



## Blackfoot

*W.R. Gingell*

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Bad luck is the least of their worries...

Annabel has never wanted a cat. She certainly didn't want a secretive, sarcastic black cat who takes over her pillow and makes remarks that no one else ever seems to hear. Despite that, Blackfoot manages to slink into her life like a small, furry shadow.

Now Annabel and her friend Peter are being over-run by cats. More and more arrive each day, turning up at the old castle ruins where Annabel and Peter spend most of their time. And some of those cats aren't as...friendly...as Blackfoot.

When someone tries to kill Annabel and a spell goes very badly wrong, they find themselves trapped in the castle ruins, which are now growing back at an alarming rate. Even more alarming is the fact that the person who tried to kill Annabel is rapidly gaining control over the magical ruins.

Worst of all, Blackfoot knows more than he's telling, and what he's not telling could be enough to get them all killed.

## **Blackfoot Details**

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Author : W.R. Gingell

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## From Reader Review Blackfoot for online ebook

### Hail says

I did not enjoy this book as much as **Masque**. I felt there was a lot of bickering and after so long it was a little off putting. I also felt I would have understood more if I had read **Spindle** first; which I think I would like to read. There were a lot of "*I'll explain later*" moments.

I still enjoyed the book's atmosphere; I would say it's similar to Terry Pratchett, only not as savvy.

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### Aristae Henricus says

#### Loved it!

Confusing start, but a few chapters in and I couldn't stop reading. A stubborn, mysterious girl, a snarky cat, a know-it-all boy and a castle ruin with a mind of its own, this story kept me reading until way into the morning on several nights. Love the characters and the setting reminded me of a "castle" ruin I played in as a little girl. Thank you for a good story and for jogging pleasant memories, W.R. Gingell. I look forward to reading more stories by you.

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### Denae Christine says

**Reader thoughts:** It wasn't as heart-pounding awesome as some of the other Gingell books, but I still really liked it. With Gingell books, you have to realize you won't understand every detail, not even at the end of the book. Some things just work that way (unmagic? castles that grow? characters that suddenly understand things better than the reader?).

Annabel was such a neat character. I have so many questions, even now! Like, how did she get caught by the witch in the first place? What's the point of the string? She grew so much, too. I loved seeing her go from a timid, stand-offish girl who pretends to be an idiot to a pro-active thinker/planner. I didn't really care about her, though, not the way I did for Poly and Rose and Isabella and Rafiq. Maybe Annabel wasn't in danger enough or surrounded by enough characters for me to really sympathize with her.

Peter and his tickerboxes made me think Peter and Nan were Poly's parents. I thought this for most of the book. Maybe they still are, but I can't remember what Poly's parents' names were, and it never connected that way. I really ought to reread Spindle and see if I can make more connections with it fresher on my mind.

The castle was amazing! It sort of had a mind of its own (like Castle Glower in Tuesdays at the Castle). It wasn't just moving hallways, but growing and revealing things and piggybacking on spells. Some was Rorkin or Mordion, but I like to think the castle itself was thinking.

#### Favorite quotes:

"Instead, there was only dense, impenetrable darkness, soft and inclined to swallow sound." (This is a great example of some of the what-a-cool-description-but-I'm-not-sure-I-really-know-what-that-means moments in Gingell's books.)

"Thinking was somewhat addictive." (Nan's mind is waking up! I think this, too, irony intended.)

"Then I'll sit here, and I'll just start erasing." (I love magic pencils!)

"I'm always careful," said Peter with greater confidence than accuracy. (This one sentence describes him so well.)

"You're still trying to do it all by yourself and being worried that you won't be able to do it properly because you're not strong enough." (How often we all do this. We try to rely too much on ourselves and then stress out because we just can't do it all.)

**Writer thoughts:** There were so few characters in this book. How did WRG make it all work?

First, there were basically 2 bad guys, 1 MC, 2 good sidekicks, a mother, and a castle. The last chapter held three more, but they don't really count. All the main pieces are in place. We have a character as antagonist, a character as protagonist, and all the supporting foils to make our MC grow into the hero.

The biggest struggle with a small cast, I think, would finding the right setting. Most places have so many people that authors would have to go out of their way to make the story avoid all those characters. Not so when you plunk the MC in a magically sealed off castle.

