



# TEEN BOOK REVIEWS

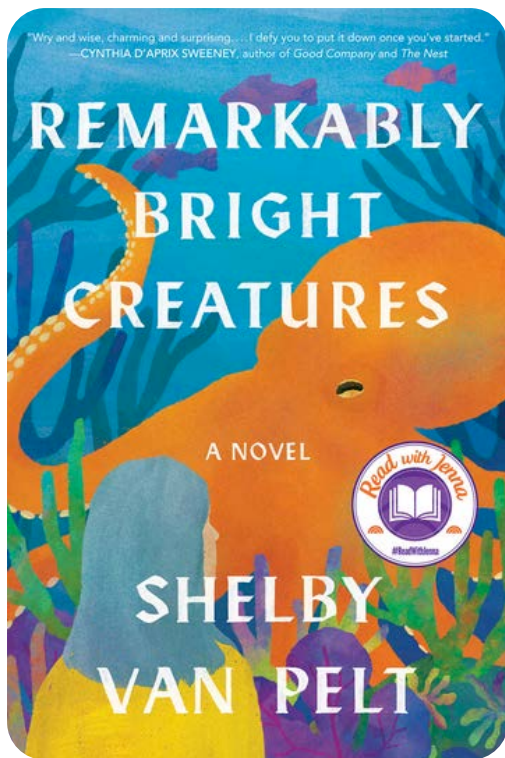
JUNE 2024

GUIDE

BOOKS IN THE  
YOUNG ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
CHILDREN  
COLLECTION



# REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES BY SHELBY VAN PELT

CALL #

FIC VAN PELT

COLLECTION:

FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

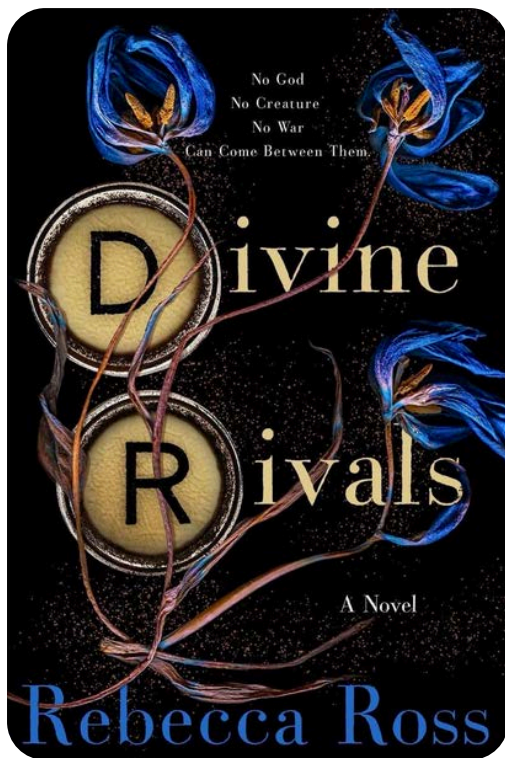
RELATIONSHIP FICTION

## Book Review:

Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt is a novel about the friendship between the octopus Marcellus and Tova Sullivan, a worker at the Sowell Bay Aquarium. The novel explores Tova's trauma and her working at the aquarium as a form of coping mechanism after her husband's death and her son's disappearance. She encounters Marcellus, an octopus who yearns for freedom outside the aquarium that has not long to live; they form an unexpected friendship alongside Cameron, a man who is struggling to survive due to his debt, as they try to help each other heal their traumas and live their lives to the fullest.

My biggest positive about the novel is how interesting Marcellus is. For an octopus, he is very intelligent, and you can really relate to him, understanding feeling trapped and wanting to explore beyond his tank. One of my biggest gripes about the books is that outside of Marcellus and Tova, I didn't care a lot about the side characters as they weren't as interesting to me. Marcellus is unsurprisingly my favorite character given his intelligent and curious nature, especially surrounding human beings. The book made me feel excited whenever I saw Marcellus, and I also found it interesting to see his first-person POV in chapters about him.

I'd recommend this book if you're interested in the mind of an octopus or are looking for a way to cope with the trauma of losing someone. Tova's entire journey throughout the novel revolves around trying to find closure after her son's disappearance and wanting to be happy again, so if you are interested in these subjects, I highly recommend reading them.



