



## Sworn to the Night

*Craig Schaefer*

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Marie Reinhart is an NYPD detective on the trail of a serial killer. When she sleeps, though, she dreams of other lives; she dreams of being a knight, in strange wars and strange worlds. On the other side of the city, Nessa Roth is a college professor trapped in a loveless marriage, an unwilling prop in a political dynasty. She's also a fledgling witch, weaving puppets and tiny spells behind closed doors.

When Marie's case draws her into Nessa's path, sparks fly. What comes next is more than a furtive whirlwind affair; it's the first pebbles of an avalanche. Nessa and Marie are the victims of a curse that has pursued them across countless lifetimes; a doom designed to trap them in a twisted living fairy tale, with their romance fated to end in misery and death.

They aren't going out without a fight. As they race to uncover the truth, forces are in motion across the country. In Las Vegas, a professional thief is sent on a deadly heist. In a Detroit back alley, witches gather under the guidance of a mysterious woman in red. Just outside New York, an abandoned zoo becomes the hunting-ground for servants of a savage and alien king. The occult underground is taking sides and forming lines of battle. Time is running out, and Nessa and Marie have one chance to save themselves, break the curse, and demand justice.

This time, they're writing their own ending.

## **Sworn to the Night Details**

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## From Reader Review Sworn to the Night for online ebook

### Mark says

An finalist in the spfbo2018, a poor confusing start, well for me anyway.

But when you get past the first 20%, the characters come into the exceedingly lovely well written world building.

Nicely done with the female characters, I am, MIND very keen to see the friend come into the story more, she seems to me more interesting than the other characters.

Highly recommended urban fantasy.

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### Luke Sweetser says

**I've read all his works. This is by far the best yet.**

Wow, where did the depth come from Mr. Schaefer? Loved this work and it far excels in depth, nuance, and shades of grey over his other novels which I've read and thoroughly enjoyed. As an aside, I liked how he wove in faust, roth, calypso, harmony, etc without you needing to know this characters for the story to flow. Made it seem like a judge through the 4th to the reader from the author. Laughed out loud about "not enjoying the fictional, fictional killing floor by Carolyn". Way to go with this in-depth paranormal, noir, murder mystery morality play, passionate love story novel. Keep 'em coming!

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### Elena says

My first, emotional reaction to **Sworn to the Night**, first entry in the new Craig Schaefer's trilogy **The Wisdom's Grave**, which places itself at the point of convergence of *all* the author's other series (yes, his epic fantasy one, too) was pretty much this:

If nothing else, for the sheer awesomeness of what Schaefer means to achieve with his latest work, which aims to be the place where all of his various series meet and go *boom*. But the scope of the author's ambition - albeit exciting and something that, as a fan, I'm ultimately very much looking forward to see happening - is what, I think, prevented *Sworn to the Night* to truly shine.

Schaefer has to juggle with a massive cast, part of which some of his readers already know from his previous books, while new readers will meet (almost) everyone here for the first time: so the author has to put every character in place for *this* story to work while making sure the overall storyline he's sketching makes sense for his old readers and is intriguing enough for the new ones. And also, you know, get on with this new story.

Not an easy feat, to be sure, and one that Schaefer only partially manages to pull off. I say "partially"

because despite my complains Sworn to the Night is still a better urban fantasy than 93% of the rest out there - and a very enjoyable read even outside the boundaries of its genre. I mean, Craig Schaefer is an excellent writer, period. But this book had to meet too many expectations and it shows. The problems, in my opinion, were essentially two: the overall pace and the villains.

❶ When I said that Schaefer has to put his characters in place, I meant it literally: so he has, for example, to drag Daniel Faust all the way from Las Vegas to wherever he must go to do whatever he must do. This maneuvering takes time, actual pages where you read who's where, doing what and why. I understand it's unavoidable and, to be fair, Schaefer manages to make every scene an interesting one - but that's what they felt like, scenes. There were places where Sworn to the Night felt more like a storyboard than a book.

❷ I wrote in my review for Winter's Reach that Schaefer writes villains like no other. Well... it wasn't the case with Sworn to the Night's baddies. These people are just vile. They are the kind of filth you just want to see crushed and destroyed: they didn't make for a particularly interesting read and yet Schaefer gave them *a lot* of attention, going as far as granting each of them his/her own POV. The problem is that being in their minds didn't change a thing: once you've established a character like a mindlessly cruel, bloodthirsty psychopath, it doesn't really matter if he has a secret crush in his old-time buddy, if he has daddy issues or if she'd sacrifice anything in the name of science. I mean, who cares? It's not as if by tossing us such tidbits these characters gain any real depth.

That said, there's much to like in Sworn to the Night: the usual blend of genres that Schaefer excels at mixing up - thriller, pulp, horror, action, romance, mystery, fantasy - it's here and the author makes it all work perfectly together: you'll find yourself sucker-punched more than once, thinking you were reading a certain type of story and finding yourself going in a completely different direction. And, villains aside, Schaefer proves once again what a master he is when it comes to write three dimensional, complex characters: Nessa and Marie are a spectacular pair (even though the very nature of their dom/sub relationship is a big pet peeve of mine) and I can't wait to read where their story is going. Now that most of the major players are in position, I'm sure #2 in the trilogy will make for a truly exciting ride.

