



The Ruby Key

Holly Lisle

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Bestselling fantasy writer Holly Lisle brings us her children's debut with a lyrical, fast paced fantasy for middle-grade readers!

Mankind is Sunkind
And rules by the light;
Nightlings are Moonkind,
And rule in the night;
Or there will be war.

Human and Nightlings are never to meet, but when Genna and her brother Dan venture into the old forest at night, they encounter a Nightling slave who reveals a terrifying secret: Genna and Dan's village chieftain has made a dangerous deal with Letrin, ruler of the Nightlings, offering the lives of his people in exchange for his own immortality.

The Ruby Key Details

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Author : Holly Lisle

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From Reader Review The Ruby Key for online ebook

Rhea says

I have no idea how to rate this book.

I read it long ago and thought it was original and exciting. But that was when I had no literary sense and thought *Eragon* was good.

So, here's what I can tell you:

- the plot is rather unoriginal (basically, three teens look for a magical person to save their families from an evil king.)
- the adventure takes place in an exciting world; while reading it, I felt like I was exploring a mysterious place, as if down Alice's rabbit hole. The cover art helps set the mood for this adventure: our heroes travel down moonroads and use mystical magic.
- the characters are common archetypes: the mysterious guide, the loyal younger brother, the spunky heroine, the evil uncle, the evil king, etc.
- true literature usually explores meaningful themes or characters or ideas, and Sturgeon's Law says that 90% of all things published is crap. In that case, *The Ruby Key* might be considered as a part of that 90%, as it isn't particularly meaningful, but it is well-written and entertaining.

I think the reason I really liked this is because it makes you feel like you're in another world, experiencing all these magical things, and that wherever you turn, there is going to be a new surprise.

So, recommended? Only for escapism, which this is perfect for.

However, I'm not sure I conveyed well that I love this book; the thing is, I do, I really do. I love being lost in otherworlds, and I am eagerly awaiting book 3!

Please finish soon, Holly Lisle!

Joanna Brauckmann says

This is a brilliant book! It's one of the best children's books I have ever read. It's fresh, thoughtful and full of suspense. The characters face and have to make hard decisions, are bound by tribal laws which they always bend to and torn between family and duty. I like the idea of the moon roads, slipping between worlds during the hours of moonlight and searching for places you have to go. But traveling them is not for free. What you need of the moon road might not be given and the moon roads will still take as much of you as they can get, leaving you changed and unaware of what you have lost. I can't wait for the next book in the Moon & Sun series!

Roxanne Hsu Feldman says

It felt very loose -- the book. The pacing is off due to many "mini-expositions" -- whenever Genna meets a new character or a new situation, a long winded explanation ensues and none of the elements really feels belonging to quite the same world. There are all kind of "standard fantasy characters": the fortune-teller, the cat, the fairies, etc. but feeling very "pieced together." The whole time I read it, I felt like I was watching someone knit a multi-colored and patterned sweater -- and the knitter keeps dropping stitches and has to start from the beginning again or retrace her step to make-up for the missing parts. It was a bit tedious -- and I have to confess that I really scanned/skipped the second half of the book since I just couldn't bear the boredom. And, this is, *gasp*, the first book of a series, obviously: since the "enemy" turns out to not be the "real enemy" after all. So, vanquishing him did not end the story. I will not passionately wait for the second installment.. for sure.

Mrs Mitchell says

Some parts were quite exciting, but it was so long and the world was so complicated to imagine that it was pretty hard work to keep track of all the important characters and facts. Working so hard to understand the story made it hard for me to really get into it and enjoy it completely. It was a good challenge for me though, since many of the books I read are pretty easy for me.

Anita says

I liked the book as a whole - enough traditional fairytale to have the feeling of roots, but with its own worldbuilding and plot variations as well - but I think two things really sold me on it.

1) Moon-roads. Not to get too spoilery but that bit of the plot contributed in a considerable way to the size and the power and danger of the world, and made it feel - wilder, and more full of possibilities, than it would have otherwise.

2) I was able to get to know the characters, and felt they were worth knowing. There are a lot of books which tell me how characters feels, even attempt to use their points of view, but the point of view seems shallow and not fleshed out - you don't get an impression of them having any history, or caring deeply about their circumstances, and after all if they don't why shouldn't you? I didn't get that here. They were invested, they had needs and goals and reasons for fear, and it was palpable.

