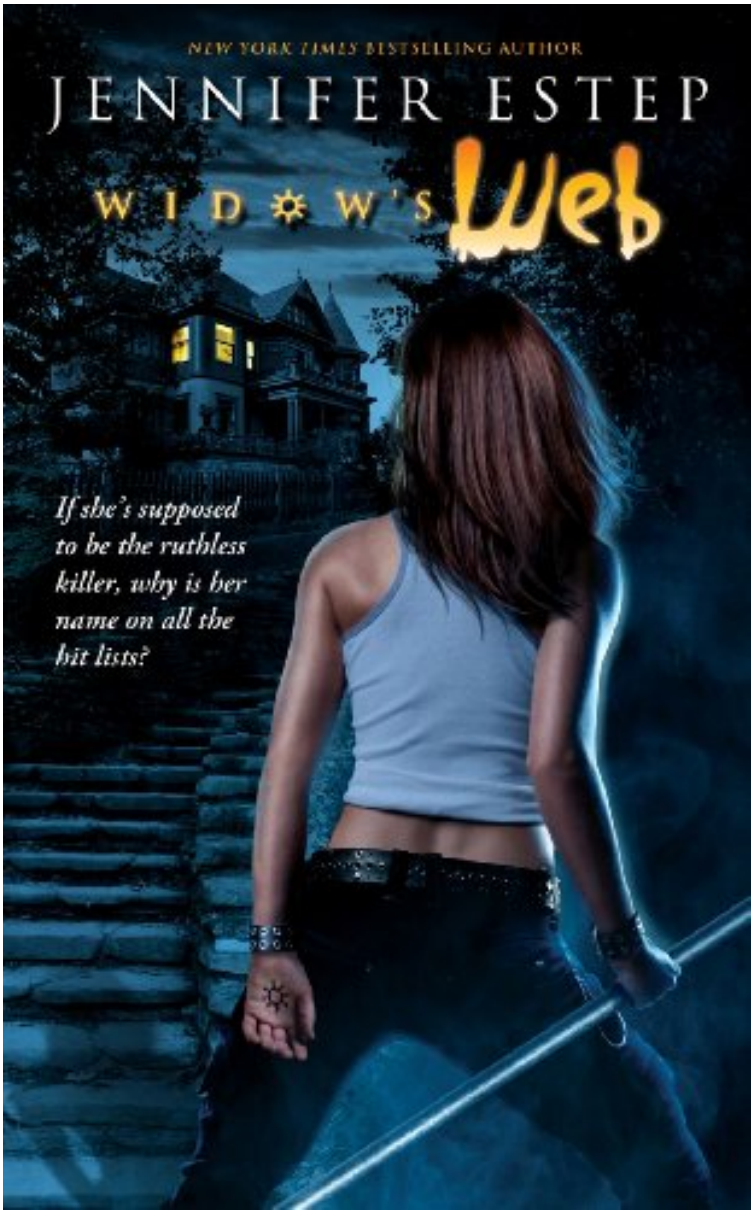
[Read now] File size: 61.Mb

Widow's Web



Download

Read Online

Par Jennifer Estep
*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #36315 dans eBooksPubli le: 2012-08-21Sorti le: 2012-08-21Format: Ebook Kindle

[Read now] Widow's Web

Par Jennifer Estep : Widow's Web before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Widow's Web:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe seventh book in the hugely popular Elemental Assassin series by New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author Jennifer EstepGin Blanco is back and ready for action.I used to murder people for money, but lately its become more of a survival technique. Once an assassin, always an assassin. So much for being plain old Gin Blanco. With every lowlife in Ashland gunning for me, I dont need another problem, but a new one has come to town anyway. Salina might seem like a sweet Southern belle, but shes really a dangerous enemy whose water elemental magic can go head-to-head with my own Ice and Stone power. Salina also has an intimate history with my lover, Owen Grayson, and now that shes back, she thinks

