



Gabriel's City: A Tale of Fables and Fortunes

Laylah Hunter

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For spoiled young aristocrat Colin Harwood, the port city of Casmile is a buffet of easy pleasures. But when he steps into a pub brawl to help a dangerously outnumbered young man, he is drawn into the seedy underbelly of the city the young man calls home.

Gabriel is a cutpurse and a knife for hire, practically an urban legend. His vision of Casmile is touched by a strange combination of faith and madness, driven by fairytale logic and a capacity for love that he often must suppress to survive. He's always worked alone, but when a dashing dragon who calls himself Colin saves him in a bar fight, he pulls Colin into his world.

Gabriel's city is nothing like the refined, socialite existence that bored Colin senseless. Colin finds adventure and excitement there—and maybe even love. But with his layers of finery stripped away, nothing remains to protect him from poverty or danger—except Gabriel. So he must choose: go back to the civilized young man he once was, or fly free as Gabriel's dragon.

Gabriel's City: A Tale of Fables and Fortunes Details

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From Reader Review Gabriel's City: A Tale of Fables and Fortunes for online ebook

Green Reviews says

I'd asked for steampunk recommendations, and Gabriel's City was suggested (though it is not in any way steampunk, really). I am so glad that I wound up with it though, because I loved it! The writing is exceptional, and the characters and plot are well thought out and developed in a way that kept me engaged and intrigued.

Colin/Drake's change from a spoiled, rich kid to a street-tough 'dragon' could have easily been too rushed, but I thought the pacing was spot on. Gabriel was as much of an anti-hero as I've ever read, and I loved him for it.

This isn't a book for you if you're looking for characters who redeem themselves and turn from a life of crime.

Lola says

There is no actual dragon or shapeshifter in this story (while the blurb suggests it.) We can say metaphorically speaking but definitely not literally. Not even a little one.

Colin comes from a wealthy family, yet he never felt like it was really his place and the fact that he and his father don't share a good relationship sure doesn't help. He owes money to some powerful—as in bad bad bad—guy and is alone to pay his dues. His father doesn't want to hear of it. So, what does he do? He flies from home, wanders around and ends up meeting Gabriel, the terrifying and legendary Gabriel. Saving his life, this latter decides to keep Colin as his 'luck.'

Colin is a pretty ordinary guy, before meeting Gabriel who succeeds to change him into someone, yes more courageous, but also a little—quite—savage. At first, that wasn't a problem. I enjoyed the fact that he seemed to see everything—especially Gabriel—more clearly and leave his fear behind. But, then, he started killing people or meaning to only because they were a 'nuisance' to him or Gabriel or potential to expose them (FYI, they *are* killers.)

Gabriel is quite something. I don't think that I've ever met a character such as his. He may seem to you in control and fierce at first—he is—but he as well has a character development. On the contrary of Colin, he became less bloody, aggressive and more vulnerable and...*human* (mostly towards Colin.) He is worthy meeting since he will surprise you and steal your heart.

I can't believe I'm saying that about a killer. But, you know, same thing happened to me while watching the TV show Revenge. You obviously can realize that Emily is not innocent and does awful things but you also can't help but, as weird as it seems, empathize with her situation and connect with her character somehow.

The plot had so so much potential and started out really good. The problem is that it became very repetitive and the characters started doing the same thing over and over again. If I were them, I would get bored quite quickly. See, either they're looking for people or hiding from them. Oh, or killing them. Sometimes, they do also keep some time for themselves (*suggestive eyebrows*) but those 1) aren't numerous and 2) are too

close to one another in the plot.

Oh gosh, I loved the writing! It was great and I mean it. It would be easy for me to give this book a four star rating because of the writing but unfortunately the plot really deceived me the most and it's quite one of the main elements of this book so I can't let that go. Be sure that I will try some other works by this author though.

One of the things I enjoyed the most was witnessing how subtly Colin and Gabriel met. It was not a sweet moment since there was some killing involved but it was indeed smile worthy and cute in some way.

I *would* recommend this but my advice for you would be to not get your hopes up too much. You could for the writing and characters (depending) though. Those were generally well done and I'm excited for you to meet Gabriel and see what a complex and unique person he really is.

