



The Shadow Society

Marie Rutkoski

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Darcy Jones doesn't remember anything before the day she was abandoned as a child outside a Chicago firehouse. She has never really belonged anywhere—but she couldn't have guessed that she comes from an alternate world where the Great Chicago Fire didn't happen and deadly creatures called Shades terrorize the human population.

Memories begin to haunt Darcy when a new boy arrives at her high school, and he makes her feel both desire and desired in a way she hadn't thought possible. But Conn's interest in her is confusing. It doesn't line up with the way he first looked at her.

As if she were his enemy.

When Conn betrays Darcy, she realizes that she can't rely on anything—not herself, not the laws of nature, and certainly not him. Darcy decides to infiltrate the Shadow Society and uncover the Shades' latest terrorist plot. What she finds out will change her world forever . . .

In this smart, compulsively readable novel, master storyteller Marie Rutkoski has crafted an utterly original world, characters you won't soon forget, and a tale full of intrigue and suspense.

The Shadow Society Details

Date : Published October 16th 2012 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux

ISBN : 9780374349059

Author : Marie Rutkoski

Format : Hardcover 416 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fantasy, Paranormal, Romance, Science Fiction

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From Reader Review The Shadow Society for online ebook

Gabi Graceffo says

“Truth was like an exploding star: violent, glitteringly beautiful. Now that I had seen it, felt it, it was impossible to settle for anything less.”

3.75 STARS

Well, now I'm starting to wonder if my fear of fire just might be a sign of my Shady-ness (get it? ah-ha-ha-ha...ha...okay I'll stop with the shitty puns now, apologies) but since I'm about as olive-skinned as they come, I think I'm in the clear. But I'm sure you couldn't care less about my complexion and care at least a little about this book, so let's get to it.

The Shadow Society was a highly enjoyable read with easily relatable characters, an interesting story arc, and an original twist on the parallel dimension trope. The story centers on Darcy Jones, an orphan teen struggling to find her place in the world, though it turns out she really doesn't belong in it. Darcy is a Shade, a person who looks like a human but has had mutations in their ancestry leading to an ability that allows them to essentially dematerialize, every molecule fused together suddenly ripped apart, leaving only a ghost behind to observe and move through the world. There are two dimensions (maybe more?) that the novel focuses on: the one Darcy is really from and the Alter (our world). Rival organizations in Darcy's home world come to claim jurisdiction over her life, the IBI government agency and the Shadow Society of rebel Shades. The story revolves on Darcy's quest to return home, her attempt to understand her heritage, and undermining a terrorist plot that would destroy the city.

All in all, this was a good book, like I said. The only reason it's not getting a higher rating from me is because it simply wasn't to the standards of the other 4 and 5 star books that I've read this year. If I had read it last year, it might have gotten a 4 star rating or even better, but I've unfortunately been biased with some amazing reads.

Now, please don't get me wrong; this was a really enjoyable book, and I'm unfortunately making it out to be not so great, which is completely the wrong impression you should be getting from it. Darcy was a highly interesting, developed character that I latched onto because of her sarcasm, art background, and empathetic emotions. Conn was similar, though I couldn't quite understand his relatively rapid shift between loyal IBI agent to rebellious lover, though I might have just read it too quickly and not taken the time to process everything in my head.

I do wish we had gotten a little more information on Darcy's friends, simply because I felt at home in that group just like she did and it reminded me of my own close friends. Though the two main characters were well developed, I thought that many of the others were a bit rushed and not fully formed. However, because they are secondary characters, they don't *need* to have the depth of a Renaissance painting, I just would have preferred a little more novel time with them.

The plot was fast paced at times, deliciously slow at others, and continually moving toward an end destination. All tangents and random plot deviations were either amended or tied neatly into the larger storyboard. That's something that's pretty rare to see, especially in YA novels where there are lots of random plot holes that are never resolved and leave me going like this:

But bravo to Rutkoski for not leaving anything to chance and tying everything perfectly in a little inter-dimensional bow!

There was really nothing bad about this book; yes there were slow moments that I found myself drifting from the page a little, especially when Darcy was in the transition between the IBI and the Shadow Society, but those feelings were resolved quickly and beautifully. The writing of this novel was nicely developed and I'm sure that in Rutkoski's other series it will be even more elevated and interesting to read.