hes hers for the taking. Salinas playing a mysterious game that involves a shady local casino owner with a surprising connection to Owen. But they call me the Spider for a reason. Im going to untangle her deadly scheme, even if it leaves my love affair hanging by a thread.ExtraitWidows Web 1 Breaking into the building was easy. Too easy for an assassin like me. Hell, I didnt even really have to break inI could have walked right through the front door, waved at the guard stationed behind the reception desk in the lobby, and taken the elevator up to the appropriate floor. Stroll into an office building holding a vase of flowers, an oversize teddy bear, or a couple of pizza boxes smelling of grease, pepperoni, and melted mozzarella, and no one looks too closely at you. Except to wish they were the ones whod thought to order pizza. The delivery ruse was one Id used countless times before, and I would have done it again todayexcept my target knew that I was coming for him. He was on his guard, and everyone entering the building was being checked and double-checked for weapons and to see if they even had the right to be there in the first place. Besides, I preferred to be subtle about these thingsto creep around in the shadows, leap out, take down my target when he least expected it, and then vanish back into the darkness once more. As the assassin the Spider, I had a reputation to upholdthat I could get to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Something I planned on proving once again this eveningno matter how tight the security was. It had taken me the better part of a week to scout out locations where the hit might go down. Home, office, the route in between, restaurants he liked to frequent, even Northern Aggression, Ashlands most decadent nightclub, where he spent some time after hours. Id eventually decided to do the job in his office, which was housed in one of the citys downtown skyscrapers. He probably thought he was safe there, but he was going to learn exactly how wrong he was. It had taken another week, and been a bit more difficult than Id expected, getting my hands on the buildings blueprints and figuring out a way to get close to him, but Id managed. I always managed. I wouldnt have been the Spider otherwise. Besides, I always enjoyed a challenge. Now I was into the third week of the operation, and it was finally time to put my plan into action, since the job had to be done before the end of the month. Normally, that wouldnt be a problem, but the target knew about the looming deadline and that I was gunning for him. Every day that passed meant that security got that much tighter and my job that much more difficult. I strolled into a downtown parking garage, wearing a black pantsuit and matching heels. Id pulled my dark, chocolate-brown hair up into a high, sleek ponytail, while black glasses with clear lenses covered my cold gray eyes. I looked like just another corporate office drone, right down to the enormous black handbag I carried. This particular garage lay on the opposite side of the block from the front entrance to the skyscraper I wanted, but thanks to the blueprints Id looked at, Id discovered the two were connected by a series of maintenance corridors, which meant I didnt have to go anywhere near the skyscraper lobby to actually get inside the building. Always take the most unexpected route. That was something my late mentor, Fletcher Lane, had told me more than once, and I expected it to work just as well this evening as it had so many other times. Still, Id thought that my target might have a few guards stationed in the garage, hence my business attire, but I didnt see anyone as I walked down the ramp from the street to the basement level. A few security cameras swiveled around in slow loops on the walls, their red lights blinking like malevolent eyes, but it was easy enough for me to walk through their blind spots. Sloppy, sloppy of him not to make sure the entire garage was covered, even if it was on the other side of the block. This was Ashland, after all, the city that showcased greed, violence, corruption, and depravity in all their deep-fried, Southern glory. My heels cracked against the concrete as I headed toward the elevator, the harsh sound bouncing around like a Ping-Pong ball someone had tossed into the garage. Despite the fact I was in the business district, muggings werent unheard of here, and my eyes scanned the shadows, just in case there was anyone lurking around who shouldnt be. Assassin or not, I had no desire to get blood on my clothes before Id gotten close to my target. I was the only one getting away with any violence tonight. As a final precaution, I reached out with my magic and listened to the stone around me. People leave behind emotional vibrations in their surroundings, in the places where they spend their time, in the houses, apartments, and offices where they live, love, laugh, work, and die. All those feelings, all those emotions, especially, sink into stone, whether its a concrete foundation of a house, the gravel that constantly crunches under the tires of a convertible, or even an expensive marble sculpture prettily perched in a living room. As a Stone elemental, I can pick up on those vibrations as clearly as if the person who had put them there was standing beside me, telling me all about how hed used that marble sculpture to bash in his wifes brains for the life insurance payout. I reached out with my magic, and the usual sharp, worried murmurs echoed back to me. Nobody much cares for parking garages, and the low mutters told me just how many folks had fearfully clutched their bags and briefcases to their chests as they hurried to unlock their carsand how many hadnt made it