# DIVINE RIVALS BY REBECCA ROSS

CALL #

YA FIC ROSS

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

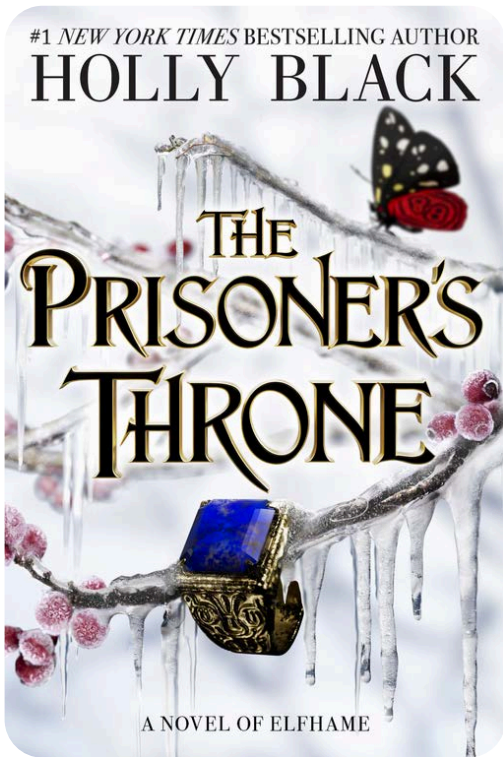
STEAMPUNK; FANTASY

## Book Review:

One of the most popular young adult books of 2023, Divine Rivals by Rebecca Ross, centers around Iris Winnow. Set during a war between two gods, Iris' life is in shards. Her adored older brother is missing from the front lines, and her once bright and cheery mother is dealing with an addiction that has thrown their family even deeper into the shambles they are barely grasping onto. In the fragile hopes of bringing some sense of normalcy back, Iris competes against her rival to try and win a promotion at a local newspaper establishment. One day, she tucks a letter meant for her missing brother into her wardrobe, full of her pent-up worries, regrets, and anger due to his leaving. The next day, the letter is nowhere to be seen. Instead, it has ended up in the hands of Roman Kitt, her rival whom she despises. After Roman anonymously writes her back, a connection between them blooms through a series of touching and thoughtful letters following them to close encounters with death.

Ross beautifully manages to not only paint the depths of this heartbreaking war but also masterfully creates characters and friendships that come to life. The aspect of this story that stood out the most was how emotional and touching it was. Through the letters Iris and Roman send each other, their regrets and hopes come to resonate with the reader, perfectly capturing what they mean to each other. This novel's storyline is also extremely captivating, as there are splashes of fantasy interwoven throughout the main plot. The main issue I encountered was how the characters' personalities felt rushed or unfinished. While Iris is well-rounded and a character that readers connect with, there was not much that was unique to her. Similarly, Roman felt like any other love interest and had no memorable quirks or much dimension to him.

Divine Rivals was a captivating and immersive read; there was a creative and unique magical subplot as well as touching letters that were effortless to connect with. I would recommend this book to readers who are looking for more plot-driven romances or adventure novels. This story was very well-rounded, with there being not only romance, but also action and many notions of growing up, regret, and bravery. Readers will find it easy to connect with Iris and Roman's experiences and will be plunged into the era in which this story takes place.



