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Deep Blue

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Book Review

Title: Deep Blue
Author: Jennifer Donnelly
Reviewer: Abigail Packard
Publisher: Disney-Hyperion
Year: 2014
ISBN: 9781423133162
Pages: 352
Interest Level: Intermediate
Rating: Dependable



Review

Serafina is heir to the the mermaid kingdom Miromara, and lately all she can think about is her Dokimi ceremony and whether her betrothed still loves her. But her world changes when a dream calls her to fulfill a prophecy and her mother, the queen, is assassinated during Sera's Dokimi ceremony, throwing the kingdom into chaos. Sera and her best friend, Neela, narrowly escape an incoming army meant to take over Miromara. They embark on a quest to find four other "merls" after realizing that had the same prophetic dream about a dark evil returning to the world. They find Ling, Ava, Becca, and Astrid to help them talk to the leader of the river witches who first prophesied the great evil returning to darken the world's waters. After discovering the river merwitches, Sera and her friends are discovered by the enemy army and attacked. During the attack, they enter into a powerful bond of sisterhood, promising to defeat the coming darkness.

Jennifer Donnelly's middle grade fantasy saga is rife with adventure and drama fit for its intended audience. Donnelly's world building is intense and thorough, throwing readers into a mermaid world filled with political alliances, vivid underwater settings, and a veritable deluge of made up terms, places, and names, some of which is hard to follow. However, the overarching plot is easy to understand and exciting as the "merls" go from place to place, trying to figure out what their dream means and what is going on between the mermaid nations. Sera, Neela, and the other girls are funny characters, if somewhat two-dimensional. The magic is based on familiar mermaid folklore: songs imbued with power and magic. That being said, the lyrics to these songs come off as contrived and stilted to an older audience, but younger readers might think they are charming and fun. Deep Blue promises an expanded story across four novels that dives into adventure and humor.

*Contains mild violence.