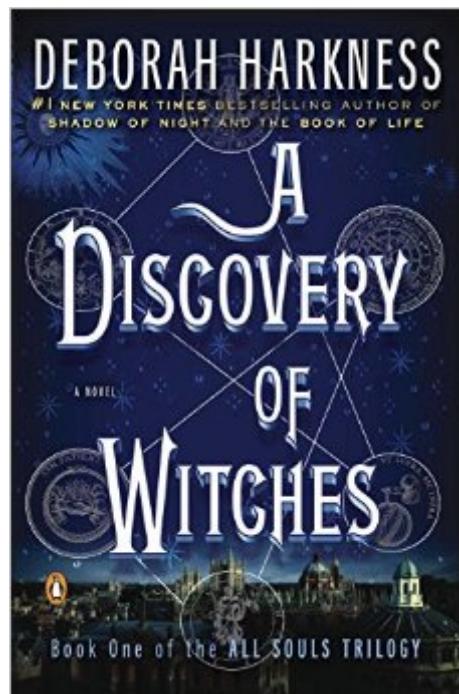


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A Discovery Of Witches (All Souls Trilogy)



Synopsis

Book one of the New York Times' "bestselling All Souls trilogy" "a wonderfully imaginative grown-up fantasy with all the magic of Harry Potter and Twilight" • (People) Deborah Harkness'™s sparkling debut, *A Discovery of Witches*, has brought her into the spotlight and galvanized fans around the world. In this tale of passion and obsession, Diana Bishop, a young scholar and a descendant of witches, discovers a long-lost and enchanted alchemical manuscript, *Ashmole 782*, deep in Oxford's Bodleian Library. Its reappearance summons a fantastical underworld, which she navigates with her leading man, vampire geneticist Matthew Clairmont. Harkness has created a universe to rival those of Anne Rice, Diana Gabaldon, and Elizabeth Kostova, and she adds a scholar's depth to this riveting tale of magic and suspense. The story continues in book two, *Shadow of Night*, and concludes with *The Book of Life*.

Book Information

Series: All Souls Trilogy (Book 1)

Paperback: 579 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; 1st edition (December 27, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143119680

ISBN-13: 978-0143119685

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 1.2 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (4,970 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #9,903 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #47 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Supernatural > Vampires #55 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Supernatural > Witches & Wizards #130 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Horror > Occult

Customer Reviews

In *A DISCOVERY OF WITCHES* Harknes takes all the urban fantasy romantic tropes and...uses them. Main PoV character Diana is smart, orphaned, stubborn, beautiful-though-she-doesn't-know-it, and a powerful witch. Her vampire love interest Matthew is almost perfectly thoughtful, impeccably dressed, brilliant, rich, and well connected. The antagonists resent their blossoming romance because vampires and witches 'just don't mix' (Really! It's never happened before!). There's the trendy locales (Oxford, France, upstate New York), the

wine/books/artifacts only a centuries old vampire could have, the tension between the supernatural races. If you've read your share of urban fantasy, you've seen all this many times over. The issue isn't that Harkness uses these tropes over again--they are tried and true for a reason--it's that it's her first novel and you can tell. Her foreshadowing lacks subtlety. Last-minute contrivances fix issues. Too much time is spent on the minutiae of eating/traveling/clothing. Expository conversations are used to forward the plot. And the plot itself is bogged down with irrelevant information. You know, the kinds of things any writer's workshop would explain are problems because they affect flow and readability. But do these problems ruin the story? For most urban fantasy readers, those are issues that won't impede their enjoyment of the love story. However, while I enjoyed Harkness' blending of ideas and the magic, even if they aren't exactly groundbreaking, the execution made it hard for me to enjoy it on a level that would make me give an unhesitating endorsement. The story starts off with a problem: why does everyone want Ashmole 782? Diana is a Ph.D. in history, an expert on alchemical texts, and during her research at Oxford she finds a text that has been missing for 150 years. She can tell it's special because it fires off all her witch's senses. But she's here as a scholar and not a witch, so sends it back, where it disappears again. Now every vampire, witch, and daemon in Oxford wants to know how she got it to appear and if she's going to do it again. Because its hidden text supposedly explains the origin of paranormal creatures--and perhaps even how to destroy them forever. During Diana's research, Matthew Clairmont appears. He's mysterious and attractive, but he's a vampire. He's a scientist at heart, who wants to not only know the how but also the why. He claims to want to help Diana, and is interested in Ashmole 782, but his altruistic intention is suspect. Diana, against her better judgement, is drawn into Matthew's circle of protection. The other witches don't want anyone but another witch to ever obtain Ashmole 782, and see Diana's vampire-trusting behavior as a betrayal. Then the dots start connecting: the death of her parents, the text, the motives of witches and vampires who are trying to keep Diana and Matthew apart. Harkness blends history, magic, science and alchemy into a story that sucks you in despite its awkward pace--because, really, you don't know where Harkness is heading with all this and you are compelled to know. Harkness's prose is easy enough to read, and she handles the magic well, including the separation of the supernatural races, and even the 'science' of their behaviors. Even though some of it seems to be for convenience's sake (i.e., vampires awake and walking around during the day). My favorite part of the entire book is the sentient house where Diana's witch Aunt Sarah lives. It creates new rooms for guests, has temper tantrums, and hides/reveals things at the appropriate times. The love story between the main characters is a strangely mixed bag of reality and contrivance. I wanted to want to

