



Daughter of the Centaurs

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Malora knows what she was born to be: a horse wrangler and a hunter, just like her father. But when her people are massacred by batlike monsters called Leatherwings, Malora will need her horse skills just to survive. The last living human, Malora roams the wilderness at the head of a band of magnificent horses, relying only on her own wits, strength, and courage. When she is captured by a group of centaurs and taken to their city, Malora must decide whether the comforts of her new home and family are worth the parts of herself she must sacrifice to keep them.

Daughter of the Centaurs Details

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From Reader Review Daughter of the Centaurs for online ebook

Gab McLaren says

Centaurs aren't seen nearly enough in today's books and that's what drew me to this book originally. I loved the take that Kate Klimo took on them, but I couldn't help but feel that the book was uneventful. I never sensed a conflict, or impending doom. Furthermore I didn't really click with the main character as I thought she was rather overly perfect. The vivid descriptions and clever take on centaurs, their society and their living space was incredible.

TheBookSmugglers says

Original review posted on The Book Smugglers

On The Cover:

We must start this post by saying that we strongly believe the cover of Daughter of the Centaurs to be the latest case of Whitewashing.

The story is set in Africa. The protagonist of the book is described as being “dark-skinned” whose “skin and hair are the dusky red-brown”. At various points in the story, attention is called to the earthen red-brown tones of her skin (especially as Malora tries on pretty Centaur dresses).

The person on this cover – presumably the protagonist – appears as a fair-skinned Caucasian.

To whitewash is to use a white representation for a character that is not white and it is a sickening form of discrimination that must end.

Ana's Take:

When I first heard about Daughter of the Centaurs I got super excited about it. I am going through this Mythology phase and was really looking forward to reading it. Then, I started reading news about the book and realised it was not to be the Fantasy I was hoping for. Instead, the story is supposedly a Post-Apocalyptic/Science Fiction tale set at some point in the future which made me even more curious about it. Unfortunately, I ended up not finishing the book, making to the halfway mark and then putting it aside.

It wasn't because of the protagonist – I actually really loved Malora, she was definitely an awesome example of female character in YA: cool, tough, and full of agency. It wasn't the story – the premise was full of potential: the last human on earth meets with an advanced society of Centaurs (although the awesome premise was so poorly executed). It wasn't the narrative as its present tense-third person narration did not bother me at all. Although I felt that the Post-Apocalyptic/Science Fiction elements were unnecessary and not really integrated in the novel, I will refrain from commenting on those because I didn't read till the end so I don't know how it develops. For the same reason, I will also refrain from commenting on how queasy I felt about the HAPPY SLAVES aka, the race of beings that live in servitude to the Centaurs and are so grateful for it (but I am sure Thea will be able to tell us more).

No. Here are the main two reasons I stopped reading the book:

First of all, the story is supremely boring. For a book about THE LAST HUMAN ON EARTH, who encounters a tribe of EXTREMELY ADVANCED CENTAURS and taking into consideration how each side never even knew the other existed, the novel is remarkably devoid of tension or conflict. But what makes it all the more boring is the sheer amount of exposition. From the moment Malora meets the Centaurs, the story is developed in conversation format in which characters basically info-dump everything about the Centaur society. It is really, really clumsy. The author created this really fleshed out, in-depth world for the centaurs and then proceeds to TELL us about it, instead of SHOWING us. And despite all the in-depth elements, unfortunately there is nothing really NEW about this society. I feel this could have been any society in any given period of time.

And then, of course, there were the horses.

Folks, I couldn't sleep because of the horses. I found myself Googling about horse breeding at 1 AM. I was driven to distraction by the horses. Please bear in mind the following facts:

- 1) Horse pregnancy usually lasts 11 months;
- 2) Horses rarely have twins;
- 3) A mare usually starts breeding on its second year of life.

