



## Salt Magic, Skin Magic

*Lee Welch*

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## **Salt Magic, Skin Magic** Lee Welch

Lord Thornby has been trapped on his father's isolated Yorkshire estate for a year. There are no bars or chains; he simply can't leave. His sanity is starting to fray. When industrial magician John Blake arrives to investigate a case of witchcraft, he finds the peculiar, arrogant Thornby as alarming as he is attractive. John soon finds himself caught up in a dark fairytale, where all the rules of magic—and love—are changed.

To set Thornby free, both men must face life-changing truths—and John must accept that the brave, witty man who's winning his heart may also be about to break it. Can they escape a web of magic that's as perilous as love?

## **Salt Magic, Skin Magic Details**

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# From Reader Review Salt Magic, Skin Magic for online ebook

AI \*the semi serial series skipper\* says

Wow, this was terrific. Very good for a debut!

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R \* A Reader Obsessed \* says

## 4.5 Duly Impressed Hearts

I must say, this brought the best of historical romance and seamlessly mixed it with a new twist on magic as well as a known fantastical legend.

This starts off with Lord Thornby who is trapped. His father has made it his sole purpose to marry him off for personal greed and until Thornby agrees, he can't leave the family estate. *Literally*. Surely that's not possible right? Is Thornby slowly losing his mind from being confined for so long?

When mysterious guest Mr. Blake arrives, the hope he brings at possibly setting Thornby free is a thought too good to be true! However, his claim that magic is real is preposterous! Or is it?

I admit this started off a bit slow, but soon the tension builds, slowly ratcheting up the psychological suspense for our two protagonists. When things don't easily fall into place and Blake can't quite explain how and why Thornby is unable to move beyond the estate's boundaries, the desperation is hard felt as time starts to run out.

What this succeeds at is the slow progression of the relationship between Thornby and Blake. Each are a lot suspicious of the other but as more and more is revealed, they realize that to have an ally, and an amorous one at that, is definitely a relief, a comfort, and a boon.

I quite enjoyed the subtle nuances of this story and the insecurities and vulnerabilities of these two men who were so used to being on their own, isolated due to their own disparate stations in life and by of course, their sexuality. What they discover in the other was something fabulous and refreshing which was often counterbalanced by the heavy atmospheric feel as the mystery and questions pile up. This all leads to an explosive reveal that had me at the edge of my seat and reading well into the night.

If you want something smart and different and full of weighty emotions, then this is it! Throw in a good dose of paranormal fantasy with nicely done dashes of sexy dirty, and one gets quite the welcome wonderful tale!

My only complaint is that Lee Welch hasn't written more and that's a completely unabashed plea to do so in this fascinating historical AU!

*Thank you to the author/publisher for a copy in exchange for an honest review*

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## Sofia says

I first heard this tale from Clarissa Pinkola Estes of *Women Who Run with the Wolves* fame. Clarissa tells a lot of tales in her books and I'm not going to tell you which tale I'm referring to. Please just take it from me that Lee Welch take on this particular tale is brilliantly done in my opinion. Subtle good writing with character. This character is then infused in all around even the most unexpected.

Well did you ever imagine that salt can be a character in itself, well read this and see.

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## Cadiva says

Wow, what a refreshing change from the usual historical romance that was! Absolutely brilliant Victoriana with a magical twist looking at traditional British/Irish mythology and magic which is based on the "scientific" ideals of John Dee back in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

I love the thought that Dee's thoughts were based on something real and that people went on to study thermatology, alchemy, the magic of inanimate objects etc and made careers out of it. There's a lovely tie in with the Crystal Palace of Joseph Paxton, constructed in London's Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, which one of our erstwhile heroes was involved in the magical protection of.

The plot itself, and the twists within it, isn't going to be spoiled in this review. For a long, long time I had no idea where the mystery was going to go and the book is better for that. When I began to get an inkling of where it was heading, I must admit I got quite giddy!

John and Soren are so beautiful together, hesitant and mistrusting at the beginning, they slowly come to understand that they have found the other half of their perfect whole. The sex scenes are superbly done, very much in language suitable for the period and quite, quite erotic as John proves he has command over more than just his salt, iron and other magic components.

I could keep going about this book because it just ticked pretty much all my boxes but I think it's one which people will love the most when they go in blind so I'll just say *bravo Lee Welch* for something so completely different from your debut published novel!

*#ARC kindly provided by the author in return for an honest and unbiased review*

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## Renée says

This was a new-to-me author, and I really enjoyed Welch's writing style. It's engaging and flows easily.

