



2017

The Black Witch

Liz Sugihara

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Book Review

Title: The Black Witch

Author: Laurie Forest

Reviewer: Liz Sugihara

Publisher: Harlequin TEEN

Year: 2017

ISBN: 9780373212316

Pages: 601

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Significant Shortcomings



Review

As the granddaughter of the most powerful Gardnerian witch Carnissa Gardner, Elloren Gardner is bombarded with high expectations. However, she completely lacks any magical power. Elloren's uncle sends her to Verpax University to study as an apothecary where she meets people of various races; the same people who are considered inferior and enemies to the Gardnerians. She struggles dealing with the prejudices held against her and Gardnerians in general and is forced to come to terms with her own prejudices. As Elloren slowly opens her eyes to the possibility that her lifelong held beliefs of other races may be unfair, she begins to make friends with those who are not Gardnerians. Outside of the university, however, political tension rises between the various races, leaving people of all races to wonder what will happen when the inevitable clash occurs.

This novel has so much potential, but its many flaws make it difficult to enjoy. While the plot is interesting and the world building detailed, the story progresses very slowly until the last fifty pages. In addition, the many plot details left unresolved by the end of the book may frustrate readers who expect some closure at the end of this first installment. The choppy written flashbacks and reflections of the main character may also be distracting to readers. Readers should also consider the racial elements of the story before reading. Elloren and the other characters hold deeply prejudiced views of other races which is reflected in their language and treatment of each other. Although set in a created world of fantasy, some readers may find the racial discrimination and physical abuse uncomfortable to read. Overall, the plot moved slowly and ended with no resolution and the writing would benefit from additional editing.

*Contains mild language, mild sexual content, and mild violence.