



The Pattern Scars

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Nola is born into poverty in Sarsenay City. When her mother realizes that Nola has the Othersight and can foretell the future, she sells her to a brothel seer, who teaches the girl to harness her gift. But she will soon learn a harsh lesson: that being able to predict the future has nothing to do with preventing it.

The Pattern Scars Details

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Liviu says

The Pattern Scars is a book that has so much going for it - prose, narrator, world building - that I kept hoping the author won't partly squander that by keeping it a one note novel to the bitter end; but sadly the novel while starting promisingly, morphs into a s&m - ok mostly psychical and magical, not purely physical, but that's beside the point - relationship that takes precedence over everything else.

A page turner and well written but its one dimensionality keeps it from being more than a B for me.

Steph says

3 1/2 Stars

This is one of the most somber stories I've ever read. It took me an extensive amount of time to get through this book, probably because of its somber tone. Well written, but if you like your stories to have some glimmer of hope or happiness, you've come to the wrong place. This is a standalone book written in 1st person POV, about Nola, a common girl who has a strong talent to see into someone's future.

After being sold by her mother to a brothel for that purpose, she finds that her path is not destined for happiness. Without giving too much away, Nola spends almost the entire story as a magically mute slave, to a very sadistic and sick master seer. He uses her talent in a very twisted and forbidden way, which leads her to a path that she can never return from. The characters are three dimensional, but utterly unredeemable, which went along with its somber non-HEA tone. There is a just sliver of romance, between Nola and her childhood friend that comes back later to find her enslaved but unable to say so. No sex is described, but there is a fair amount of violence and gore, not YA.

If you like your books on the darker depressive side, then this one might be for you. But for me, it was out of my comfort zone, and not exactly satisfying, to say the least. Still well written and constructed, which were the only redeeming factors, besides its unpredictability.

I received an advanced copy of this book via NetGalley.

Lorina Stephens says

It would be very easy to wax poetic about Caitlin Sweet's, *The Pattern Scars*. Deservedly so. From the first sentences Sweet demonstrates her craftsmanship by translating the reader into a richly and perfectly realized world, populated by people who are very human despite extraordinary and sometimes dark abilities.

With astonishing subtlety, Sweet presents a relationship between a clairvoyant girl who is employed as a seer in a brothel, and a psychopathic and megalomaniacal seer who holds the trust of his lifelong friend, the king. What unfolds is a horrifically mesmerizing tale that is haunting and heart-breaking, and in the end even hopeful.

Throughout the novel the pace vibrates with tension, married to elegant yet simply drawn prose, spare on detailed description, allowing the reader to fall into the action. In fact, the only descriptions of significance are those of the seers' eyes, which brilliantly serves to heighten the importance and power of the characters.

If you are of a tender heart, as am I, it is a novel that will make you weep, and one you will return to time and again.

rameau says

Shall we begin with the warnings? If any of these (spoilerish) elements disturb or trouble you in any way, you should probably run back to reading *The Princess Diaries* or something equally scary: ***abortion, abuse, blood play, child abuse, cutting, death, dead babies, lying, murder, necromancy, paedophilia, physical abuse, psychological abuse, prostitution, rape, scars, slavery, zombies.***

Now that all of the sane, self-preserving, healthy people have moved on, that just leaves the creepy mentally disturbed people like me.

This book was a slow read for me. There was something about the story and the writing that told me right away that I need to take my time and pay attention to the words. Maybe it was because the narrator reminded me of Fitz Farseer in Robin Hobb's trilogies *The Farseer* and *The Tawny Man*. Like Fitz, Nola is telling the story of her life from some point in the future and she starts from her childhood, if you can call it that.

It turns out that being poor in Sarsenay City can mean growing up with a mother who'd rather be pregnant with another mouth she can't feed than endure her monthly bleeding. It can mean that a girl will be sold to a brothel for few coppers and not because mother needs to feed her other babies. It can mean simply growing older only because the brothel is where a girl can earn money.

And all that without the burden or gift of Otherseeing.

"A seer's place is apart - and if you forget this you'll be flogged. It's not your flesh that matters, after all, and I won't fear you as the others will."

Who could have guessed that these words spoken to an eight year old would turn out to be just as true as they were false? But of course she doesn't get to stay in that *innocent* place with Bardrem and Yigranzi for too long.

