



Shadow Embraced

Cheree Smith

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No escape.

Those words haunt Scar's dreams. She thinks the creature that terrorises her while asleep isn't real, but when she's abducted and taken to a reform school meant to contain creatures too dangerous to function in society, she starts to wonder whether she isn't some monster.

She turns to an underground fight club full of vampires, werewolves and witches established by the students to control her urges, and who is she kidding, she loves to fight.

When fighters begin to disappear, turning Scar into the prime suspect, she must race to prove her innocence before her true nature is exposed.

The only problem is that she's not entirely sure she's innocent.

Shadow Embraced Details

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Author : Cheree Smith

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From Reader Review Shadow Embraced for online ebook

Katherine Paschal says

Teenager Scar(short for Scarlet) is having difficulties. After attacking her best friend and drinking her blood, she learns she is a dhamphir, an abomination from a human vampire pairing. She is whisked away to a school for teen supernaturals, where no one can know what she really is. While at school she joins an underground fight league. One by one the members go missing and all the signs point to her.

This book fell very flat for me. It sounded interesting when I first picked it up, but I quickly lost interest. The writing was so choppy, I felt overwhelmed by all the action. There was hardly any character development, mainly just the main character running into some other sort of predicament. There was just way too much going on in a fairly short novel. This book could have easily been 100 pages longer to help cover all the topics that were thrown at me. It was a little like a hodge-podge where every topic was hit on but not at all developed.

The main character had no real personality. She just did things, but the reader never really got to know why she did things. I also had a big problem with her name being Scar. Who wants to go by an ugly healed wound? Scarlet is much better, but what would I know, maybe it was not bad-assed enough for her. All the side characters lacked personality also. Everything was incredibly one-dimensional. Also, it had some very unrealistic parts for me. One minute she hates her roommate, and the next they are best friends, but it was not gradual and there was no reason for the change of heart given, just surprise instant bond. That is not how teen girls are. Also, some of the fight club things I did not buy because they were not explained well and not believable. And yes I know this is supernatural fiction, but if I shake my head in confusion I am not sold by the description.

There was just way too much going on in this book without any character development or description. My biggest problem is that the book and the main idea had so much potential that was completely wasted. I will not read anymore if this become a series (which it opened it up for), I have had enough.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

Kj says

****I was provided a free copy via Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.**

Scar knows she is different but she doesn't realize the full extent until she wakes up at Haven. It's a school for Vampires, Witches, and Werewolves. She finds out she is a dampire which is half vampire, half human. While in the special school she trains to control her powers and turns to an underground fight club.

This book was tough for me. I read the first 40% in one sitting but after that it was a painful chore to read. The whole underground fight club mixed with the school for vampires, witches, and werewolves didn't really go together. It was almost like the author plucked a couple of topics out of hat and mashed them all together. I hate giving bad reviews but this book really wasn't my cup of tea. It was written in a way that led me to think it was for younger readers like maybe a middle grade book but it had cursing in it so I know that wasn't the case. I really thought it had potential in the beginning but unfortunately it fell flat for me. I really would have liked this book to follow Rachel Caine's writing style in the Morganville Vampire book series. I think it could have been so much better if she had.

Ian Wood says

A detailed review of this novel can be found on my blog.

I rated this one warty because it's nothing but brutal fighting for no reason and I could not for the life of me discover any rhyme or reason to it. It felt a bit weird when I began this because I was reading another novel in tandem with this one, which featured a character called Cinder, while this one had a character called Scarlett! lol!

Scarlett is evidently a vampire but of course she doesn't know it. She liked to hang with her friend Alex who was always bringing trouble on her, and Scarlett was too stupid to figure this out. She goes to a fight club where she encounters a weird woman. There's a police raid, but fortunately her dad is a cop so she gets away unscathed, but falls once more afoul of her parents.

