



# Soulbinder

*Sebastien de Castell*

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**Soulbinder** Sebastien de Castell

**The fourth book in the page-turning SPELLSLINGER fantasy series.**

**Perfect for fans of The Dark Tower, Firefly, Guardians of the Galaxy, Terry Pratchett, Ben Aaronovitch and Jim Butcher.**

## Soulbinder Details

Date : Published October 4th 2018 by Hot Key Books

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Author : Sebastien de Castell

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## **From Reader Review Soulbinder for online ebook**

### **kit says**

these just keep getting better. fascinating magical systems, emotional complexity & maturity, & more than a little humor.

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### **Pen says**

I have devoured this series, it's just so thoroughly enjoyable. It may be one of the best I have ever read.

Easily checks off the trifecta for me:

Dynamic characters

Great world and magic system

Exceptional pacing

Surely at some point one of these books is going to bend and I'm going to lose interest... nah who am I kidding? Just gimme more!

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### **Joel says**

I can't say enough about this series. It's exciting, with great characters, really palpable drama, and some real sense of urgency throughout, showing how much it pulled me in. I've got very little to say beyond what I already have regarding this book and series - writing incredible, engrossing and entertaining novels seems so casual for de Castell, surely not 'effortless' but it seems very natural and enjoyable. I can't wait for the 5th novel to be out in a couple months, as I had a legitimate moment of sadness as I finished this book and realized it was a while still until the next.

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### **David Harris says**

I'm grateful to the publisher for a copy of this book via NetGalley.

This is the fourth in de Castell's fantasy series featuring exiled Jan'Tep mage Kellen Argos and his formidable "business partner", squirrel cat Reichis. It follows Spellslinger, Shadowblack and Charmcaster (mild spoilers for which may follow).

As was clear from the end of Charmcaster, Kellen is now alone (apart from Reichis) and when we meet him again at the start of Soulbinder, he is at his wits' end in the desert ("the desert is a liar"). It's the moment when in previous books Ferius would have pulled off some stroke or other and saved the day - but Ferius isn't there. Kellen has left her. He is forced back on his own resources, and they're running very low. Soon even more challenges arrive, combining family loyalties, Jan'Tep plots to wipe out those infected with the shadowblack, and counterplots by a whole community of the shadow touched.

Soulbinder is in many ways a bleaker book than those which came before, as Kellen makes a journey into darkness on several levels. The shadowblack continues to spread. Kellen doesn't know who to trust, or how to save what he loves. Not only must he cope with all this alone, bearing a crushing loss and suffering the pain of betrayal ("I hated my sister. I loved my sister") even more sharply than before. Not only being treated as a spy, and being unable to manipulate the shadows, just as he can't use Jan'Tep magic.

More than all this, I think, Kellen sees again what he is missing - the home he was exiled from and the friendships he can't be part of because he is hunted and outlawed. For much of this book he's trying to work out how, if at all, he can fit in with a whole pack of new shadowcasters but Kellen's not used to this (as we have seen before) - Jan'Tep society is much more hierarchical and since he left it he's been in strange company and generally fighting for his life. Not the best way to learn social graces.

Yet a great deal hangs on Kellen's success. Not only Kellen's own life, but that of someone else very close to him, and potentially those of the new "friends" and their community in Ebony Abbey, to which exiles cursed by the shadow black make their way for sanctuary. There's also the question of what's wanted from him - this book sees the powerful trying to tempt him to their side with plausible arguments and it's as much Kellen's moral compass that is tested as his courage and ingenuity. (We can see what de Castell feels about these blandishments from the chapter headings, where various nuggets of folk wisdom are expounded and then dismissed scathingly:

"A king rules not for himself, but for his people. Thus he can not be bound by conscience, but must instead be guided by every deed necessary for the survival of his realm.

- Platitude frequently used by arseholes to justify their actions"

I think Kellen steps up to all these challenges very well, much better than in the previous books - effectively he has much more responsibility now, even if he still despairs at what he has to do as he walks The Way of Thunder ("I hate this. I hate this. I hate this") and he has clearly learned a great deal from Ferius as well as from Reichis and even his own family. There is a sense he's growing, even if he hasn't had a decent night's sleep or a square meal for months. It probably needed Kellen to lose his companions for this to happen, but I do hope he meets up with some of them again soon because while it's still very entertaining, there isn't so much fun without, say, Ferius to annoy Kellen.

Finally. Being very careful, again, about spoilers, there's something that happens in this book that had me practically cursing de Castell. Which is a kind of backhanded tribute, I suppose, to how real he makes his characters and the events in the books, and how much the reader cares about what happens. It's an ability not all authors, even good authors, possess so I can only be grateful that he's writing these books and that there are more to come. But - SEBASTIEN, SEBASTIEN!

So. Buy this book. Read this book, and look forward to Queenslayer.

Oh, and Kellen now has an Argosi name, which I think we didn't know before (maybe I missed it). We learn it at the very end of the book and I won't tell you what it is but I think it's very appropriate.