# THE PRISONER'S THRONE BY HOLLY BLACK

CALL #

YA FIC BLACK

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

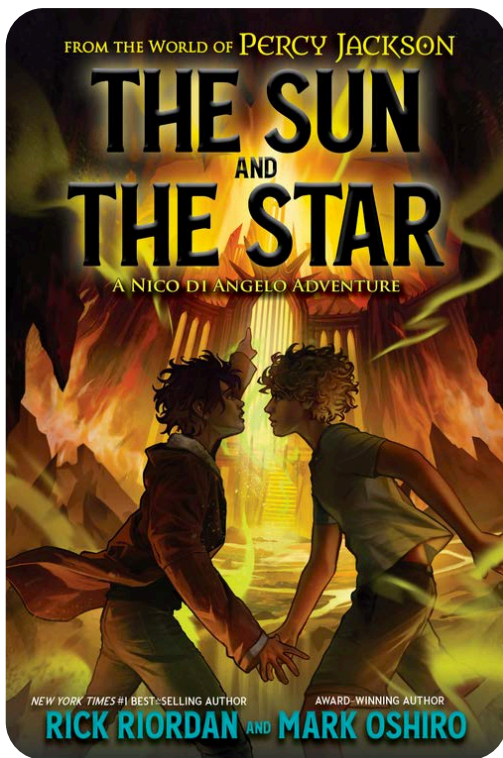
FANTASY; ROMANTASY

## **Book Review:**

The Prisoner's Throne is a captivating fantasy fiction novel that revolves around the character Oak, a mischievous and spoiled character. Oak's main goal is to marry Queen Suren of the Court of Teeth. Oak will have to decide whether to attempt to regain the trust of the girl he's always loved or stay loyal to Elfhame.

In my opinion, this book is an engaging and fun read, and I would definitely give it five stars. It ensures that you are consistently entertained throughout the novel. I liked this book because it was extremely captivating to read, and if you are lost in the book, it has its way of hooking you back right away. One thing that I liked the most about this book is its interesting storyline. My favorite character is Oak. I like Oak because he has a great personality and never gives up on his hopes.

I believe this book is highly suitable for fans of Fantasy Fiction. The story introduces a diverse cast of characters, including queens, kings, old hags, and even a ghost. I would recommend this book to readers aged ten and above due to its advanced grammar. While the book is long, its engaging narrative eases a swift read.



# THE SUN AND THE STAR BY RICK RIORDAN

CALL # J RIORDAN

COLLECTION: J FICTION

RATING: 

GENRE: FANTASY

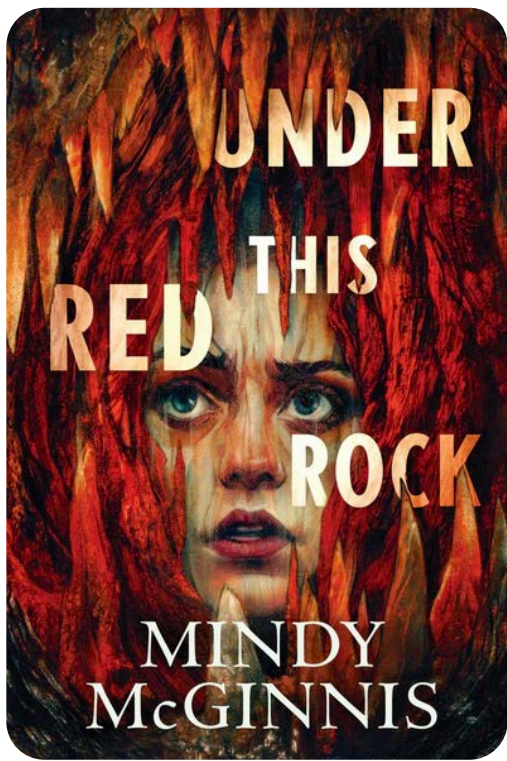
## Book Review:

Everything seems normal in Nico di Angelo's life. No monsters are attacking him, and no gods want to drop in and ask him to help on dangerous quests. But Nico keeps having nightmares, and they aren't just any run-of-the-mill nightmares. He knows that these nightmares are messages about the Titan Bob, who was left behind in Tartarus. But who is sending him these bad dreams? When a prophecy demands his subconscious go rescue Bob, he and his boyfriend, Will Solace, embark on a journey to the Underworld.

The author, Riordan, executes this spin-off from the popular Percy Jackson series with his personal vision of Greek mythology. The plot thread of this epic keeps a satisfying pace, and the character dynamic is the chef's kiss. Riordan's version of the Underworld is fascinating to read about as Nico and Will traverse through it. The inhabitants of the Underworld are also interesting to learn about.

Scattered amongst the book are moments (from funny to epic) that will make you want to dog-ear the pages. These types of moments are the ones you like to carry around in your pocket.

Overall, this is a great read. I would recommend it to Greek mythology fans or readers who enjoy epics.



