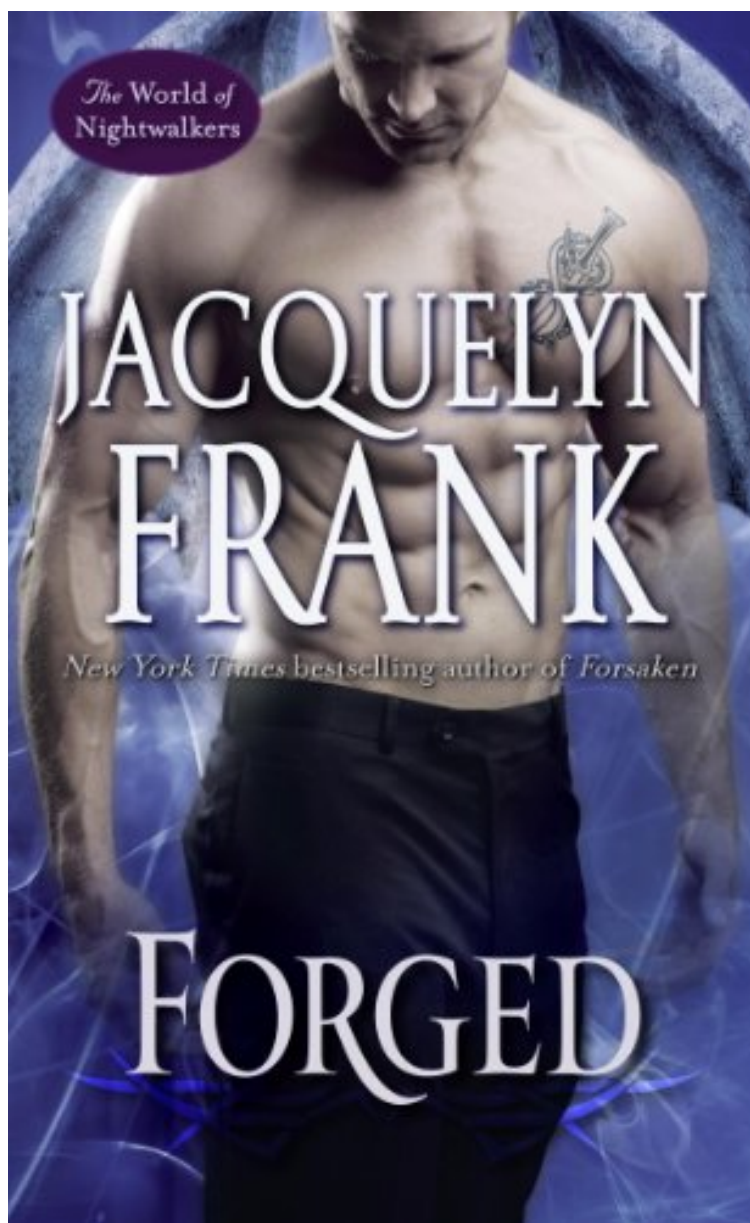


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Forged: The World of Nightwalkers



Par Jacquelyn Frank
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ventes : #298517 dans eBooksPubli le:
2014-04-29Sorti le: 2014-04-29Format:
Ebook Kindle

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom New York Times bestselling author Jacquelyn Frank comes a seductive new paranormal romance set in the World of the Nightwalkers, as a battle-scarred bodyguard and a sensitive beauty risk their livesand their heartsin the face of evil. When Katrina Haynes discovers a large man lying wounded in the snow, she fears he is at deaths door. But as Kat tends to his injuries, she quickly realizes that theyre the least of her worries. With an irresistible Scottish brogue and a strange ability to harden his chiseled body like a statue, the stranger awakens a desire she is unable to resistand a fascination about the

intriguing world he exists in. As a proud Gargoyle, Ahnvil must safeguard the Nightwalker to whom he's sworn fealty. But as this bewitching woman nurses him back to health, arousing an almost uncontrollable hunger within him, he is possessed with the fierce impulse to protect her as well. And he will have to shield her for by coming to his rescue, Kat has placed herself in the middle of a supernatural war . . . and exposed herself to dark, powerful magic. As human and Gargoyle forge an unbreakable bond, Kat will discover that despite his intimidating strength and size, one thing Ahnvil does not possess is a heart of stone.