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### **Steve Isenhower says**

Outstanding! I thought it was a little slow in the beginning probably because I didn't read the Revanche Cycle books. When Nessa and Marie meet in this one, wow, the storyline really took off. Great book and great start to a new series!

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### **Kristen says**

Full review is here, on my blog!~

This book follows Marie Reinhart, who is an NYPD detective investigating the disappearance/murders of several prostitutes. She's put on administrative leave due to a shootout along the way, but despite that, she can't stop investigating, because nobody seems to be as interesting in investigating as she is.

It's also the story of Vanessa Roth, a college professor and amateur artist who is married to a big time real estate magnate, and isn't very happy at all. She dabbles in witchcraft on the side, with various success.

Marie's investigation brings her into Nessa's path, and when the two of them meet, it's like they can't take their eyes off each other. Marie tends to have dreams where her and Nessa are together, but in other worlds and in other times.

At the same time, some shady shit is going down behind the scenes. A crazy brotherhood of demon-ish worshipers are hunting people in an abandoned zoo. A group of witches are causing shenanigans. A card-flinging sorcerer is tasked with retrieving an item of some importance. All while a new drug called Ink is making its way around New York, and nobody can figure out where it comes from.

I'm never expecting books to grab me right off the bat, but this one certainly did. Before I knew it, it was 5 hours into the audiobook and it was time to go home from work (yaaaay)! However, this said, I found that I liked the first half a lot more than the last half.

It was very well written, there's some great prose and fantastic imagery here, which made the world I imagined very dark and gritty, and so I was sucked right into the world, but I ended up faltering a lot in the second half of the book because characters I had liked in the first half became profoundly different in ways that I just didn't grab onto. So, I liked the world that was built up, but in the end... well I didn't really like the main characters by the end.

I liked Marie at first, the cop who goes above and beyond even the law to help those she feels are in need. As the story progressed, I found that she had lost a lot of what I liked about her when Nessa and she had started a relationship and Marie became suddenly very submissive to her. I didn't start out disliking Nessa exactly, but I didn't ever really like her by the end of the story. There is certainly merit in her overcoming being timid and submissive to become her true dominant and witchy self, but I found that this change was far too sudden for me, and was rather jarring. It wasn't the instalove that bothered me, as this story presented an actual reason for that, but Nessa was very suddenly 'you're mine and you do what I say' and Marie was suddenly 'yes, yes, anything for you'. I've no problem with a dom/sub relationship in a book, but if that was how it was going to go, I feel like there should have been more lead up to it than there was.

Perhaps there was more lead up to it though, in some of Schaefer's other novels. This book appears to be the culmination of a few different series by this author (don't worry, this series doesn't necessarily require that you've read them), in which characters in this series, including Nessa and Marie, have played a part. I think that I probably would have enjoyed this book more had I read the series that came before it. I would probably have understood the characters' motivations more.

I am a very character oriented person, and alas, we can't all love everyone... but one or two characters certainly stood out to me. My favorite example here is the inclusion of a eccentric and half-crazed scientist who is also a sorcerer (because magic is science) who can conjure up fractals by casting a spell using the Mandelbrot set. Daniel Faust was another character that was intriguing as hell to me, and I think I shall further investigate that series in the future, because he sounds like he leads a rather interesting life, and he had all kinds of snark to throw at people, and I do love me some snark.

The narrator, Susannah Jones, did a pretty good job. The narration was good, but the recording was sometimes a little iffy, in that I heard background noise once or twice which, as you can imagine sort of breaks up the flow to me. But, the narration was well done in general, and I didn't have a hard time staying engaged with the audiobook.

So, all told, I liked it but I didn't love it. There were definitely some cool and unique ideas presented here, and some lovely writing that told an interesting story, but I just could not like Nessa no matter what I did,

and considering how much Marie ends up liking Nessa, I just sort of crinkled my nose at that whole dynamic and ran with it. So it goes, as they say.

Given all that, I'd say that I had 7/10 stars of fun with this one. (Reminder that this is only my score, not the final Team Weatherwax score). Not my favorite finalist thusfar, but definitely worth the read especially if you like Urban Fantasy with some interesting magical and ritualistic elements.

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### **Cassandra Campbell says**

What can I say about this book? I like it. I like it a lot. May I say thank you for given me a couple that just happens to be the same gender that really works? The story was interesting, great dialog, and plausible interactions. I can't wait for the next in the series.

I am late to the Craig Schaefer universe and I started with his latest installment. This has caused me to start ready the Harmony Black series to see how all of these characters tie together. Daniel Faust will be next.

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### **Timy says**

*I didn't read this book as part of SPFBO, but since then it had become a finalist. My rating doesn't reflect FBR's final rating, which will be announced later as the final phase progresses.*

This review was published on my blog with a few extras :)

*I've got a copy from the author in exchange of an honest review.*

First of all, to read this book and/or trilogy you don't necessarily need to be familiar with Craig Schaefer's other series, but it can give an extra perspective if you've read his Daniel Faust or Harmony Black books (both characters will play a part in the events described in the Wisdom's Grave trilogy), but especially the Revanche Cycle, where Nessa and Marie appear as characters. I've only read two of his Daniel Faust books and I had no problem following the story, but it definitely added a bit of extra understanding to Daniel's character.

