

Black Water (Pendragon #5)

By D.J. MacHale

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Breaking the rules
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Black Water (Pendragon #5) By D.J. MacHale Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #223074 in Books
- Brand: Aladdin
- Published on: 2004-08-01
- Released on: 2004-08-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.63" h x 1.20" w x 5.13" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author
D.J. MacHale is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling Pendragon series and the Morpheus Road series. He has written, directed and produced many television series and movies for young people that have been seen on Nickelodeon, The Disney Channel, HBO, Showtime, PBS, Discovery Kids, and the broadcast networks. D.J. lives with his family in Southern California.

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Chapter One

Acolytes.

That's what this was all about.

It was also about saving humanity from being crushed by a villainous demon named Saint Dane, but that was a little much for Mark Dimond and Courtney Chetwynde to tackle right off the bat. They figured becoming acolytes was the best way to ease into the whole universe-saving thing. The two friends sat together on a musty old couch in a small New York City apartment. They were there to learn the mysterious ways of the acolytes. Not exactly dramatic surroundings, considering they were hearing words that would change their lives forever.

"You are the acolytes from Second Earth now," said Tom Dorney, whose apartment it was. "With Press gone, I'm no longer needed. It may be an easy job compared to what the Travelers do, but I think you'll agree it's an important one."

"We do. Absolutely. Yessir," Mark and Courtney assured him.

Dorney turned to look out his window and frowned. He was an old guy with short-cropped gray hair and excellent posture. He was once a soldier. Old habits die hard.

"Is there something you're not telling us?" Courtney asked.

Dorney sighed and said, "It's just a feeling."

"What?" she demanded.

"I don't know," Dorney said, troubled. "I didn't like what I heard about Veelox."

"Yeah, no kidding," Courtney said.

"What I mean to say is, be careful. Saint Dane has finally had a victory, and there's no telling what's next. From this point on, I can't guarantee that the old rules still apply."

This was chilling news for Mark and Courtney on their first official day as acolytes. Dorney's ominous warning was very much on their minds as they left his apartment and took the train back to Stony Brook, Connecticut. Just before the train pulled into Stony Brook Station, Mark announced, "I want to go to the

flume."

"Why?" Courtney asked.

"We'll bring some of our clothes to leave there."

"But nobody told us they needed clothes," Courtney countered.

"I know. Just thinking ahead."

"That's just an excuse to go there, isn't it?" Courtney asked.

Mark didn't argue. "I guess I just want to see it again. To prove it's real."

"I hear you," Courtney said. "I do too."

When they got off the train, they both went home and gathered up a bunch of clothes they thought a Traveler from some distant territory might need on a visit to Second Earth. That's what acolytes did. They supported the Travelers on their mission to protect Halla. Courtney picked out a bunch of simple, functional things like jeans, T-shirts, a sweater, socks, hiking boots, and underwear. She debated about bringing one of her bras, but figured that was overkill. Mark gathered up a bunch of clothes that were totally out of style. It wasn't like he had a choice. That's all he had. He found sweatshirts with logos that meant nothing, no-name jeans, and generic sneakers. Style was not something Mark concerned himself with. He hoped the Travelers felt the same way.

Mark brought one extra item, but hoped he wouldn't need it. It was the sharp poker from his parents' fireplace. It was a woefully inadequate weapon to deal with an attacking quig-dog, but it was all he could find.

Shortly after, Mark and Courtney met at the iron gates in front of the empty Sherwood house. They silently walked around to the side and climbed the tree to get over the high stone wall that surrounded the spooky, abandoned estate. Once over, Mark held the fireplace poker out in front of him, ready to ward off a rampaging quig. Mark's hand was shaking like warm Jell-O, so Courtney gently took the weapon from him. If either of them had a chance of fighting off a charging quig, it would be Courtney.

Luckily they didn't run into any of the yellow-eyed beasts. They made it through the big empty mansion, down into the basement, and into the root cellar that held the newly created flume. No problem. They emptied their backpacks and neatly folded the clothes in a pile. Courtney looked at some of the geek clothes Mark brought, and chuckled.