And also... The Cat was the Cattiest Cat, whatever his protests of non-Catness. I always love a good Cat. ;)

Dhiksha says

the plot for this book turned out to be something new, the first book(moon sun ruby key) was nice enough and the second book(silver door) was not bad but i dont think the third book has come out yet (well silver door was published in what 2009????)well since complete the series is incomplete it's OK overall

Pepper Thorn says

This is one of the most interesting and creative worlds I have seen in a middle grade book. It ranks right up there with Suzanne Collins Gregor series and Garth Nix Keys to the Kingdom and Seventh Tower books. I love the dichotomy of the humans and the nightlings, the magic that feels both earthy and otherworldly at the same time, and the sense that there is more going on than we are being told. The characters are real and engaging and though their outlook is appropriately straightforward there are surprisingly complex layers underlying everything that happens. Holly Lisle is a fantastic storyteller and this series promises to be one I pass on to my friends young and old.

Janeen-san says

Reading the back cover, this book sounded like it had a very good story tucked away. However...it was not to be. This book definably had promise, but the author didn't EXPLAIN ANYTHING. At least, not very good. On the spine of the book, it clearly said "Book 1", however it might have been book 4 of a 8 book series. It started too abruptly. In fact I never got past page 15.

I might come back to it someday....However, not now. Defiantly not now.

Eva Mitnick says

This fantasy starts off like many Human vs. Unhuman stories, with the humans making a yearly ritualistic offering to the nightlings in order to maintain an old truce that promises that nightlings won't harm humans so long as humans give them goods and don't trespass on nightling territory. Nightlings are a bit like elves – their faces are delicate and ethereal, their skin comes in colors like yellow and blue, their magic is of a higher order than that of humankind, and they can only venture out at night.

It is soon clear that all is not as it seems. 14-year-old Genna and her 12-year-old brother Dan set out at night into the woods to gather magical sap to help their dying mother (horribly risky as this is the time and the territory of nightlings) and are brought by a nightling girl named Yarri to the Kai-Lord, ruler of all the nightlings. He is a tyrant who has made a terrible bargain with the chieftain of Genna and Dan's village – they, and in fact all humankind, might perish unless Genna and Dan can find and bring a nightling boy named Doyati back to the Kai-Lord.

From this point on, the action is non-stop. Genna and Dan's journey is mind-bogglingly dangerous, with nasty creatures trying to eat them and various factions pursuing them. They can't let their guard down for a second, and so the reader can't either. Luckily, they have two companions – Yarri and a supercilious talking cat (who reminds me of Mogget in Garth Nix's Sabriel) – who just barely keep them from getting killed over and over. Despite the tension, there is a lightness to the tone and even moments of levity. Several episodes have a very funny Lloyd Alexander-esque quality to them, as when Doyati tries to guess how Genna kills a huge dire-worm.

“Enchanted arrows? Spell of exploding flesh? Rain of fire?...Speak up, girl.”

“I hit him with your skillet. A lot.”

In another scene, the travelers consult an old wise woman. After much mystical and vague proclamations, “she made a broad, sweeping gesture, certainly meant to be ominous or impressive, but in the cramped space,

she managed to knock two jars of herbs from the shelves right beside her to the floor. We heard glass shatter, and then twin clouds of powder and dust billowed up from the floor.” Soon everyone is sneezing and the eerie mood is quite broken, to everyone’s relief.

The finale is appropriately climactic and tense, with some surprises thrown in. Nothing is predictable, a refreshing thing in a fantasy, and there is still plenty of chaos left to ensure that the next book should be just as thrilling. I just hope we learn more about that mysterious cat.

One final note – this book is printed with dark blue ink rather than black, giving it a special look that is quite easy on the eyes.

Grades 5 - 8

Shanshad Whelan says

Decent fantasy series. Ms. Lisle knows how to write a story and how to craft characters. Overall it kept me reading quickly through this first book in the series. Should be very appealing to middle grade readers and has a strong female protagonist who struggles to succeed and save her family and people. Obviously, the story isn't done yet, but this first book has a decent conclusion that satisfies. I'll likely pick up the next book. My main complaint may be that the plot gets a little convoluted at times and there is a large cast of characters and motives to keep track of.

