keys with my fingertips in hopes of bringing to life what their story did to me, and with one of their fingers they could bring down a few buildings or maybe a city or two if they truly wanted. These women are not just women, they are woven into each other and their mother Earth and they are not a group you want to piss off. Meriel Owen is the daughter to the most powerful witch around the world.... Edwina Owen. Also, better known as The Owen Clan.

Meriel has the weight of the world on her shoulders or should I say she has big shoes to fill. She has been raised all her life to take over the reigns of The Owen Clan when her mother is ready to pass it down to her. Meriel is a phenomenal witch, but what caught my heart is how devoted she is to her clan. It goes beyond that though, because Meriel not only wants to protect the witches within her clan, but she wants to protect, educate and join forces with those that are not in a clan. So, she doesn't just look out for her own.... But for others as well. And let me tell you one thing about Meriel.... You do not want to piss her off or mess with any of her witches. Because when you do.... Ohhhh wow, the fury she would bring down on you - you would not survive. She is a strong woman, independent to the core with her life in front of her... Until one night.... in the Heart of Darkness.... Her life will change... Will it be for the better... or for the worst... Only way to find out... Because that faithful night is when she meets the man that will forever be branded in her heart.....

Dominic.... Is a man that not many people have the pleasure of getting to know. He tends to keep to himself, but being the owner of Heart of Darkness kinda puts him out there for all to see. And believe me, I WOULD LOVE TO SEE HIM! He takes pride in what he offers to his clientele. Not only a place to let loose for the evening but also allowing a sense of privacy to those that enter the doors... However, it takes a lot of magick to keep certain doors hidden from the eyes of the humans because his club not only caters to the human world... but also to the Other world. He uses his own magick and some stolen magick to keep that part of the club hidden. Because even though most of the paranormal creatures have come out in the world... some witches are still kind of hiding out... But when a certain clan gets wind of Dominic stealing their magick.... Well, let's just say there is always a price to pay for what you steal and the price Dominic will pay... may cost him more than he bargained for

These two people will give you an awesome story; because alone, they are great... but together, they are explosive. To watch what they can do - alone and together... is just spell bonding! But then you factor in

their friends and family and this is one kick ass story.

Ms Dane created characters that you will find yourself cheering along, characters that will break your heart and mend it back up with a quick little spell. You will find characters that will make you fall in love and dream of that kind of bond. Characters that you will want to bitch slap into tomorrow. Characters that will simply bring you the best damn story ever!!! Ms. Dane created a story that simply rocked my world. Witches, spells, werewolves, greed, power, and passion are brewing up a storm in this book... and just wait till some of those combine together.... WOW....

Ms Lauren, I commend you on a job very well done. You have pushed all the buttons of a romantic reader, you have triggered all the desires for the paranormal creatures and you have delivered one hellva story! One I cannot wait to watch grown into more stories to come! Believe me, this is a story that you will want to read and maybe even re-read. It is just that good.... Scratch that... It is just that freaking good! This story will enchant you all the way to the last page....

And just in case you are wondering.... This is book two...

did you hear my spell working to get book here now... in my hands...

Sarah says

3.5 Stars

Meriel is a coven witch and has been raised knowing that one day she will take over the role of running the Owen clan from her mother. As the future leader Meriel has to live up to her mother's high expectations of her which she doesn't always find easy and their relationship is quite strained at times. Before she can take over her place at the head of the clan she must become a full council member and she is unable to do that until she has met and joined with her bond-mate.

As they discover that witches across the country, both coven members and ones that prefer to go it alone, are disappearing Meriel's mother puts her in charge of the investigation. Meriel must find a way to work with other clans and lone witches to find out exactly what is happening and put a stop to it. She has also been given the task of contacting nightclub owner Dominic. It appears he has moved into the area and tapped into the Owen clan's magick without requesting permission and Meriel must get him to either join the clan or disconnect him from their magick supply.

Now I have to admit that I was a bit confused by some of the world building in Heart of Darkness. I'm not 100% sure how the clans share their magic, how bond-mates work and I was left with a few other questions too but I don't know if that is because some of these have been answered in a different series? This is the first book I've read by Lauren Dane and I did wonder if this is a spin off to one of her other series but I can't seem to find any confirmation of that on her website. Possibly because of my confusion I did find the story was a little slow moving at times, I was interested in the world but I seemed to spend a lot of time waiting for something to happen. The book probably could have been trimmed down quite a bit and been made into a much faster read and I think I would have enjoyed it more if it had been.

Having said that I did still enjoy the book. I really liked both of the main characters and I was pleased that they didn't immediately jump into a full on relationship despite the obvious chemistry between them and the

fact that they are bond-mates. They took time to get to know each other properly and I enjoyed seeing them spend time together doing the things that normal couples do like going on a dinner date. Meriel is a strong woman who proved over and over again that she will be a force to be reckoned with as leader of the Clan. Dominic was an alpha who likes to be in control but he was also prepared to learn from Meriel where she had so much more magick experience than he did.

I really liked the relationships between Meriel and her best friend Nell and Dominic with his business partner Simon. Simon is a shape shifter and a character I want to see more of so I was pleased to discover the next book in the series is focused on him. Heart of Darkness is the start of a series that has a lot of potential and I'm looking forward to reading Chaos Burning when it releases in the summer. I'll also be checking out some of Lauren Dane's back list when I've reduced my to read pile a bit.

Lady Lioness says

I will likely post a review at my blog closer to time of publication.

Quick note, though, this book works as a stand-alone, but characters from some of Dane's previous books are mentioned in passing, as they are all set in the same world. While not strictly necessary, I recommend you read What Happens In Vegas...After Dark, and the de La Vega Cat books if you have the time and/or money. Failure to do so won't detract from Heart of Darkness, but knowledge of these characters will add an extra layer of satisfaction.

Amanda says

When I read romance novels--whether they're paranormal or contemporary or historical or WHATEVER--I live for the tension between characters. That build up, that fight against the attraction, the explosiveness of finally giving in. The romance itself is the main plot arc.

But that wasn't the case with Heart of Darkness, and for me it overshadowed the rest of the story.

Don't get me wrong: there was plenty of sexin' it up and gettin' down and dirty. But the falling for each other part happened quickly, with ease, and it left the remaining pages devoted to what happens with Dominic's mom. Which was interesting. And cool. But not what I was looking for when I picked up the book, so in some ways, my own expectations defeated me.

That said, I think the Bound by Magick world is intriguing and I like Clan Owen, the witches, and the general paranormal structure. I've heard the second book is smokin' and I intend to continue with the series.

The thing about tension between characters is that we begin to learn about who they are through their struggles--against themselves, their world, and the people around them. I find that this was most lacking for me--that though I liked Meriel and Dominic, they spent more time telling each other how important they were to the other rather than letting me get to know them. Because Dominic struggled more, his character is a bit more defined. But still not quite what I was expecting or looking for.

However. I'm intrigued. I want to know more. I want to see how this world expands and unfolds because I've

read just enough to be intrigued, but not enough to have it all figured out. And I like that.
