



REVIEW

Author Pamela Keyes tells us right from the start that this is a "Thrills. Chills. Electric Romance. A *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* with a Caribbean twist...".

The book's jacket is intriguing, setting great expectations for the content. The artwork receives See Nen Nen News' enthusiastic nod. *The Jumbee* is a fiction tale written for the young adult reader.

It was not easy to get past the spelling of "Jumbee". It nagged and distracted me constantly. I wondered at this choice of spelling as opposed to the more familiar "Jumbie" - author's literary license perhaps? Or was Jumbee a more formal name given to the antagonist in the plot? Couldn't be, since the name was used to describe the underworld beings throughout the book. It grated. The dialogue among the natives of Cariba was another thing that made me grit my teeth. Most notably, there was the use of "mon" instead of "man" when mimicking the Caribbean voice. A word to the wise, the sound is more phonetically like "mahn". Also, native Carib "cannibalism" was mentioned. Really? I had thought that myth was debunked years ago.

Serene Terra Legard, better known as Esti Legard, is our haunted and beautiful young heroine, equally appealing as she is annoying. More than once I wanted to shake her as she made one poor indecision after another. I tried to blame the jumbie (critic's literary license) for Esti's ill-planned actions but could not quite level all the blame on him. We all want to like our storybook heroines, so any criticism of Esti was shooed away as I followed her along the thorny paths. I liked her, wanted to mother her and keep an eye on her, especially since Aurora, her real mother, tended to be a bit wispy and not all present.

THE JUMBEE

by Pamela Keyes

Reviewed by: [See Nen Nen News](http://www.SeeNenNenNews.Com)
(www.SeeNenNenNews.Com)

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Elon (Alan) Somand, the not quite jumbie Jumbee, the unquestionably mad, horridly marred, manipulative thespian extraordinaire. As much a victim as any he terrorized with sleight of hand and stealth of movement. His origin, life and existence on Manchineel Cay is fuzzy and confusing. I wondered how the baby was hidden away for so long, how the boy was whisked away to an elite school in Europe and returned as a man, as stealthily, to hide once more on Manchineel Cay. As a native of the Caribbean, I know few things hide for any length of time - our curiosity is legendary even when matched by our fear of jumbies and things that go bump in the night. Someone will see and hear and pass it on.

Elon's relationship with Esti's father was odd, uncomfortably so and could have been explained more. Why did the Great Alan Legard never mention such a fabulous talent as Elon to his wife or daughter? There are a few too many Alans and Elons in the tale by the way and that confused things just a bit.

Ma Harris the seer woman, her sidekick brother, Domino and her pithy daughter Lucia, lacked authenticity and came off as affected if a little comical. Since the book leans heavily on Caribbean shadows and the occult, it would have made a stronger tale to have those characters stand stronger and reflect the dark better - so to speak.



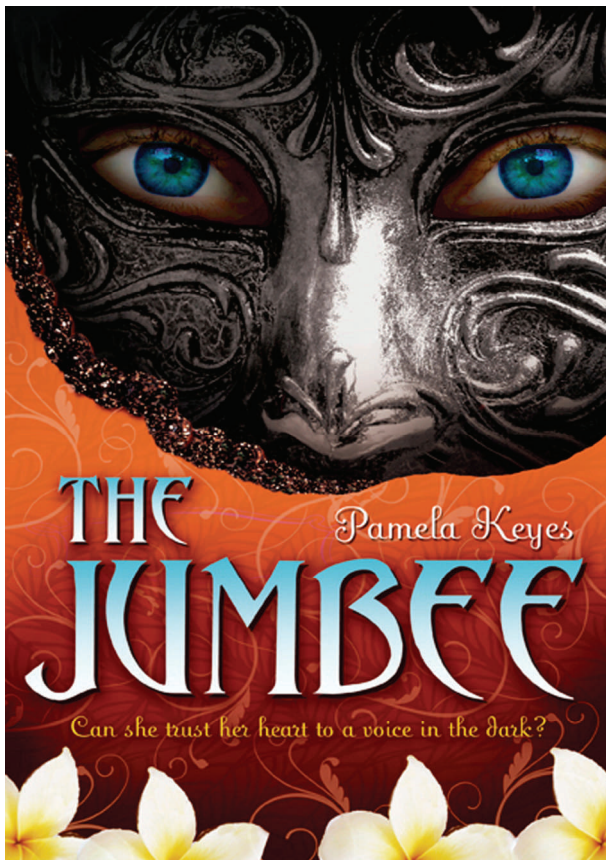
Some of the supporting characters brought light into this dark tale. Carmen especially, with her quips and gossipy presence. Danielle, the Barbiesque mean girl - that type of character seems inescapably central to stories aimed at young adults. All the accompanying handsome young men of various hues and ethnicities with Rafe at the foremost. His rakish disrepute seemed to vanish the moment he was introduced to us though, so I never really got a good view of his lothario.

The carnival scene on Cariba was nicely done. The colours and frenzy well presented. The moko-jumbies, the mas, the music trucks, the melee, smells, sights, sound and fury rose off the page and danced in the imagination. I could feel the rhythm and excitement. The blue-eyed jumbie appearing and disappearing was vivid and well written. Bravo!

The original Phantom of the Opera came to mind constantly. I was warned beforehand but it was far more than I expected, especially when Romeo stole his Juliette and carried her to Manchineel Cay. The small boat, single oar, black cloak, mask, deep cave, dark thundering sounds all rang too familiar and stole a bit of the excitement and expectancy. It will work well for those who have never read or seen the play. I am all for bringing good theatre to young adults and this works well as encouragement for them to find out more.

Overall *The Jumbie* was a good read with several page turning moments. The Shakespearian underpinning was absolutely delightful. The hint of sex was titillating without being overdone. The mystery threaded through is easy for the young adult reader to follow. I appreciate the way the book is written for the genre.

See Nen Nen News Review Score: 6 stars out of 10



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By Pamela Keyes

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