Nola leaves the brothel when her friends, and other seers, die and she believes her life to be in danger. There's a serial killer loose in the city and she isn't safe as long as any of her customers could be the faceless murderer. So, when a stranger from the castle offers to protect and teach her, she leaves thinking of fancy dresses and gems and luxurious life of the castle. She gets those things, in time, along with a last glance to a young, beautiful and innocent girl.

The horrors she has to witness and do are unimaginable. Or were right up until the moment I read this book.

I'm not as strong a character as Nola was, because I would have walked of a balcony long before that ceased to be an option for her. She's not a weakling, but she isn't strong enough either - she gets out of breath for just walking down the corridor on few occasions. She doesn't really care when she hurts people's feelings,

like telling her eager-to-please maid she isn't needed, but that's only understandable since hardly anyone cared about hurting Nola's feelings. She wasn't taught to think for herself and because her mind has been twisted by a morally corrupt man, she can't see a way out.

And just as there wasn't an escape for Nola, there was none for me. I couldn't stop reading even when I knew I was making those micro-expressions of disgust non-stop. I had to keep going even when I was tired or yearning for something fluffier - yes, I ran for fluffy fanfiction in the middle of this book - and I had to see how it all ended.

(view spoiler)

Caitlin Sweet doesn't disappoint. The ending she chose, although we could have a serious discussion about the method of delivery, was the only one possible for such a story.

I received an Advanced Readers Copy from the publisher through NetGalley.

Hallie says

Not giving this a rating, because I thought the writing was generally very good but the story just got too bleak for me to listen all the way through. I listened for over two-thirds, then went to the last few chapters. I had to give up at the point because there had just been too many chapters depicting Nola's utter powerlessness at the hands of the creepiest of villains (no names, as it's a bit of a spoiler, though by the time it comes out who he is, it's not a big surprise), and her powerlessness was so appallingly portrayed. Not only was she unable to escape him, but she was unable to tell anyone what was happening, and then he kept talking to her like the worst sort of sexual abuser, so lovingly, and she was sexually attracted to him, no matter how much she didn't want to be. I'm still not at all sure what I feel about the portrayal of this horrific emotional and physical abuse, especially as Nola was so young when it started, but that's a larger question than just about this book. I can't rate it, anyway.

One thing I do find quite irritating though, is the fact that even in a completely secondary world, the protagonist and all the people she knows are pretty clearly white, while an island country with whom they have a lot of trade (and more, later) are very definitely dark-skinned. And they're also depicted quite a bit as Other - exotic and beautiful often, but decidedly Other. Why *do* that in a secondary world?

Barbara says

Waaaay creepier than expected, it was actually quite hard to finish it.

DMS says

<http://dms.booklikes.com/post/520923/...>

Annleire says

“The Pattern Scars” è rimasto per un sacco di tempo nei libri da leggere, lo avevo richiesto ma poi come sempre mi era passato di mente perché presa da altre letture. Finalmente ci ho messo mano e devo dire che è stata una piacevole sorpresa.

Il libro si sviluppa come una sorta di diario e racconta le vicende di Nola da quando era una bambina. Nola è una Otherseer, una sorta di veggente, o comunque una ragazza che è capace di leggere il futuro o meglio il Pattern delle persone, con la cera, con l'inchiostro, con il sangue. La madre per sopravvivere la vende ad un bordello dove vive Yigranzi la sua mentore che le insegna i rudimenti dell'arte di vedere le strade che un individuo può percorrere entrando nell'Otherworld. Nel bordello vive anche un ragazzo Bardrem, cuoco e poeta, che diventa subito amico di Nola. Quando lei ha 14 anni un uomo viene a prenderla per insegnarle l'arte del Bloodseeing, lui è Master Teldaru il più grande seer che esiste in Sarsenay, il luogo dove si svolgono le vicende. Teldaru ha un grande piano, e Nola ne sarà complice perché costretta da una maledizione che le ha imposto lo stesso Teldaru e niente riuscirà a darle pace, anche quando tutto sarà finito.

La storia non è facile da riassumere, sia perché ci sono molti elementi, e quindi per la sua complessità, sia perché è estremamente toccante. Parla soprattutto di futuro, di destino, della non chiarezza delle visioni e soprattutto del fatto che il nostro Pattern non è definitivo ma sempre in evoluzione come un corso d'acqua che si snoda nel tempo e nello spazio dell'Otherworld in attesa delle nostre decisioni.

