



The Strange Maid

Tessa Gratton

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The Strange Maid Details

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From Reader Review The Strange Maid for online ebook

Anna says

I am kind of disappointed with this book I expected it to be as good if not better than the first book. The first book was an interesting read this one not so much. I thought it was okay not I did not like it that much. The plot was slow and it was not that good. The main character was not one I could connect to very easily.

Juliet Smith says

What if you had to solve a riddle to earn your place in the world? That's the dilemma Signy Valborn must solve to earn her place amongst her Valkyrie sisters. While the subject matter is at times dark and dreary, Gratton manages to instill her signature humor so it isn't all doom and gloom. The settings are fascinating and excellently described, and I like how Gratton adds details that show the divergences of their world from ours (e.g. Jefferson's Compact, the Thralls' War). The romance between Signy and Ned is sweet and heartbreaking and not a re-hash of the Astrid/Soren romance in the last book. My only quibble is that if her foster brother is an MLM, Gratton should have said so more explicitly as there continues to be a dearth of positive representation of LGBT+ people in urban fantasy. Apart from that, this was a well written fantasy for teen readers who enjoy Percy Jackson, and adult fans of fantasy and alternate history who are still teens at heart.

Liviania says

THE LOST SUN ended up being one of my favorite books last year. The romance, the loyalty, the world - it all combined to form a delicious reading experience. But I was not prepared for the sequel. THE STRANGE MAID starts before THE LOST SUN, and is the story of Signy Valborn, a disgraced Valkyrie who couldn't be more different from Soren. Soren longed to escape his violent destiny. Signy would like to bring back human sacrifice.

Signy is a delightfully unique heroine. She dances on the edge of madness and chaos, delights in battle and revenge, has sex with whoever she wants and doesn't apologize for it. Her story is likewise violent, sexy, and just a little crazy. Also, fitting for a story set in a US where the Viking gods are real and everyone still worships them, there is a strong vein of BEOWULF running through the plot.

I loved how much more of the world Gratton explores in THE STRANGE MAID. Soren shows up eventually, but he doesn't take over the story. Signy's story stretches over even more of the land, and she spends time integrating into more groups. For all that THE LOST SUN involved a road trip, it was more insular. THE STRANGE MAID also gives more insight into the berserkers, in addition to the Valkyrie. I'm not entirely sure where Gratton is going with this series, but she obviously has a plan. Clearly, I have no idea what might happen next, and I love it.

I think that I prefer THE LOST SUN to THE STRANGE MAID, but that's because I loved the central triangle of Soren, Astrid, and Baldur in THE LOST SUN so much. I think THE STRANGE MAID has stronger worldbuilding and a more sophisticated plot. It's a rich exploration of grief, revenge, entitlement, destiny, choice, and faith. Plus, like her critique partner Maggie Stiefvater, Gratton knows how to use her

words. THE STRANGE MAID is a beautiful novel.

I cannot wait for book three.

Pam ?Because Someone Must Be a Thorn? Tee says

Signy Valborn has fire in her veins. Anger over a devastating childhood incident led her to climb the New World Tree where she met and was claimed by the Alfater, Odin, for his own.

But being a Valkyrie in training is not what she expected. The current Valkyries are tame compared to their history. They are the consultants to kings and presidents, and Signy longs for, burns for, the old ways.

The final insult comes when she wakes to find a riddle on the day she is supposed to become a fully realized Valkyrie. It's a question she must answer. One she cannot find a solution to. It keeps her from rising to the full position of Alfater's fierce servant, and it sets her on a dark, dark journey to find herself.

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Dark, dark, dark. If you have read THE LOST SUN you will likely not be prepared for THE STRANGE MAID. This is a story about fate and death and longing. Its a story that explores 'the glory' of revenge and warfare, and unlike the previous book, there is more truth to the world-building here. These people seem closer to what I would expect from those descended from Vikings, from those who live and worship the old gods.

There are fewer Christian sensibilities in this book. We get new insight into the Berserker battle lust, and we get animal sacrifices.

I love this book because it's more adult than THE LOST SUN, and because there's less flitting around the violence. This is part of Odin that sees value in heroic death and monumental violence.

I love this book because there's poetry in the writing. The use of words isn't frothy and light, but dense and evocative. And Tessa Gratton is afraid to let her characters take sex casually or lose themselves to what we might consider madness.