There was a great deal of potential here, but the plot left me wanting, unfortunately.

Soren is trapped on his father's estate. He reacts violently every time he tries to leave. John Blake arrives on the estate, and, as a magician, sees about breaking whatever spell, curse, or other **thing** is keeping Soren trapped on this piece of property.

The romance was done well, and it evolved naturally. With alternating POVs, character development was on point too.

So what was lackluster about this, for me?

This book had everything. Too much. The paranormal aspect of this book was on steroids. I couldn't keep up, and then another type of "being" would be thrown in the mix.

The pacing slowed a lot for me in the middle of the book, even though there was always **something** happening. I found myself growing bored, but forcing myself along. It would all come together and make sense soon enough, right?

Well.....it all went somewhere, but I can't say that it came together and made sense. I'm still scratching my head about some small tidbits. And, if I'm honest, the ending was a little less than satisfying. I was left with questions about "Where do they go from here?"

Overall, this was a strong story that I'd say needs a bit more polishing. As a historical fantasy from a newer author, I was intrigued and I'd consider something else from this author in the future.

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## **K.J. Charles says**

DISCLAIMER I edited this book.

I enjoyed this one gigantically. The opening is terrifically creepy and compelling, the magic system is really unusual and intriguing--John's magic is gloriously inventive in particular--the romance is emotional and hot, the setting is Gothically vivid, and the author manages, extraordinarily, to make me absolutely desperate for a sequel starring a character that we haven't even seen on page. A lovely new voice in historical paranormal romance. More please!

(Note: I am chary about reviewing books I edited but I've decided it's not significant conflict of interest given I'm not taking on new work now. Others may disagree. Whatever.)

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## **Len Evans Jr says**

First off I just want to say that I am extremely impressed at the wonderful characters the author has peopled this book with, as well as the complex and awesome system of magic she put together for this book. This story was riviting, suspenseful and beautiful. I love Soren and John... together they are perfection. If the author can write like this for her second book... I can't wait t0 see what amazing things she does in her third!

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## Christelle says

### **\*\*3.5 stars\*\***

Not a real fan of magical historical romance, but I was very curious about this release and eager to give it a try.

The writing is really good and it's adequately fast-paced : a page turner. However, the plot confused me. Maybe because I'm a newbie for this genre ? Renée's review well described my thoughts.

As I had just read *The Magpie Lord*, I couldn't help making the comparison. I enjoyed the magical plot more in *The Magpie Lord*, and the sexual tension and romance more in this book.

In overall, I liked this book and I'm warming up to the fantasy/magic romance genre. I'm sure that the fans will greatly enjoy this story.

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## Lost in a Book says

### **4.25 Stars**

Well, Well, Well. This is a captivating (and a tad gruesome) read. Sign me up for immediate membership into Lee Welch's fan club. I'll patiently await my official VIP card, please and thank you.

Lord Thornby is trapped on his father's estate. Still. After being kept there *somehow* for well over a year, the days are bleeding together and he's barely keeping a hold on his sanity. Thornby's father and step-mother arrive back in town and there's an increase in the already peculiar happenings taking place around the Yorkshire estate. Luckily, John Blake shows up to investigate some unexplainable magical happenings.

Thornby and Blake have an immediate dislike and are forced to work with each other to make sense of what is holding Lord Thornby hostage. Their dislike changes fairly quickly and a necessary companionship is formed. They have great chemistry, entertaining banter, lots of heat, and are frequent passengers on the orgasm express. Apparently danger turns them on...

*Salt Magic, Skin Magic* is a historical paranormal romance that is very well done. I was enthralled from the beginning and didn't want to stop until the end. Once the plot picked up, I was on edge until the end. There are many PNR/fantasy elements taking place. Some of them made sense and other elements weren't fully explained and left me wondering if it's slightly lacking world building is setting up another book? I'd definitely read it.

I *wanted* to give it more stars but I *needed* more at the end. There's a HFN but where do they go from here? That could be me just being picky but I didn't feel completely settled at the end. Still, very enjoyable and definitely recommend.

*Copy provided for honest review.*

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## Richard Derus says

Real Rating: 4.75\* of five

Almost perfect in its genre. Almost! I'm amazed, astounded, delighted that it was such a top-flight romance, since it came by way of a newly minted author. And what a coinage Author Welch has struck! Confident, unhesitant strokes of imagination and inspiration, several passages that made me stop. dead. and. savor, just a wonderful reading experience all the way around.