Overall it was a nice break from the series that I've been reading, and certainly not as heavy with serious themes, though this dealt with some dark moments. Looking forward to reading *The Winner's Curse* trilogy soon!

Share your thoughts!

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

Read This Review & More Like It On My Blog!

So many good ideas and golden opportunities were wasted or ignored over the course this supernatural story set in Chicago. I had high hopes for this - I own the first two books in the author's Kronos Chronicles series and have been meaning to get to them for months - but *The Shadow Society* never lived up to its blurb and my expectations. Promising originality, suspense and intrigue, the book I read delivered nothing of the sort. Instead I got the same old cliched approaches and ideas so generic in the young-adult genre: the oh so attractive though antagonistic love interest, the sketchy and unfulfilled world-building glossed over in favor to focus on a romance with the lonely girl who feels out of place, etc. It's certainly very a readable novel - I will give it that, this is a book that is hard to put down - but that doesn't necessarily translate into it being a *good* book.

Despite starting out with a bang in a well-done and intriguing prologue, the novel falters soon out of the gate and never really regains the initial excitement. Formulaic, and occasionally predictable the author fails to make the most of good ideas and themes touched upon too rarely in *The Shadow Society*. The concept of the novel is strong and noteworthy, but the execution of various plotlines AND of the cast of characters is rough, clumsy, and often unengaging. Or just disappointing - the climax particularly stands out as massively anticlimactic and not worth sloughing through 400+ pages to reach. *The Shadow Society* moves along at a decent clip, so it's never boring, though it is a bit short in the action department for the majority of the narrative.

Darcy is mostly drawn well, but also caused problems with my involvement with the novel. Subject to some of my least favorite tropes of the genre (the love triangle, the fact that 3 boys love her oh so much, her inability to make smart decisions), they end up detracting from her better traits. I liked that despite the views from both sides of the human/Shade conflict, nothing was as black and white as it appeared. There is some depth to the conflict Rutkoski creates for the novel, but it feels entirely shortchanged by how easily the author chose to conclude everything. It's too neat, too simple of an ending for the scenario that has been use up over the course of the book. The secondary characters mostly shine - especially the spunky Lily and the earnest and hilarious Jims - but they're not given enough screen time to make up for the lack of tension, atmosphere or world-building.

So much unnecessary filler, so many failed opportunities, so much left superficial, a cop-out of an ending, and a cloying romance made for a less than enthusiastic read. I finished the novel, but more out of a feeling of duty than of want. If this were a series rather than a standalone, it would not be one that I chose to pursue past this first novel. Too generic and undeveloped for my taste, I will read Rutkoski's first series and try to forget about this one.

Rebekah says

Sooooo good! Full REVIEW HERE! Check it out! <http://awesomebooknuts.blogspot.com/2...>

Miriam says

A very low 4-star -- better than the several I've recently given threes to but not as good as many I've four-starred, including the author's earlier *The Cabinet of Wonders*.

I liked the initial concept and I liked Darcy and her friends even though they seemed a little too good to be true (okay, she is an orphan with a sad past, but her foster mother is nice and she has great friends and does well at school and is very talented at art).

And I thought the ending was pretty strong.

The middle, on the other hand, was pretty much a slog. Too much angsting over boys. Too much watching Darcy fail to master her Shade powers. Too much pouting Orion, who seems to disappear from the story and be ultimately pointless, but maybe Rutkoski had something in mind for a sequel? I would have liked way less of this and more time with (view spoiler).

Hmm. I may have talked myself down to 3 stars again. I was bored for ~50% of the book.

Savannah (Books With Bite) says

can't begin to tell you how much I love this book. I wish more books like this were published more often, Finally a new idea, something that is not overdone and not copied!!! THANK GOD!

What I loved most about this book, if you have not guessed it by now, is the plot. This is a plot that is well done and beautifully written. It's heart-pounding, exciting, and just pure fun all together. In the story, Darcy is not who she thinks she is. She is something more and once that secret is out, Darcy is caught in the middle between the good guys and the bad guys. Or so we think...

I admire how wonderful it was to keep both the reader and the main character out of the loop. This is the most exciting part. Going along with the character, taking out the pieces, and deciding for ourselves how we should we feel.