The biggest benefit here is that each character means more to the story. Also, Annabel gets to carry on some good conversations with herself since she doesn't have as many people around her to talk to all the time.

The real question should be, why do other books need MORE characters?

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### **Tessa says**

Okay, this one was a bit less fabulous than its predecessor, but it still had magnificence in other areas.

#### **PROS:**

- There was an interesting trio of a girl, her best friend, and a cat who kind of pushed and shoved his way into her life. Annabel had a lot of doubts and uncertainties while still managing to, uh, manage the male members of the group. She had a good head on her shoulders, even if she only used it when nudged. There was quite a bit of growth for her. Peter was a character who came off as abrasive, but who deeply cares nonetheless. And Melchior. We got a bit of him in Spindle and now we get to see what happens to him. He was wonderfully sarcastic and mocking and, if it wasn't obvious, my favorite character.
- There was also a castle that was rebuilding itself, a side-effect of time going wonky.
- A wonderful pencil.

#### **CONS:**

- Alas, there are some. The storyline confused me a bit. I couldn't understand what exactly was going on. What the driving factors were. That may be partially because I still don't have the magic system figured out. It also dragged a bit in places and, I admit, I skimmed said dragging places.
- There were some plot points I wanted followed, such as Annabel's parents, the witch, and a few others.

But overall, a generally enjoyable book. Still the quirky writing style and world I fell in love with in the first

one.

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### **Lara says**

Wellllll, I mostly enjoyed this, sometimes a lot. But something about the ending kind of ruined it for me--I feel like Gingell was trying so hard to tie all the characters together, but not really explaining things well. Like, how does Poly know Peter again? I just read Spindle, so it seems like I would remember that, but I don't. It just lost all sense of flow.

There are also a LOT of typos--words missing, words repeated, extra words that don't belong, wrong words, and at one point Annabel calls someone by name before she's actually learned what his name is. So I feel like this book could have used a little more editing.

I also got real tired of Peter and Blackfoot and EVERY SINGLE PERSON THAT ANNABEL MET making fun of her weight. Blackfoot's nice about it one time, but other than that it's constant! I love how she handles it, but it made me dislike pretty much everyone besides her.

That said, I am looking forward to the next book for sure!

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### **Ann Brookens says**

#### **Loved it!**

Annabel, Peter and Blackfoot are well-written, interesting characters and their personal journey was intriguing. A thoroughly enjoyable book! I hope we will eventually get the further adventures of Annabel. This is Two Monarchies Book 2; be sure to read Spindle first (book 1 in the sequence), then Blackfoot, then Masque (which is an un-numbered book in the series, taking place when Annabel is an adult, although not about Annabel). That way you will know who everyone is.

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### **Sylvia Mercedes says**

This is another book I read a few months ago but haven't taken time to sit down and actually review. So this is a quick making-up-for-lost-time review!

If you've been following my reviews for any length of time, you'll know that Gingell is one of my new favorite authors. She writes sort-of fairy tale retellings (as in, you can see the inspiration stemming from the original fairy tale, but the stories she tells are COMPLETELY unique), and she writes them with such a completely one-of-a-kind style that somehow is completely addictive to me. I don't know that everyone would react to her writing the way I do, but . . . if you are at ALL a fan of Diana Wynne Jones, you absolutely should read Gingell. Gingell isn't the same as Jones, but she's got a ineffable *je ne sais quoi* that reminds of that great Mistress of Fantasy.

As to the story of *Blackfoot* itself--this is a twisty-turny adventure involving time travel and evil wizards and clever sentient cats (with secrets) and one stubborn little girl. It took me a while to figure out Annabel's age--but I'm pretty sure she's fourteen. She's a very YOUNG fourteen, so she feels like a child a lot of the time. But . . . she's a lot smarter and braver than even she likes to admit, and while it may take a little while for readers to warm to the idea of her as heroine, she totally comes into her own by the end of the story. (Again, very much like a Diana Wynne Jones heroine.)

This story is complicated, for sure . . . and even by the time I got to the end of it, I wasn't ENTIRELY certain I understood everything that took place. But in a weird sort of way, that didn't MATTER to me. I enjoyed every moment of what I was reading, so even if I ended the book a tiny bit confused, who cares? I'm just as addicted to Gingell's style as ever, just as bound to pick up my next Gingell read as soon as I can, just as likely to recommend her work to my friends!