Now consider this: at the beginning of the novel, Malora leaves her settlement to live all alone in the prairie with only her beloved stallion Sky for company until they find a mare named Shadow to join them. This is what happens next:

It is not long before Shadow's belly bulges. In the spring, she drops twins. And so the herd begins to expand. True to her vow to leave no horse nameless, Malora names each one as it slips of its damn and into the world. First come Coal and Lightning. Then Silky and Raven and Blacky and Posy. These horses, in various combinations over time, produce Charcoal, Ember, Smoke, Fancy, Streak, and Stormy.

By the third spring – Malora's fifteenth year – there are fifteen horses in Malora's cave, including Sky and Shadow.

Bearing in mind the horse breeding facts aforementioned, the above is simply NOT.POSSIBLE.

UNLESS these are either magical or genetically modified horses which, considering the Fantasy/Scifi context of this novel, might be the explanation. But there was nothing even remotely indicative that these are not regular horses except for, you know, the fact that they reproduce like rabbits.

Still, let's say I accept the premise that these could be a magical and/or Science Fictional horses. Here is the thing: the fact that I was so concerned about the mechanics of horse breeding is pretty much an indication of how bored I was about the actual story and THAT should tell you everything there is to know about my reading experience.

Alas, it's my first DNF of the year.

Thea's Take:

Unlike Ana, I did manage to slog my way through this novel to the end (although I should disclose that I engaged in liberal skimming towards the last 80 or so pages of the book). Like Ana, however, I found myself supremely underwhelmed and increasingly frustrated with this novel.

First, the good: I think the premise of the novel is brilliant. I started the book expecting a Fantasy novel (unlike Ana's experience, as she had read some other peoples' interpretations and was expecting Apocalyptic

SF), and was surprised, not necessarily in a bad way, by the integration of Science Fiction-ish elements. We learn that Malora's world is, in fact, our own. We learn that Centaurs maybe-possibly were genetically engineered by humans, as presumably are the many other fantasy-ish creatures in the mix. Thus, *Daughter of the Centaurs* is actually an SF novel that plays on the destroyed/post-apocalyptic hi-tech society meets low-tech devolvement trope, with the integration of elements that seem very much like magic (for example, Orion the Centaur makes perfumes that unlock impossible past and future visions for Malora – visions of men in white lab coats performing tests on animals, of Orion as a young Centaur, and so on). There are talking cat-creatures called Twani, Centaurs, and something like a Satyr. When fantasy and SF intersect, it can be a very cool thing (see Catherine Fisher or Pendar O'Guilin or Jaine Fenn).

Unfortunately, in *Daughter of the Centaurs* this is not the case.

Unlike Ana, I hated the narrative style of the book. Third person present tense annoys the bejeezus outta me – almost as much as first person present tense – and in this type of fantasy-cum-sci-fi novel, it had a strangely offputting, distancing effect on the plot and characters. Additionally, the writing was rife with Exclamation! Points! (including a chapter title that ends in an exclamation point!) which is also incredibly irritating. These are personal stylistic preferences, though, so understandably other experiences may vary.

Much more frustrating than writing style, however, was the utter lack of a central conflict. There is nothing propelling this story forward. The entire book is, as Ana says, a giant exposition-laden info-dump, full of conversations that, while mildly interesting, amount to nothing of significance. Hence, the strong urge to write the book off as a DNF (I don't blame Ana in the slightest, as this was an exceptionally boring story).

There's also the incredible offensiveness of the system of Centaurs and their Twani, a race of happy, work-themselves-literally-to-death slaves that wait on the Centaurs because it is their immense honor to do so and they wouldn't know what to do with themselves without the oh-so-honorable task of helping a Centaur use the bathroom and groom themselves. It's possible that I missed the part of the book where the Twani are given a voice and are portrayed as more than subservient happy slaves, given as I was so mind-numbingly bored by the last quarter of the book, but I highly doubt it. If there was a metaphor or deeper meaning to these class divisions, Ms. Klimo does not do a good job of communicating that message.

This, combined with the offensively whitewashed cover (which, to be fair, is not the author's fault nor does it have anything to do with the book itself), sucked out any potential enjoyment I had of the novel.