Happy reading!

ARC provided via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Cat M says

I finished this Wednesday evening and really enjoyed it, but I'm going to say upfront that it is NOT for everyone. It's a surprisingly sweet story about a privileged kid who accidentally loses and then categorically rejects his privilege in favour of his new murderboyfriend with whom he lives happily ever after while doing terrible and deadly things to mostly terrible and deserving people.

cw: graphic violence and torture, although the torture is mostly off-screen and not lingered on. Murder. Slavery as background world building.

The worldbuilding is kind of shaky in places, but the characters and their interactions were wonderfully to my tastes. Colin is the son of a rich landowner who likes to go into the city and spend his money in the high-end casinos, flirt with the more scandalous corners of high society, and listen to salacious stories about cutthroats and criminals. And then he gets in over his head and finds himself in that world, taken in by Gabriel, the most notorious and notoriously unhinged cutthroat of them all.

Gabriel, still young himself, has lived on the streets since he was a child and is more than willing to use his wits, his knives, and his lack of much of a moral compass to survive.

And Gabriel is...not entirely sane. He has moments where he's not entirely lucid, he sometimes has trouble discerning the truth from the stories he tells himself, and he often prefers the stories. And I really like that about him. I like that he is allowed to be mentally ill, and not in a family-friendly or comfortable way, but still have community and still find love. And love doesn't cure him, and Colin falls in love with him knowing this, and doesn't have any illusions about Gabriel when they begin sleeping together.

And then they kill some people for money, and other people try to kill them, so they kill some people for no money at all and live happily ever after. And I couldn't put it down.

MLE says

This is not a perfect book, but it's one I really enjoyed. The characters were fun, and interesting, and I loved that Gabriel was a complex, and difficult character and not some Disney ruffian. I liked that he was as dangerous as he was made out to be. It's a refreshing change from other books of this sort. I was surprised by how much I liked Colin as well, and how much his actions changed him, and how much it brought out of the parts of himself that he had been hiding. I liked that Colin really did suffer a change in circumstances, and had to suffer without any of the luxuries he had grown up with, and that life on the run wasn't glamorous in the least. The level of violence felt real to the characters, and their situation. It felt like a real adventure rather than a child's dream of adventure, and I'd love to read more about these characters and their world. Perfect vacation hammock reading. Once I started it I couldn't put it down, and isn't that the essence of a five star read.

Karen says

This is a strange and strangely beautiful story/fable set in an ugly, slavery-dependent world of highly divided classes and brutal retributions. The MCs are very young men from opposite sides of the rich man/poor man spectrum. The story is told in third-person present tense from the viewpoint of Colin/Drake, a spoiled and virtually clueless young noble who has never given much thought to how the other half lives, beyond slumming it a bit in gambling dens and gossiping with his equally clueless (albeit in some cases good-hearted) privileged friends. A series of unfortunate events, due to Colin's carelessly neglected gambling debts, lead to being on the lam on the wrong side of the tracks and being rescued, then saved and sheltered, by Gabriel, a notorious cutthroat who is also mentally fragile and often delusional. As Drake and Gabriel's precarious relationship develops they manage to save each other — body, heart, and soul — becoming an assassin team of mythic reputation. Does this sound sordid and nasty? Yes, but there's harsh beauty there as well, and even a dash of sweetness. The present tense voice gave this story a tense immediacy, and I was on edge through much of it and unsure how any form of a happy ending could be wrenched from this dark world. Not a perfect story, but one with a bit of magic and one that touched me in these oft-dark times.

Charli Coty says

This book had one of my favorite things in queer books with romantic elements. Can't tell you, though, it's spoilery.