She lives in a red brick townhouse which turns into apartment. Maybe her adoptive mom is a witch?! Scarlett has a bad dream, and wakes up to discover that she was sleep-walking again. This time, she wrote 'no escape' on all the posters in her room. Her mom bans her from hanging with Alex so the first thing this idiot does is hang with Alex. I already don't like the fem protag at all. Worse than just hanging together, they ditch school under the juvenile delusion that Scarlett's parents won't find out, and the first thing that happens at the arcade is that they run into a guy with hair falling into his eyes. Seriously? SERIOUSLY? I'm only ten pages in and I want to call in sick. Instant male trope. Just add vomit and shake. Fortunately we don't have to deal with him any more. Unfortunately, there are more waiting in the wings.

Smith needs a good editor. She has problems discerning 'its' from 'it's', and there are some really awkwardly constructed sentences, such as "One sound takes precedent over everything else"? Precedent? I think she means precedence. Either that or "One sound is precedent over everything else." Scarlett has heightened senses. It's weird I should be reading this in parallel with Under the Never Sky where there are heightened sense traits, too. But Scarlett has bigger problems. After she beats the male trope at an arcade game, she starts in on one of her 'spells', and not of the witchy kind: dizziness, odd feelings, blurred vision. Next she launches herself at Alex and bites her neck! Suddenly, the woman from the fight club is there trying to help her recover, and she feels a needle and passes out. How that woman got Scarlett away from her assault on Alex by shooting her up with a drug in public is not dealt with.

When Scarlett recovers consciousness, she's in a cabin out in the woods in the middle of nowhere. Another woman is there - a doctor or a nurse - and she takes a blood sample and talks like there's something wrong, something unusual, something way out of the ordinary. I hope so, otherwise why write this novel?! Hopefully there'll be some information coming soon about what's going on here, but of course its doled out like it's the last information on Earth and if we don't make it last as long as we can, it will be all gone and then what on Earth shall we all do?

When the woman takes a phone call, Scarlett bolts out the door and starts running through the woods. She encounters something there which is somewhere between a man and a wolf, but it has quills (not hairs) on its pelt, so who knows what it is? If I'd known this was a werewolf story I definitely wouldn't have selected it! Fortunately it's not only werewolf. Full disclosure: I find werewolf stories to be the most laughable of all paranormal tales, coming even lower down than vampires and fairies. However, I will try to get through this one.

Scarlett runs until she comes across a decaying town. Somehow the wolf thing doesn't get her but she's

apparently too dumb to grasp that it actually isn't trying to "get" her. A woman's voice says, "Welcome to Haven" and she passes out again only to find herself awakening in the cabin once more. This is becoming a bit tedious. Now there are two women, the nurse-doc and kidnap woman bitching about what's going on with Scarlett and still telling her nothing. I have to wonder about Scarlett's IQ. Right after one of women tells the other that "He wants her alive", obviously referring to Scarlett, Scarlett is telling herself "I'm going to die"! She definitely seems to be a were short of a wolf - or maybe a vamp short of a pyre. She feels like she's burning up so she staggers to the nearby bathtub and falls in. She keeps hearing a voice chanting 'No escape', and she passes out again. Seriously?

By the end of chapter four the only thing we've learned is that Scarlett is an adoptee, and her real father was a vampire. I'm guessing that her real mother was a werewolf or a non-paranormal. She's carted off to reform school for paranormals where she gets the usual trope of either a really cool roommate or a really obnoxious one. This time it's the obnoxious option. Apparently there's no in between in YA world. She wanders the grounds and meets a male protagonist immediately. He's a skateboarder with hair in his eyes. Excuse me, I have to run and vomit. Oookay, that's better. Paul shows her around the place, but she's not yet done with trope YA hottie guys. Next she meets Daemon (no, I am not kidding, that's his name!) and it's instadore (rising orchestral music)! Excuse me, I have to vomit again. Oookay, that's better.