"Oh yeah, Bobby's gonna blend right in wearing a bright yellow sweatshirt with a red logo that says, *'Cool Dude!'"*

"Give me a break," Mark said defensively. "It's my favorite sweatshirt."

Courtney shook her head in disbelief. When they were finished, they both gazed into the dark tunnel to the territories. The flume. They stood together, each with his/her own thoughts as to what the future might hold.

"I'm scared and excited at the same time," Mark said.

"Really," Courtney added. "I want to be part of this, but it's scary not knowing what to expect."

"Can you imagine being a Traveler?" Mark asked while stepping into the mouth of the tunnel.

"Well, no," Courtney answered, "to be honest."

"Well, I've thought about it a lot!" Mark declared. "It would be awesome, stepping into a flume and announcing the next amazing place you'd like to go."

"It's pretty unbelievable," Courtney agreed.

"Look at this thing!" Mark said, scanning the flume. "It's kinda like having a jet fighter."

"It is?" Courtney asked with a chuckle.

"Yeah. You know what it's capable of, but have no idea what to do to make it go."

"It's not all that hard," Courtney said. "If you're a Traveler."

Mark smiled, turned to face the dark tunnel, and shouted out, *"Eelong!"*

He looked back to Courtney and said, "Could you imagine if -- "

"Mark!" Courtney shouted.

Mark saw the terrified look on Courtney's face. She was looking past him, deeper into the flume. Mark spun quickly and saw something he thought was impossible.

The flume was coming to life.

Mark jumped out of the tunnel and ran to Courtney. The two backed away toward the far wall of the root cellar, hugging each other in fear.

"D-Did I do that?" Mark asked.

"Or is somebody coming?" Courtney added.

The light appeared from the depths of the tunnel. The musical notes were faint at first but quickly grew louder. The rocky walls began to crackle and groan. They had seen all this before, but only when the flume was activated by a Traveler. Never, ever had a flume been activated by a non-Traveler -- until now.

"I-I don't really want to go to Eelong," Mark cried. Courtney held him tighter, ready to hold him back if he got pulled in by the power of the flume.

The gray walls of the tunnel melted into glorious crystal as the bright light and sound arrived at the mouth. Mark and Courtney didn't dare put their hands in front of their eyes because they were too busy hanging on to each other. But neither felt the tug of the flume, because someone was headed their way. Through the bright light they saw a tall, dark silhouette appear and step out of the tunnel. Oddly, the sparkling light didn't go away. The jangle of music stayed too. This had never happened before, at least not that Mark or Courtney

knew. But none of that mattered as much as the man who now stood facing them.

It was Saint Dane. He had arrived on Second Earth. The two had never seen him before, but there was no mistaking the tall demon with the long gray hair, piercing blue eyes, and dark clothes.

"And so it begins," Saint Dane cackled. "The walls are beginning to crack. The power that once was, will no longer be. It is a whole new game, with new rules."

Saint Dane roared out a laugh. With a sudden burst of light from deep inside the flume, his hair caught fire! His long gray mane exploded in flames, burning right down to his skull. Mark and Courtney watched in horror as the flames reflected in his demonic eyes. Saint Dane laughed the whole while, as if enjoying it.

Mark and Courtney didn't move, except to tremble.

The fire burned away all of Saint Dane's hair, leaving him completely bald, with angry red streaks that looked like inflamed veins running from the back of his head to his forehead. His eyes had changed too. The steely blue color had gone nearly white. He fixed those intense eyes on the two new acolytes and smiled. He tossed a dirty, cloth bag at their feet.

"A present for Pendragon," Saint Dane hissed. "Be sure he gets it, won't you?" Saint Dane took a step back into the light of the flume. "What was meant to be, is no longer," he announced. With that, he began to transform. His body turned liquid as he leaned over to put his hands on the ground. At the same time his body mutated into that of a huge, jungle cat. It was the size of a lion. His coat was brown, but speckled with black spots. The big cat snarled at Mark and Courtney, and leaped into the flume. An instant later the light swept him up and disappeared into the depths. The music faded, the crystal walls returned to stone, and the light shrank to a pin spot.

But it didn't disappear entirely.

Before Mark and Courtney could get their heads back together, the light began to grow again. The music became louder and the gray rock walls transformed back into crystal.

