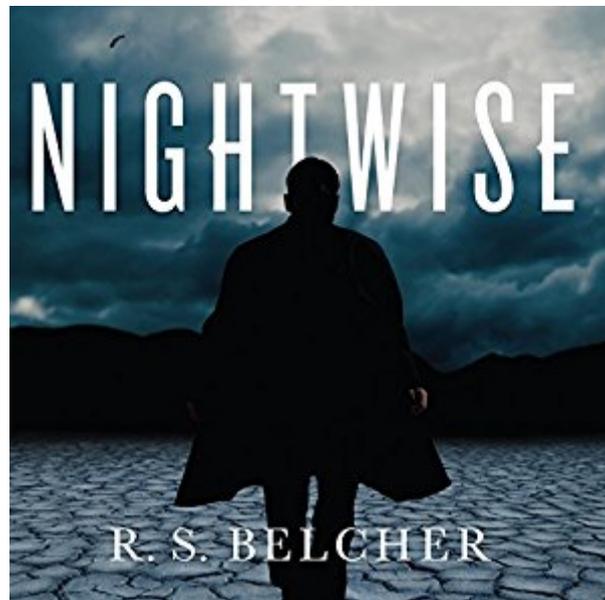


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Nightwise



Synopsis

R.S. Belcher, the acclaimed author of *The Six-Gun Tarot* and *The Shotgun Arcana*, launches a gritty new urban fantasy series set in today's seedy occult underworld in *Nightwise*. In the more shadowy corners of the world, frequented by angels and demons and everything in between, Laytham Ballard is a legend. It's said he raised the dead at the age of 10, stole the Philosopher's Stone in Vegas back in 1999, and survived the bloodsucking kiss of the Mosquito Queen. Wise in the hidden ways of the night, he's also a cynical bastard who stopped thinking of himself as the good guy a long time ago. Now a promise to a dying friend has Ballard on the trail of an escaped Serbian war criminal with friends in both high and low places - and a sinister history of blood sacrifices. Ballard is hell-bent on making Dusan Slorzack pay for his numerous atrocities, but Slorzack seems to have literally dropped off the face of the Earth, beyond the reach of his enemies, the Illuminati, and maybe even the devil himself. To find Slorzack, Ballard must follow a winding, treacherous path that stretches from Wall Street and Washington, DC, to backwoods hollows and truck stops while risking what's left of his very soul....

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Last year, I read and enjoyed R.S. Belcher's first two books (*The Six-Gun Tarot* and *The Shotgun Arcana*). So I was excited to see that he had a new book coming out. *Nightwise* is something of a departure from the previous works, although I see quite a few commonalities. This is a fairly dark book, and it mixes all sorts of mythologies and magical systems from around the world. We hear

about the chakras and kabbalah. We meet Japanese mystical creatures. Various conspiracies involving the Templars and the Illuminati, as well as 9/11, are touched on. Historical figures and events also figure in -- the war in Bosnia, Timothy Leary's experiments with LSD, and more. But this is totally what I've come to expect from Belcher and, although it sounds a little crazy when I just list it, it actually all works together. As an aside, Belcher is quite good at taking something that is true or real (say, Chuck E. Cheese or the death of Kurt Cobain) and adding enough fictional details to *almost* have you going for a minute. His tone is believable -- he sounds sure of himself -- and that makes it work. The writing style is firmly in the noir fiction camp. There are some real gems in there (the part about Chuck E. Cheese stands out in my memory, and you will encounter it fairly early on in the book). It fits the tone and it tells you a lot about the main character, since this is a book told from a first person POV. Sex, violence, drug use, and four-letter words all figure in this novel. I didn't find any of it gratuitous because it fit the world and the characters. Those elements helped set the mood of the novel and would have been conspicuous by their absence, had they not been there. But if those sorts of things bother you, you have been forewarned.

This was a very strong entry in the urban fantasy genre. The story opened with action, launched directly into action, without providing buildup and background, and continued to press forward with action until the end. Laytham Ballard is a wizard in a gritty urban noir world. He has been asked by a dying former partner to kill the Serbian general who killed his wife. Ballard takes up the quest, and we are then thrown into author R. S. Belcher's world. It is a gritty world and Ballard seems to be deep into the BDSM lifestyle. I found this an off-putting feature, but except for a couple of scenes it remained largely in the background. On the other hand, offputting or not, the bondage subculture element provided something that differentiated this story from others and I wondered if the discipline of magic required a disciplining of the body; at least, there was a situation that Laytham found himself in that suggested that a lot of pain tolerance might be required for wizarding. There are other elements of this book that caught my fancy. For example, this was irrelevant to the story but caught my imagination: "Yeah, dude has trained himself to reach a heightened state of creative visualization while on LSD. He's a seventh-brain adept, a neurogenic alchemist. He works his magic with a computer while he's tripping his balls off," Grinner said. "I know what an Acidmancer is," I said. "I just didn't think they existed anymore. They were Timothy Leary's Knights of the Round Table. There were eight of them, hand-picked, one for each of the Eight Circuits of Consciousness Leary discovered. I just thought they all died in San Francisco, fighting Charles Manson's nightmare Tulpas in the Helter Skelter War in 1969." Belcher, R. S.

(2015-08-18). Nightwise (p. 92).

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales (<http://darkfaerietales.com/>) Quick & Dirty: Dark, gritty urban fantasy. The description of the world and magic system is overly technical and the main character is really hard to connect with. For fans who like the really dark side of urban fantasy. Opening Sentence: The banker was crucified on the wall of his Wall Street office, fountain pens rammed through both wrists, an Armani Jesus. The Review: The synopsis is completely accurate when it says that this novel is a "gritty" and "seedy" urban fantasy. Nightwise is a trip to the dark side of humanity which includes a cold, hard look that the government has been tangling with our minds since the creation of the U.S. government. All with the use of magic! This novel took me some time to get into it, only because of how the character acted, but I did find this world quite genius. Laytham Ballard is basically a rock star in the magical community. He is the one that you would call if you want some kind of spell broken or a magical artifact found. Laytham's dying friend, Boj, wants to cash in on a favor that Laytham owes. Boj wants Laytham to kill the man that killed his wife at a Bosnian war camp. The only problem is that no one can seem to find Dusan Slorzack. He is hiding very well. And the clock is ticking for Boj. Laytham must find Dusan before Boj dies. Laytham's journey takes him to New York City, Washington D.C., Virginia and Chicago, meeting up with his equally strange friends in order to find Dusan. In his journey, he is attacked by some strange and terrible creatures. Laytham believes the Illuminate are behind Dusan's disappearance and in his investigations he discovers a deeper government conspiracy.

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Nightwise

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