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**GrilledCheeseSamurai says**

Just when things started feeling 'same old, same old' Sebastien de Castell switches everything up! Kellen is on his own and thrown into a predicament without any help from his companions. He is forced to grow as a character, and in doing so, we learn a lot more about his Shadowblack problem and what it could all mean.

I had a helluva fun time with this one, and after the first book, it is probably my favorite in the series so far. At first, I was put a little off balance with the omission of some of my favorite characters, however, I quickly grew to love (or at least be fascinated by) the new peoples that the author has populated his story with.

Again, just like the other books, this is an action-packed book that reads really quickly. It is peppered with the usual humor, although, I feel like this one had darkness behind the tongue in cheek banter that the other ones didn't, which in turn, really hammered home the seriousness of Kellen's plight.

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### **Sean says**

Received from Hot Key Books and Netgalley for honest read and review.

Starts off after events in book 3. Here we find Kellen again in a fix. We are instantly keeping an eye to see what happens next and this book does not disappoint in any way.

Another brilliant book with Kellen and I am so looking forward to book 5.

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### **Jay The Crippled God says**

I was desperate after thinking that Charmcaster was the last one. So happy and excited waiting for this one !!!!! Thank u De castel and we support u

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### **Shree143 says**

This series keep getting better and better. The multi layer story style as always awesome. The solo performance of Kellen's showed character development. I genuinely scared about Reichis for a while. Overall a top notch writing, kick ass story and complex characters. Sebastien de Castell showed yet again that he is one of the best out there right now with this book ?.

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### **Kayleigh Brindley says**

I discovered the first book in the Spellslinger series in December 2017, and after reading the following two books in the series earlier this year, it's become a huge favourite.

So, I was more than excited to see Soulbinder pop up in NetGalley as I was desperate to find out what happened after the events of Charmcaster. I'm going to do my very best here to keep any spoilers out of this review, but if you haven't read the first three books of this series, you might want to look away now. You can find my reviews of book two (Shadowblack) and book three (Charmcaster) by clicking on the respective

links.

This series goes from strength to strength with each new instalment that I read, and Soulbinder is no exception. It felt much more action-packed than the other books in the series, which really sped up the pace.

I have noticed a few recurring trends in these books, often with how they start (in the form of the trouble that Kellen is usually in), something bad happening to my favourite character, and the endings which lead Kellen on a new path and show how much he's grown, but each time it's something a little different that keeps things fresh and moving forward, and whilst each individual book has a sub-plot, the overall plot is continuously fuelled and driven forwards.

One of the best things about this book is the new characters, in particular, Butelios who is the absolute sweetest person, and the source of many, many smiles during his interactions with Kellen.

*"...wearing an idiots smile so bright it made you want to kiss him. Even if you weren't into boys."*

(Shame, because I'd totally ship these two!)

Kellen has developed beautifully throughout this series, discovering new strengths, facing his weaknesses, learning new truths and just becoming a better person. He truly rules this book (as does my little fur baby Reichis, of course) and his agony was so painful to witness, even though at the same time you can visibly see just how much he's grown and learned from Ferius and Reichis, becoming the hero (I personally believe) he was destined to be all along.

This book is the most heart-wrenching of the entire series, and I was so close to sobbing at one point that I almost didn't want to continue, so brace yourself for ALL THE FEELS!

*"Life ought to be more than just losing the things you love one after another until you have nothing left."*

As always, the politics between the various regions, clans, peoples etc. in this series, made the book extremely interesting, as did seeing the cast of new characters clashing with the old. Look out for some pretty awesome new displays of magic!!

The book itself is absolutely stunning, so far we've had beautifully illustrated covers in red, blue, orange and now green...I think the next one is purple and it's going to look stunning! The illustrations inside are also beautiful and work extremely well alongside the funny and poignant quotes at the start of each paragraph.

*"Cages have bars and everyone knows you're supposed to escape a cage, but houses have walls and people lock themselves inside to feel safe. You ask me, it's a lot easier to break out of a cage than a house. - What passes for Squirrel Cat Wisdom."*

After reading Soulbinder, I can't wait to find out where Kellen's journey takes him next, to discover new enemies, reface old ones, to reconnect with past characters, to be introduced to new ones, and above all, to see what kind of man he becomes.

*"...I won't know for sure until I meet the man you're going to be once you finally get tired of being the boy you once were."*

If fantasy and magic is your thing and you're looking for a story featuring an unlikely non-typical hero, a

ferocious, bloodthirsty squirrel cat, beautiful friendships, brutal enemies and uncertainty at every turn, I highly recommend that you read this series!

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## **Mogsy (MMOGC) says**

4.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/12/13/...>

In my review of the previous book, Charmcaster, I noted how certain patterns seemed to keep popping up repeatedly in the storytelling. However, as I was reading Soulbinder, all I could think of was how Sebastien de Castell must have had the same concerns as I did on the direction of this series, because it seemed he did everything he could in this one to shake things up and make the story as unpredictable as possible again, even going as far as to make light of some of the repetitive patterns from the previous novels.