W. says

Review: *Centauriad #1: Daughter of the Centaurs* by K.K. Ross (for ages 12 and up)

Twelve-year-old Malora is one of a small tribe of people. In the far future, humans are nearly extinct. Yet they eke a meager living from the brutal plains where they live. Much of their heritage becomes forgotten or lost in the struggle to survive.

Though they live a rough life without technology, books or many of the modern comforts we take for granted, life is good, until a flock of viscous birds attacks the men returning from a hunting trip.

Young Malora witnesses the atrocity, which plunges her community into chaos. Things go from bad to worse when the predators return and attack the village again and again.

Malora's mother sends her out alone into the plains during one such attack, after requiring her promise never

to return. Malora is on her own except for her father's favorite horse, Sky. She does her best to keep herself and the horse safe alone in the wild.

Malora can't keep her promise and, in time is drawn back to the village. What she finds plunges her into despair. While she's dealing with this emotional blow, she is attacked and captured by Centaurs.

The Centaurs are the civilized beings in this future, at least on the surface. Malora goes from captive to a friend of sorts on the journey back to the centaurs' city.

Ms. Ross does a remarkable job of world building with this novel. Even though the history of how the humans became almost extinct, and the centaurs became the dominant species is far-fetched, I found the story line believable. The story drew me in and I found myself alternating between cheering for Malora and wondering why she didn't run away.

The inconsistency of the prose did detract from the story. The narration felt as if there was more than one author. Parts of the story were confusing, and in several instances, I found myself going back several pages to clarify the action.

The inconsistency was minor until the last few chapters where it grew pronounced enough I almost put the book down. I found the conclusion to the story rushed. The final pages wrap up the book quickly, in the process creating gaping holes in logic. Since the book seems to be the initial offering in a series, perhaps the questions left unanswered here will be address in future books.

This review was based on an ARC provided by the publisher.

Ravwrin says

In a world where dystopian meets fantasy this book was an interesting concept. We follow a young human girl into the bush of what could be an African savanna of modern time after her whole village is decimated. Her only companion left from her father and the village she loved is a horse. Along the way the two pick up more horses and she finds herself taking care of a whole herd of horses she lovingly thinks of as her boys and girls. She and the herd are trapped by a group of Centaurs. They take her to the Highlands where they live and her life changes.

I found this book to be fascinating. I couldn't put it down. It was a good read but some of the parts fell a little flat. The development of the main character was quite nice but the other characters were a little flat. The horses were more interesting than the Centaurs which is depressing. Though I got the feeling that the Centaurs, at least the Highlanders, were more or less the idealistic philosophers of the age of the Greeks and Romans. They were too frivolous and airy to care about the others below them for my liking. Though I must say, this book left me wanting more. I would surely read the next book that comes out.

Selena Yukino (The Lioness: hear me roar) says

What...? This was odd, and not to mention cliché as fuck. And the writing... *shudder*.

Taneika says

This is a 2.5 rating.

More of my reviews can be found at [Flipping Through the Pages!](#)

This book was strange to say the least. It's about a girl named Malora who ends up being the last known human in the world. Malora also has a way with horses (and this book kinda made me like horses a little bit - I'm terrified of their heads) and takes over her father's job as horse master.

I found the beginning of the story to be the best part of the book, however it was still quite strange. There are some creepy creatures called 'Leatherwings', bat-human hybrids that love eating horses and people. I loved the beginning because of the Leatherwings, I thought they were awesome enemies/predators and it really got me into the story. However, once Malora is cast out into the bush on her own, we don't really hear anything about them again which disappointed me because I thought they had such a significant part in the beginning, I assumed they would throughout the novel.

It took me a while to figure out whether this was set in the distant past or the veryyyyyy-distant future. Turns out it's waaaay in the future! "*The earliest known examples of mosaics were found at a temple in Ubaid, in Mesopotamia, and they are dated to the second half of the third millennium.*" So we can assume from this sentence that they are in the fourth, or possibly the fifth, sixth, seventh millennium which is seriously insane.

As Malora lived in the bush (in Africa I'm assuming because of the animals), she finds stray horses and ends up with her own herd. After a few years combing the bush for food, killing lions, zebras etc etc and basically just surviving, she and the horses are trapped in a cave by centaurs.