Jeannie Zelos says

Gabriel's City, Laylah Hunter
Review from jeannie zelos book reviews

This is a strange book to categorise. With the mention of Dragons I assumed Colin was going to be some kind of shifter, but was wrong. Then there's the feel of it – its classed as NA and it has that definite air that it will appeal to that age group. Some NA transcend age groups and appeal to everyone, but this was one that's very NA specific IMO. I enjoyed it but it's not one I'd re read and not one I'd have been really sorry to miss. Colin has a real change of personality over the course of the book, which starts when he becomes embroiled with Gabriel, who promptly names him Drake. That works well because Colin and Drake really are two very different people. The Dragon reference was confusing at first, but made sense once I understood Gabriel more, and fitted the story telling (both the book and the stories told within it) perfectly. Gabriel – oh how sad I was for him, and yet he wasn't sad for himself but had known no other way of life, abandoned in the cemetery at a really young age. He's looked after himself since then, with only Deidre for a sort of friend. He looked upon Drake coming in to his life as a great gift. Deidre was so good to him, helping where she could and trying her best to keep him alive. Its easy to get moral about the killings, but it's a rough world where its often kill or be killed. I loved how the connection between Drake and Gabriel grew slowly, developing at its own pace, not an insta love type romance.

Its a very different read to which I'm used to, a romance but also a story of how difficult life can be if you're not born into the right class, and even if you are how easy it is to fall from favour. I loved that friendship and help was often found in unexpected places. Even the little details, the squalid room they lived in, the ratty blanket and worn clothes, catching pigeons (and even rats) for food – it all gave that almost historical, underclass of people feel to the story, but the desolation that could have been in was lifted by Gabriel's way of looking at life and appreciating the small things, and his love for Drake. From someone who was so self contained he gave his whole heart over time, and was lost when he thought Drake would leave.

Stars: Its a fun read, and like I said, very outside my comfort zone. Its a Riptide publication and I've read and enjoyed so many of those that I simply didn't check carefully enough to see what this story was about. I'm sure for YA/NA its a five star read but from this O(der) A its a three.

ARC supplied via Netgalley and Riptide.

Debra Guyette says

Colin Harwood lived the typical life of a spoiled young aristocrat. He wants some excitement but his father will not allow it. He has no problem sneaking out through windows. When he steps in on a pub brawl to help save an outnumbered young man, Colin's wish for excitement is granted. He finds himself drawn into the underbelly of his home city of Casmile.

Gabriel is practically a legend. A cutpurse and a knife for hire, Gabriel lives by his wits. He is a curious mix of fairy tale innocence and jaded survivor. When a dragon named Colin saves him, he wants to keep him.

Gabriel's city is nothing like Colin's and as he becomes deeply involved with Gabriel, Colin has choices to make. Does he stay as Gabriel's dragon or return to life pampered life as an aristocrat?

Gabriel's City was a fascinating tale. Gabriel was a unique individual, considered a legend by many. He had faith but was an assassin for hire. He had no problem dispatching anyone who deserved it and anyone who attacked him. He seemed very dark at times and quite a study in contrasts. When Colin came to his rescue when he was outnumbered, Gabriel called him his dragon and decided to keep him. Colin was used to a pampered life and found Gabriel fascinating. He stayed with him because he felt drawn to him. But Colin was not born to that life and soon he found conflict with both and was forced to make a decision. What one did he make? You will need to pick up Gabriel's City to find out. There is so much in its pages – two very

complex main characters, action on every page, and more than enough danger to satisfy all of us. If you relish MM stories with a touch of different, then this one is for you.

Wart Hill says

You can read this and other reviews at [Things I Find While Shelving](#)

I received a free ARC via NetGalley

Under normal circumstances, this would be a 4-5 star book.

It's very much a story about two people, more so than it is a story that is heavy on plot. It's about Colin, a rich nobleman who finds himself in the wrong place at the wrong time and winds up getting sucked into the underbelly of the city he's used to. The city of thieves and murders, the city of living hand to mouth, never sure if you'll have to steal your next meal or if you'll have a roof over your head.

In this city, Colin meets Gabriel. Gabriel who is kind of a legend around the city - a monster, kissed by the Lady (death), her chosen one. Gabriel who's grasp of reality is a little on the iffy side. Gabriel who calls Colin Drake because for him Colin is a dragon in disguise - a great, rich, noble beast, hiding among the humans.

And in a way, perhaps he is.

It's about Colin becoming Drake. Becoming the man Gabriel sees in him. It's about Drake being an anchor for Gabriel's sanity.

And I loved that aspect of it. I loved it so much.