**[Sex, drinking, and violence. Beowulf and swordwerk.]

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also <http://booksforkids-reviews.blogspot...>

--review copy

?Kimari? says

If you liked this book, you might also enjoy:

- ★ Iron Druid Chronicles series
- ★ Valkyrie series

Bhawisha Chand says

..... the cover was pretty, okay?

jv poore says

A wizard is that person who is outstandingly clever, the person of amazing skill and accomplishment; she who practices magick, also known as a conjurer and enchanter. Ms. Gratton epitomizes this definition, she is a true wizard and *The Strange Maid* confirms it.

As the second in *The United States of Asgard Books*, I assumed that Signy's saga would pick up where *The Lost Sun* left off. (Ms. Gratton throws back her head and wickedly laughs at my basic expectation.) Of course she would never do something so simple, so mundane, so exactly-what-the-reader-expects. No, her way is cooler than the other side of the pillow. Using her mad, magickal skills, Ms. Gratton seamlessly gives the reader a more comprehensive look at Asgard as a whole, then cohesively melds Book 1 and Book 2, evoking a familiarity and comfort level in the oh-so-fortunate-reader.

The passionate, albeit petulant, Signy is such a strong, laudable, endearing character that, truly, Ms. Gratton could have had her eating cereal and still given us a remarkable yarn. This reader couldn't keep from rooting for the courageously determined, head-strong heroine with a carefully hidden, yet not closely guarded, pure and kind heart.

Signy is plagued by a riddle. She firmly believes that the answer to the riddle will reveal who she is and what she is meant for. This lyrical portrayal of Signy's journey is captivating and wholly engrossing with colorful and alluring characters all along the way. It is also sneaky and clever in that the journey proves more enlightening than the destination.

True to form, Ms. Gratton masterfully and oh-so-subtly unveils Signy's self-realizations throughout the story, beautifully presenting growing pains and character developments that all adolescents experience in their voyage to adult-hood. The supporting cast including trolls of all varieties, gods and goddesses and my personal favorite, Glory the Fenris Wolf; keeps this story fresh and wildly entertaining.

Tiny twists throughout amused and delighted me. Ms. Gratton's uncanny ability to present various points of view is a unique, remarkable trait that keeps the reader open-minded and hopeful. Red-Stripe exemplifies this. Which author could have me terrified of mountain trolls while simultaneously wishing I had my very own Red-Stripe? None other than Wizard Gratton, of course.

I've come to learn that whenever I pick up a Tessa Gratton book, I'm in for a special treat. There is no doubt that the tale will be compelling, heart-felt and diabolically funny at times. The other certainty is the plethora of quotes that I pull from each tome: "...that a way of life, a tradition, does not equal truth." Righteous.

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: A Valkyrie, a mysterious man with an unholy sword, and berserker who serves a different a god are out to claim her destiny.

Opening Sentence: "I was born under a frenzied star, so our poets would say."

The Review:

Signy Valborn was given a riddle to solve by Odin when he made her a Valkyrie, and Ned Unferth shows up years later to help her. Signy has been training to be a Valkyrie since she was seven. She ran from the Valkyrie council in order to bring glory to the Valkyries and solve her riddle. Along the way she meets Ned the spiritless who is also a poet. Half of the book takes place before book 1, *The Lost Sun*, and the other half of the book takes place during and after. Ned teaches Signy how to hunt and fight trolls.

In one massive troll attack Signy believes that Ned is killed and she realizes her quest is tied directly to the mother Troll. Signy ends up meeting the berserker group and Soren in quest to hunt the trolls. Soren and Signy become close friends while trying to figure out her dreams, and her destiny.

I am not going to go into too much more because of spoilers. However, I will say this book is packed with action, another weird love story and tons on Norse mythology. Signy is an interesting main character she is often rash, for example in the troll attack in the first book, you find out in this book she is the woman who charged into the group of trolls with nothing but a sword. I say weird love story because it's like Astrid and Soren in the first book where they just kind of fall in love. Initially I thought this might be a standalone, I didn't understand how she tied it in with the first book, but once you get about halfway through the book that becomes clearer. Signy and Soren are tied together because of the mother troll and Signy's destiny. The gods work in mysterious ways.

I loved this book, although I admit I struggled in the beginning, she really wasn't mentioned in the first book so I had no clue who she was and what she had to do with the story as whole. But despite that struggle, I really loved the whole Norse culture in the modern world. It's so interesting and Tessa really incorporates some wonderful aspects of Norse culture and poetry in the book. I have to admit that I am total sucker for the Valkyries, Berserkers and Beowulf. You really can't ask for more in a book, than that!