"My brain is exploding," Mark uttered.

A second later the bright light flashed at the mouth of the tunnel to deposit another passenger before returning to its normal, dormant state.

"Bobby!" Mark and Courtney shouted. They ran to him and threw their arms around him in fear and relief.

"What happened?" Bobby demanded, all business.

Mark and Courtney were both supercharged with adrenaline. "It was Saint Dane!" Courtney shouted. "His hair burned! It was horrible!"

"He said the rules have ch-changed, Bobby," Mark stuttered. "What did he m-mean?"

Bobby took a step back from them. Mark and Courtney sensed his tension.

"What did you do?" Bobby demanded. It sounded like he was scolding them.

"Do?" Courtney said. "We didn't do anything!"

Mark and Courtney focused on Bobby. He was wearing rags. His feet were bare, his hair was a mess, and he had a coating of dirt all over his body. He didn't smell so hot either.

"What happened to you?" Mark asked.

"It doesn't matter," Bobby shot back. He was just as charged up as they were. "Did you activate the flume?"

Mark and Courtney looked to each other. Mark said, "Uh, I g-guess so. I said 'Eelong' -- "

"No!" Bobby said in anguish.

"What's the matter?" Courtney asked. "We're not Travelers. We can't control the flume."

"Things have changed," Bobby shouted. "Saint Dane's power is growing. He's got his first territory. It's all about changing the nature of things."

"So...that means we can use the flumes?" Courtney asked.

"Don't!" Bobby demanded. "It'll just make things worse."

Mark remembered something. He ran back to the door of the root cellar and picked up the bag Saint Dane had thrown at them. "He said this was for you," Mark said, handing the bag to Bobby.

Bobby took it like it was the last thing in the world he wanted. He turned the rotten bag upside down, and something fell onto the floor. Courtney screamed. Mark took a step back in shock. Bobby stood firm, staring at the floor, his jaw muscles clenching. Lying at his feet was a human hand. It was large and dark skinned. As gruesome as this was, there was something else about it that made it nearly unbearable to look at. On one finger, was a Traveler ring.

"Gunny," Bobby whispered. It was the severed hand of the Traveler from First Earth, Vincent "Gunny" VanDyke. Bobby took a brave breath, picked up the hand, and jammed it into the bag.

"Bobby, what's happening?" Courtney asked.

"You'll know when I send my journal," he said. He turned back and ran into the mouth of the flume, clutching the bag with Gunny's hand in it. *"Eelong!"* he called out. The flume sprang back to life.

"Is Gunny all right?" Mark asked, nearly in tears.

"He's alive," Bobby said. "But I don't know for how long."

"Tell us what to do!" Courtney pleaded.

"Nothing," Bobby answered. "Wait for my journal. And whatever you do, do *not* activate the flume. That's exactly what Saint Dane wants. It's not the way things were meant to be."

With a final flash of light and jumble of notes, Bobby was swept into the flume, leaving his two friends alone

to begin their careers as acolytes.

It wasn't a very good beginning.

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From AudioFile
In this installment of the Pendragon series, Courtney and Mark think they'd like to become acolytes for travelers coming to earth. The rules are changing, and they find themselves in the middle of Bobby's adventure rather than just reading about it in his journals, as in previous installments. William Dufris returns as narrator, creating the core cast of characters from prior books and some crossover of characters from other worlds. Dufris has plenty of opportunity to express the teenagers' enthusiasm, as well as the tempering presence of the older and more subdued Gunny. Dufris is undaunted in his interpretation of the inhabitants of Eelong, giant cats whose disdain for humans is barely contained. J.E.M. © AudioFile 2005, Portland, Maine-- *Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brent Jones:

This Black Water (Pendragon #5) are generally reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The main reason of this Black Water (Pendragon #5) can be on the list of great books you must have is actually giving you more than just simple reading through food but feed a person with information that probably will shock your previous knowledge. This book is actually handy, you can bring it everywhere you go and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed people. Beside that this Black Water (Pendragon #5) giving you an enormous of experience like rich vocabulary, giving you demo of critical thinking that we understand it useful in your day task. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

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Kimberly Pratt:

The reason? Because this Black Water (Pendragon #5) is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such wonderful way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you

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