Next she's subject to appalling cruelty and bullying from her teacher, named Talon. No, I'm not kidding. Seriously? Do I have to endure 234 pages of this? She gets into a fight with a girl called Jynx, and her punishment for this (apparently she's to blame even though Jynx started it) is to get into a fight with one of the school's council members, named Rome(!), where she gets her ass kicked. Then she passes out again. I've read to some bad YA, but never one where the fem protag is so given to attacks of the wilts and the vapors. Swoon me to the max!

And that's it : running around, fighting and more fighting, and no explanations for anything. Maybe some people will like this kind of thing, but I prefer an actual story. This one I rated warty!

Sammyd says

WOW JUST WOW!!!! Got this book to review from the publisher....WOW..... I am really impressed loved it cant wait for book 2. Going to be an epic series if you like YA series like mortal instruments, covenant, vampire academy and wicked lovely you will really enjoy this first instalment it really is up there with these brilliant books , Scar is a fantastic leading lady just the right amount of ego and doubt in her charter lots of fighting blood monsters and suspense right up to the last page and it just leaves you really really wanting more, Could not put this book down had my kindle glued to my face.....The world building flowed well along with all the charters fitting right in with the story and it never got dull or 2 in depth were you got board, Had a little bit of romance but not to much were it was predictable and sappy. Overall a creaking read and cant wait to see what other troubles scar gets into next,bk2 Shade consumed will defiantly be on my next to read list...Well done Ms smith 5 stars....

Proserpine says

Shadow Embraced really surprised me, I didn't think I would jump into the whole thing with that intensity. Naturally, I was attracted by the paranormal elements in the blurb and mostly the underground fight club

filled with werewolves, vampires and don't know what else!

The blurb was interesting, yes, but the main story was even more appealing. Scar (Scarlet) isn't just the typical tormented vampire, she's a fighter and a really good one. But all this power and strength is coming with a price and she might not be ready to pay it. Plus she hold a huge secret that might cause her own down fall.

The intrigue surrounding Scar's dream and the mysterious abduction of student from the reform school where she living were thrilling. The author, Cheree Smith knows how to create a scene filled with action, mystery and suspense. Plus the characters are quite entertaining: one of my favorite was Snow, who always want to fight with Scar. Their rivalry seem to be uncontrollable and it's almost funny at some point.

I also had the chance to read some sexy and intense scenes between Scar and Daemon! Daemon is the sexy teacher assistant that will help Scar to adjust her new life and work with her abilities. I didn't think I would read about love and relationship in this story so I was even more surprised by this starting relation. Daemon, who's older than Scar and also more informed about the school and everything that happened inside of it, will be a great ally!

The author doesn't gives us all the answers in this first book. I still need some answers about important things that happened, most of them are about Scar's past and about her parents, so I guess I would have to read the rest of this series to find everything out, which doesn't bother me!

I enjoyed my experience with Shadow Embraced and if you are a paranormal lover, you will love this new adventure!

Thomas Winship says

Shadow Embraced is the first installment in Cheree Smith's "Haven" series. It introduces readers to Scarlet Devena—Scar to those around her—a teenager with a penchant for fighting, whose world is suddenly turned upside down, inside out, and a whole host of other clichés (luckily, the clichés end there), when she's abducted and sent to a reform/finishing school for supernatural creatures.

Suddenly, Scar is besieged on all sides by those who don't trust her, those who fear her, those who want to use her, and those who want her dead (or worse). All the while, students are being attacked ... and Scar is the main suspect.

To make matters worse, even she isn't certain that she's innocent.

What I liked: Scar is a great character. Smith finds the proper balance between strength and vulnerability to make Scar a heroine readers can invest in and root for. That, of course, assumes Scar turns out to be a heroine. Nevertheless, the book slides along at a brisk pace, never letting up on the action, suspense, and drama for more than a paragraph or two. The cast of characters is diverse and offers plenty of options for readers to find a favorite. Most importantly, Smith builds a world and creates a story that promises enough unrevealed history and future potential to keep readers hungry for more.

What puzzled me: the book's description mentions an underground fight club, which doesn't play a prominent part until well past the halfway point of the story. This part really interested the action lover in me, so I was kinda disappointed that it took so long to emerge.