Nola è una protagonista a tutto tondo, un personaggio molto interessante. Non ha nulla della classica protagonista da YA e anzi è molto forte e anche se lo è non si comporta mai da damigella in distress. Rimane sempre consapevole di quello che fa, sempre fedele a se stessa anche se Teldaru esercita una forte influenza su di lei. La fa diventare Mistress, le insegna un'arte proibita e pericolosa, la sceglie come la sua favorita e la fa diventare la sua amante. E quando un uomo dal fascino di Teldaru molto più grande di lei, potente, e quando vuole dolce e appassionato è difficile resistergli. In realtà Nola resta immune dalla spinta sentimentale di Teldaru perché innamorata di Bardrem, ma alla fine vittima consenziente del grande Master. E alla fine testimone impotente di gran parte delle vicende.

Teldaru che è l'antagonista della vicenda conserva sempre un'aurea di insegnante e alla fine è solo un pazzo accecato dal potere e dalla voglia di governare. Deve essere il migliore. Afferra e potenzia un'arte che faceva bene ad essere proibita, gioca con la vita e con la morte, percorre le strade dell'Otherworld come se fossero reali e trova la fine che merita. Ma è un personaggio affascinante, complesso, descritto magnificamente e se ne ha una percezione così forte che sembra di avercelo davanti. La Sweet è stata estremamente brava, e forse è anche migliore di Nola.

Anche il caleidoscopio dei personaggi secondari è estremamente vario e interessante e vorrei citare Grasni, e le donne di Belakao Zemiya e Ispa Neluja (il corrispettivo di Seer) che in qualche modo sono le più importanti nella vicenda, hanno un ruolo chiave e soprattutto sono le più riuscite.

E non da ultimo Borl, il cane di Teldaru che ha un voltagiaccia incredibile e a cui spetta il compito più importante e che ho semplicemente adorato e Uja l'uccello di Neluja, che era andato con Teldaru e che si affeziona a Nola e la aiuta in diverse circostanze.

Indiscutibile è il ruolo svolto dal paranormal, non so di preciso in che definizione metterlo, ma è stato rinfrescante leggere di qualcosa di diverso che non fossero demoni, angeli, vampiri o simili. L'idea è originale e il libro fila veloce, dopo la prima metà in cui si parla dell'infanzia di Nola nel bordello. Da quando fa la sua comparsa il Master, il libro assume un nuovo ritmo, e non ci accorgiamo della gravità delle sue azioni finché non ne siamo catapultati nel mezzo. È un'incredibile corsa, in cui non facciamo che fare il tifo per Nola e alla fine sono rimasta di sasso, perché mi aspettavo qualcosa di diverso, ma riflettendoci questa è l'unico finale possibile e mi sono commossa leggendo le ultime righe.

Ve lo consiglio anche perché Caitlin Sweet è davvero una brava scrittrice, molto in gamba, questo è il suo terzo romanzo e sono curiosa di leggere anche gli altri. Davvero brava. Good Luck!

Io d'altra parte ringrazio Netgalley e ChiZine Publications per avermi concesso il piacere di leggere in anticipo questo libro in cambio della mia onesta opinione.

Nighteye says

"Predicting the future doesn't mean you can prevent it..." are the words on the backcover and these words are mirroring the book well!

I meet the author at Swecon and then read her book, we talked a bit about the book after I've been reading a bit into it. The book is about a young girl whose mother sells her to a brothel when she discovers that her daughter is a seer, a person who can foretell the pattern of the future for a person.

Then she lives there a time, dreaming to come to the chaste, and then a person comes that says that he will give her a chance to go to the chaste if she only follows him... and after that nothing is the same any more.

It's a good book, I really love it for several reasons and here are some of them: first of all it's difficult to say what will happen next (which I like), as soon as you think you'll know what will happen then something totally unpredictable happens and you are lost again...

It's a lot of twists in it, especially the sequel surprised me a lot and in the last half of the book there are twists after twists. Another thing I like is that it constantly happens things all the time, like in Trudi Canavans books, and I would like to read more books like that!

And in almost every chapter there are small clues of what Nola is doing right now, who I really liked and were searching after, sometimes it's only a sentence or two of words who says something about it but if you are looking closely you will find them...

Hannu says

This novel held the top of my Must Read-list for a very long time, and now that I've finally got a chance to read it, I was really pleasantly surprised: It was even better than I expected.