The characters themselves are so redeemable it's amazing. I love a character who has been or was being steered the wrong way and BOOM! Changed for love. A love that is forbidden but so darn right. I LOVE it

so much. And to see others start to see things clearly for the first time, it feels amazing, awestruck. The beauty of them going against everything they know, it's just so freaking cool!

The Shadow Society is an dynamic story! Well told with a wonderful world building, you can't help but be sucked in the beauty of it. The engrossing details of action and love, it fiercely shoots adrenaline to the reader. The Shadow Society is awesome!

Blythe says

Want to win an ARC of The Shadow Society? Enter the giveaway on my blog and good luck!

Actual Rating: 3.5 stars

You know those books that you like, sometimes even *really* like, though you have no clue why? Those books that, for some reason, you can come up with quite a lot of reasons why you *shouldn't* like it, but when you are to come up with reasons why you *do* like it, you're pretty much at a loss for words? *The Shadow Society* is, for me, one of those books. I don't know why I like it. I sure could come up with a lot of reasons why I shouldn't like it, but I do like it. I really do.

Ever since she was five years old, Darcy Jones never felt like she fit in anywhere. As an orphan, she jumped from household to household after each new foster parent realized they didn't want her, shortly after adopting her. Darcy, now happily living with a new foster parent for a year, has finally found a great and loyal group of friends at her school. Her life is finally the way she wants it to be. That is, however, until Conn McCrea comes into her life. Eventually, Conn drags Darcy into a world she never knew existed - an alternate dimension of Chicago - and introduces her to a world full of non-human creatures, Shades. Creatures which are hellbent on wreaking havoc on humans. And Darcy is one of them.

Throughout the entire first quarter of *The Shadow Society*, all that went through my mind is, "This book is just one big paradox, isn't it?" I saw it as a paradox in that it has one of the most original and creative concepts I've ever read in young adult paranormal romances, but that, at the same time, it was as unoriginal as most of the books in the genre. It was unoriginal in that it seemingly went out of its way to use every cliché and trope imaginable in young adult paranormal romances. The instant connection the two love interests have (though not *really* insta-love), how they both meet at school, how the two love interests are partnered up for an art project, how the main character doesn't feel she belongs, etc. All that, and more, made the first quarter of *The Shadow Society* almost a chore to read, and I had myself doubting that I'd be able to make it through the rest of the novel.

But then that all changed abruptly. Seemingly from one percentage to the next, *The Shadow Society* became thoroughly interesting and unputdownable, as Darcy is introduced to the world of Shades and the alternate Chicago. Alternate universes fascinate me, and while this book hadn't gone that in depth into the detail of the alternate Chicago, I still found myself entranced by the world and, for once, original plotting.

Though, as entrancing and interesting I may have found the world in *The Shadow Society* to be, the world building we're provided with is not that great. *The Shadow Society* is one of those books where you have to just leave your logic at the front door and enjoy the ride along the way, and if you do that, I can almost assure that you will have fun with this. The story is intriguing enough to have you flipping pages nonstop, and the characters and their relationships are well developed and, like the rest of the novel, fun to read. Darcy is a strong character, and, while she does at times get sappy around Conn, saying their 'I love you's'

(which, normally, would annoy me very much), I didn't mind it all too much in here, and I think it's because I actually liked Darcy and Conn's relationship, and I actually liked Conn himself.

And in the end, while the big conclusion was a bit anticlimactic, I found myself sighing contentedly at the end of *The Shadow Society*. It certainly isn't a perfect book, but it sure is a fun one, and, for once, I wish there were more to come and this weren't a standalone. One of the few books whose world and characters I'd like to read more of is a standalone. Ha. Go figure.

Giselle says

The Shadow Society begins on a very clichéd note: hot new guy who our protagonist is immediately attracted to, who invades all her thoughts, and seems to be enchanted by her--the plain Jane. Let's just say I did not have high hopes after this. But fortunately, and as a big relief, things turn around quite drastically once we get over this beginning slump. This is when we find ourselves into a very intriguing and unique premise involving alternate dimensions.