Sworn to the Night starts off as a regular detective novel. Marie Reinhart and Tony Fisher are trying to get to the end of a serial killing that's happening all over New York. The victims are prostitutes and aside from Marie no one thinks the murders are connected. She is determined to find the latest missing girl, Baby Blue and is convinced she'll be dead in two weeks if they don't save her. The evidence first lead to an Ink storage house in Monticello, then to a wealthy business man with connections, Richard Roth. This is where Marie meets Nessa Roth and her life turns upside down. She has to question everything she ever knew about herself or the world and has to pay the price for it.

*"My momma, she said there comes a time in everyone's life when the Lord gives you a test. That moment when you go up against the wall and you find out what you're really made of, deep down inside. It ain't about winning or losing, it's about learning. Because once you've seen the truth of what you are, you can't never run away from it." – Harlow*

Being the first book of a trilogy, *Sworn to the Night* was a really great set up for the rest of the series, but it also had its own story arc for which kudos to Schaefer. Which started out to be an interesting mix of mystery and urban fantasy, soon turned into total craziness. What seemed a simple serial murder, was in reality a fun activity for a pack of wealthy guys aiming to belong to the inner circle of the Network, with some rituals on the side. And a booming business of drug dealing, namely ink which spreads through America like a wildfire.

Meanwhile The Lady in Red, Dora and the Mourner set some events into motion to help Nessa discover her powers and also to bring into play Daniel Faust and Harmony Black. Their motives aren't quite clear yet, but there are still two more books to settle these matters. Another major player I need to mention is Savannah Cross, whom I feel will play an important role in the future. She is also a bit crazy, and has some cool equipment on her disposal.

*"That's the thing about life," Janine said. "Just when you think you've got it all figured out, you find out that it can always get weirder."*

How true. Now that we have most major players out of the way, let's focus a bit on our two main characters, Nessa and Marie. To be perfectly honest, I have conflicted feelings. On one hand their romance happens too fast, it's too close to insta-love for my taste, and that annoys me. It still has some build up, and I actually enjoyed reading about the way they get to know each other (the whole dinner scene where they share stories about their life is just pure awesomeness), the insecurity, all the thrilling and at the same time terrifying feelings that accompany a new relationship. I probably could sympathize with Marie the most in that situation. At the beginning Nessa seemed like a timid, intelligent but oppressed woman who only needed a little push, a surge of confidence to find herself. What she had become was nothing that I have expected, and I'm still not sure I like the way where this relationship heads. At the same time I can understand why Marie feels drawn to Nessa, her need to finally let the control go out of her hands a bit and allow herself to be spontaneous and wild, let go of the pressure of being the strong and dependable one. To allow herself to be vulnerable after a long time. And that takes courage. I know this all too well. Even so, subordinating herself completely is not something I can make my peace with, and don't think she will either in the long run.

*"I believe that we all have two faces. Our public face – the mask we wear, the persona we want the world to see – and our true face. The person we really are, when we're completely unguarded and our defenses are down. There is no greater intimacy than the truth, Marie. You can stand utterly nude before your lover and never show him anything at all. Nothing that truly matters. I know, I've done it. Your body isn't who you are." – Nessa*

*Sworn to the Night* has several plotlines and not every one of them gets an ending, but you still don't get that unfinished feeling when you turn the last page. Just anticipation and excitement to get your hands on the next book and learn what's going to happen. Which says a lot, especially since this book really has everything you can think of: a murder mystery, magic, super evil villains, a secret underground community which deals with a drug called ink, forbidden romance, countless dead (and mutilated) bodies, unforgettable scenes and a few twist you never see coming. A wonderfully intriguing and delightfully brutal story after which you won't be able to resist grabbing the sequel. Schaefer brings urban fantasy to a whole new level mixing it with mystery, classical fantasy elements – witches and knights – and wrapping it into a brilliant, although totally crazy read.

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## Mihir says

Overall rating = 4 & 1/2 stars

Read full review over at Fantasy Book Critic .

Read my interview with Craig Schaefer about the stunning cover art and the book's genre.

**OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS:** Sworn To The Night (STTN) is the culmination of a lot of threads and characters, chief among them as two whom we previously meet in The Revanche Cycle books by the author. The true inclinations about this whole "story" were first mentioned in the Revanche Cycle (book III) and then later gloriously expanded in The Castle Doctrine (Daniel Faust book 6). If that might seem confusing, then dear reader then welcome to the universe(s) of Craig Schaefer wherein everything is connected and only now (after 15 books, 1 novella & 3 short stories) are we getting to see where the connecting threads lie.

SSTN is the first book of the Wisdom's Grave trilogy but it is a book in the making from 2014 (wherein Craig first wrote the Revanche Cycle). It is a book that can be read as a standalone story but for readers who have read and enjoyed any or all of the author's previous works (the Daniel Faust books, the Harmony Black volumes, & The Revanche Cycle) will love it the most. The story begins in the future or present (depending on how you want to look at it) wherein we encounter famed fantasy hack Carolyn Saunders (first introduced in The Castle Doctrine) get picked up by an unknown group and is forced to recant the story of "the Witch & the Knight". Carolyn mentions that it's a fairy tale and a fairly grim one at that but nevertheless accedes to her captor's wishes.