The centaurs. Okay, they just weren't really interesting - they were very prissy and I imagine centaurs as fairly primitive and vicious. These centaurs basically live in luxury and lead peaceful lives. They have freaking mansions and gold trimming on everything. They also have little slave animals (that apparently LOVE slaving after them - like the house elves from Harry Potter) called Twani, these are cat-human hybrids that looked like a transparent fluffy white cat that could talk in my head - not a very pleasing image.

The thing that did my head in was the descriptions of the setting and the clothing (oh yeah, centaurs have to cover up their bits with magnificent cloth and whatnot). **BASICALLY EVERYTHING HAD BLUE AND WHITE STRIPES.** Including a lot of the Twani's clothing! So I ended up picturing this:

(Aren't my editing skills on Paint just AMAZING!) That was basically the image I got whenever the description came up and even when the freaking decorations were white and blue striped. Ugh.

Whilst I appreciated the world building, I wasn't a fan of the writing. It was written in third person (which I LOVE LOVE LOVE) but sometimes the POV would randomly switch in the book or in the middle of a chapter. When it first switched to Orion's POV, I had to do a double take, it just didn't flow.

Oops I lied, I appreciated but didn't love the world building. Apart from the centaurs, Twani and Leatherwings, there are apparently a whole assortment of hybrids... **HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?** Was it the result of evolution? Magic? A scientific experiment? (This seems possible as I *think* it mentions something about a scientist, somewhere).

The middle of the book was pretty boring and consisted of Malora having hallucinations of Sky (by the way, where did he go) and some other random bloke whom we find out nothing about, eating bread and cheese and learning how to read and write. Towards the end, it doesn't get much better - she races a horse and becomes accepted by the centaurs and then BAM. It ends. Like, literally! The ending was so abrupt I thought

I had accidentally skipped some pages on my tablet. I would have much preferred a cliffhanger to such a boring ending.

"Herself and Father feel that I've been adversely influenced by reading far too many books about love. Ancients like Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen and Victoria Roberts and Danielle Steel and Nico Simonette and Shakespeare and Stephanie Meyer"

Dear God, no. No no no. You can't tell me that centuries, perhaps even thousands of years from now, that Stephanie Meyer will be considered one of the great writers of love. Just, NO. Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen and Shakespeare I can understand because they've basically already proved themselves. But Meyer? The author may as well have put Nicholas Sparks down too. Pfft.

And one more thing that pissed me off - the centaurs constantly called Malora 'pet' and Orion said she was "his pet". She doesn't even complain about it!

Overall, I loved the concept of hybrids and how far in the future it is, however there are so many plot holes and things that just bugged me, that I couldn't enjoy this as much I would've liked to. I was quite disappointed.

Kira says

When the Leatherwings hit her village, Malora is forced to flee with her family's horse, a few provisions, and the clothes on her back. Three years later, she, and the horses she rescued along the way, fall into a trap set by her people's enemies, the Centaurs. Forced to become their "guest" and adopt their ways, Malora feels unsettled. She likes most of them, but their ways are strict and stifling to her. When a group of rogues start attacking people on the trade route that the centaurs use, innocent people begin dying and deep secrets about the past between the centaurs and her people begin to emerge. Can Malora save the centaurs? Will she find a place she can call home?

DAUGHTER OF THE CENTAURS is really slow to start and doesn't have much of a plot until about pg 200. Still, the characters are likable and the spread-out action does keep the reader wanting to read more. Readers who are fans of fantasy or who like books that are more character-based than plot-based might enjoy reading this book.

Dot says

Oh, geez. First, I'll give some props. I always loved the Walter Farley and Marguerite Henry books, and I liked the main character's interaction with her horses. It was an enjoyable part of the plot line.

Having the story set in future Africa (I'm assuming, due to the types of animals that show up) was kind of interesting, although I'm a bit curious as to how hippos are somehow not dangerous to humans, since they're considered totally aggressive and kill humans all the time. I think the girl on the front cover is nowhere near as dark as the main character describes herself in the book, so that's a bit disappointing.