Final thoughts: the school, the students, the teachers all contributed to a real Hogwarts-like feel from time to time. There's nothing wrong with that, of course (in fact, I like being reminded of it)—and plenty of other series' have similar set-ups—but it'll be interesting to see if Smith steers far enough away from that hallowed ground to avoid criticism going forward. Also, the sheer number of characters made keeping track of each a bit of a challenge at times. I can see casual readers struggling.

Overall, Smith delivers a real treat from down under. I believe paranormal and supernatural fans will love *Shadow Embraced*. Bring on book two!

Nancy (The Avid Reader) says

I received a free copy of the book from the author for my honest opinion.

Scar is a Dahampir which is a half- vampire/half-human. Her family has hid this from her; her whole life. But then Scar starts going through the change earlier than anyone thought she would. When the change came upon her, Scar had no idea what was going on. She almost kills her best friend Alex and puts her in the hospital. Scar is taken away to a place where there are other people or should i say creatures? (well I don't exactly like that word either) like her. Scar doesn't understand what is going on and no one will explain to her what is happening to her and why she is there. She wants to call her mother you know to let her know where she is, she knows that her mother will be worried. But the ones who have taken her won't let her call home. They say that everything has been taken care of. I guess they mean that they have already contacted Scar's mother but I am not sure that is what they mean exactly.

Scar has started going through the change early and no one expected this. Everyone at the school seems to hate Scar or this is what she feels or since. She thinks they all hate her. They won't explain to her what is happening to her or explain the rules to her. They think that if she doesn't know the rules and what to do then that makes her a dumb a**. If someone has never been given the knowledge of something doesn't make them a dumb a**. If everybody knew everything wouldn't this make them god? If you don't know, you don't know.

Scar is having some issues with one of the girls at the school. This girl just will not stay out of Scar's face. So Scar and this girl get into a fight and this is one of the rules that must not be broken. Well Scar and this girl get caught fighting. A werewolf comes along and pulls them apart and stops the fight of course. The werewolf is a part of the student council and so therefore gets a hand in deciding her faith. The council puts their heads together and decide that fighting with the big dog (no pun intended here) which just happens to be the werewolf is to be her punishment for getting caught fighting. After the fight is over "the big dog" tells her not to get caught fighting again. What I am thinking at this point is that by saying it this way "don't get caught fighting" again to mean that it is ok to fight as long as you don't get caught doing it, right?

Someone at the school is attacking the students and everyone thinks that Scar is the attacker. Even Scar herself is not sure if it is her at times. Strange things are happening to her that she can't explain or can't remember sometimes. Scar must prove that she is innocent of hurting anyone. Will she be able to prove her innocents? Can she stay alive long enough?

Would I recommend *Shadow Embraced*? You bet your bottom dollar I would. *Shadow Embraced* is an extremely good book. I like that Scar was a girl who could take care of herself and didn't need a man to do it for her. Scar wasn't scared of anyone man, woman or creature. She would fight anyone who happens to get in her face.

Silvia says

This review was originally posted on my blog, Darkest Sins.

This wasn't the first time I read "Shadow Embraced". I did a Beta read for it a very long time ago, but I clearly remember how I was hoping to see the manuscript becoming a book sooner or later. Then, I re-read it before creating both cover and trailer for the book, of course. And now? Well, I wanted to read it again just for the pleasure of it, because I think Cheree Smith has created something different and boy, how fast and furious!

Scar is a strong character, a real fighter, no doubts on that, who takes and fights back everything that comes her way (and it's a lot) and, in the process, she tries to get over what scares her the most. I honestly would have liked her to show a bit more of thoughts for what and who she had left behind, but then I'm not sure it would have made her face the reality in which she's been forced to live in the same way she had. What I did really like was the relationship between her and Daemon. There's no I-love-you-from-the-moment-I-saw-you or I-am-going-to-die-if-I-do-not-see-him kind of romance in here, but just two people who like to spend time with each other. Ok, basically to improve Scar's techniques, but who are they kidding? The attraction has always been there and at some point it develops in a fascination that can't be denied but still, don't expect romanticism. I found it refreshing and I think it worked out well for those two.