We are then brought back to the past or present (depending on again your perspective) wherein we meet Marie Reinhart, an NYPD detective currently hunting a missing prostitute called "Baby blue". Eagle eyed readers might remember that we first have encountered Marie and her partner Tony in Glass Predator (Harmony Black #3) but that was only a small taste. Within this book we get to meet her fully, a determined cop who's haunted by her very tragic past (Revanche Cycle readers might have a solid inkling about this) who looks out for the small guy with an obsession. Teased by her roommate and her partner for her love of the simplistic fantasy volumes (by Carolyn Saunders) that she has devoured from her teenage years, Marie is nevertheless no less focussed on her job but some in her department don't look at it the same way. We are also introduced to Nessa (Vanessa) Fieri-Roth, the timid & mentally troubled professor and wife of Richard Roth (son of senator Alton Roth who has been in the background of both Harmony Black & Daniel Faust books). Nessa has been trying to figure out her life's purpose and her skills but is stymied within her personal and professional lives by a variety of agents.

Things take an interesting turn wherein Marie makes her way to Vanessa's home and the two characters meet each other for the first time in this lifetime. This is where the metaphorical sparks begin, of course this isn't your typical love story. Hell I'm not even sure that we can it a love story, is it love if two characters are fated to be together even if for a short time? That's a fundamental question posed in this story, are these characters truly their own or are they marionettes dancing to the tune of the "cosmic story". As far as I can, the answer to the former part is a resounding yes, they are their own people and their love is something that neither of them can explain but they feel just right for each other.

This book is solidly about characters and none shine brighter than Nessa and Marie. Infact it's Nessa who truly gets to shine as we get to see her transformation from a meek mouse into the terrifying Owl we have seen and met before. Previously when we meet Nessa in the Revanche Cycle, she seemed like a onenote villain and it's to Craig's credit that she becomes a terrifying person but one that readers get attached to. In

this book as well, we get to see her descent into the Owl and it's a terrifying one. Make no mistake, Nessa is no hero and she makes no qualms about it. She and Marie have been brought together and taken apart violently over and ad infinitum. We even get to see a scene play out that was previously featured in the Revanche Cycle and it was a delight to read. For newer readers it will give them a background as to what happened before and give seasoned readers a clue as to what comes next.

Marie also takes center stage in this story and she's as terrifying as ever. Mari Renault was her previous reincarnation and as the warrior suffering from PTSD and yet striving to achieve an ideal, she stole reader's hearts (including mine). She was the hero that the world didn't deserve but yet needed. The characters who met her were bemused but no less inspired. Marie is very much in Mari's mould as the "cosmic story" dictates but is still an endearing character. When we meet her, we get to see her determination, her hard-edged obsession with the law (whom she sees as her liege) and possibly her transformation. There are other characters in the play and I won't reveal them but safe to say that there are other witches in the fray and I can't wait to read more on the main one. There are also some memorable cameo appearances from Daniel Faust, Harmony Black and a couple of other minor but important characters from the other series. Lastly as is the case with other Craig Schaefer books, characterization remains a solid point and readers will have their favorites namely a NYC librarian who's cute and badass all the same.

This book doesn't feature all out action sequences like the Harmony Black series or the noir plot twists of the Daniel Faust ones. But make no mistake, this volume is no less effective than either one of them. This book is a slow burn and one wherein the consequences are the same if not worse. I loved how the author set up the story and then let it unspool and unspool it does (in quite a horrific way). As mentioned in the blurb, there's a potential serial killer hunting prostitutes but the truth is much worse. I loved how the author explored this angle and then tied it to the Network and also to elements that have bubbled up to the surface in the recent Harmony Black books. We also get a clearer look into the production of "Ink" the designer drug that has been mentioned extensively in the Daniel Faust volumes. Especially we get a solid idea about how it's tied into the mythology of the series. What I was looking for was an explanation about the phenomenon of "The Owl Lives", which isn't quite explained but this is the first volume only and there are two more to go.

This book in my view is a like an atmospheric thriller which builds up on tension, characters and plot elements which bring it to a resounding climax. This I believe is the highlight of the book and featured the author's version of a magic vs science fight. You have to read it to be enthralled and I certainly was. Lastly remember the dual timeline I mentioned in the start with Carolyn Saunders, we get a solid twist to that plotline as well.

Since I've gushing so much about this book, one might wonder what are the drawbacks to this book and yes there are a couple (YMMV with them though). Primarily the book's pace in the start is on the slow side and slowly builds up as the chapters go along. For readers of the Faust & Black books, this might be perhaps a different experience which they might not enjoy all too well. For newer readers, this will a very personal thing, some might like it some might not. The second and last thing which stuck a craw in my mind was that the final twist on the villains is very much the same with regards to what happened in the Cold Spectrum book (Harmony Black #4). Craig Schaefer is too talented an author to be repeating this twist and I feel that there will other readers for whom this might seem the same.

**CONCLUSION:** *Sworn To The Night* is a book that leaves a mark perhaps in the same way as the Owl intends to leave one on this world. STTN is a book that is like a nine course meal, it takes its time to get to the final course but leaves you sated completely and wanting more. I loved this book from cover to cover and can't wait to read the sequel tentatively titled "Desolation Boulevard".

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## **Lukasz says**

This isn't some sweet Disney bedtime story. This is a real fairy tale. With death, and blood, and suffering. And I never promise a happy ending.

Nessa and Mari were my favorite characters in the *Revanche Cycle*. I was furious and devastated after *Queen of the Night* brutal ending. When I learned that this unlikely couple will reappear in other books, I felt relieved. Truth is, I haven't read Daniel Faust / Harmony Black books. And yet I'm pretty sure Nessa must be Craig Schaefer's greatest character. Prove me wrong. I dare you.