This is an exquisitely written novel of literary fantasy that will linger in the memory long after the last page. Although *The Pattern Scars* hardly belongs to the "grimdark" or "edgy" school of fantasy, it's still a very dark tale. But the novel's somber undertone stems more from its exploration of the darker side of human condition than any dreary, entropic setting. And this it does extremely effectively.

The Pattern Scars is very light on world-building, but that is as it should be: This is very much a character-driven novel.

The book's main protagonist and narrator, Nola, is born into poverty in the prosperous nation of Sarsenay, and sold to a brothel as a seer when her mother discovers she has the gift of Othersight, the ability to catch a glimpse of the future through Otherword - a kind of fantasy equivalent of quantum world. But this gift is a double-edged sword really. The universe here is very deterministic; you simply can't change the future no matter what.

In Sarsenay, brothels serve two purposes - the obvious one and the one where the customers come and pay

the seers to tell them their future. Nola spends her girlhood in the brothel dreaming of life in the castle among Sarsenay City's nobility where she would prophesy for the king and the court. This dream proves to be her undoing, as it leads her to trust the promises of a charismatic and handsome seer who turns out to be a narcissistic sociopath with very dangerous delusions of grandeur. Nola gets caught into his web of dark deeds and treachery and soon learns that there is a darker aspect of otherseeing that is strictly forbidden for a very good reason.

It is interesting to note that the novel gets even darker as the story progresses - it gains almost a horror aesthetic. At this point the entire story could have easily become a depressing, melodramatic mess, but Sweet handles her difficult subject matter extremely well.

Nola is never quite a passive victim in a helpless situation - she has her own plans and agendas - although it becomes clear she starts to eventually suffer from some form of Stockholm Syndrome. The seer - the book's main antagonist - is exquisitely realized. He is as unpleasant a character as you'd expect such a psychopath to be, but he's never one-dimensional. It is truly fascinating to follow his slow slide from Merely Psychotic all the way to the realm of Batshit Insane. In the end he becomes so consumed by his obsessions that he simply turns out to be more pitiful than just monstrous.

The account of their destructive chemistry makes really compelling reading, and on one level it could be read as a pretty insightful examination of dangerous and abusive relationships.

The Pattern Scars is not only monochromatic gloom, though. There is beauty, melancholy and quiet moments of joy to be experienced as well - vibrantly brought to life by Sweet's lyrical, assured prose. Caitlin Sweet's very personal prose style is pretty much the highlight of this novel. She's extremely sparing on fancy wordwork; instead she makes the world and the characters come alive through lucid, beautiful prose.

Yet some more interesting layers are added to the story, as it is almost entirely told in the form of Nola's memoir. This might subtly indicate Nola belonging to the category of unreliable narrator. Is the account really accurate or perhaps unintentionally falsified by a mind gone through really traumatizing events? Towards the end, the novel seems to gain also a slight mythical undertone as Nola will surely become one of the darker legends of Sarsenayan history.

But these are just my interpretations. Your mileage may vary.

The novel's ending - although not exactly happy - is logical and satisfying.

At this point it should be glaringly obvious I loved The Pattern Scars utterly. It flew straight into the top ten of my favorite fantasy novels of all time. It is simply one of the best I've read in a long, long time. I would highly recommend this novel to anyone, especially those with penchant for gorgeously written literary fantasies.

Caitlin Sweet is a real talent and deserves much wider recognition.

Sandra "J sanz" says

Nola is born into poverty in Sarsenay City. When Nola's mother realizes that Nola has the gift of Othersight and that she can foretell the future, she sells her to a brothel seer, who then teaches the girl to harness her gift. As Nola grows up, she embraces her new life, and even finds herself a small circle of friends. All too soon, Nola's world is again turned upside down when one of that small circle of friends is murdered. When a handsome, young Otherseer from the castle promises to teach her, she eagerly embraces the prospects of luxury beyond what she can imagine and the safety from a killer who stalks girls by night. Little does Nola know that he will soon draw her deep into a web of murder, treachery, and obsessive desire that will threaten

the people and the land she holds dear. Nola will soon learn the harshest of lessons: that being able to predict the future has nothing to do with being able to prevent it happening.