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## Bookreader87(Amanda) says

Soren

Lord Thornbery is trapped on his father's land by a curse. A curse he believes his father placed on him. Every time he tries to leave something pulls him back. After a year and a half he fears he is close to madness. Mr. Blake has been hired to help the new Mrs. Dalton. She fears her husband's son, Lord Thornbery, has placed a curse on her. When Mr. Blake shows up he finds things are not what they appear. Overall an ok read.

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## Caz says

4.5 stars rounded up.

First of all - don't let that horrible cover put you off!

**Salt Magic, Skin Magic** is a very impressive almost-début novel from Lee Welch – I say ‘almost’, because the author has previously published a novella – and I devoured it in two sittings. I’m not widely-read in the fantasy genre, but the premise seemed quite unique, the world-building – in terms of the rules governing the use of magic – is well-thought out and explained, and the two central characters are engaging and strongly defined.

Soren Dezombrey, Lord Thornby, lives a life devoted to pleasure in London, as is usual for many heirs-in-waiting. He is estranged from his father, the Marquess of Dalton, whom he hasn’t seen for twenty years, so is naturally surprised when the marquess visits him in town and insists that Soren returns to the family’s Yorkshire estate of Raskelf Hall so that he can marry one of two heiresses selected for him. In fact, the marquess does more than insist; his servants overpower Soren and force him into the carriage, and Soren is now a prisoner in his own home. For the past eighteen months, he’s been at Raskelf – and he can’t leave. Literally. He isn’t bound or locked in; he can go wherever he pleases within the estate boundary, but whenever he gets close to it, he starts to panic, think the nineteenth century equivalent of “*damn, I’ve left the oven on!*” and immediately turns back and returns to the hall.

John Blake is a down-to-earth industrial magician, an exponent of inanimate magic, which is regarded in magical circles as lesser, more *common* magic than that practiced by Theurgists, who summon demons to do

their magic for them and so don't get their hands dirty. His normal line of work is in factories and other industrial buildings, where he is employed to ward against things like fires, injuries or accidents, so the request to visit the home of a nobleman is a very unusual one. But a friend – who happens to be Lady Dalton's cousin – tells him that the lady is terrified that her stepson is using magic with intent to harm her, and he asks John to visit Raskelf as a favour. John reluctantly agrees to go, and immediately senses that there's something not right. The house is literally drenched in ancient magic, curses and things John doesn't understand, and even odder is the fact that Thornby seems to be completely immune to his magic. John's curiosity is aroused – as are other things, because Thornby, while the epitome of the arrogant, disdainful nobleman, is quite the most beautiful man John has ever seen.

At first, what he sees would seem to support the idea that Thornby is indeed a malevolent force within the household, and he takes little heed of the latter's insistence that he holds no ill-will towards Lady Dalton and that he is unable to leave the estate. It's only when he witnesses first-hand – by marching Thornby forcibly across the estate boundary – the other man's struggles to return and then watches as horrible wounds appear on his face that he at last comes to realise that there's something truly sinister at work at Raskelf and to believe that Thornby is an unwitting pawn in a dangerous game... but what exactly is going on and who is pulling the strings?

Lee Welch has created an original, riveting magical fantasy in **Salt Magic, Skin Magic**, which combines an intriguing, tightly-constructed and high-stakes plot laden with mysticism, magic and suspense with a warm, tender romance between two men at opposite ends of the social spectrum who should, by rights, never have met. The chemistry between Soren and John is intense right from the start, although neither is happy about the degree to which they're drawn to the other man; and I loved the evolution of their relationship as it progressed from antagonism and suspicion to trust, affection and soul-deep belief in each other. Their interactions are flirty, funny and tender, and the romance develops in a wholly believable, organic way.

**Salt Magic, Skin Magic** is unquestionably one of the most original, compelling books I've read this year, and I'm eager to see what Ms. Welch comes up with next.

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## **Lotta says**

Oh, this was so good. Need to think a bit before I write my review. But basically, if you like paranormal historical romance, you should read this!

OK, let's give this a try.

This was definitely one of my favourite reads this year, with really beautiful language.

I liked the magic system (material magic vs. theratology, and apparently based on some Elizabethan beliefs?) and would love to read more about it, perhaps in more books set in the same world? Hopefully?

I also found the characters compelling. Lord Thornby, trapped over a year by some unknown spell and fighting to get free, now less arrogant than he once was. John Blake, trade to the core but with magic abilities that makes him in some ways the more powerful of the two. But Blake's magic doesn't seem to work on Thornby. And the budding attraction that pulls them together, while they still both doubt the other. They are both changed by the contact, and both learn new things about themselves. I don't want to say too much, unless I spoil the secrets.



