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The Mesmerist

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Ever since Jessamine Grace’s father was killed, she and her mother have earned a living working as spiritualists for London’s elite. Their work is a sham until one job causes Jessamine to actually receive deadly messages from the supernatural cult, Mephisto. Realizing Jessamine has the gift of mesmerism, communicating and interacting with the dead, her mother takes Jessamine to Balthazar, a half-faerie man who heads a small league of gifted youth dedicated to thwarting Mephisto and other evil forces. While Jessamine is training with Balthazar’s league, Jessamine’s mother is killed by Mephisto’s ghouls. Jessamine joins in the fight against Mephisto’s darkness, discovering along the way that she is half-faerie.

The Mesmerist has a lot going for it: gritty suspense, deadly dark forces, supernatural gifts, etc. But as the story gathers steam it seems like Smith throws in any cliché gothic elements found in monster movies to make the story feel more menacing. However, he thwarts that heightened fear-factor by punctuating the story with a “Tinker-Bell” styled world. Smith may have thought that mixing these two worlds would be original and fresh, but the blend severely cripples the book. Overall, The Mesmerist has too much going on inside it’s short 261 pages, leaving many readers dazed and confused. If readers are interested in stories that have similar themes of monsters, death, and magic, check out Garth Nix’s Abhorsen Trilogy or Janet Lee Carey’s The Beast of Noor.