But I can only give this book 3 stars. Because of the sex. Not that it was poorly written, no, it was the fact that Gabriel, even when he's lucid, doesn't read like he comprehends enough to fully consent to sex and that gave the sex a level of skeeve that I know wasn't intended, but for me it just didn't feel right. It might just be me, but that's just how I read Gabriel.

Elizabetta says

3.5 stars

Well, this one is not your typical gay romance. I'd venture to say that *Gabriel's City* is more of an action/adventure story with a look at how poverty and desperation reshapes one young man's look at the world.

It took me the longest time to get a handle on the story...

At first, this appears to be a coming of age tale: a rich, pampered boy (Colin) gets in trouble with bad people over a gambling debt. He flees his comfortable home-- and his debtors-- for a hard knock life, hiding out in the city slums. There, Colin meets street thug, Gabriel. Knives are Gabriel's weapon of choice and he gives Colin a personalized entry into a world of crime, grifting, theft, and murder.

Cutpurse and cutthroat. We get to see what these words really mean. In full technicolor. There is a lot of blood-letting.

And then, I'm confused... Am I supposed to *like* these guys? Gabriel is clearly not all there much of the time. He's so, so dangerous (with a capital D) when he's not. Colin slowly learns about Gabriel's slippery grasp on reality. You don't get on his bad side, he's a powder keg, ready to go off in an instant, knives flashing. Colin learns that his gift for storytelling soothes the savage in Gabriel. And Gabriel develops a thing for Colin. He sees hope and, maybe, a kind of salvation in him.

Colin -- who becomes *Drake* in his new street thug reincarnation-- goes along with it all. He falls trippingly into Gabriel's life, at first frightened and leery and then seduced by Gabriel's allure. Yeah, thieving and committing murder bothers him but it doesn't send him running. (view spoiler)

Not a cozy, warm and fuzzy couple, these two.

Maybe it's a *Prince and the Pauper* kind of thing? But, instead of exchanging roles, Colin-now-Drake, climbs into a new skin. He sees the shallowness and futility of his previous rich-boy life and learns some hard-knock life lessons. That, in and of itself, seems like a good thing... but is this new life that Drake immerses himself in better? Is it an improvement? Does it make him a better person?

What are Colin and Gabriel to each other, really, besides partners in crime? Gabriel wants nothing to do with rich-boy Colin. But has a fondness for the scrappy Drake who brings him companionship and stability (as much as that is possible). And Drake doesn't want to reform Gabriel. He becomes an enabler.

About half-way in, an interesting dynamic develops between Gabriel and Drake.

It seems that Drake finally recognizes how poverty and abandonment can affect a bright mind. He learns to care for Gabriel when he slips into that narrow edge between sanity and madness. They learn to comfort each other. There is sex eventually, but it's... odd. Gabriel, in this respect, seems strangely inexperienced and naive. Drake is much more experienced and it almost seems as if he's taking advantage. But, maybe that's just me.

While I can appreciate the coming of age aspect of the story, I had a hard time empathizing with Drake and Gabriel. They are colorful and interesting characters but they're also scary in how comfortably psychopathic they can be-- a different take on Bonnie and Clyde, maybe. Gabriel's City is a tough romance to cozy up to-- it didn't really work for me-- but it is well written and has some great action/adventure scenes.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher/author in exchange for an honest review. For this and other reviews, author interviews, and general fabulousness, visit **Love Bytes**:

Gretchen says

This is a beautiful, multi-layered tale that truly has a little bit of everything: action, adventure, mystery, and romance. But more than anything, it is Gabriel and his characterization that gripped me and made me fall in love with this story.

****Contains spoilers****

Too often mental disorders--like schizophrenia--are romanticized or villainized in stories, the characters who have those traits never elevated beyond a set of stereotypes and troupes. This is NOT the case in Gabriel's City. Gabriel's condition is never specifically named, and it wouldn't be in the language or thinking of the time and world in which the story is set. Everyone thinks him mad or, if they are more compassionate towards him, "touched" and prone to flights of fantasy. But his portrayal is so wonderfully nuanced that he is presented as a fully realized character who happens to be schizophrenic, not a schizophrenic character. The difference may seem slight, but it is very important. Because Gabriel is a fully realized character and not a caricature of his disorder, the story as a whole speaks to the importance of perspective in understanding, and how even "flawed" perspectives hold truth and value. How perspective can change the world around you and the way you interact with it; the way others interact with it.