Alternate dimensions are not something I have often come upon in YA, I love the concept, it's brimming with endless possibilities. This is what I enjoyed the most in this novel. The concept is well done, there are some holes--mostly grey areas--but I found it quite fascinating overall. The explanation that caused the dimensional divide is both scary and thought provoking, and the differences between the two are as vast as I like to imagine they would be--butterfly effect and all. Furthermore, Marie created this new world with a lot of details and cinematic descriptions that had me easily portraying this alternate Chicago. It's beautiful and dangerous. The notion of shades is so very neat as well--how they live, what they can do, how they're considered evil and a thing to fear. Being able to disappear... who hasn't thought of that at least once? After gaining this knowledge about this world so unlike our own, we get an explanation for the stale beginning which gets us to understand Conn's initial attitude towards Darcy, changing my opinion of it all for the better.

The story follows Darcy quite closely, there are some secondary characters, but other than the two love interests that forms our cliché triangle (we couldn't get away from them all), there aren't a whole lot of secondary character interaction--which is a shame because the ones we do meet briefly are a memorable bunch. At least, Darcy leads the show very well. I liked her personality. She's flawed, and she makes mistakes, but she's not oblivious to them. Her relationship with Conn is actually built, not born from passion and lust. This is partly due to Conn himself. I was never too sure where he stood. His character is intricate; he wants to be loyal and true, but to whom? Him being any kind of relationship with a shade is a definite unusual and strongly frowned upon idea, seeing as they're the enemy race. Although there wasn't a strong "forbidden love" tone I usually like from these romances, I thought their relationship growth was realistic, and perfectly combined with an obvious connection.

After the not so exciting beginning, I'm happy to have found the book well paced. There is a ton going on once they arrive in the alternate world, from spying, to learning newly discovered ghosting abilities, to researching forgotten past; I was kept thoroughly entertained. The anti-climatic ending was a tad disappointing, though. The resolve was too easy for my taste, with some conveniences that were a little... implausible.

It's not a perfect novel, but not one I would pass up either. I think my biggest problem lies in both extremities: the beginning and ending, which is where I often find is the most important to compel the reader. However, the originality of it alone is well worth it.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#)

Suzanne says

I began the Shadow Society with some hesitation having seen bloggers, whose opinions I've really grown to appreciate, hadn't been very happy with it. I was aware of the cliched "new guy at school that girl can't stop obsessing over", but I felt that was something that wouldn't bother me, I'd be fine with that. Maybe low expectations paid off again, but this book was really for me. I was completely engrossed in it.

Darcy was abandoned outside a fire station when she was just five years old and has no recollections of her life before then. She has went from foster home to foster home her whole life, and is only now, settled enough with her foster mother to still going to the same school for the second year in a row.

She notices Conn on the first morning back to school, hard not to when there's a complete stranger staring at you like they hate you. Over the next few days, he starts trying to get to know her, and volunteers to be her partner for a science project. But his actions contradict the look in his eyes and he cringes at her touch. But as he seems to be warming up to her more, she realises that she's starting to like him too. And she kisses him. Suddenly, he's slapped handcuffs on her and all hell breaks loose. Darcy's life is torn apart again as she discovers that she's not human, she's a shade, and she's from an alter world.

Darcy has always had a difficult life in the foster care system and there's always seemed to be something a little off about her. But things get so much worse for her when she's arrested by Conn, who's a member of the IIB and taken to the alter world where everyone hates her and looks at her with disgust, and they just want to lock her up for the rest of her life.

Darcy is a strong willed character. It's tough and must be really scary, she has no one. Yet, she fights back against both systems that seem to just want to take her freedom away, the humans of the IIB and her own kind, the shades of the Shadow Society. She doesn't care about their war, she doesn't want to be on either side, she just wants to do what's right.

And while Conn does appear to be the bad guy, I liked him from the start. He's young, but tough, and excellent at his job. He listens to his gut and goes with what he believes in.

Darcy's friends are wonderful. Jims, Lily and Raphael, they're not present for most of the book but enough for me to get to like them and see how good they are. And while it was a tad on the unbelievable side, I still enjoyed the part they play in the ending of this book and the impact they have.

Overall, I was mostly happy with the world building, I would have liked some more information on exactly how the alter world was created. The split in worlds was caused by the Great Chicago Fire, but how, and why? And the people who live in the alter, how do they come to be there, are they people from the original world? The people in the alter world are aware of the original world, but not vice versa. This lack of knowledge didn't impact on my enjoyment of the story but it did leave me extremely curious.