SSTN is the first book of the Wisdom's Grave trilogy. It can be read as a standalone but I think it would be wiser to treat it as a culmination of Craig Schaefer's work. I'm pretty sure that due to my lack of Faust and Harmony Black background, I wasn't able to fully appreciate the book. And yet it's a five star book for me.

Marie Reinhart, an NYPD detective is on hunt. A prostitute called *Baby Blue* is missing. currently hunting a missing prostitute called "Baby Blue". She loves knighthood stories. Vanessa Fieri-Roth is mentally troubled professor of anthropology diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. She's also a wife Richard Roth (senator Alton Roth's son) who is a dangerous bastard. Nessa looks for a purpose in her life. Not an easy task when you're on tranquilizers.

Soon their paths cross. And magic starts to happen. Black magic. Blood magic. Destruction and mayhem happen when the two meet and fight to survive and break the Wheel of Time.

What makes this new series so strong are characters. They are the key. Marie becomes the Knight. Nessa transforms into terrifying Owl we've seen in the *Revanche Cycle* books. She's not a nice person. She can be cruel and sadistic and yet I can't help it – I simply adore her. Marie remains an endearing character – she's determined and driven to incarnate law / police ideals. She cares about victims no one cares about. She's a good people. Sadly, her fate in the Cosmic Story isn't easy. Both she and Nessa needs to pass bloody and cruel initiation.

Daniel Faust, Harmony Black and some other characters appear. I know nothing about them but the glimpses I got made me decide to immerse myself in other Schaefer's works. The climax of the book was strong and quite terrifying.

The story is told by fantasy hack Carolyn Saunders who is captured by Network in the first chapter. I know little about her but it seems she has interesting role to play.

It's an amazing story guys. It tastes better if you already read *Revanche Cycle*. And it's good news. Now you have another argument to read this excellent tetralogy. I wait impatiently for a sequel and in the meantime I'll start to catch up on Faust / Black series.

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## **Emma says**

Having powered through Craig Schaefer's Daniel Faust and Harmony Black books, this was an obvious next step. Set in the same world and forming part of the overarching storyline that links all three series, this features Marie Reinhart, an NYPD Detective we met in HB book Glass Predator and, Nessa Roth, a college professor with a troubled mind. Their love-at-first-sight meeting brings chaos to their ordered but unfulfilling lives, throwing them into the fight for the future of the whole world.

The crossover aspect works well enough for those that have read everything that's come before, though it makes me wonder how the author is going to pull it all together. Is the big final battle going to be in this series, spread out between them, or individualised by main character, which means three separate versions of the same ending? Considering I like this a lot less than the others, it's a bit of a pisser if I have to read the other two books in this trilogy to get info on the characters I do want to see again. Here, we get both Faust and Black thrown in for side jobs, perhaps to introduce them to readers who haven't read their series, but to get the fullest understanding of what's going on with the plot of this novel alone, theirs should be read before starting this one. Most of the characters we've seen before. The Kings? The Network? All revealed in previous instalments. I haven't read the The Complete Revanche Cycle so can't speak to what that adds, if anything, but I haven't felt the lack so maybe that's not been as necessary until now. Of course, there is an almost independent storyline in this book that probably feels understandable as a standalone, but which is enhanced by things that have already happened. As a police procedural investigation into the disappearance of a young prostitute, Baby Blue, it's pretty uninspiring, with a used-to-death scenario of ageing frat boys hunting human prey. Yawn. Everything is slowly, slowly step-by-step, with zero surprises, and little real action. The twist is even reused from Cold Spectrum. Poor form, Schaefer. A decent final battle by the end but otherwise it's light in every fashion.

Now character is where it really lost points for me. Separately, these two women do ok. But together, what we have is one super dominant woman and her knight, I mean slave. Now this is no doubt a personal preference thing but I cannot stand it when a woman who seems to be confident, competent, and full of agency, a Detective no less, suddenly morphs into this dithery, where-am-I, who-am-I, can-I-go-for-a-wee-miss?? type of person, but only while in the company of their special other. And i'm not talking about a person who willingly chooses a submissive role in sexual play thing, I mean a change-your-whole-personality and become a piece of wet lettuce thing. The hark to a Knight-in-shining-armour fantasy makes this more romantic than either of the other series and while I'm a fan of the two women as a couple, I'm not convinced by Nessa as Mr Grey Fifty Shades of Grey. Her whole you'll-submit-to-my-every-demand-with-no-complaint spiel is waaaay too much, put the book down or skip the section too much. Otherwise, I quite like her bad attitude, it gives her magic some serious bite, and even without the knowledge given by the Revanche cycle, it's quite clear she's riding the villain line.

It's not all bad news, there are some excellent Aha! moments for those who have been paying attention. The Owl Lives. Faust lives. Ink production and distribution is explored some more. The larger story, that Great Theatre production with its repetition of Roles and Lives over the ages, is ever more tantalisingly revealed. These women get on my nerves as they're portrayed now, but i'm hoping there might be some change in the future.

In any case, I need to know what comes next. Damn you and your addictive world, Schaefer.

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

**January 18, 2018:** you thought my original review for this book was long? Hahahaha. You're so funny

sometimes, my Little Barnacles.

**Okay, Rating For This Book** (RFTB™), either you stop going up and down in my little head, or I'm shooting myself in the upper exoskeleton to **quit thinking about you** and stuff. So let's hack at you one **final, last and hopefully decisive time** and be done with it, shall we? "No," you say? Oops, **too late**.