Aaand now...can we talk about the Twani? I haven't read an uncomfortable cultural mishap like that in a while. You see, they're small cat-people who the centaurs saved from a volcano many ages ago, so every generation since then has pledged themselves to the service of the centaurs. It makes them happy, you see. And don't even try to pay them, because that makes them less happy. Basically, it reads like the author

needed an excuse to have a race in servitude (perhaps because centaurs have tricky physical logistics), but wanted to avoid all the icky cultural implications that would ensue. But somehow, having these cat-people adds a whole different level of squick, especially the one that fawns over our main character.

In full honesty, I think this would have worked better as a middle reader novel. Right now, the writing style and plot line just isn't working for YA, but a little tweaking could have made a really terrific adventure for younger girls.

Victoria says

Despite its rather cheesy cover, the description of this book really attracted me to it. Centaurs in a post-apocalyptic world? Sounded terrific! Unfortunately, its execution failed to be as intriguing. The book opened not with mythical half-human, half-horse creatures but with a ragged group of human survivors (the "People"). Malora, a young girl obsessed with her father's horses, and with a mother who spoke only in platitudes, witnessed a tragic attack by Leatherwings (monstrous humanoid bat-type creatures) and eventually set off into the wilderness alone. The book felt painstakingly detailed, but - frustratingly - without any of the background story that felt rather necessary regarding this new version of Earth.

Even after the introduction of the centaurs, the book still felt overly detailed, but without ever setting up an actual plot. I kept waiting - and waiting - for something more interesting to happen than endless details on the luxuries of the living with the Highland centaurs. The book felt like set up, with Malora's visions foreshadowing the future (of the series, apparently). The strong relationship between Malora and her horses certainly spoke to my inner twelve-year-old, but the underdeveloped relationships and lack of plot soured the book as a whole. The foundation was laid for a plot more thrilling than a horse-race and while the curious hints of the future were intriguing, I just am not dying to see where the series goes from here.

Branwen Sedai *of the White Ajah* says

I luckily received this book through NetGalley, in exchange for my honest review. Despite her family wanting her to be a healer when she grows up, like her mother, Malora dreams of being a master horserider, like her father. When her family and tribe are all killed by malevolent huge bat-creatures called leatherwings, Malora escapes and lives for a few years on the open plains with her beloved horse, Skye. She breeds and cares for her own horde of wild horses until a group of centaurs capture them. Malora travels with them to Mount Kheiron, a huge city of centaurs. While there she learns of their customs and way of life.

This book was great for a number of reasons. First of all, I have always enjoyed horses, but never actually took care of any. The first half of this book relates a lot of information about horses, horse behavior, and how to train them; which I found very interesting. Secondly, the author paints an image of centaurs that is very different from the myths and stories that most people know, so it was very enjoyable to learn about their society and habits. Like I said, this image of centaurs is very different from a lot of other myths about them but as long as you go into this book with an open mind it's very enjoyable.

Cecelia says

I'm just going to put this out there: Centaurs are super cool. And yes, you can judge me for my nerdiness. Greek mythology, Narnia, and Harry Potter – none of you did anything to cure me of this! And then came Kate Klimo's Daughter of the Centaurs.

The first chapters of Kate Klimo's book seem to promise something excellent. Deadly Leatherwings threaten Malora's small settlement, and the scene is set with impossible choices and an interesting world. Then, everything goes south. Warning: if you liked Daughter of the Centaurs, read no further.

Oh, how many things went horribly wrong? Let me count them:

1) Third person present tense. This is the goofiest narrative voice ever. It almost spoiled the first bit of the book for me (the only decent bit, as it turned out). It is awkward. It deadens any connection between character and the reader. It. Is. Terrible. Experiment: read some of the text aloud and tell me it doesn't sound stilted. See?

2) Twani. One of the interesting things about Daughter of the Centaurs is that it's not all centaurs all the time. There are humans, Leatherwings, horses, other unique beings, and the Twani. Twani are described as cat-like creatures whose life goal is to serve the centaurs. In fact, they work themselves so hard that they sometimes die. In servitude. No explanation. I'll move on before I get upset.