Needless to say, this time the introduction did not parallel the opening chapters of the previous books, although once more, the novel opens upon a scene of our protagonist Kellen and the squirrel cat Reichis struggling to survive another attempt on their lives. Such is the life of an outlaw, after all. Still, instead of Ferius Parfax charging to the rescue with her bold tricks and fiery words, this time the Argosi adventurer is nowhere to be found. And instead of barely managing to thwart their attackers and get away, this time our heroes wind up beaten and broken, lying in the hot desert sands waiting for death to claim them.

But when Kellen wakes up next, his elation at having survived is short-lived. He finds he has been kidnapped by a cult of monks afflicted with the cursed Shadowblack, who have spirited him away to their Ebony Abbey hidden in the snowy mountains. Worse, when they took him, they also left Reichis behind, leaving our protagonist all alone in a strange place.

No Ferius. No Reichis. You'd think I wouldn't have enjoyed this book as much, since our beloved trio has been split apart, but nothing could be further from the truth. I loved Soulbinder, which might be the best installment since the first one. This is the book where it is truly Kellen on his own against the world, where his resolve is fully tested. Without the support of his friends, he must rely on only his own wits and skills, applying all that he has learned since leaving home to figure a way out of his predicament. As much as I love Ferius and Reichis, even I must admit a story like this was a long time coming, because readers needed to know just how far our boy has come.

That's not to say Kellen doesn't find help from other sources, some of them quite unexpected. It turns out there is more to the Ebony Abbey followers who have stolen him away, and among them, he makes a few new friends and allies. What's more, we get to learn a lot more about the Shadowblack, which our protagonists and his companions have been trying to find a cure for since the beginning of the series. But what if there was more to the condition? For the first time, Kellen is willing to consider the possibility that there might be something more to the so-called curse, which means we are also one step further along on his journey to self-acceptance.

It would be hard to read this book and not to feel proud of him, watching him confront his demons and decide his own future. Having grown up in a society of labels and where one's place in the hierarchy is everything, Kellen coming to grips with his new life as an exile was a huge turning point. Now he'll have another challenge before him as he determines once and for all how to deal with his own family, from the father who has given up on him to the sister he doesn't know if he can trust. Without Ferius to guide him, or Reichis to fight with him, Kellan is forced to follow his instincts and place priorities on what matters most.

In some ways, this makes Soulbinder the most telling and important books in the series thus far, revealing all of our protagonist's inner feelings and conflicts.

And so, if you've been following along and enjoying the Spellslinger adventures, this fourth volume is not one to be missed. A great deal hangs in the balance in this book, not least of all are the lives of friends both new and old. Soulbinder is a powerful installment that sees a hero coming into his own, and it is filled with momentous revelations and pivotal actions that will surely make it one of the more memorable books in the series.

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### **kartik narayanan says**

Spellslinger continues to be one of the best YA series with Soulbinder being another great entry.

As before, the standout element is the nuanced relationship that Kellen has with his family especially with his father. Even though the amount of pages devoted to this relationship & interaction is in the single digits, it is enough to elevate the story from the sea of YA fiction out there.

The other aspects of this series - Kellen's wit(?), the action, fast paced writing, unique world building - are as strong in this book as in the earlier installments.

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### **Martin says**

Review still to come

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### **Nikki says**

Still loving this series, and how broad the universe is!

Kellen is brilliant in this one - really coming across as a young kid forced to grow up too fast, and a good trickster, but also a sensible (trouble loving) head on his shoulders! His interactions with all the new characters was fab. My favourite is Butelios, he's awesome! I'm really hoping we see more of him in the future. And as much as I sort of want to push Diadera off a cliff, I really enjoyed her character too.

I loved getting to see more of Nephemia, and the role she played in this made me smile. I did miss Ferius though, as I knew I would.

And saving the best for last, Reichis. I love that murderous squirrel cat. His relationship with Kellen is always wonderful, and though he wasn't in this enough, he still shone through.

The only complaint I had was the abbot's motivations were not great, but I can see how he ended up where he was. I just found it as frustrating as Kellen did. And there was a point about half way through where I had to stop reading for a bit - far from poorly written, but enough to shock me out of it a bit. You'll know what I mean when you get there. As always it is brilliantly written and funny, and I can't wait for book five!

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**Anniek says**

This installment was more interesting to me than the previous one, as it was more suspenseful and I felt like the stakes were higher. It also introduced some awesome new characters!

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**Akshaya Sriram says**

As usual, Castell does a fantastic job with the fourth installment of the Spellslinger series. In this book, finally, our ever whiney protagonist, grows into a hero in his own right. Fun, entertaining and of course, in Castell's style, preposterously daring.  
Five enigmatist stars.

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