

## The Two Souls of Shadows: Voidoxity: Book 2

**James L.P. Thompson**

FriesenPress

(198pp)

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*The Two Souls of Shadows is a dark fantasy novel following a clash of good and evil in a world marked by magic.*

In James L.P. Thompson's epic fantasy novel *The Two Souls of Shadows*, a magical royal princess uncovers the secrets of her heritage while facing the machinations of a wicked god.

Mana is the child of a demon king, Aergos, and an elder god, Kisara. She is plagued by horrific nightmares, even as an undead elder god, Daevox, haunts the land. Daevox hopes to capture Mana and acquire the power of her bloodline.

When Aergos is incapacitated by an encounter with Daevox, Mana ventures on a quest to heal him. She befriends a dragon who is distant kin to her family. Later, her family gathers their allies and prepares to battle Daevox.

Intricate backstories help to flesh out the cast, whose histories inform the plot's forward movement. Mana's parents, for example, encounter allies and enemies from their earlier adventures along the way, and their dynastic roots and dueling magical heritages make Mana powerful and vulnerable to those who crave power in turn. Further, Mana is charming as she sets out on her own adventures and makes new friends on the road. She's also an effective foil to her serious parents, helping to humanize all three. Their mutual tenderness and shared humor stand out against the darker elements of the plot.

The worldbuilding is accomplished via references to prior eras and lands, infusing the lands Mana and her family travel through with historical import. Dragons, magical powers, demons, elves, and talking swords are introduced in exciting succession, and the everyday presence of the supernatural results in a convincing otherworldly tone.

However, the book's style of infusing such details about Mana's world and its past into the narrative is quite clunky. Characters introduce themselves at length, covering their personal histories even when they are not asked to do so; they make statements about their relationships to one other in flat terms. Such expository moments appear throughout the book, and information is often reiterated multiple times. The most egregious example of this trend is in the final confrontation: Moments before the encounter comes to a close, Daevox persists in explaining how his powers work and proclaiming that he is difficult to defeat, but this speech is without conviction and delays the action. Elsewhere, descriptions rest in blunt lists of objects in scenes sans dynamism.

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BRENDAN MCKELVY (December 11, 2024)

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