# UNDER THIS RED ROCK BY MINDY MCGINNIS

CALL #

YA FIC MCGINNIS

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

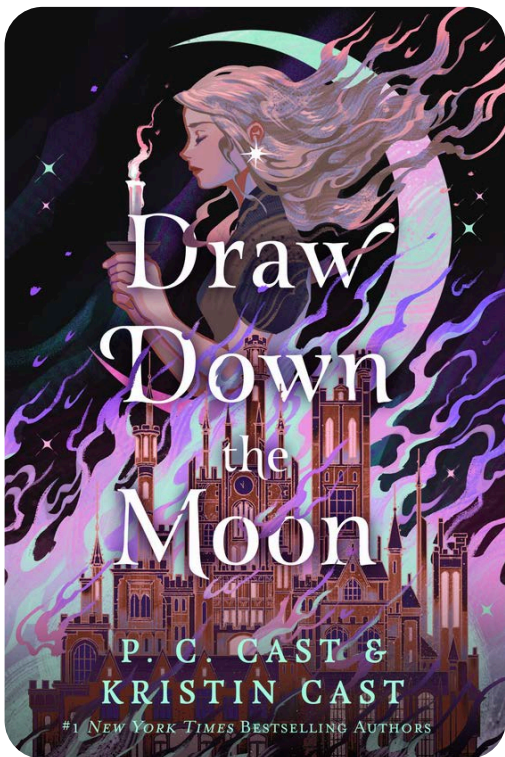
PSYCHOLOGICAL SUSPENSE

## Book Review:

Under This Red Rock is a book about a girl, Neely, who has grown up with two tragic deaths in her family. She inherited severe mental illness from her father and experiences hallucinations, confusion, and memory loss. The book follows her journey to try to live a “normal life” and identify what is real and what is just in her head. Slowly, the novel turns into a mystery when her coworker is found dead and tortured in the underground caverns where they work...and Neely is desperate to find out who is guilty.

I loved this book because it was fast-paced, unpredictable, and really hard to stop reading. My least favorite part was how dark and disturbing it was at times, but I think that was worth it because it really added to the story and is also a reality for real people experiencing extreme mental illness. It was fascinating to see the inside of someone’s head, who I never would be able to relate to without reading this perspective. While most of the book was pretty serious, there was also some humor and romance in the background.

If you are a fan of We Were Liars or Genuine Fraud by E. Lockhart, you will appreciate this book. These three books share a very specific genre of mystery where you can’t quite trust the narrator, therefore making a very suspenseful read with a more interesting climax and ending. If you’ve never read a book like this, it’s definitely worth a try, and I highly recommend Under This Red Rock.



# DRAW DOWN THE MOON BY P.C. CAST & KRISTIN CAST

CALL #

YA FIC CAST

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

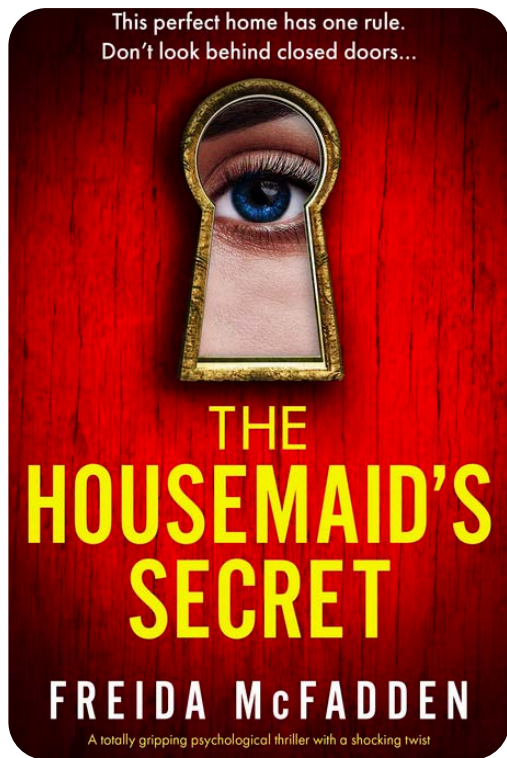
FANTASY

## Book Review:

Draw Down the Moon by P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast is about Wren Nightingale. Wren wasn't supposed to have magical powers as she was not born under the full moon. However, when she discovers she has magical powers, she leaves home for Academia de la Luna, which is a magical school hidden from Mundanes or people who don't have magical powers. Wren joins her friend and crush, Lee Young, at the academy. As they participate in the trials, they learn the academy is hiding something.