Praise for Forged As always there is passion, intrigue and danger in this darkly romantic story, but it is the potential for the melding of series and characters that gives Forged an extra dash of excitement. RT Book s The World of the Nightwalkers gets more interesting with each book, as we encounter new species and the battle lines are drawn between good and evil. The world building is superb as the author begins to flesh out and color in this new world. The Good, The Bad, and The Unread A very good addition to a highly entertaining paranormal series. Fresh Fiction There's something to be said when you finish a book and immediately want the next book in the series. Jacquelyn Franks The World of the Nightwalkers . . . is just that kind of series. Bad Ass Book s From the Paperback edition. Extrait Chapter One Approximately three hundred years ago His name had been taken from him. All those years ago, when he had first been forged, they had robbed him of everything that he had been and had left him with nothing... stripped and raw, without even a name. From the moment he had been reborn into the thing that he now was he had been called many things. Slave. Idiot. Fool. Those words were his name now. What do you think, fool? Fetch me that water, slave. Don't you know what you are doing you idiot!?!? But no longer. Tonight he would be free, one way or another, and he would not flinch from what it would take to grasp that freedom. Whether it be actual escape or whether it be death. All he had to do was get the stone. That was all. Just one small piece of rock that had been bound to him at the very same moment his existence had been forged into this horrid life. One small stone would mean the difference of life or death to him. Freedom or oblivion. There were no other choices. He could no longer tolerate any other state of being. But the task was harder than it seemed. His master guarded the stone zealously, as he did all of the stones of his slaves. He felt a twinge of regret that he would be leaving the others behind to wallow in their enslaved states, but he could not worry about them and he could not enlist their help. He would not risk any lives but his own. More important, he did not know if he could trust any one of them not to betray him. Yes, it was selfish in its way, he acknowledged to himself, but he had no choice but to be selfish. This folly would be his and his alone. All he needed was one small stone. He waited until the room had emptied of everyone save himself and his master. He lingered nonchalantly, trying not to look like he was up to anything that could be perceived as remotely rebellious. His lord was a dark and powerful man. He was very high up in the chain of command, his life busy and focused on the war he was heading against his enemies. However, he was not all-powerful. True, he had been talented enough to forge many slaves like himself, but his master answered to a mistress of his own. He fawned over her constantly, bidding his slaves to do any number of tasks, both benign and horrific, on her behalf. And though his master was the one who had enslaved him, it was this mistress he directed his impotent captive fury toward. Oh, they were equally responsible for the individual slaves they created, but his master's mistress was the twisted mind that birthed the terrible tasks his master would bid him to take care of. And no matter how reprehensible the task, as long as his master held that stone, he had no choice but to comply. And so he had done terrible things. Things that sometimes he had taken great pleasure in doing, despite knowing how dark the ultimate goals of his master might be. He had stolen things. He had headed raiding parties against his master's enemies. He had committed cold-blooded murder. And the night he had realized that he was beginning to take delight in these murderous tasks was the night that he began to see how reprehensible he himself was becoming. He could only blame his master to a point, but he had gone above and beyond the duties outlined to him and he had taken pleasure in it all. He had gone from being a man enslaved and despising his captor to a true and loyal servant that took pride in the way he accomplished these dark, vile deeds. He had truly become a disgusting reflection of his master. He had so much penance to pay for his deeds that he probably didn't even deserve freedom. But to keep away from freedom meant that he would only continue to perform more harm on others. He would continue to descend into damnation, and that he could not abide. But it was this loyalty toward his master that made his master drop his guard, leaving the stones unprotected against his very best and most loyal of slaves. Just the same, if he failed he would never be trusted again, and would suffer everything from cruel torture to absolute death. He had seen his master's wrath in action up close and personal. Hell, he had often been the instrument through which his master had exacted his vengeance on those who crossed him. He knew just how creatively the man could sketch death

on another. The room was empty, but that meant nothing. He walked slowly and purposefully toward the box holding the stones. A simple wooden jewelry box with blue velvet lining and a high polish that made the wood gleam. It was in the shape of a hexagon with another hexagon of etched glass in the center of the lid.

The central design on the glass was of a lily. Had it had color, it would have been a black lily. Black lilies were his masters mark. He was sometimes instructed to cast a black lily on the ground near a scene of action, whether it be something as brutal as a vengeance murder or something as benign as an altar of worship, he dispatched his masters mark. It was not some corny token, however, like in movies or television-some way of saying I was here! or fear my wrath! The black lily was a profound symbol for death, a death his master chased with a single-minded fury. Not the deaths of those around him, but his own. For his master was a powerful immortal, doomed to live life over and over again, always remembering the suffering that had come the lifetime before. Not many recognized this, but as his masters right-hand man, it was hard to miss

how the man craved permanent death. He hesitated a moment before touching the box. He knew it was ensorcelled, that it would raise an immediate alarm and explode with defensive, painful magic against him. Through the glass he saw the small collection of colorful stones, each ranging from being as gray as granite to being beautiful shades of red and everything in between. His, he knew, was the cinnamon-colored stone just big enough to fit his hand around. It was clear as glass, as brilliantly faceted as a ruby without the deep

blood-like coloring. It matched his eyes perfectly. It was what it was. A stone. A protected stone. His touchstone. A stone he would be bound to for the rest of his days. It had been taken from his hide the day he had been forged and now... now he was slave to it. Every day he must sleep in contact with it. If he did not...

the consequences were horrific. To be parted from the stone for long periods was to risk permanent being. He fisted his hand, turning his flesh and bloodskin to stone... a dark gray stone. With a carefully controlled show of force, he rammed his fist through the glass. He was powerful enough to grind everything within the

box into dust if he was not careful, and that would mean not only his end, but the end of all the others connected to all those other stones. The reactive magic was horrifically painful. It lashed at him, driving him back, pushing him away from the object he so desperately needed. He lunged forward against it, but still the force drove him back. No! No! I cannot fail this! He needed to succeed and he needed to do so quickly. The

alarm screaming out of the room would bring others in mere moments. Using every last ounce of strength and will he possessed, he lunged forward once more, grabbed for his touchstone, and closed his fist around it. The box toppled to the ground, the other touchstones within it scattering wildly. But he paid them no

attention. He was turning into the push of the magic, letting it shove him violently out of the room. He plowed over two acolytes that had come running at the sound of the alarm. A third lifted a weapon, a gun, and fired at point-blank range into his chest, right over his beating heart, right below the brand that forever marked him. The stone of his skin deflected most of the bullets impact, but he felt and saw a chunk of it go

flying. The pain was brilliant and fierce, but he paid it no mind. He felt worse. For now he focused on grabbing the acolyte, yanking him closer and smashing his hand, touchstone within, into the mans skull. The man crumbled and he let him fall, discarding him like trash. As always he allowed no remorse to fill his mind. That would come later. In that moment he needed to fight, for his freedom and for the right to pay penance-for the new sins he was about to rack up as well as for the old. Shaking that thought off, he made

his way outdoors, the night cold and brisk and stunningly perfect as he spread his wings and launched himself into the air with three steady pumps of his wings. He knew they would be on his heels, but he also knew he was free. Free. And no one would ever take that away from him again.

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