see them together, and they seem to fit together as a couple personality-wise, but the execution made Matthew creepy and Diana wishy-washy. Matthew is an over-protective control freak and Diana is a 30-something Ph.D. who devolves into a lovestruck teen, which made me kind of embarrassed for my sex. It doesn't help, either, that it only takes them three weeks to decide this is True Love Forever. While I was eventually able to enjoy the main characters, and even the plethora of secondary characters that are important in Diana and Matthew's lives, I couldn't get around the meandering storyline. Certainly there's forward movement as they fall in love, travel, and unravel the mysteries of Ashmole 782, but I look back and there's just so much fluff. I spent 500+ pages reading to remember all these details (historical, alchemical, etc), only to have them mean nothing to the story. If you asked me, I don't think I could pinpoint the exact climax of the novel (I think it was around the 2/3 mark, which is an awkward spot); then the last third of the novel devolves into a meandering buildup for an event that leads into what's obviously going to be a sequel. I guess we'll have to see if she improves with subsequent novels.**This review was posted on Elitist Book Reviews. For more reviews and interviews stop by our blog.**

I've been trying to read "A Discovery of Witches" -- it looked fun and had come highly recommended by someone I thought I trusted -- but here's a paraphrased, conglomerated conversation between the main character, Diana, and her love interest:~~~~~

"Oh, Matthew de Clairmont! You must remember that I'm an independent and strong 35-year-old, tenured, Oxford professor! I don't need your help just because you are a thousand-year-old vampire who looks like a 30-something and smells of spices and has long elegant fingers and a chiseled jaw and broad shoulders and mesmerizing eyes and such masculine energy and impeccable taste in wine and cheese and mushrooms and *swoons*....oh, all that MONEY!""I know, Diana, my love, my goddess. You are the strongest witch I've ever known! You row and run every day and your body is just...SCHUH-WING! You are so much stronger than I am! I tried so hard not to love you, but I am drawn to your power and your light! NO! Wait! I mustn't! I am sodangerous...so dark...! I can't bear the thought of accidentally attacking you." "Oh Matthew, you know I will love you no matter what. I know I can handle your wild beastliness!""No, Diana, I am telling you I could kill you if I lose control! I am so broooooody and daaaaaark!""Oh, you silly! I know you love me! We've known each other almost 3 weeks now and I just KNOW you could never, ever give me the hurtsies and boobooos! And will you please show me how to use my magic that I have always known was there but just couldn't awaken without you? *simper* NO! No, WAIT! I don't WANT to be a witch! I've always known I have such power and I'm the most special witch that ever was, but I'm just too afraid

to use my vast powers! Magic has always led me to....to....PAIN...! *sobs* "Enough! You are wearing yourself out! I ORDER you to go have a bath and eat something, Diana Bishop! You WILL NOT be allowed to get sick while you are under my...er....protection...! I will not have it!" "Oh, Matthew de Clairmont! I simply cannot go shower and I know it's been days since I've had a bite but I don't think I can eat! I'm just so sad when I have to leave your side! I'm sure to flood the world with my magical tears! Yesterday, while you were gone I nearly flooded your mother's house with my enchanted waters!" "You WHAT? Oh, how could I?! I left you here for a whole day without my guidance, and look what happened! What if you had DIED? Oh, I blame myself!" *sobs* "Oh, Matthew, promise me you won't ever go anywhere again!" "You know I can't promise, Diana. You know I must come and go on all this secret business I won't tell you about to PROTECT you!" "I don't need your protection, Matthew! Remember, I am an independent and strong 35-year-old, tenured, Oxford professor with a fabulous body wrought by 16-hours of rowing and running every single day! And if you'll leave again, I just don't know what I'll do, except cry! And maybe snoop through your drawers." "Yes, you are so strong, my darling Diana. So independent! But, don't make me lose my temper with you. Now you GET! Go on, GET! To your room! AT ONCE! I will order a dinner tray brought to you!" "Yes, Matthew!" *giggle* "I can tell you care about me because you are so moody and bossy! Just don't forget that I am an independent and strong 35-year-old, tenured, Oxford professor!" "It gives me a boner. Oh, and by the way Diana, you and I were married two weeks ago." "Oh! We were MARRIED? Without my strong and independent permission?" "Yes. I kissed you, and in the vampire world that means you're mine." "But, in the vampire world aren't the men in charge? Does this mean I have to let you lead and make all the decisions?" "I'm afraid it does." "Oh, okay. Just remember that I'm strong and independent 35-year-old, tenured, Oxford professor, and I don't need you or anyone else to rescue me! Will you carry me upstairs for my nap and my half-bite of watercress sandwich? I'm feeling peaked." ~~~~~ I don't know how much further I'm going to get, gag reflex being what it is and all. It feels like a repackaged Twilight or 50 Shades of Grey, with the same wet-noodle, codependent Muppet-Woman in the lead.

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