I love the idea of how when you are born in a different zodiac, you have different powers; for example aquarius have healing powers. I didn't like how the romance felt kinda cringey, and it felt as if the characters were fighting for no reason. My favorite character was Lily because of how nice she was, a contrast to her twin brother. The book made me feel confused, but I still enjoyed reading it because of the idea of the zodiac powers. Also, I wish they had talked more about the powers.

I would recommend this book to younger teens and people who enjoy Harry Potter a lot. I wouldn't recommend it to older teens because it feels like a book for kids, but there aren't a lot of pages, so you can read it quickly. This book is very similar to Harry Potter and to a lot of fantasy stories.



# THE HOUSEMAID'S SECRET BY FREIDA MCFADDEN

LOCATION: Available through Link+

RATING: 

GENRE: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUSPENSE

## Book Review:

The Housemaid's Secret, by Frieda McFadden, is a mystery/thriller that follows Millie, who works as a maid to wealthy New Yorkers to pay for her college. After losing her current job, she gets a call from Douglas Garrick, the CEO of a successful tech company. He has requested that she cook and clean for him and his wife, but under one condition- she may not interact with his wife, Wendy, who spends every day locked away in her room. Despite her worries, Millie takes the job, in dire need of the money. But, as soon as she begins, she realizes her instincts are right, and can't help but feel like something is wrong with Wendy. This is the second book following Millie, with the first being The Housemaid. Though I recommend reading The Housemaid before this one, it is not essential to have a fun time reading this book.

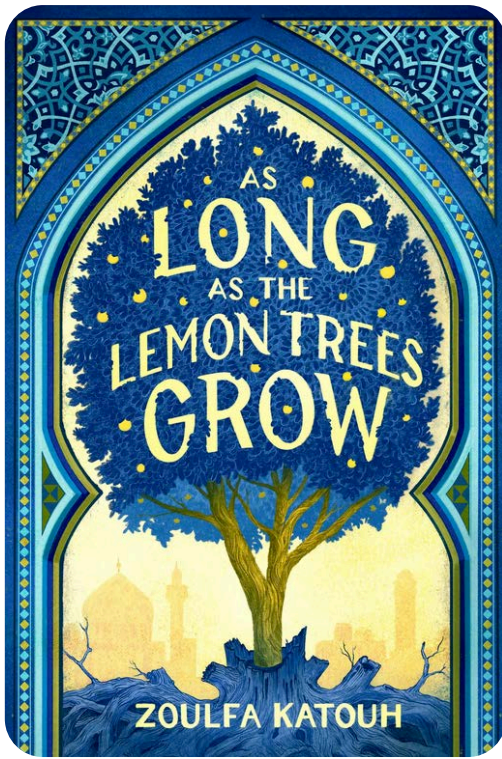
Although, as many thrillers are, this book is a little ridiculous, it still serves the purpose of any good thriller. I spent the majority of this book on the edge of my seat, wondering what the twist would be. Especially after reading the first book in the "series," I thought I would be able to guess the plot twist, but it ended up not being what I expected at all. And, as any good plot twist is, this one was layered. I've never read a thriller series or anything of the sort, but I think knowing the main character already and having the background that The Housemaid provided about Millie made me even more captivated by this book as I grew an attachment to Millie. Additionally, it aided the flow of the story, making it even more enthralling. Even when I wasn't reading, I was constantly thinking about the story.

I've read many of Frieda McFadden's books, and I think almost all of them are worth reading. They are all so quick and easy to read and the perfect book to read, especially if you're in a slump. I recommend reading this one, especially if you've already read The Housemaid and enjoyed it. It's not too eery or off-putting, while still having some of those elements. Especially during the summer, when there is more time to sit and binge a book, I think The Housemaid's Secret is worth reading!





