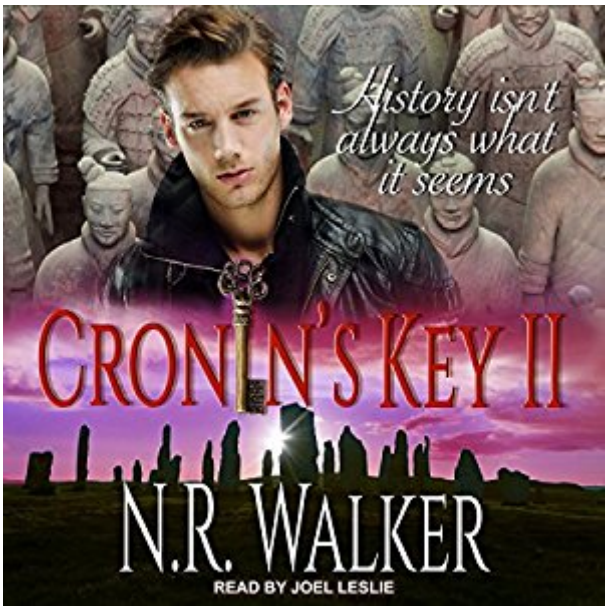
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Cronin's Key II



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Synopsis

History isn’t always what it seems.... With the battle of Egypt behind them, Alec and Cronin are enjoying the thrill of new love. Though fate doesn’t wait long before throwing them back into the world of weird. They know Alec’s blood is special, though its true purpose still eludes them. And given Alec’s inability to be changed into a vampire, Cronin is free to drink from him at will. But the ramifications of drinking such powerful blood starts a ripple effect. With the help of Jorge, a disturbing vampire-child with the gift of foresight, Alec and Cronin face a new kind of war. This time their investigations lead them to the borders of China and Mongolia - but it’s not what lies in the pits beneath that worries Alec. It’s the creator behind it all. In the underground depths of China, amid a war with the Terracotta Army, they will find out just what the Key is - and what Alec means to the vampire world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Much of what I said reviewing the first instalmentCronin’s Key, #1could be repeated for both this and the third oneCronin’s Key, #3only taking the rating down a notch because much of the tension -which was not overwhelming to begin with- has evaporated, leaving the writing’s flaws so much more evident. I shall only mention the rather repetitive sex scenes, the inconsistencies (not many but easily detectable) and the vain efforts -translating into dull paragraphs- of making the book self contained while it cannot be read without reading the first episode first.

I loved it! We not only get to explore Alec and Cronin’s relationship, we get another clue as to what

is behind the events that came to pass in book 1.These two characters are wonderfully portrayed, and I very much enjoyed going along for the ride. From Cronin’s struggles with his unexpected changes, to the challenges Alec faces in not only adjusting to his new life and relationship, but realising he still has a part to play in the fate of all vampires. My favorite secondary character would have to be Jorge. What a cute, evil, and yes, misunderstood little person! :)Wonderful follow up to the first installment, and I can’t wait to read the next!

No heteronormativity. Check.A lot of my comments for the previous book carries out. This installment of the series followed the same formulae. The pacing was similarly a little slow, but more action and suspense towards the end of the book. Still, Alec and Cronin were really cute together.The biggest beef I had with this was the research. It said that there are 4 elements in Chinese mythology/culture - wood, fire, water, air - and that they represent the seasons and each have a mythical creature avatar; and that there is a 5th element that scholars are still debating whether or not it exists - metal. Hell no. There has always been 5 elements and they are all connected in a way such that one overpowers and is in turn weakened by another. The 5th element isn’t like the quintessence like the Western elements where it connects everything. A little research on the 4 seasonal elements brought a similar picture as the one Walker painted in the book, but the element that connects all is the Emperor, symbolized by a yellow/golden dragon. But instead, it’s metal in the book. Another thing, Qin Shi Huang isn’t the ancestor of Genghis Khan!The final battle was quite anticlimatic actually, similar to the last book.Again, the characters are nice to read about, just don’t think too much about the research-y bits.

To get best enjoyment, the reader should read the stories in order so that you can follow the development of Alec and his relationship with Cronin.This story starts shortly after the end of the first. Alec resides with Cronin in his New York appartement. Partly because he still is sought after by his colleagues in NYPD and partly because he and Cronin cannot bear to stay away from each other. And they are waiting. By now they know that there is more to come, before Alec can be changed.But there are already some changes, something is not quite right. Cronin is experiencing things he should not, while tests done on Alec’s blood show results all over the place. Something is seriously wrong with Alec. In fact, he is dying.They consult the only known vampire child. It’s said Jorge has multiple personalities, but later it is revealed that he actually channels the dead. The child talks in riddles and it takes some effort to "untangle" all the information. And the last part will be understood much later.Since they’ve realised that Alec’s life is in danger, they decide to speed up

the confrontation. Just to find out that the villain in this story is ready for them. But he is not the only one. Actually he is only a puppet in a larger plan (no more spoilers from me here).To put the potential reader's worries to rest - there is a third book coming. This time with Alec as the most powerful vampire known to their kind.As I wrote previously, I appreciate highly that the writer keeps closely to known (and some assumed) facts - this time from Chinese history - even if they are spiced up with some inventive explanations. And I am already looking forward to the third story, wondering what the writer has in store for us.

As a fan of the first book I was glad to find out there was a second novel. A lot of the novelty of the first book arises out of the premise of Alec as some sort of saviour and the well drawn characterizations of the happy band of vampires. I wondered where the second book would go as the storytelling would become more important. Actually I was wrong as the author managed to really develop the characters further. It is great to read a gay fantasy book where characterization is as important as the sex or the story.The story has a similar spin to the first book, ancients threatening the modern world. The author managed to build up the suspense well but once the action started in earnest it lost a bit of tension. I feel the denouement was rushed and over and done too quickly. That said the strength of the book lay elsewhere and that is why I gave it 4 stars.I hope there is a book 3 as there is I feel a lot more to learn about Alex, Cronin et al.

I'm going to start off by saying this is an overall series review because in my honest opinion there is no way you can read just one, once you start book one you won't want to stop till you reach the final page of book three. Alec and Cronin are perfect together and even though they are the center of the series, the secondary characters will burrow their way into the spotlight and the reader's heart. Eiji brings some much needed comic relief at times and others he always has his friends' back and fully devoted to his mate Jodis. I don't often read vampire tales but I have loved every one of them and Cronin's Key is no exception, as a matter of fact it has quickly moved to the top of the list. NR Walker has created a world that reminds me of a sexy Twilight meets Indiana Jones, the best of paranormal, history, and romance.

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