3) Total loss of tension. As mentioned above, Daughter of the Centaurs opened well. I could overlook the narrative voice and other small annoyances as long as the plot moved along at a strong clip and Malora was going places and doing things that furthered her journey. Unfortunately, almost as soon as Malora and the centaurs made contact, the book slowed down. It eventually stalled out in info dump territory. Class tensions weren't tense. Family disagreements weren't true obstacles. Shady characters never developed into sinister villains (or anything else, for that matter). The text meandered, told, and pontificated, but the thrill that drew this reader in? Disappeared completely.

4) The wise pet. Oops, I mean the faun tutor (and now it sounds as though we've fallen into Narnia, I know). This was something that made my skin itch. When Malora comes to live with the centaurs, one of the first beings she meets Honus, a combination tutor and pet. It is disconcerting and disturbing to see the objectification and 'ownership' of sentient beings throughout the book, especially when it is NEVER unpacked. If there was any self-consciousness evident in the writing at all, I could be reconciled to it. Instead, there is none. And it feels creepy.

This list is by no means exhaustive. For further insight, check out The Book Smugglers' take. They were the ones who identified the narrative voice - I didn't even know what it was called. *le sigh* Another interesting note: according to Amazon, Daughter of the Centaurs is a young adult title. I found it to be very juvenile (and thus the label 'middle grade').

Kate Klimo's Daughter of the Centaurs was not for me – in fact, I got to a point where I actively disliked it. I kept reading in hope... but I urge you not to make the same mistake.

Not recommended.

Lili says

I love when stories--particularly with "selfless" female protagonists/heroines--live by the seat of their pants and know the skills--or slowly learn, in this case--how to survive and be independent. When Malora must leave her People and live alone forevermore with just her horses as company, she saw a restless but fortifying life ahead of her. When she went back to discover the desolation of her people it destroyed something in her. That's when they discovered that the People were not as dead as they thought. A society of human and horse hybrids have been living successfully since the war with the People of Mount Kamaria--known now as Mount Kheiron, habitat of the centaurs--occured. From Daughter of the Mountains, to Daughter of the Plains, to Daughter of the Centaurs, Malora "Ironbound" Thora-Jayke does not fail to capture the reader's heart and symbolize inspiration for a whole other race.

Such vivid descriptions of mountainous and barren landscapes. So easy to hear the hoofs of Malora's "boys and girls" stampeding across the plains. Without the need to learn to read or write, Malora's voice captures more abstract concepts and appreciated the primal nature of the land she knows by heart. Her love of horses became my love of horses for all their nickering, whinnying, snorts and eye-rolls. When first encountering the Highlanders and their method of living, the frivolity was comforting but seen as a waste through the main characters'. The author's writing ability to depict all the monuments, murals and colorful aspects of a Highlanders' life was dazzling and absolutely awe-inspiring to behold. With the minor addition of its own terminology, Daughter of the Centaurs was originally created and uniquely executed. I did not want to put down this book for longer than six hours, couldn't part with it; not the world or the characters.

The plot did prove a bit too peaceful and calm, but it was successful in appealing to the no-nonsense side of me. I can't stand when authors make up unnecessary conflict between two parties just to liven up a certain scene. The book's solitary, soothing tone helped develop Malora's characters and was easy to use as a filter to distinguish traits and personalities of other characters.

It is obvious, reading the ending and knowing all the other unanswered questions, that there will be a second book in the series. No doubt the "Centauriad #1" gave that away. Its the waiting that might do me in if I don't get another horse-y book-related fix in the next six months.

Grade: A-

Isa Lavinia says

An entertaining if not entirely successful book.

The plot starts well enough then takes needless and sometimes absurd turns.

I got the sense that, by its subject matter, this book was meant to be Young Adult, but the writing is too simplistic. Don't get me wrong, you don't need big words to convey big emotions and there were certainly several descriptive passages that proved just that. But the characters' motives, the plot itself, were too simple and it was sometimes jarring to read mentions of rape and murder in a child-like prose.