before theyd been beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Par for the course in this garage and so many others like it. Still, there were no recent disturbances in the stone, and no indication that someone had set his sights on me. Satisfied, I shut the murmurs out of my mind, rounded the corner, and reached the elevator that led from the garage up into the office building on this side of the block. A man wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase waited in front of the elevator, watching the numbers light up as it descended to our level. I gave him a polite nod, then pulled my cell phone out of my bag and started tapping the buttons on it, sending a message to no one. The elevator arrived, and the man stepped inside, holding the door open for me. Going up? he asked. I waved him off. I need to finish this text first. My reception always gets cut off in there. He nodded and let the doors slide shut. I hit a few more buttons on my phone, just in case there was anyone else behind me heading toward the elevator, but no one appeared. When I was certain I was alone, I put the phone away and headed to the far end of the corridor and a door marked Maintenance Only. I looped my bag across my shoulder so my hands would be free, held my palm up, and again reached for my magic. Most elementals are only gifted in one areaAir, Fire, Ice, or Stonebut I had the rare ability to tap into two areas. So now, instead of using my Stone magic, I grabbed hold of my Ice power and used it to form a specific, familiar shapeone that would help me get through this locked door. A cold, silver light flickered in my palm, centered on the scar there, one that was shaped like a small circle surrounded by eight thin rays. A matching scar was embedded in my other palm. Spider runessymbols for patience. My assassin name, and so many other things to me. A second later, the light faded, and I clutched two slender Ice picks in my fingers. Still keeping an eye and ear out for anyone else in the garage, I went to work on the door. I wasnt as good at jimmying locks as my sometimes partner, Finn, was, but I got the job done in under a minute. I threw the Ice picks down on the concrete, where they would soon melt away. Then I slid through the opening and let the door close behind me. In the long, narrow hallway, flickering bulbs gave everything an ugly, sallow tint. I paused, listening for the footsteps of the maintenance workers who used these corridors. But I didnt hear any scuffles or whispers of movement, so I started walking. Even if I ran into someone, Id just claim to be a lost worker bee, desperately trying to find my way back to the hive. For once, my luck held, and I didnt see anyone as I hurried through the hallways. Eventually, I wound up in the basement of the skyscraper housing my targets office. After that, it was just a matter of picking another door lock and taking the service elevator up to the second floor, above the guards in the lobby. Then I leisurely walked the rest of the way up the emergency stairs until I reached the top floor. Cracking open the stairway door, I looked out over a sea of cubicles divided by clear, plastic walls. Id gotten here right at quitting time, and everyone was trying to wrap up their work for the day so they could be out the door by five sharp, get their kids, get dinner, and get home. Everyone was hunched over their phones and computers, sending out a few last messages, so no one noticed me slip out of the stairway, softly pull the door shut behind me, and stroll into their midst. I kept to the edge of the cubicle area and walked down a hallway until I came to a corner office that, thanks to a scouting trip Id made here earlier this week, I knew was being used to store supplies. The door was open, and I stepped inside like I had every right to be there. I looked over my shoulder through the inner window, but no one so much as glanced in my direction, so I went into the attached private bathroom and closed the door behind me. I stood behind the door, counted off the seconds in my head, and waited, just waited, to see if anyone had spotted me and alerted security. Ten . . . twenty . . . thirty . . . forty-five . . . After the three-minute mark, I felt safe enough to move on to the next part of my plan. Now that I was on the appropriate floor, all that was left to do was get to my targets office. I removed a small, electric screwdriver from my bag, climbed up onto the bathroom counter, and used the tool to open one of the grates on an air duct high up on the wall. Of course, I could have gotten into the air ducts down in the maintenance corridor. The only problem was that those grates were all wired into the security system. The second I popped one open, an alarm would have sounded, and lobby guards would have come running with their guns drawn and plugged me full of bullets. But my target hadnt bothered with alarms on the grates up here in the rarefied corporate air. Few people thought to properly secure the doors, windows, and air ducts on the upper levels of their homes or offices, figuring that preventing someone from getting inside on the ground floor was good enough. Not when it came to the Spider. Once the grate was open, I climbed back down, stripped off my suit and glasses, reached into my bag, and put on my real clothes for the eveningcargo pants, a long-sleeved T-shirt, a vest, and boots. All in black, of course. Yeah, wearing head-to-toe black might be a little clich for an assassin, but you went with what workedand best hid the bloodstains. I put the suit, glasses, and heels into the bag, looped it around my chest, climbed onto the counter, and hoisted myself up and into the air duct, making sure to reach back and close up the grate behind me. Like many buildings in Ashland, the ducts here were made slightly