There's also Lord Thornby's obsessed and horrible father, a bunch of his henchmen, the young, charming, but troubled step-mother, a hedgehog who likes walnuts and the wild Yorkshire sea.

Heather also wrote a really good review.

Highly recommended to fans of KJ Charles' and Jordan L Hawk's paranormal series.

For full disclosure, I got this book as an advance review copy.

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## Hollis says

Recently I saw advance praise (two five stars in a row!) of SALT MAGIC SKIN MAGIC from folks on my flist and I'm not ashamed to admit that without really even knowing what this book was about, it sent me scurrying, almost immediately, to get my hands on this book. And boy am I ever glad I did.

I had only a vague idea of what this book was about, seeing as I am mostly averse to blurbs and tend to skim only for keywords as I like to keep the mystery alive, and right away the opening chapter hooked me. Who was this character, what was going on, was this a haunting or a curse or a mental illness.. what. I needed to know more. And that's basically the driving force behind the story. It unfolds slowly, teasing us with bits here and there, toying with us to understand. And yes, there is a curse, there's madness, obsession, magic, strangeness, and salt. Also quite a few surprises along the way.

*Soren was used to people wanting him. John actually **liked** him.*

I'll admit that the latter half of the story felt a bit stronger than the first, as there were times my attention wandered, though that perhaps wasn't helped by me being sleepy on a dreary lazy post-hangover sunday (#noragrets), and I chose to overlook the unlikeliness of one of the sexy scenes happening at a particular time because it was **hot**.. and hey, this is a good time to point out that despite that comment, I liked how Welch didn't shove our faces in the intimate scenes. And how there was real doubt, and uncertainty, and each character questioned the pull, the connection, and weren't inclined to be all 'hey this is all very normal and I'll just go with the flow'. So many romances that occur in life threatening, or action-packed circumstances, are rarely given this kind of consideration and I really appreciated that. I also appreciated the escalation of the scenes themselves instead of just diving right in to fullblown sex. It was very well done.

*"If you give me a cockstand in public I'll never forgive you. These breeches are awfully tight."*

**"Yes, thank you, I noticed."**

And yes, I realize I've spent more time talking about how they got it on vs the plot but that's because it's spoilery and a mystery and y'all know I don't spoil and am the queen of vague. That said, though, there are villains that might not have been villains at the onset, there are red herrings, and paranormal doings, and inanimate objects that might not be precisely inanimate. But there were also lighthearted moments, real sweetness, and connection. Also I will never look at salt the same way.

SALT MAGIC SKIN MAGIC is moody, atmospheric, a little creepy, beautiful, tragic, and twisty. I am so happy I had a chance to read this one and I fully anticipate people going gangbusters over this release and this new-to-us-all author. I am definitely on the hook for more books in this world. If you love that particular blend of historical, paranormal, and romance that KJ Charles does so well, I would highly recommend you

read this debut.

4 "you fucked him for his diction?" stars

\*\* I received an ARC from the author (thank you!) in exchange for an honest review. \*\*

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## **Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says**

**Who are you, Lee Welch, and where did you come from?!**

### **I. AM. GAGGED.**

Salt Magic Skin Magic took me completely by surprise. I had never heard of Lee Welch before picking up this book, but I decided to give it a go because it reminded me of a K.J. Charles-ish story. I was completely blown away by what I found.

**If you are looking for that perfect blend of magic and historical romance that is so hard to find, look no further.** I loved the gloomy, dark English countryside setting with the crumbling castle and murky, magical vibes. I loved the contrast of the high-born, proud English lord and a working-class magician. I liked the sexual tension and I loved the magical world, though I could have used more world-building, for sure. In fact, I hope we get other books in the series with other MCs, just so I can learn MORE about Lee Welch's creation.

**The plot kept me guessing, and it had that elusive quality that makes you think, *just one more page*.** I *needed* to know what was going to happen next.

I was also really surprised that Salt Magic Skin Magic was this author's first full length book. It felt polished and professional, and really reflected all of the hard work and editing that must have gone into it, which I really appreciated.

**I was going to give this book 4.5 stars because it's not *quite* perfect, but I stayed up past 2 am last night to finish; I just could NOT put it down. Any book that has me reading all night is a winner. Lee Welch is an author to watch.**

\*Copy provided in exchange for an honest review\*

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