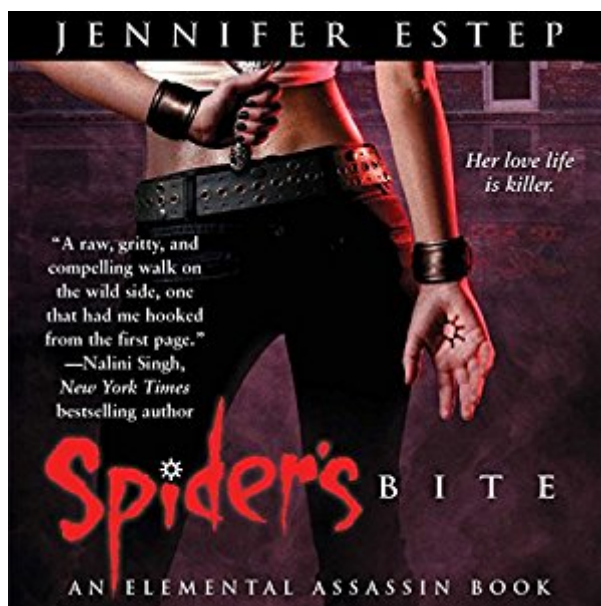


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Spider's Bite: Elemental Assassin, Book 1



Synopsis

They call me the Spider. I'm the most feared assassin in the South -- when I'm not busy at the Pork Pit cooking up the best barbecue in Ashland. As a Stone elemental, I can hear everything from the whispers of the gravel beneath my feet to the vibrations of the soaring Appalachian Mountains above me. My Ice magic also comes in handy for making the occasional knife. But I don't use my powers on the job unless I absolutely have to. Call it professional pride. Now that a ruthless Air elemental has double-crossed me and killed my handler, I'm out for revenge. And I'll exterminate anyone who gets in my way -- good or bad. I may look hot, but I'm still one of the bad guys. Which is why I'm in trouble, since irresistibly rugged Detective Donovan Caine has agreed to help me. The last thing this coldhearted killer needs when I'm battling a magic more powerful than my own is a sexy distraction... especially when Donovan wants me dead just as much as the enemy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If Urban Fantasy were a poker game, and UF authors were the players, Jennifer Estep would be the one who sat down at a high stakes game full of steely-eyed gamblers, pushed a huge pile of chips into the middle of table and said, "All in." In a genre full of gritty locales and bada** heroines, Estep found a way to up the ante. Gin Blanco, the heroine of Spider's Bite, is an assassin. She's not a former assassin. She's not an assassin in the service of some higher cause, she has no special dispensation from angels or demons or any other supernatural group that hands out licenses to kill. She's an assassin for hire and she takes real pride in a job well done. Gin does prefer to kill people

who deserve it - she does a fair amount of "pro bono" work, as she calls it - but this is one book that doesn't gloss over the fact that even her charitable activities leave bodies on the floor, wives without husbands, children without fathers. The plot is fast-paced, a real page-turner. As the book opens, Gin is just finishing one job and, once the deed is done, she's immediately sent on another. She prefers a little more prep time, but the contract is worth \$5 million and the job doesn't sound too hard: all she has to do is kill a middle aged accountant within a certain time frame. For an assassin of Gin's caliber, nothing could be easier. But just as she's about to pull the trigger, Gin discovers she's been double-crossed: the client who took out the contract on the accountant took out another on Gin herself. The plan was for Gin's death to tie up any loose ends related to the accountant's murder and keep suspicion away from the client. But things don't go as planned.

Gin, aka the Spider, is an elite assassin for hire. As she puts it, she's got the skills, blood doesn't bother her, and the money is good. She does have her own code of ethics that limit her services to the truly deserving (as well as a strict no pets, no kids policy). When her current client double crosses her and kills someone close to her, Gin has a clear conscience in vowing revenge, and enlists the help of the only honest cop in Ashland (a metropolis in an alternate South) who has been hunting Gin ever since she killed his partner. I loved the thoroughness of the world building in *Spider's Bite*. Magic is common. Some people are gifted with magical abilities tied to various elements (Stone, Ice, Earth, and Fire) and vampires, dwarves, and giants are part of the population. And I definitely think that the urban fantasy genre was ripe for a good female assassin. It should come as no surprise that Jennifer Estep is a self proclaimed fan of the show *Alias*. In the opening scene of *Spider's Bite*, Gin is trying to escape from an insane asylum in a way that is very reminiscent of one of my favorite episodes of *Alias*. Gin had to be resourceful, patient and quick on her feet. And as an assassin, I liked her immediately. When she wasn't killing people? Not quite as much. Gin is an extremely aggressive character in every sense of the word. Alpha with a capital 'A.' In her professional life, that aggression is vital. She would have died long ago without it. In her personal life? It's a little hard to take. Normally I prefer at least a little romance in my urban fantasy, but I hate to say that I think *Spider's Bite* would have fared better without it. That's not to say there actually is any romance in this book, there isn't.

As a teenager, Gin Blanco lost her family to a brutal attack which left her homeless, friendless, and running scared. All that changed after she met Fletcher, the kind own of a local BBQ joint. Fletcher got Gin back on her feet while wiping away her fear with the knowledge of how to protect herself

and those she loves. Years later, she's become a tough assassin, known as the Spider, with a killer record. And if her sharp knives don't do the trick, Gin's ace in the hole happens to be an affinity for stone, making her a rare elemental. After agreeing to a risky contract which ends up going south, Gin quickly finds herself fighting tooth and nail to protect those she loves while trying to stay alive herself. But the only way she's going to make it out alive in the corrupt and brutal city of Ashland is by aligning herself with by-the-book Detective Donovan Caine. Which can only complicate matters since said easy-on-the-eyes Detective happens to loathe every single aspect of Gin's chosen profession. Figures. Jennifer Estep has created an intriguing new world in her newest series Elemental Assassins. As a dangerous and corrupt city with dirty cops ready to look the other way, Ashland reminds me of a southern Gotham City with an added bonus of powerful magic. Though equipped with an appealing world-building concept, I struggled to connect to Gin as a character. Even in the face of tragedy, I never really felt that her grief was genuine. Sad to say, her narrative often seemed forced and quite repetitive. I often found myself hearing Gin describe the same types of scenes over and over again. Her enemies were always "sloppy, sloppy, sloppy" and every description of the attractive Detective Caine ended with "Mmm."

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