So, yes. Wonderful book by an amazing author. And I compulsively read the sequel immediately after, so watch for that review coming soon!

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### **Jenny Koch says**

I spent a good portion of this book trying to place the lead characters and figure out how this book was related to the first two books in the series. This book was different from the previous two - the heroine is only 14, incredibly passive, and does a terrifyingly great impression of (in her words) "a stupid cow." It sounds awful but the heroine does redeem herself and find her voice and inner strength before the end. Also, unlike the previous books, there is also no romance in this book (she's 14 and very young mentally). There was several parts of the book (the sections about magic and its nature in particular) that were so convoluted that I still have no idea what happened or how it happened - but overall I liked this book. It was different and I love the author's writing style so it all worked well enough for me.

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### **Eric Bertone says**

#### **A little confusing, but still entertaining**

After spindle, I really liked the aloof style of the writing that took a while before you knew what was happening, not to mention Poly and luck. This story follows Annabel, Blackfoot, and a little bit of Peter. While still am entertaining continuation, it had less magic and I wasn't as into Annabel's story. I'm holding higher hopes for the next book in the series as the ending is where everything started happening.

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### **Caitlin says**

It took me a while to warm up to these characters. Annabel isn't perhaps very bright, and acts even less bright in self defense, leading her into passivity by habit. Peter and Blackfoot are very intelligent, but prone to lying and sarcasm.

But Annabel redeems herself, learning the limits of her skills, figuring things out, out maneuvering her problems. And Peter and Blackfoot, well, they remain a bit scoundrel-like, but unrepentantly so, with some

good intentions. I didn't read these stories in the proper order, which added to my confusion, but there are some bits that are convoluted regardless. Overall, though, it's at turns funny and gripping, and I'm curious to see where it's going next.

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## Michelle says

I love this book, where to start with my review? I guess I'll start with a short synopsis for speculative readers.

This book takes place roughly 5 years after *Spindle*. It is important to not only read *Spindle* first, but to also read the books close together so that you can catch all of the references and whatnot that tie everything together. As a baby, Annabel is fiercely protected by her family. A spell is always wrapped around her wrist to "dampen" the magical (or perhaps unmagical) aura that Annabel gives off that will make her a target to unscrupulous magic users everywhere. Unfortunately, as a toddler, Annabel becomes lost, and then is stolen away by an evil witch who raises her, and I use the term "raise" loosely. The witch is abusive, as most evil witches are, and uses Annabel as an ingredient in her spells. Annabel copes with her unhappy life by playing the idiot. Her only real sources of happiness are her cocksure and rather condescending friend Peter, and her sarcastic talking cat, Blackfoot. When Annabel turns 14 a whole new set of trouble comes up. Cats start appearing around the old castle ruins where she and Peter play, and one particularly nasty non-cat shows up at the evil witch's cottage. Blackfoot, Peter, and Annabel are forced to fight for their lives against an evil leech of a wizard. Along the way they discover more than they want to about queenships, betrayal, and time-travel...

Now, that is a very tame description of this **HILARIOUS** and clever book. I love Gingell's voice. Her stories have Personality with a capital "P," with the type of wit and depth that reminds me of Terry Pratchett. Half way through this book I realized it had been too long since I read the first book, so I went back and re-read *Spindle* before finishing and that really helped me put things together. It also reminded me how much I **LOVE** *Spindle*. I read a lot of books. Most books I read are pretty good, they make me happy and all that jazz, but *Spindle* brings me palpable joy. I think, as an author, if you can make someone feel something like that, then you've made it. I'm going to have to write another review of *Spindle* just because it was **SOOOO** good this second time around. Better even than the first! Luck and Poly are the best couple. Anyway, this review is supposed to be about Blackfoot, so I'll get back to that.

Blackfoot is just as clever and fun a book as Gingell's others. The character of Blackfoot is wonderfully fun. He and Annabel's growth are particularly interesting. I really felt for Annabel and the way she molded herself to fit the disappointing life she'd been thrust into. I enjoy the fact that all of Gingell's heroines feel reasonable. They "become" rather than just "are." Something else I love about Gingell's books, I always have to highlight sections that make me either laugh out loud or that make me really think. They're not as good out of context, but here are just a few gems from Blackfoot:

- "managing to stretch in an entirely sarcastic manner..."
- "Strong magic isn't necessarily better than crafty magic..."
- "I'm so sorry to have saved your life. It must be very difficult for you to bear."
- "Oh, this is hard," said Blackfoot, "There are so many biting comments to be made here."
- "I suspect you're overestimating my love for sausages," said Blackfoot. "Not to mention underestimating my love of being superior."
- "Also, why are you flirting with me? I'm fourteen. That's disgusting."