The Shadow Society is a stand alone book, something I haven't read for quite a while. I'm happy about that in one way, no long wait for a sequel, but still slightly sad, as it would have been nice to have some more time with Conn and Darcy.

Maureen says

I really enjoyed this book! It definitely wasn't perfect and dragged at some points, but overall I really really liked it. Conn & Darcy are really great characters and I loved seeing all the characters grow & change in this book. Also such an interesting concept for a book! SO GUHD.

K. says

Three words sum up my overall experience with *The Shadow Society*: I don't know. I didn't know what I was reading and I still am not quite sure. I *do* know that I didn't like it very much. The plot was uninteresting, the world building was lacking, and the characters were mediocre.

It's about Darcy, a foster child of many, always being returned to the system, always needing a place to belong. Finally she's found a place where she has a home, a school, and friends. The mystery to her is her past -- she is missing the first five years of her life. Intriguing, non? Well, not really. As a character, Darcy was kind of undetermined for me. She had no solid personality with which I could identify her. I didn't know if she was the sweet, vulnerable, sensitive type. Or the badass, take-no-crap kind of girl. I don't take kindly to books that pigeonhole a protagonist with two-dimensionality, but you have to add *some* colour to the central lead and I felt like Darcy not only was a dull grey-ish, beige-ish, pale-ish colour in the most energizing of scenes but actually lacked colour all together for the rest.

I report, sadly, the same of the love interest. Conn, the boy with the "past", the "secret", who everyone refers to as "ruthless". I think the airquotes say enough. I just didn't get the intensity of him. His dramatic contribution came and went without even a hello. The secondary characters were flavoured just a bit more -- as it often happens -- but only because they were too joke-y, too snobbish, or too bossy. You had no choice but hang a name tag identifying them as The Best Friend, The Jokester, The Pining Boy, and The Bitch.

The plot. I think this book achieved the shortest, laziest, most anti-climatic climax ever in the history of all young adult fiction K. has read. It was gone before I even realized it'd arrived. It is a countdown to midnight: two opposite ends of the city, there will be an attack, two sides will be coming to a head, and a massacre about to be carried out. It must be stopped. And it was, if I remember correctly, all within fifteen minutes. If even. And when you discover the key with which they solved this problem...ay!

But besides that, the entire book was simply implausible. The characters' reactions to situations, revelations, and each other were just unrealistic -- at the very least, I can't imagine myself or anyone I know reacting as such. There is an alternate world here, people. Darcy (who learns something shocking about herself) gets stuck in this world. Her oh so loyal human friends (who have no qualms whatsoever when they learn this "something shocking" about Darcy) find the portal to this other dimension, and somehow get away with just being there -- no guide, no knowledge at all of this place except what they observe on the streets. They rent ~~trespass~~ into an abandoned house, somehow able to buy groceries/clothes/other necessities (and even go clubbing!). Huh?

The world building. Well, I did say I don't know what I'd read, right? Then you'll understand why I can't explain to you in any great detail about this one. I know that there are two worlds. They are parallel, split in half by a single event -- the Great Chicago Fire. In both worlds, there is the existence of another...population. In our world, this "population" has been eliminated. But in the other world, they have not and because of

this, there is a great divide between this other world's inhabitants. That was all I gathered, and all I can safely relay with any confidence. It was muddy. And when it wasn't, it was not convincing.

This was a weak story. My heart is not at all in this review. I cared so little that I don't even have the energy to dislike it properly -- with indignation and supreme pomposity. I'd never tell you not to read a book because each to his or her own and I can certainly see how many might find this a really good read. The problem, truly, for me (which is a shame as I was really excited and hopeful) was that it just didn't have anything new to distinguish it from the masses of young adult books in the market.

But, nice cover.

2

This review also appears on The Midnight Garden. An advance copy was provided by the publisher.

?drea? wears the cheese says

Actual rating 3.75

Steph Sinclair says

These days every time I go to pick up another Paranormal Romance I know I'll end up with some form of vampire, werewolf, zombie or ghost. And while there is nothing wrong any of those types of characters, it tends to get a little "tell me something I don't know, would ya?" I wanted something different, creative and imaginative. So when I first discovered *The Shadow Society*, I was really excited to read a novel that featured an entirely new Paranormal creature: Shades, children of the shadows (badass tagline, right?).