Notable Scene:

"Again and again it appears against the starry sky, weaving in and out of itself like a message for the entire world."

"Death Chooser, Strange Maid, the binding rune scare says."

"The Valkyrie of the tree will prove herself with a stone heart."

"But a Valkyrie does not balk at death."

"I make myself a mirror to understand the beast."

FTC Advisory: Random House Books for Young Readers provided me with a copy of *The Strange Maid*. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Christopher McKitterick says

I love Gratton's United States of Asgard books. Because I have to read so much for the Campbell Memorial Award and student writing, her US of A books (THE STRANGE MAID and book 1, THE LOST SUN) are the first novels I've read for fun in months. And what a perfect pleasure these are!

THE STRANGE MAID kept me up until 3am - I had to finish it! It's exciting, beautifully written, wonderfully structured, and a real pleasure to read in all the ways both readers and writers enjoy books. It demonstrates how professional confidence, in-depth research, and deep understanding of a fictional world are everything in writing great spec-fic. Bravo!

This volume works just fine as a stand-alone; you don't have to read the first book to love the second. In fact, only one character (besides the gods) appears here from the first volume (and only as a secondary character), though I would recommend reading THE LOST SUN, too, to fully immerse in this fantastic world - and because I loved it, as well.

If you like alternate history, Norse mythology and gods, trolls, Valkyries, YA fantasy, and the triumph of the human spirit, you'll love this book.

I'm really looking forward to Gratton's next work!

Shoshana says

4.5

I enjoyed "Lost Sun" well enough, and while I wasn't actively looking *forward* to the next book, I was keeping half an eye out for it. And I'm glad I did 'cause, wow!

At first I found "The Strange Maid" tough to get into: Signy is a complex character who embraces traits that can come off as pretty distasteful: death, madness, selfishness, and rage. When she is a child and her parents die she leaves her foster family to become a child of Odin and join the Valkyrie. Flash forward several years, where the story really starts, and Signy is wandering, half cast out of the Valkyrie and Odin's graces, pursuing a strange riddle.

On top of Signy's acquired-taste personality there's a big emphasis on poetry - that difficulty is more of a personal thing. Signy expresses herself through rune poetry and feels heavily linked to it, and ends up joining forces with a poet, so there's a lot of poetical play that was hard for me to follow. (I don't know, it never makes sense to me. Whatever.) It lightened up a little over time - or I got used to it - and eventually blended very nicely with the story, giving things a richer, more lyrical feel.

And Signy's darkness is fantastic. Yes, she's selfish, she's risking her life and those of her friends in a quest that's suicidal at best for - it often seems - all the wrong reasons. But she's so full of passion and conviction. I loved her as a heroine. And when she eventually runs into Soren (from "Lost Sun") their friendship makes me ridiculously happy. In general, Grafton avoids tired old tropes, cliches and Suffering of the Stupid and showcases complex, interesting characters who are strong and think for themselves in a very unique world. (view spoiler)

I'm very much looking forward to whatever Tessa Gratton comes up with next (and I DO hope there's more to this series!). In the meantime, I believe I shall read me some Beowulf.

K says

As beautiful as it is ugly, *The Strange Maid* is a triumph of a story. Signy is a nuanced mess of a character, contrary and brave and foolish, young and smart and strong. The book took a moment to hit its stride, and sometimes the pacing of certain reveals was confusing, but those are rather minor quibbles. I love Gratton's world--she transforms Norse mythology and world history deftly--but the relationships were probably my favorite thing about this book. I loved the relationship between Signy and Soren--the commonalities, but also the ideological strife. And I *loved* Signy and Ned. I feel like I didn't quite absorb everything on the first read, but I'm sure I'll revisit this book again and again.

Stacy Koster says

I really enjoyed the story. It was difficult to put down. However, the romance was flat, and not believable. It seems to me, if someone betrayed you, caused most of your family to be murdered by trolls, you wouldn't just welcome them back, no matter what their story is. If the author had made it more of a tortured romance, she could have made it work. As is, it's just flat. I did like the twist with the Troll Mother.

Lizzie Andrews says

The Norse gods are by far some of my favorites, so I was super excited to come across The United States of Asgard series. In my opinion, they Norse gods don't get used often enough in the Paranormal/Fantasy genre. It is a genre dominated by the Greek and Roman gods and it was really nice to take a break from that. Not that I don't love them either, I just love the Norse gods a little bit more.

