



2019

Brightly Burning

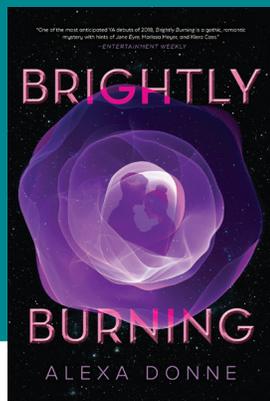
Tessa McMillan

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Book Review

Brightly Burning

Author

Alexa Donne

Reviewer

Tessa McMillan

Rating

Significant Shortcomings

Level

Young Adult

Pages

394

Year

2018

ISBN

9781328948939

Publisher

Houghton Mifflin
Harcourt

Life is not sustainable on Earth. To give Earth time to regenerate, humans create life-sustaining rocket ships to house Earth's remaining inhabitants. But even in Space, social classes develop between the different rocket ships. The poorest societies live on the Stalwart, a ship that grows food for higher-class spacecrafts. Stella Ainsley educates the children on the Stalwart while also keeping the failing ship in working order. Stella yearns for life away from the struggling Stalwart, so she accepts a teaching job on the rocket ship Rochester. Rochester is privately owned and captained by the young and mysterious Hugo Fairfax. Stella loves teaching Hugo's young sister, Jessa, and having in-depth conversations with Hugo. But the ship is shrouded in secrecy regarding Hugo's past. A deep relationship blooms between Stella and Hugo, but a wealthy family wants to snag Hugo for their daughter. While sorting out her feelings for Hugo, Stella uncovers the Rochester's devastating secret and returns to the malfunctioning Stalwart. With a close friend's help, Stella travels to Earth to check it's sustainability for the Stalwart's inhabitants and to reconnect with an Earth-banished Hugo.

Donne's book is a science-fiction version of the classic, Jane Eyre. Donne cleverly reimagines many elements found in Charlotte Brontë's book. However, Brightly Burning falls horribly short when it comes to the personalities and relationships of the two main characters. Stella, unlike Jane, is actually beautiful and sought after by different guys in the story. Jane's plainness kept her from being loved or taken seriously by most people in her life. Mr. Rochester was searching for redemption from his seedy past and finds salvation in the pure goodness of Jane. Mr. Rochester awakens Jane's deepest feelings and emotions because of the acceptance he shows her. For Donne's characters, Hugo has a playboy reputation, but he isn't apologetic to Stella about most of his past mistakes. Stella isn't an example of purity or virtue. It seems only their physical attraction keeps them together as a couple, with no mention of a spiritual connection so essential in Brontë's novel. For ages 15 and up.

*Contains mild sexual content.