# AS LONG AS THE LEMON TREES GROW BY ZOULFA KATOUH



CALL #

YA FIC KATOUH

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

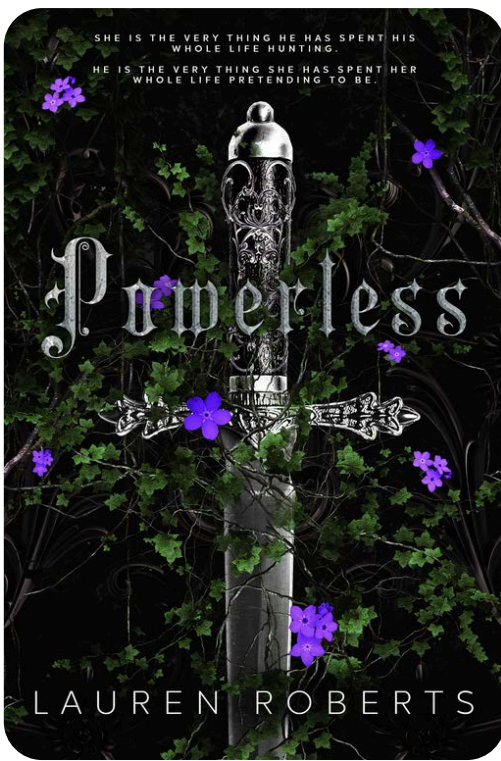
PSYCHOLOGICAL FICTION;  
REALISTIC FICTION

## Book Review:

As Long As the Lemon Trees Grow by Zoulfa Katouh is about an 18-year-old named Salama Kassab, who is a pharmacy student. She volunteers at a hospital in Homs and helps care for people hurt by the war. While working, she has to earn money to escape the country with her sister-in-law, Layla, before she gives birth to her child because of the revolution in their country. Also, Salama's PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) has taken the form of an imaginary person, Kwarf. This leads to Salama learning about the events that are happening to her country, whether they are freedom or war, and having to choose between the chance to survive or her loyalty to her country.

I really like how the book is organized and easy to read and follow. Although it was a fun and amazing book to read, there were too many romantic scenes in the book, and that makes it a bit hard to understand how Salama would choose between surviving and loyalty to her country. My favorite character is Salama because she is a brave adult who tries her best at all costs to help others' lives. This book gave me lots of different emotions, such as romance, hope, and a family spirit.

I would recommend this book to teens who like a lot of romantic scenes and are fans of history and adventure. It was enjoyable and fast to read, and I kept up with all the events that happened throughout the book. I don't know any other books that relate to this book, but I hope that others will enjoy it.



# POWERLESS BY LAUREN ROBERTS

CALL #

YA FIC ROBERTS

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

ROMANTASY

## Book Review:

The novel Powerless by Lauren Roberts tells the story of Paedyn, a girl who must survive in the Kingdom of Ilya, where only Elites, or people with special abilities, can stay. Those born as Ordinary are banished and shunned from society. Paedyn Gray knows this quite well since, in reality, she's an Ordinary posing as a Physic to blend in with the Elites. Despite this, Paedyn blends in quite well and is able to live off stolen food. However, all this changes when she unintentionally saves one of Ilya's princes, Kai Azer. She finds herself getting thrust into the Purging Trials, a brutal competition where she has to fight with her life on the line. Plus, even if she survives, she must manage to conceal the fact that she is completely Ordinary, or the prince she's fighting feelings for will kill her. The second book of the Powerless trilogy, Reckless, will be released on July 2, 2024.

I absolutely loved this book! This book had tension, fantasy, and a bit of romance that just absorbed me into the story! This novel had me reading nonstop for hours at a time! The only thing I didn't like about this book is that it ended on a cliffhanger, so you'd have to read the second book to know what happens next! Out of the entirety of the characters, I would pick Kai as my favorite character because I feel that he is a kind person who hides under many layers, but if faced with a choice, he would sacrifice so much for the people he loves. He also had to suffer so much with never having a choice to be who he wanted to be, which truly saddens me.

I would definitely recommend this novel to everyone! It was a very beautiful book, everything from its writing to the story itself. I would give so much to read it for the first time again! It is also written in dual POVs, which lets you know the story from both perspectives. However, there are quite a lot of fights and battles, so this might not be for you if you don't enjoy those kinds of books.

Nevertheless, I can't even begin to express how much I enjoyed this book. You won't be let down if you ever read this book since it has such a special and flawless combination of elements that it will transport you to the story's world. I have yet to read anything similar to this because of its unique and powerful storyline.