oversize, just in case a giant maintenance worker ever had to squeeze inside, so I didnt have any problems moving through them. I slowly, carefully, quietly, crawled through the air ducts until I reached the office I wanted. Then I eased up to the grate there and peered down through the slats. My target certainly had an impressive office. A large desk made out of polished ebony stood in the back of the room. Pens, papers, a monitor, two phones. The usual office detritus covered the surface, while two black leather chairs crouched in front of the desk. Matching furniture in varying shades of black and gray filled the rest of the room, along with metal sculptures, while a fully stocked wet bar took up the better part of one wall. Behind the desk, floor-to-ceiling windows offered a sweeping view of downtown Ashland and the green-gray smudges of the Appalachian Mountains that ringed the city. The office was empty, just like Id anticipated, so I didnt have to be quite so quiet as I used my screwdriver to undo the grate on this duct and put the loose screws into a pocket on my vest. I practiced removing the grate from its frame until I was sure I could do it without making any noise, then I slid it back into place. I also reached into my bag and drew out my weapon for the eveninga small gun made out of plastic. Normally, I carried five silverstone knives on meone up either sleeve, one against the small of my back, and two tucked into the sides of my boots. I liked my knives, and they were the weapons I used on the majority of my jobs. But my target had an elemental talent for metal, which meant he could sense whenever the element was near, just like I could the stone around me. In fact, metal was an offshoot of Stone. Since I didnt want to give my target advance notice that I was here, Id decided to leave my knives at home tonight. I wasnt as good with a gun as I was with a blade, but the one Id brought along would get the job done in the offices confined space. As a final touch, I reached into my bag and pulled on a pair of black gloves, making sure the thin leather covered the spider rune scars embedded in my palms. The scars were really silverstone that had been melted into my skin years ago by a particularly vicious Fire elemental. I didnt think my target would be able to sense the metal in my palmsnot through the ductworkbut the gloves offered another small bit of protection, and I wasnt going to take any chances. With the grate and my gun in position, all that was left to do was settle down and wait. Id been inside the air duct for almost an hour when the office door opened and two men carrying briefcases stepped inside. Both wore expensive tailored suits and shiny wing tips, marking them as the movers and shakers they were. My target was having an after-hours meeting with his moneyman to go over company financials and other sundry things. Too bad it was a meeting neither one of them would live through. Through the grate, I watched a third man step into the officea giant who was almost seven feet tall. He wore a uniform marking him as one of the buildings security guards. The two businessmen hung back while the giant did a sweep of the office, peering behind the desk and the wet bar, then going into the private bathroom and repeating the process with a glance into the shower. The nightly sweep was another reason Id chosen to make my approach through the air duct, rather than just hiding in a dark corner somewhere. A moment later, the giant stepped back out into the office. All clear, sir, he said. The rest of the floor has been checked and is empty as well. My target nodded his thanks, and the giant left the room, closing the door behind him. The second man immediately moved over to the bar, grabbed a bottle of Scotch, and poured himself a healthy amount in a tumbler. He swallowed the amber-colored liquor and nodded his head in approval. Then he turned his attention to his friend. Any sign of her today? the drinker asked. The target shook his head. Nothing so far. The drinker grinned. Well, since the Spider hasnt come to call yet and it looks like you get to live another day, lets get down to business. I happen to have someone waiting up for me tonight. Im sure you know what I mean. My target smiled at that, and the two men opened their briefcases. They spread the papers inside over a table in front of the bar, then sat in the chairs on either side and got to work. Now, the drinker began, as you can see from these latest tax and earnings figures . . . I waited until the two men were thoroughly engrossed in their conversation before I slowly, carefully, quietly, removed the grate from the air duct opening. I paused, waiting to see if theyd noticed the slight, furtive movement above their heads, but of course they didnt. Few people bothered to look upeven those knowingly being hunted by a notorious assassin like me. I put the grate to one side of the duct and made sure the gun was within easy reach in its slot on the front of my vest. Then I slowly wiggled forward until I was at the edge of the opening. I drew in a breath, let it out, and slid forward. I let my weight and gravity pull me down before grabbing the edge of the duct, flipping over, letting go, and landing on my feet facing the two men. Theyd barely had time to blink, much less get to their feet, before the gun was in my hand and trained on my target. Puff-puff. I double-tapped my target in the chest, and he dropped to the carpet without a sound. I trained my gun on the second man, who leaped to his feet, put up his hands in a placating gesture, and started backing away. Hello, Finn, I said in a mocking voice to the drinker. Werent expecting to see me here, were you? Finnegan Lane, my foster brother, looked at me,

a clear plea in his eyes. You dont have to do this. Youve proven your point by icing Owen there already. This whole thing was your lovers brilliant idea, not mine. Dont blame me for his mistakes. I gestured with the gun at Owens prone form. Thats not how I remember things. In fact, I distinctly recall you being the mouthpiece behind this whole situation. You were the one who kept pushing and pushing me. Well, tonight, I finally push back. When he realized I couldnt be reasoned with, Finn decided to try another tacticbribery. Ill pay you whatever you want to put the gun down and walk away, you know that. I do know that. A cold, cruel smile curved my lips. But walking away is not nearly as much fun as this is. You know that as well as I do. No, please, dont I pulled the trigger twice, cutting off his protests, and Finn joined my lover on the floor.Prsentation de l'diteurThe seventh book in the hugely popular Elemental Assassin series by New York Times and USA TODAY bestselling author Jennifer EstepGin Blanco is back and ready for action.I used to murder people for money, but lately its become more of a survival technique. Once an assassin, always an assassin. So much for being plain old Gin Blanco. With every lowlife in Ashland gunning for me, I dont need another problem, but a new one has come to town anyway. Salina might seem like a sweet Southern belle, but shes really a dangerous enemy whose water elemental magic can go head-to-head with my own Ice and Stone power. Salina also has an intimate history with my lover, Owen Grayson, and now that shes back, she thinks hes hers for the taking. Salinas playing a mysterious game that involves a shady local casino owner with a surprising connection to Owen. But they call me the Spider for a reason. Im going to untangle her deadly scheme, even if it leaves my love affair hanging by a thread.