Malora, the main character, is a mix of wild child (a part of her that was well-written and compelling) and Mary-Sue (a part which, obviously, was not). You have an extremely pragmatic character, who will not cry for her father's death or the destruction of her people because life goes on and she needs a level head to survive, then later on takes to her bed in a fit of tears because some minor character she barely knew gets himself banished for his own stupidity (an event for which she absurdly blames herself when in similar situations back in her village she'd brush it off and recognise the ridiculousness of it all). Her

behaviour, even given all the changes she goes through, was not credibly consistent.

The centaur society had a lot of potential to be explored, especially the whole issue of class differences, but it never gets the attention it should.

The culmination of the story ends up being a horse race which, not only plunges the impoverished centaurs into deeper poverty keeping us from rejoicing over her victory (though that's later resolved), but also ends up being anticlimactic given that the book opened with a horrible attack from winged demons.

I really liked the whole scents and visions aspect of the story, I hope the next one will explore this.

Still, this one was a light and nice read.

Jillian -always aspiring- says

Imagine a world where humans are near extinction, mutant bat creatures stalk the skies like birds of prey, and centaurs rule as nobility within their own mountain fortress. That sounds like such a great fictional world, doesn't it? Wouldn't you want to read about such a strange yet dangerous place?

Well, I definitely did -- but once I started reading *Daughter of the Centaurs* my enthusiasm quickly dimmed to lukewarm feelings and then, finally, to a sense of disillusionment and confusion.

The author, Kate Klimo, tried to capture the charm and adventure that are to be found in novels by fantasy authors such as Tamora Pierce, Robin McKinley, Diana Wynne Jones, Gail Carson Levine, and Shannon Hale -- but even with an original idea the novel fell flat in many areas.

One of the hard sells of the novel is that this book is *not* meant to be straight fantasy...but rather dystopian in the sense that this world ruled by centaurs and other creatures is meant to take place *really, really far* into the future (yes, OUR world's future). While that's an interesting idea in and of itself, my curious mind wants to know *how*. Klimo never explains the origins of her world and how these sentient creatures came to be. Are they the result of evolution? Genetic abnormalities? Magic gone wild? The questions always loomed in the back of my mind as I was reading, yet never once did I get an answer, satisfactory or not.

Another sticking point to me was that the centaurs...well, to put it bluntly, they were *lame*. Though I could understand more civilized centaurs (as opposed to my more traditional view of tribal, warrior-like creatures), I still expected them to be majestic in some ways. Instead, they are shallow and irksome beings who are served by cat-like servants called Twani (who actually reminded me of the house-elves from *Harry Potter*), and there is little depth to be found in the centaur characters (many of whom are nobles). Then, when we actually do meet a more traditional (and, might I add, much more likable) centaur, the novel is almost three-fourths done! Injustice, I say!

The society of the centaurs was...frivolous at best and cartoonish at worst. Though I was expecting some intrigues possibly a la Megan Whalen Turner's *The Queen's Thief* series, there was none of that to be found here. Instead, we are treated to some vague signs of tension between the Highlanders (the noble centaurs) and the Flatlanders (the common centaurs), but it never builds to anything especially exciting or noteworthy.

The one semi-good point of the novel was the heroine, Malora, who reminded me of a mixture of Katniss from Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* and Daine from Tamora Pierce's *The Immortals* quartet -- but some of the likenesses to those heroines were often only skin-deep, making Malora seem more a caricature of the "wilderness girl" and less of a real character.

The writing itself had its good and bad moments. Pacing and exposition were not always consistent; those flaws make the story a bit of a rocky reading experience instead of a smooth one. Sometimes the novel also had an identity crisis in that it never quite seemed certain whether it was meant to be aimed towards middle-grade readers or young adults, and that could prove to be a problem for this novel to reach the audience that may be most receptive to it.