Donna says

This is more a young adult book but I think most fantasy readers would enjoy it. The world is shared by humans and nightlings. They are at peace but the peace can easily be disrupted. Genna and her brother Dan are worried. Their father is missing and most presume him dead. Their father's friend, Bantris, is acting as Caer. Their mother has an illness they aren't able to cure. So they decide to sneak out and tap the tantru tree for its curative sap. Since nobody will let them do this during the day, they decide to do it at night although it is forbidden by the peace treaty. While out, they get approached by a nightling who talks them into seeking a boon from the King of the Nightlings. This starts their great adventure.

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

Lisle, Holly *The Ruby Key*, 368 p. Scholastic (Print Date: May 2008).

Genna and Dan are desperate to find their father and save their mother, before she is forced to marry the village's new chieftain. What they don't know, however, is that their incredible journey is destined to save more than one race of peoples. Cunning will be needed and danger must be encountered along every step of the way as the two and their companions try to satisfy the demands of the nightling king without getting themselves killed or betraying those they love.

A really hard-hitting start, a little slower in the middle and then a big rush to a fine conclusion, with a great setup for at least one sequel. This book can easily span all three levels of school libraries. Lisle has made a

smooth transition into the teen fantasy market - check out her adult level fantasy if you haven't already.

EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

<http://kissthebook.blogspot.com/2008/...>

Raven R. (AvalonReadsBooks) says

I'm honestly not sure if I liked this book.

I will say I was interested in the plot and the outcome. I felt for all the characters. I wanted things to work out, and the two children were believable characters though the magic and the strange names for it got confusing after a while. The movement was slow, even when things were happening, all the way up until the end where everything happened at once and you couldn't quite tell what was happening. And the bad guy gets away making room for a second book that I'm not entirely sure I want to read.

Maybe I'll know how i feel about this book in a few days.

Karissa says

This is the first book in Lisle's Sun and Moon trilogy. I wasn't sure what to expect from this book. I had read a couple of Lisle's older books back when I was in high school and remember liking them. Well I am glad I picked this up because it was a great book!

Gennadara and Daneth live in a small village called Hillrush and along with the other villagers struggling to maintain peace with the Nightlings, a race that can only emerge at night that is ruled by the evil and immortal Letrin. When Gennadara and Dan find there mother has caught a wasting illness, they seek to make a bargain with Letrin to save their mother's live. Little do they know that bargain they make will take them on a great adventure and force them into an age old struggle beyond their imagining.

This was a really well done book. All of the characters are engaging and interesting. Gennadara is especially intriguing; she is a somewhat timid girl with a core of strength and determination that is admirable. The world Lisle creates is interesting and immense; just the surface of this world is touched in this book with hints showing the larger struggle humanity faces against the Nightlings. Lisle does an excellent job describing the surroundings in a way that really conveys the dark and dank mood of the settings. In general the book is very well-written and Lisle shows great skill in creating a readable and intelligent writing style with excellent plot weaving.

There aren't a ton of action scenes, the majority of this book focuses on adventuring, but both the adventuring and action scenes are very well done. The whole time you are left wondering if Gennadara and Dan will make it in time to save their mother and this really propels the story forward making it hard to put down. You never know what fantastical creature will appear around which corner or what a character will do next. Lisle also adds a thread of humor into both Gennadara's and the Cat's personality that keeps the story from taking itself too seriously.

The best thing about this book is that it reminds me a lot of a good old classic fairy tale or folktale, with a bit more added. At first the story seems contained, but then it is broadened to deal with all of humanity. I just really, really, enjoyed it and couldn't find a single thing about it I didn't like. My biggest complaint is that

now I want to read the next book in the series RIGHT NOW! It was a great book, suited for younger children as well as young adults and adults.

Rachel Smith says

This tome was a delight. I was pleasantly surprised to find that, although the magic and creatures are perfectly original, it still has the elusive flavor of old-fashioned epic quests - in the tradition of fantasy classics such as *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hobbit*, and *Lord of the Rings* - that demands the accompaniment of a rainy day and a cup of tea. Pick up this book and become lost in the adventures of a brother and sister, a nightling (NOT an elf - yay!) and a talking cat, as they seek the only thing that can save their people along magical paths that might or might not be more trouble than they're worth.