Tessa Gratton did an amazing job writing a book that combined a captivating story with enough danger, twists and turns to keep you interested from the very beginning. The characters were extremely well developed, well written and extremely likeable. I thought the whole book was intriguing and I absolutely loved it.

Signy's character was fantastic. She was fierce, loyal, and everything a Valkyrie should be. I loved her quest to solve the riddle from Odin. She possessed a layer of depth that a lot of female leads lack in books. I think it was because at this point, she had nothing left to lose.

Then enters Ned the Spiritless. His character was great and it was obvious from the very beginning that something was off about what he was saying to her. Towards the end of the book we find out exactly what is going on and you can't help to feel but a little sorry for him.

The Berserkers were great! Vicious, uncontrollable, and highly excitable! I loved them the minute they entered this book. I was so glad they stayed until the end of the story. I really hope that in the next book (fingers crossed) I will see them again.

I fell in love with this world that Tessa Gratton wove in *The Strange Maid*. I need to go back and read the

first book, that way if she writes more I will have all the background information! You can't lose with this series, it is a 5-star A+ winner in my book!

I received an ARC through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review!

Originally Posted On Lizzie in Wonderland

Angela says

Complex, dark, and evocative tale – Gratton's best book yet, 4.5 stars

Tessa Gratton has penned her best book yet with Book 2 of her United States of Asgard series: *The Strange Maid*. I stayed up late into the night, with goosebumps raised on my arms, to finish this book. The story, the writing, and the characterization are all beautiful, deep, and complex. I love a book like this that prioritizes character development over plot, but *The Strange Maid* still manages to combine the two well. Most of all, though, I love the risks that this book takes with characterization, theme, and source material.

Signy Valborn is a girl on the verge of Odiniist glory as a Valkyrie, and she embraces the dark things she believes that should include – blood and death and violence and chaotic, passionate things stirring inside her soul. I love that Gratton was willing to create a wild, out-of-control, and fearsome female character; in doing so, she affirms that madness, desire, and a longing for revenge can be felt by all, not just males. Signy, however, is not a one-note character; she also experiences fear, doubt, and love. The other characters who flank and support Signy are also well-developed, from Soren Bearstar of the first book to Ned the truth-teller who hides behind his poetry to the gods and other Valkyries themselves. I also so appreciated the themes conveyed in the story about loss and revenge, the balance between chaos and control, choice versus destiny, and the types of relationships that matter in our lives.

In addition, Gratton skillfully plays with and updates Norse mythology to create a modern tale that pays homage to the violence, strength, and madness that was celebrated in Old English works like *Beowulf*. Because of this and the adept way the characters are portrayed, this book felt more mature than most other YA titles I've read. This is a complex and evocative tale that will be best appreciated by readers who aren't afraid to feel uncomfortable from time to time while reading. Reading the first book in the series or having a background in Norse tales isn't necessary to understand and appreciate the story, but it will likely help.

I have always been a fan of Gratton's work, but my appreciation for her craft and the intentionality of her writing has been taken to a new level after my reading of *The Strange Maid*. I can't wait to see what the next book in the series brings, and I will definitely be recommending this title to my friends and older students alike.

Note: This review refers to an advance review copy.

Tom says

A few months ago, I finally read book 1 of Tessa Gratton's United States of Asgard series, *The Lost Sun*. (Yeah, I don't know what took so long either.) Liking it was a no-brainer; a Norse influenced United States,

complete with berserkers, Odin, Thor, trolls, and everything else that makes Norse mythology fantastic. It was extremely well-written, and the characters are so likable that I find myself thinking of them when I'm reading other books.

Strange Maid is even better. I have to admit, it took me a second to warm up, but that's because we were really getting to know Signy, the main character. I mean, really. After reading this book, I feel like she is someone I truly know, someone I know which book to buy for their birthday, what not to make her for dinner. The characters are fantastically developed, and Signy is the example. The plot is well paced, and doesn't give itself away. And, I have to tell you...the feels smacked me in the face. The high point of the plot sang to my heart, and I wanted to simultaneously hug Tessa and yell at her for not warning me I'd hit an emotional high finishing this book. Exclamations of exultation over lunch whilst sitting in your cube provide for some odd looks. :)

Read this. I recommend it for anyone who likes alt history, fantasy or Norse mythology.