Though having the benefits of a fresh idea and an intriguing set-up, *Daughter of the Centaurs* honestly was a disappointment to me, but other readers may feel differently and find charm where I found annoyance. If you're interested, then by all means give it a try. Perhaps it will be a fresh yet nostalgic kind of fantasy story for your reading pleasure.

Note: I received an advanced copy of this book from the publisher through Netgalley.

Heidi says

Review originally posted [here](#).

Malora was born with an affinity for horses, and desires nothing more than to follow in her father's footsteps as a horse wrangler and hunter. After leatherwings ravage her family's settlement, destroying both men and horse, her mother sends her off into the plains with Sky--her father's horse that was too big to be carried off--in order to secure her safety. She begins a herd of her own, strong, black, fast horses, encountering no other being for three years. When her herd, and Malora, are captured by a group of centaurs seeking horses to compete in an annual race, Malora finds herself surrounded by a completely foreign culture and way of life. Malora determines the comforts of civilized living are worth losing her freedom, but she must determine how much she is willing to sacrifice.

So. Okay. I have to get this off my chest. I like genre bending, but I'm quickly getting sick of books trying to pass off fantasy as science fiction in order to somehow jam it into trends that are currently more popular. *Daughter of the Centaurs* was constructed like the opposite of *Star Wars*. Instead of "A long long time ago in a galaxy far far away..." it supposedly is set "A long long time in the future right here on earth...". I cannot for the life of me understand why this was necessary. There's no explanation of the history of how centaurs and other creatures came about/if they were always there, and this would be fine if it weren't supposed to be our world. The only time this reality is even brought up within the story is through books, which I also had a huge issue with. This is supposed to be so far in the future that humans are considered "living fossils" and yet our physical books have survived. Not survived in that they were printed on high quality linen paper and preserved well in safe environments; survived in the sense that wealthy centaurs actually have our physical books like Dr. Seuss which was probably printed on highly acidic paper and they read them in their homes and what not. Plus if Stephenie freaking Meyer is one of the "great" literary names that survives the test of time in a completely unironic way alongside the likes of Austen, Shakespeare, and Dickens, I WILL RISE FROM THE GRAVE AND CUT SOMEONE. Honestly I really wish *Daughter of the Centaurs* had just embraced the fantasy label and either cut out the aspects that tied it to our current society, or provided stronger ties to make it more believable, as is, the story was weakened.

The narration of *Daughter of the Centaurs* is at times perfect. It's told in the present tense, making it very reminiscent of an oral tale one would hear spoken around the camp fire. This works beautifully in the beginning of the story, while Malora is on her own save for her horses, but becomes slightly less effective as the story progresses. The world and story that Klimo has constructed have a great base, but could use some trimming. *Daughter of the Centaurs* could have made a good stand alone story, but I did not like most of the allusions towards future plots. For example, Malora has visions of meeting a man in the future. I loved that

this story had no romance in it, as this is always refreshing, but the foreshadowing of a future romance to me seemed forced and irrelevant to the current story. Again, this came across somewhat as an attempt to shove this book into a popular trend, and it would have been best left alone. There's a chance this is me just being a stick in the mud about preferring this story as a stand alone.

I did very much enjoy the featuring of centaurs as main characters. I've never read a book where this was done before, and the society constructed with them was very interesting, if intentionally frivolous. Malora comments at one point that she herself is more horse than the centaurs themselves, and for all intents and purposes, this is true. Centaurs seem to be largely ashamed of their horse halves, attempting to cover any horselike scent, and going modestly clothed in order to minimize their animal half. This aspect of the story was very well done, and created a nice counterpart between horse loving Malora and the horse shaming centaurs. The power of olfactory stimulation from scents was very unique as well. Orion, one of the centaurs to initially discover and befriend Malora, has a profession of creating scents--oils or perfumes that the centaurs use to disguise their horsey smells--and they have a powerful affect on Malora. When Malora inhales the created scents, she is able to have visions associated with that smell, even if it is another's memory. Finally, the horse lore in Daughter of the Centaurs was fantastic. Malora's knowledge of and skill with horses is so well presented, her interactions with the animals easily became my favorite part of this story.