**Final Actual rating maybe:** 3.25 stars.

**Why?** Because:

? **No matter how hard I try**, and despite my undying love and respect for **Craig Schaefer's Most Tremendously Prodigious Characterization Skills** (CSMTPCS™), I just cannot bring myself to like the **main protagonists** of the book. Worse, I am considering NOT reading the rest of this trilogy **because of them**. And me considering NOT reading **any** Schaefer book is like:

? **I do think** that the **Mightily Smashing Schaeferistic Crossover** (MSSC™) is absolutely fantabulous indeed. It works beautifully in Daniel Faust and Harmony Black: it's **coherent**, it **makes sense**, feels **completely legitimate** and makes for a **rich, complex world**. The problem in Sworn to the Night is that the crossover **feels somehow forced**. It doesn't feel like the story **genuinely belongs** to the Schaeferverse. On the contrary, it feels like the book has been **made to fit the universe** (yes, I know it isn't the case, but I just can't help feeling that way). This is particularly striking when you read scenes that feature characters from Daniel Faust and Harmony Black. Not only do they **break the flow** of the main plot, they also make it feel both **disjointed** and **contrived**. Is this because this is the **first Wisdom's Grave instalment**, which required Schaefer to bring in all the **storylines and threads** from his other series to **set up the rest of the trilogy**? Maybe. Can't say it makes me **particularly eager** to read book 2, though.

**Now please excuse me** while I drown myself in a, um, **soothing cup of calming camomile tea**. I'm going to need it after giving such a **despicably low rating** to a Craig Schaefer book.

**P.S.** This is Craig Schaefer's **highest rated book** so far! Which means it's actually pretty **mind-blowing!** Relief! Happiness! Hope! **Utter joyousness and stuff!** I obviously read Sworn to the Night **pathetically wrong!** Which means I'll raise my rating to **15 bloody shrimping stars** the next time I read the book! **Yayyyyyyyyy!!!!!!**

[January 13, 2018]

**Actual rating: 3.4 stars. Too much thinking my head does so up and down the rating goes.**

**Friendly warning:** get a drink preferably of the alcoholic kind and grab a snack, I think we're going to be here a while.

Damn "complicated salad" this one is indeed.

Probably my least favourite Craig Schaefer book ever it is, too. Okay, so a 3.4 star rating isn't exactly disastrous, but it is kinda sorta low on the Schaefer Scale of Utter Awesomeness (SSoAA™). ← I never wrote this and you never read it.

**Sigh.** Where do I bloody shrimping start? Okay, let's begin with the **mind-boggling stuff**. This is, hands down, the **Most Gloriously Epic Crossover in the History of Most Gloriously Epic Crossovers** (MGECitHoMGECTM). It is downright amazing, astounding and flabbergasting. And most wondrous, too. As **Those of Impeccable Book Taste** (ToIBT™) (view spoiler) know, Schaefer's series—Daniel Faust (view spoiler), Harmony Black and Revanche Cycle—are all set in the **same multiverse Schaeferverse**. And Sworn to the Night is where it all **gloriously comes together** in a most, um, you know, glorious way and stuff. By the way, my Little Barnacles, although it is true that this book can be read as a standalone (view spoiler), if you do, you'll miss out on the all the **mysterious implications and scrumptious interconnections** and that would be a shame indeed and stuff.

*See? Even Batty Batman thinks it's a bad idea.*

**Anyway**, here I was, reading the first ~~half~~ ~~quarter~~ few chapters of the book and ~~hysterically fangirling like a 13-year-old maniac on acid~~ getting slightly **enthusiastic** about it all. Then the novelty starting **wearing off** a little. I did have few delicious **Oh My Bloody Shrimping Hell It's My Boyfriend Daniel Faust Making a Luscious Appearance Episodes** (OHMSHIMBDFMaLAE™) here and there, but that's about it as far as ~~uncontrollable hysteria~~ moderate excitement is concerned. Okay, so **Spoiler Spoiler Spoiler's (not her real name) cameo** got my exoskeleton all tingly and hot and super titillated and stuff, too. Same thing for **Spoiler Spoiler Spoiler's (not her real name either) cameo**. Still, something **wasn't really working** for me here. Don't get me wrong, I still think this is **Pure Epic Crossover Genius** (PECG™) but that alone wasn't enough to make the book yet another **Blazing Piece of Undiluted Schaefer Awesomeness** (BPoUSA™). You know, the kind of story that usually makes me unleash my **super smooth dance moves** on you and stuff.

*Sexy, huh? What can I say, rhythm is me.*

**Sooooooooo**, at this point you're probably wondering what the fish went so **wrong** with this book that I ended up giving it such a **despicable rating**. You're not? Oh well, I'll give you a most fascinating **explanation** anyway. I'm kind and generous like that.