Watching Colin grow and change from a spoiled, entitled brat who was really rather unlikeable into a strong, intelligent man who thinks of more than just his own pleasure is satisfying, and he would not have undergone this transformation if not for his relationship with Gabriel. Gabriel, in both his moments of clarity and his moments of "madness," drives the story forward even though it is really Colin's journey.

Gabriel's City kept me on the edge of my seat, flipping pages and desperate to learn how it ended. There is a lot of action--theft and violence and knife play (so much knife play) and jail breaks--but there is also heart. It is engaging on so many levels, and will stick with you long after the end.

Hanna Alexander says

Gabriel's City is what I have always wanted to read in print and had only seen before in fanfiction: a romance between two male protagonists, one of which serves as a street savvy benefactor to a wealthy and naive boy who catches his fancy. At least, that was what I thought when I purchased the book.

While the story certainly started out that way, it wasn't exactly what I had expected. Gabriel indeed adopts on the run Colin, but not because he was strictly attracted to him. Colin is indeed wealthy and naive up until he encounters Gabriel, but soon enough we see how Gabriel becomes just as dependent on Colin as Colin is on him, which I liked.

It was refreshing to read a novel where at least one of the main characters was bisexual (and wasn't struggling with it), but I did have a bit of an issue with Colin's characterization. He is described in the beginning of the book as spoiled and pretentious and it's hard to believe how easily he adapts to his new accommodations with Gabriel without complaint. One would expect there to be a scene where Colin unintentionally offends Gabriel with his opinion of the food or board, or some kind of conflict between them in general, but their relationship lacks the drama of misunderstandings.

Overall I enjoyed the book. I finished it within twenty four hours, in which I looked forward to returning to it during intervals. Recommended as a fun and smooth read :)

Laylah says

I can't wait to share these guys with you. It feels like I've been carrying them with me forever.

Asher says

Yes, I'm giving this book four stars, but I don't know if I love it or hate it. Mostly, I think I love it? It was different from something I would normally pick up. I've not often read narratives of people slipping into a life of crime from a life of luxury. While it's from a publishing press known for their romance and erotic titles, Gabriel's City doesn't fit into either of those categories (for all that Colin and Gabriel do end up together). If I had to fit it into a genre beyond fantasy, I'd label it something along the lines of "new adult fantasy."

I enjoyed watching Colin become Gabriel's Drake. Once I became engrossed, I didn't register time passing as I read. Both boys captured my attention. A few times, toward the end of the novel, I caught myself holding my breath. It's not a pretty book, it's violent and while not as graphic as it could be, it's a bloody book. For all that I normally dislike that, it worked for Gabriel's City.

I also enjoy that it is a queer novel where the queerness of either characters had nothing to do with the main elements of the narrative.

Without getting too into spoilers, I also enjoyed how their stories wove together and the boys became Gabriel and Drake of myth and whispered stories.

A few problems: I had trouble getting into the present tense voice of the novel. It does pick up a rhythm, but I felt like it was a bit slow starting. Secondly, I have mixed feelings over Gabriel's mental health and his developing relationship with Colin/Drake. This is a bit spoilery, but when their relationship turned physical, I had the feeling that Gabriel would have done anything to keep Drake in his life. Although, I'm reasonably certain that isn't the case. All said and done though, I feel like Gabriel's mental health wasn't played out as a trope.

I don't normally add recommendations to the end of my reviews, but I'd suggest this to fans of Sarah Monette's *Mélusine* and Lynn Flewelling's *Nightrunner* books, although it's not really a "read alike" of either series. I also feel that people who hated both of those series, but want a queer fantasy, would like this one.

Anastasia says

(Not an actual dragon book). Wish the family/evil Captain whatsit plot lines were more fleshed out, and I honestly wasn't expecting the violence (or for C to turn so violent so quickly), but I still really enjoyed this!