Now even though in my bio it says I love reading Paranormal Romances, I am so picky with that genre because it has the biggest habit of falling into tropes that either annoy me or disturb me. At first I thought that would be *The Shadow Society's* fate as well. When our main character, Darcy, an orphan with a mysterious past, meets the new boy at school, Conn, they lock eyes and she finds herself thinking about him from that point forward. Do you see where this could have gone? Straight to my Did Not Finish list, that's where. But then I noticed something. Darcy and Conn started spending good, ol' fashion time together, getting to know each other without claiming their undying love. And just when I thought this would be a simple cutesy novel, betrayals, revelations, and mysteries ensue and I found myself wrapped up in the plot.

If there is one thing that I have to commend Rutkoski on, it's how the novel is crafted around one real life story involving a knife and a fish tank. When Darcy discovers that she is really a Shade from an alternate dimension and that her kind are terrorists, she is heartbroken. All her life she has wanted to know about her past she couldn't seem to remember, but the longer she spends in the alternate division the more she discovers that it's filled with more than just shadows. I could easily sympathize with Darcy and loved how the book was told through her point-of-view. She doesn't always make the best decisions in the novel, but unlike other heroines, I have to give her credit for trying to fix her mistakes.

The highlight of the novel is easily the secondary characters. They were hilarious with vibrant personalities, especially Jims. I LOVED him so hard. I only wish I could have seen a lot more of him and Darcy's friends.

Conn, the love interest, was a confusing character for majority of the novel. It's understandable given his role in the plot (which I won't spoil for you even if you beg!), but it made it harder to connect with him. However, I did enjoy the romance and readers can rest assured that insta-love is absent from *The Shadow Society*. And while it is an important factor in the story, it never drove the plot, which I liked.

Of course, this isn't a perfect novel. There were a few times where the story did slow down significantly and while I wasn't bored, it could be an issue for other readers. I also found the third boy's romantic interests in Darcy a bit unnecessary. She already had two admirers, one who reminded me of Blake from *Onyx* (if you've read *Onyx*, you'll know that isn't a compliment to that character), and Conn, the good guy. And no, there wasn't a love triangle. Then there was the issue of the friends somehow finding the alternate dimension and making a life there in such a short amount of time. But when Jims referred to himself as "Daddy," I quickly let that little issue slide. LOL. And finally, I felt that the ending's resolution ended a little too swiftly for my liking after so much build-up.

If someone were to ask me if I'd recommend *The Shadow Society*, I think I would tell them to sample the first few chapters first. *The Shadow Society* gives me the same feelings *Throne of Glass* did in that it's very readable with an interesting premise. It won't change your life, but being a standalone read, it works well for one of those rainy days where you want to read something a little lighter with a satisfying ending.

ARC was provided by Macmillan. Thank you!

Want to enter for a chance to win the ARC? Visit [Cuddlebuggery Book Blog](#).

Sophia says

3.5

this book started out as a 2 and then worked its way up to a 3.5.

at first, i was unbelievably disappointed by how much i wasn't feeling this book because it's MARIE RUTKOSKI and she's a WRITING QUEEN (see: the winner's curse).

but the book definitely gets better as you go along.

loved the chemistry between darcy and conn (not at first, but as everything else in this book, it improved as time passed).

the writing is sadly a huge step down from the writing in the winner's curse. i suppose marie rutkoski's writing skills have improved incredibly over the years? the writing in the shadow society is very meh; the writing in the winner's trilogy makes me weep at its beauty.

the concept was v interesting, darcy's group of friends is FANTASTIC, and all in all, the shadow society is a solid read.

Anna says

The romance in this book got me. Maybe I was feeling extra sensitive and emotional whilst reading it, but I just found it plain adorable and actual tears did fall from my eyes at the cuteness. How embarrassing.

I loved Darcy and Conn, the two main characters. They had individual personalities, which were distinct and interesting. Darcy is genuinely funny and endearing, references Sherlock Holmes, loves T.S Eliot and is not constantly swooning and lusting. Seriously, all the YA I have been reading recently has the female characters

'crumbling' and 'stumbling'- usually into men's arms. Darcy is much more cautious and, to me, normal. Take Exhibit A: the motorcycle ride. What would most girls in YA do? Grip tightly round his waist and listen to his heartbeat? Smell his hair? This is much more Darcy,

'I didn't press my cheek against his leathered back. I held my breath and wished the ride would last.'