"Shadow Embraced" is fast, full of action and fights video-games style (or so it reminds me of) and it definitely makes you wonder who the 'villain' is... You may be surprised there, indeed... I'm totally curious to see what is going to happen next and I hope to read more of Ghost and Paul, whom I think has a potential not to underestimate!

Runningrabbit says

This was fabulous!

Although this is an 'academy' style book, it is definitely a bit different with a wild set of very creative monsters.

The characters are well defined and fill out their parts to their fullest extent. There is, of course, the cool girls, who are appropriately witchy and bitchy. The sexy to-die-for guy is as sexy as. There isn't a daggy, submissive bunch but the main character is certainly the full-on misfit.

As with many people who have survived a difficult time at school trying not to be noticed, it sometimes attracts those who find those differences intriguing because of their utter indifference to the sought after attracting rather than repelling. This brings attention from the privileged.

An absolutely great read with plenty of pace and kick-arse action.

If you like action paranormal, this is for you.

Mandy says

I received Shadow Embraced in return for an honest review as part of the tour hosted by Dark World Books. Scar had no idea she was different granted she has heightened senses but they don't come without a price. Scar heads out one night with her best friend Alex who happens to start stuff with another girl leaving Scar to clean up typically with her first. However when a day at the arcade turns bad leaving Alex injured and Scar kidnapped everything changes.

Suddenly Scar isn't the human she thought she was she finds out she's half vampire making her a half vampire and the new student at a school for the paranormal. Scar is thrust into a new school where all her classmates are vampires, werewolves or witches. As she comes to terms with who she is and learns to control her vampire half she's also will be tested because the school is focused around fighting. Yet suddenly fights are missing and a killer is on the loose.

Scar is a strong independent character I love how she's a fighter it makes for a unique story. She's not perfect she has her own issues like us all but I think that's what makes her easy to connect with. I love the idea of attending a school with mixed paranormal beings you have all kinds of books that have one particular student like witches or vampires but the idea of putting them all together is unique.

I liked Shadow Embraced my ideal character to read is a kick-ass-heroine who can hold her own. I found the story captivating with a unique refreshing concept. Right from the start you plunged into the action as Scar is in a fight with another girl. The book is filled with fight scenes that spark the imagination. I enjoyed the characters. My favorite part was the way the school mixes the different type of witches, vampires, and werewolves. I look forward to checking out the next book, for me Shadow Embraced was a perfect start to a new series.

Sarah says

A school for vampires, werewolves and witches? With a secret fight club, a heroine who's considered a freak even among the undead and a killer on the loose? You can't really go wrong with a plot and setting like this. There's a lot to like about this story, and even though I had a few issues with some of the elements, it kept me intrigued until the last page and the writing style is unobtrusively competent.

The pace of the book is frenetic, which I felt worked well to a certain extent. So many YA SF/fantasy/paranormal books get bogged down in angst but this breezes along from one unexpected revelation to the next. The only problem is that the character development gets stretched a little thin along the way. I was disappointed in Scar's lack of an inner life on the page - I wanted to read more about her feelings, especially her inner conflict and her feelings about being completely severed from her former life, family and friends. The minor characters are slickly drawn but I would have liked more back story and more development of the world of Haven and its relationship to the outside world. Hopefully this will happen in book 2, without the author resorting to the obligatory love triangle.

Then there are the fight scenes - obviously there are people out there who enjoy reading page after page of descriptions of violent and mostly pointless sparring, but sadly I'm not part of this target audience. I skimmed these pages and found the whole fight club subplot a little irritating and an distraction from other, more intriguing plot threads.