#### ① **The Kinda Sorta Meh Story (KSMS™)**

Let's be disgustingly honest here: I am not a fan of **police procedurals**. They're almost as boring as barnacle porn (don't ask). And even though there is **more to this book** than this, the heart of the plot is still a **criminal investigation with cops doing cop things** and stuff. Okay, so this not your average investigation, since it involves **spoiler spoiler spoiler**, but still. **Captivated by it I was not**. I guess it felt a bit mundane for a Schaefer story ← *I'll probably burn in hell for saying this. Damn. Yay! It's my boyfriend Sandman Slim's home away from home! Go me and stuff!* Another problem is that the plot moves **sloooooooooowly**. At a much slower pace than what Schaefer has accustomed us to, anyway. Also, some events were **too predictable**. Also also, **less action**. Also also also, I kept waiting for Schaefer to surprise me with one of his **wicked twists**, as he usually does, but it never happened. Well, okay, so it did happen. **Only I wish it hadn't**. Why? Because the twist in question is **nearly identical** to one in *Cold Spectrum*. Now that really did **surprise the**

**fish out of me.** I mean, this is like Ilona Andrews using the same twist twice. **Bloody shrimping unimaginable, does not compute, I understand not and stuff.**

*Yeah, pretty much.*

**② Like this relationship I do not. At all.**

Okay, so I have a **problem** with two of the characters in this story. **And a major one at that.** It's difficult to talk about it without spoiling the fish out of the book, but let's just say that **submissive behavior IS NOT MY THING AT ALL.** Top 3 mega pet peeves and stuff. I hate it hate it hate it. Of course there are dominant personalities that tend to overshadow more passive ones, but **this was just too bloody shrimping much**, if you ask me (and even if you don't. Ask me, I mean). I'm used to reading weird/twisted/fished off stuff and few things make me feel uncomfortable, but some scenes in this book made me **really uneasy**. Okayyy, I can't go on without going all spoiler-crazy on your lovely asses pincers, so **here goes**: (view spoiler) **One-gif summary**:

*Yeah, even the Pathetic Rainbow-Colored Ponies (PRCP™) agree with me on that one. That should tell you something right there.*

**③ Disappointing secondary characters.**

**One-dimensional villains.** In a Craig Schaefer book. Unthinkable. I'm pretty sure I read there was a law against that somewhere, actually. Can't remember what country it was, though. **Papua New Guinea, maybe?** Yeah, that must be it. I hear they're pretty strict with that kind of stuff over there. But I ever so slightly digress. Anyway, I'm not talking about ALL the villains in the book here, just some of them. And yes, they are **deliciously wicked and sick and twisted and fished up**, but they are...just that. There is **no complexity** there. None whatsoever. And that kinda sorta sucks. Because Schaefer is kinda sorta the king of **Superbly Multi-Layered Evil Individuals (SMLEI™)**. Here? Err...Not so much. Even some of the **good** not-as-bad secondary characters **lacked depth**, for fish's sake! What the fishing fish is going on here?! **Is this the end of the world and no one told me or something?** I'm the one who's supposed to bring death and destruction and complete and utter annihilation to this planet, so I'd appreciate being kept informed of anyone's else **Doom and Instant Self Combustion Plans (DaISCP™)** for the universe and stuff.

**Bloody shrimping hell**, now I'm thinking I should have rated this book 3 stars instead of 3.5. The more my two grey cells overheat, **the lower my rating goes**. Damn damn damn. Okay, let's see if I can remember enough **cool stuff** about this book so that **instantaneous spawning of little stars** will ensue. *Self pep-talk: Come on, Sarah! Be strong! You are nefarious! You are abominable! You are vile! You can do this!*

**List of random yet slightly fabulous and stupendous Sworn to the Night stuff** : Marie reads **Glen Cook**. MARIE READS GLEN FISHING COOK. Now if that isn't worth a **10-star rating** alone, I don't know what is (a Glen Cook book maybe? Hmm, quite possibly, yes). **Also: cannibals exotic meat enthusiasts and the nemesis of all authority** and euties gnats (view spoiler) and glorious **rrrrrrrrrevenge** and doe and **chaos** and dominoes and, um, **quaint little restaurants** and owls and **Archduke Franz Ferdinand** and **eyeballs**. **YUM.**

**The more eyeballs, the merrier.** Always. Ergo, my rating just **went up again**. A little. Yay and stuff.

» And the moral of this **I'm Pretty Sure I'll Still Be Thinking This Rating Over When my Great Great Great Great Shrimpkids Have Great Great Great Great Shrimpkids Crappy Non Review** (IPSISBTTROWmGGGSHGGGGSCNR™) is: no bloody fishing idea. Just **keeping my pincers crossed** that, um, you know, stuff will get better in **book 2**. Much much much **MUCH** better. But hey, no pressure, Craig Schaefer. **No pressure at all**.

**P.S.** I still lurves you, Mr S. **A little**.

(view spoiler)

**[January 2, 2018]**

*An epic crossover between the Daniel Faust series, the Harmony Black series, and the Revanche Cycle*  
!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

**To be released on January 5, 2018!!!!**

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

**And look at that cover!!!!**

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

**I'm slightly excited (not much, though)!!!!**

Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

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### **Mark Lawrence says**

I've not read this book yet, but it is one of 10 finalists chosen from 300 in this year's Self-Published Fantasy Blog-Off, so it's probably very good!

Find out more about the SPFBO here:

<https://mark---lawrence.blogspot.com/...>

See this year's finalists board here:

<https://mark---lawrence.blogspot.com/...>

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### **Milda Page Runner says**

*“When my work is done, they’ll call me a villain. But that’s all right. I don’t mind. Women who refuse to submit have always been called that and worse.”*

Well, this was awesome. Like goosebumps over my skin awesome. For full disclosure goosebumps could be due to my cold, but still – a great read.