I just found her much more relateable and un-crazy than most of the girls I have been reading about lately. She isn't madly in love with Conn, she is just a girl with a crush. I liked that. Conn is also a really well developed characters, and I liked the way he wasn't particularly cheesy. He is actually quite awkward and blunt and socially inept, with a side dish of coldness and stand offishness. He does change, but I found the early attraction and flirting between them to be very genuine and real. He calls her ethereal and he is the first guy to ever notice her in that way, and she is innocent, and excited and flattered. She is uncomfortable and awkward and fluttery and excited all at once in his presence. I think it reminded me of my own experiences, and that feeling when you get noticed for the first time, and notice someone else for the first time. I think the author portrayed it very well, and it made me get very invested in the characters from an early stage, and rooting for the romance right from the beginning.

Despite my love of the main characters, I was also extremely pleased to see a nice plethora of supporting characters in the form of Darcy's group of friends. This romance does not exist in a vacuum suspiciously devoid of prying parents and friends which is another YA pitfall that irritates me. Where are your parents when your sneaking off to meet that vampire? Where are your friends when your spending all your time with him? Darcy has an awesome circle of friends, who are fiercely loyal and kinda quirky. The dialogue between them is fast-paced and witty and genuinely funny! They are quite off-beat and cultural, and they often remind Darcy not to get too carried away with Conn,

'I'm begging you Darcy, don't become a cliché'

'Which one?'

'The one who abandons her friends for some guy'

Thank you Marie Lutkoski for acknowledging that cliché and avoiding it.

I liked the way this story was told. It is told as though Darcy is looking back on it, and therefore premeditates events and gives us snippets of information before something has actually happened such as, 'If I had known what was round the corner, maybe I wouldn't have gone into that room' (not actual quote as I am too lazy to find one). It helped to add tension, and really made you wonder how things were going to play out, and how it would ever get to that point. You feel as if you aren't sure of Darcy in the beginning, and who she is and what she is done, which makes you NEED to find out.

On the other side of the romance, the nasty untrusting side, I also loved Darcy's reaction when she feels that Conn may be a danger to her. She just runs. None of this fretting and questioning and refusing to acknowledge that some boy you've known for a few weeks could POSSIBLY be a psycho rapist killer zombie. She just runs. Desire turns to fear instantly. Again, that is the exact reaction I would have: no matter how much I liked someone or thought I knew them, I would never trust them enough in that amount of time to not trust my instincts if I felt they were any sort of threat. I would get the hell out and not even think. Good girl Darcy...is what I was thinking.

The world building is interesting. There is another dimension to Chicago which we know nothing about, caused by a split in time during the Great Chicago fire. In the other dimension, things are slightly different such as art and literature (a lost Jane Austen manuscript was uncovered called 'Reservation'. DO WANT.) The most important difference is that Shades still exist in the other dimension, which are creatures who can

turn invisible at will. Humans are terrified of them and consider them evil. I enjoyed the alternate world and Darcy's experiences in it; I enjoyed the Shades and the implications of their powers especially.

This book wasn't all happy times and kissing though. It wasn't without it's flaws. Firstly, STOP WITH THE UNNECESSARY LOVE TRIANGLES YA AUTHORS! JUST STOP IT! And they're multiplying too; now it seems that every book I read ('The Selection', 'Crewel' I am talking to you) feature these girls who 3+ men cannot resist. Men just fall at their feet for no apparent reason. If they're in trouble who happens to be there? An attractive man. Where are all the old, ugly, fat men falling in love with the pretty girls? Nowhere, because pretty girls can only ever be saved and/or captured by attractive, mysterious men. FACT. However, although it annoyed me, I did like how Darcy was never really confused or did the whole 'Oh I don't know who I like, I am just so damn irresistible what is wrong with me oh damn my gorgeous face and charming personality'. She always knows who she wants really. I mean, all sorts of weird and wonderfuls are attracted to her, for no apparent reason, but she knows what she wants. At least that helped matters.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this novel. I found it genuinely sweet, well-written and exciting. Saying that, I am glad it's a stand alone as it was concluded brilliantly and perfectly and tied up nicely. Niice.

alyssa says

This book was okay.