Hmmm how to describe this book?.....like nothing else I have ever read is totally honest. It was quite complicated in some places and in others at the beginning a touch slow but wow once it got going it all happened. Then you realised you needed the slow paced part of the book to have set the scene and given you the background on the history of Sarsenay and of course the history of Otherseeing. The book is quite dark, and the blood seeing is mysterious and dark in itself as well as what Nola and Taldaru are doing with it. Its difficult to know what to say without giving away spoilers but at the end Nola makes the ultimate sacrifice to try to put all the darkness and wrong doing right. I loved the perseverance of Baldrem, how he is beaten but still tries to help and protect Nola even though he ends up paying the ultimate price. You find yourself saying if only things had been slightly different for Nola and Bardem, they could have been so happy and things so different. Nola is not totally innocent but does come across as quite naive and then she seems to be in so deep she cannot escape no matter how she tries and she does try. Nola also tries to warn people but because of the curse laid upon her she is unable to do so.

Like I said the book could at times be confusing but all the paths and ends came together in the end and made sense. So I did enjoy the book overall. It is aimed at adults, though I think some younger adults may also read it too. I would also add it is a thought provoking book too, you ask yourself what you would do if you had Nola's gift. I also liked the character of Grasni who turned out to be a true and honest friend to Nola when she most needed one at the end of the book.

Lani says

I can't say anything that will do this book justice. I found the free excerpt on here months ago, a few weeks ago I started reading it on a whim. I've read a few other excerpts and they never held me the way The Pattern Scar did--I was instantly enthralled in the magic of the Otherseers. I was in love with Nola and Bardrem and I wanted to see how their story unfolded. So I ordered the book, and I read it pretty quickly considering that I'm a slow reader and it's been awhile since I've read a novel, especially one as complex as this one.

The amount of worldbuilding that Sweet packs into the 377 pages is astounding. It's more material, more engaging and magical than what most authors create over a series of books. That being said, the story is never weighed down by details about the setting; It focuses on character and story.

The story that winds, but never wanders. The pace is fast but not frantic, feverish only when the events of the story call for it... The foreshadowing develops a perfect balance of leading you along, it made me anxious about what came next, how things would unfold, and left me with a sinking suspicion in your stomach. Then when the events did happen, when they're realized, they're even more nightmarish than I could have ever imagined.

The ending was so gut wrenching that I stopped and started every other sentence because I knew what was coming and I couldn't quite handle it. The end of the book was coming up a little to fast, I had to hold on just a little longer. I didn't want to leave Nola. She'd become a part of me, more than a character. Sweet's rendering made her come to life, leap off the page. Made her more alive than any Bloodseeing ever attempt. Nola is the heart and soul of the book. That is the true magic of The Pattern scars.

The Pattern Scars made such an impression on me that I am certain that my Path has changed, for the better, having read it.

PopcornReads says

When Nola's mother cuts herself badly with a knife while fixing dinner, and blood cascades over the cutting board, 10-year-old Nola is swept up into a vision that changes her life. She has no choice but to tell her mother what she's seen, even though she knows her ability to Oversee means the end of her life with her family. Her mom promptly sells her to a Sarsenay lowtown brothel to apprentice with Ygranzi, the Overseer there and learn to train her powers. Read the rest of my review at <http://popcornreads.com/?p=1714>

Juushika says

Nola, with the ability to view the future, is adopted by a powerful and ambitious mentor. *The Pattern Scars* could only exist in the specific. The convincing magic system and themes of complicity, coerced consent, and abuse function in perfect harmony; rather than contrived, Nola's inescapable situation has an inevitable, claustrophobic logic. It's one of the most pointed and effective speculative works I've ever read, sympathetic, discomfiting, and intentional. *The Pattern Scars* is unlovely to read and lovingly written; Sweet has an assured voice, the justified first person narrative is a rare delight, and her characterization is fantastic. If I have one complaint, it's that the plot's resolution is swift and largely external to the protagonist. But on the whole: phenomenal.

Caroline says

I really love this book, for a variety of reasons. I think it does what spec-fic needs to do, and it does it well, in that it takes something fantastic, like the power of foresight, and portrays it in a new and different way that really makes you think about the human psyche. Of course, it's also a really great book; there's a good balance of action, contemplation, romance, and conflict in here, and Caitlin Sweet's characters are all very well developed in a way that makes them not only three dimensional, but realistic. It's a fun story, and its straightforward without being overly simple--and you don't have to wade through the wordiness and extraneous plot that so many other fantasy novels fall victim to. I absolutely recommend, both to fans of the genre, and those who are just looking for an interesting read.