Highly recommended to all fantasy and UF readers. There is one caveat – you sort of need to read Daniel Faust, Harmony Black and Revanche Cycle first to get the full scope. And if you haven’t read them yet – well... What you’re waiting for?

*A memory, a scene from one of her favorite books, sparked an idea. “What about a sword?” Marie asked. “Possible,” the medical examiner told her. “The problem is that most modern swords are reproductions for collectors; they’re art pieces, not weapons. The blade that did this was incredibly sharp. And it still doesn’t explain the cauterization effect.”*

*“A sword which was on fire at the time,” Jefferson said. He reached for the severed arm and looked to Marie. “Or a lightsaber. Maybe we should put out an APB on Darth Vader.*

*“There are moments in history,” Calypso said, “when a single event changes the world. Times when one profound act sets a string of dominoes in motion. Once the dominoes start to fall, all you can do is roll along, swept up in the tide. Now, at the time, you might not realize what you’re looking at. Might not see the trigger event when it happens.”*

*“But in the aftermath,” she mused, “gazing upon a transformed world while you’re standing in its wreckage...”*

*“Hindsight is twenty-twenty.”*

*“To be a witch,” Nessa said, “is to be an outlaw. Humanity has spent centuries trying to impose order upon the wild. To pave over the forests with cities, to replace nature in all of its beautiful chaos with rules and regulations that serve only the powerful and keep everyone else in chains. But a witch cares nothing for the authority of men. We undermine. We poison. We bring change. And that is why they hate us.”*

*“Our mothers took Miltown and Valium. We drink wine. Every generation of women has their own special numbing agent. Only difference being, they popped pills behind the bathroom door while we took our particular vice public.”*

*“It sounds like you don’t approve,” Marie said, “yet we’re drinking wine right now.”*

*“Oh, I enjoy wine. What I don’t approve of is the normalization of the ritual. We are told, day in and day out, by advertisements and television shows, that gathering to drink wine is simply what women do. That it’s how we relax, how we cope. I don’t object to vices in general; it’s unquestioned and unexamined vices I detest. If one is going to drink poison for fun, as we’re doing right now, one should at least be honest about it.”*

*Marie cast an uncertain eye at her drink.*

*“Poison,” Nessa said as she took a sip, “is the wellspring of so many of life’s little pleasures.”*

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## **Kaitlin says**

\*This is one of the #SPFBO finalist for 2018\*

I picked this up as a judge for the #SPFBO competition and I have to say it was a complex read with a lot going on. This story is the first in a series, but it's by no means the first book by this author set in this world, in fact I believe there are a few previous series where you get to see quite a few of the characters we encounter here.

This story starts with a police Detective, Marie, who is hunting down a killer who has been stealing prostitutes. She has an emotional connection to the case and is determined to see it through, no matter what. I actually really liked her at first for her fiery determination and grit, but as the book went on I think she did end up losing quite a lot of what I liked about her, and she became very submissive to one of the other characters.

The other major character is Nessa, a woman who is trapped in a marriage she hates and who is being drugged for a condition she's not even sure she has. Nessa is a witch who practises without her husband's knowledge and they live fairly separate lives where they can. However, as the story goes on we also learn that there is a lot more importance on Nessa than first meets the eye, and she plays a big part.

There are a lot of other cameos from characters who are presumably in the author's other works such as Harmony Black and Daniel Faust, and honestly this was all fascinating enough to make me want to go back and read all the other stories. I did not feel like I was spoiled necessarily, just ultra intrigued about who they are and how they really tie in with everything else.

At the heart of the story I would say this is an urban fantasy with some dark areas. There is some body horror at one or two points, and there is torture and abuse in the story too. It's clearly not a light-hearted read, but it's also got a lot of fun moments.

Personally I love LGBTQ+ relationships in books but this one felt a little forced. I enjoyed the concept, but there is a sense of insta-love (although we know why later on) and I think it would have been a little better if taken a little slower. I did like the sub/dom element, but again I think that this was kind of just thrust onto the reader and I think I would have preferred a little more of a build up to the characters and these feelings as I think it would have made more sense.

Overall, this one kept me reading and interested throughout, and I am certainly intrigued enough to want to read more by the author as the story was a solid one with so much happening. I want to go back and read the others in this world to find out more, and I am intrigued about where these characters will end up too. 4\*s from me which is 8\*s overall for #SPFBO

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### **Alaina says**

*Sworn to the Night* was a very enjoyable read. It was a great start to the wisdom's grave series and I can't wait to dive into the next book.

Marie Reinhart is an NYPD on a hunt for a missing prostitute named baby blue. Then there's Nessa, who's a troubled professor diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. Her husband is also an asshole and I hate him. When Marie and Nessa first meet.. well, let's just say I fell in love. It was like watching a baby being born. Utterly amazing.

Now I have read the Harmony Black books and I absolutely loved them. So diving into another series by the same author?? Sign me the hell up! Falling in love with Marie and Nessa's characters were way too easy for me. I loved the magic aspect of this book because Craig just has a way of writing it. Especially when Nessa transforms into a damn owl! I love when she's the not so nice version of herself because it's Nessa one hundred percent. People have a good and bad side to them - it just happens I love both sides of Nessa.

Besides those two, characters from Harmony Black series have little appearances. Which, of course, made me fangirl a little bit! I missed that crowd of awesome people.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. I can't wait to dive into the second book and I will definitely be looking into another series of Craig's.

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