-(This was a particularly Terry Pratchett-ish line:

"If it's a pencil, it should be allowed to be sure about it!" "Yes, but it's awfully suspicious for a pencil to be so sure it's a pencil."

- "And tell your cat to stop smirking at me." -- "Oh heaven. How dreadful. My face has betrayed me."

- "I'm not clever enough to get distracted by other important things."

And now, after this review, I have a question and a sort-of rant that you **SHOULD NOT** read if you have not read the book yet because it has major **\*SPOILERS\***

Okay, so who is Poly's mom? I went in thinking that Peter and Annabel were Poly's parents, then, like I mentioned earlier, I got half way through the book and decided to go back and re-read Spindle and I realized that Poly's mom's name is Glenna. Also, when I got to the end of Blackfoot, it became obvious that Poly recognized Peter as her father but not Annabel as her mother. I felt like my whole life was a lie at that point. I'm kind of glad that Peter and Annabel don't end up together because even with the growth that he has here and there he really isn't good enough for her/to her (in my opinion). I kind of want Annabel to end up with Melchoir. He's such a good and interesting character and they mesh nicely, but I'm unsure if that's creepy since he's been around her as she was growing up. Plus, Melchoir totally deserves some true love. Every time he recapped his story with "the love of my life kissing another man" my heart broke a little for him.

Edit: (OMG fangirling moment of happiness!!!!) Masque was the first book I read and it's been SO long that I didn't remember any character connections between it and this series. From a hint given by another reader, I checked back in Masque to find my characters and I am SO happy with how things turn out!

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### **Intisar Khanani says**

One of the things I love about Gingell is she experiments--her characters vary by age, by background, by culture from book to book, so you never quite know what to expect. Blackfoot features a much different age-bracket from the characters we met in Spindle and Masque -- Annabelle and Peter are still kids, on the edge of adulthood but not quite there yet, perhaps thirteen or so? (It probably says in the book, I'm just sleep deprived.)

This story contains another puzzle at its heart, much like Masque and Spindle, and just as different in form as those two are from each other. In an attempt to escape a cold-blooded villain, Annabelle and Peter, along with the eponymous cat Blackfoot, end up in the enchanted remains of a castle that is slowly rebuilding itself. As the villain attempts to get in to them, Annabelle must continuously reconstruct what is happening around her and why, and find a way to keep herself and her friends safe--not an easy task when your mode of survival up till now has been to sit quiet and play dumb. I enjoyed watching Annabelle come into herself, and while I regularly wanted to smack Peter, so did Blackfoot, so at least I had a character to commiserate with.

Overall, a fun read with a great number of twists and turns.

Actual Rating 3.5

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## **Stephani Austin says**

### **Love it!**

This has been on my to read list for a while. I'm so glad I was able to grab it. It's taking my mind a bit to follow all the twisty turns of the plot line and the characters that I recognize from before. I am excited to read the next book!

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## **Rebeka says**

Anything with cats and castles is bound to be fun. And this was very, very fun. So happy to see a plus-sized heroine who doesn't have to lose weight to save the day. The other characters weren't always kind to her but she learns her own strength and she is so loveable in a quiet, sneaks-up-on-you way. No romance in this one but friendships galore!

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## **Andree says**

2.5 stars, but I rounded up, mostly because of how this sets up the third book.

Look, I see what this book is trying to do, and I get why it's doing it. Annabel is seriously hiding/shielding herself in this book, and she needs some serious prodding to knock herself out of the self-deprecating shell she's crafted for herself (with good reason, I might point out - given that she was kidnapped by an evil witch as a child who uses her in spells). But the first half of this book is way too much of everyone insulting Annabel. It's to the extent that originally I thought Blackfoot was the villain of the piece.

I mean, there's a sarcastic personality and then there's just cruelty. And some sarcasm would have been okay, but there's just not enough of anything else, especially given what Annabel's life up until this point has been.

The second half evens out a bit, but I was not so much a fan of this one. I am choosing to think of it as a set-up book for the third one in this series.

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