I wouldn't say this is a must-read for most readers, but for fans of the vampire genre it's an entertaining addition. There's nothing wildly original here but there are enough interesting twists and variations on the

typical paranormal elements to satisfy the most jaded vampire lovers.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Cheree Smith, Dark Cherry Press, and Netgalley.)

Teenager Scarlet (Scar) is always getting into trouble and getting into fights, but she's more than a little distressed when she finds herself attacking her best friend and drinking her blood!

Drugged and kidnapped, Scar awakes to find herself in unfamiliar territory, and finally finds out why she has been taken – she's a dhampire – half vampire.

Scar then finds herself enrolled in a school for supernatural beings, and also thrust into some kind of underground fight club.

Will Scar ever see her parents again? Will she survive the fight club? And is being a dhampire all it's cracked up to be?

This book started off really strong with loads of action and excitement, but as it went on it became mediocre, and even boring.

Scarlet was an okay character. I really liked her in the beginning; she was strong, and had loads of fight in her. She made her own path, went against the rules, and basically was a bit bad-ass.

The storyline was okay, but as it went on I found myself getting bored. The beginning of the story was really, really good. I loved the action, it was exciting, fast-paced, and there was adrenalin, but once Scarlet ended up at the school, the story became very teenage-vampire-angst, and I started to get bored.

The fight club was a bit different, but unfortunately it just didn't excite me, and I couldn't bring myself to care about the attacks that started happening either. I don't know why this was, but the book just didn't hold my interest.

The ending was okay, but again, I found it really difficult to concentrate and take it in. Needless to say that I don't think I'll be reading the next book in this series, which is a real shame because the beginning of this book was so good!

Overall; started out good, but failed to keep it up.

5 out of 10.

Sapphyria says

Scarlet (Scar) is a teenager that is bound to fight the battles her best friend, Alex, starts. It's okay though, because Scar doesn't mind fighting ~ until her last battle almost kills her best friend. Why on earth did Scar just go for Alex's jugular and who is this crazy woman trying to pull them apart?

When Scarlet wakes up in a nasty cabin, caged in like a wild animal, the only thing she wants is to escape

and go home. This is not, however, an option and she ends up in a Rehabilitation/Reform school full of otherworldly creatures. Upon arrival Scar is informed that she is a dhampir - a creature feared and usually destroyed upon discovery. Scar is strongly advised to keep her identity a secret and pretend that she is a pure vampire ~ which is easier said than done.

She was raised by Non's (mortals) and didn't, therefore have the training or upbringing a supernatural creature generally has. She finds herself the laughing stock of the school and a punching bag for recruiters of an underground fighting club. As she moves up in the ranks, those she's fought start going missing, and Scar is the lead suspect. Will she be able to prove her innocence before it's too late?

Shadow Embraced is a very interesting take on the supernatural world. There are witches, vampires, and werewolves that have been forced to reside at the Reform School, deemed too violent to live in regular society.

Scar is a very rebellious teenager and was written in a very traditional way - mouthy, angsty, and with the penchant to go against everything that she's told to do. She has feelings for Daemon, who has taken it upon himself to be her tutor, and we got to see a bit of their relationship blossom in Book 1. It will be interesting to see where it goes, if anywhere, in Book 2.

This novel is very fast paced and flows pretty smoothly. There is a lot of action and violence but it's not really graphic or stomach-turning. The mystery surrounding the missing students is written well and I found that I really didn't suspect the person involved. There is continued world building but we never really get the details of Scar's past - her parents, how she ended up with Non's to raise her, etc. I hope we get this information in later installments.

I will definitely move on to Book 2 in the series.

Review Copy Courtesy Of: The author, via the tour company, at no cost in exchange for an honest review.

Maghon Thomas says

So you start with meeting Scarlet, who is constantly bailing her best friend out of trouble. Except this time, Scarlet has definitely bitten off more than she can chew, because her actions bring her to the attention of some powerfully scary people. Plus, it seems like everyone really is out to get Scarlet. Plus, I don't like Scarlet. I know that sounds bad as she is the main character, but literally, I kept expecting her to get better and she didn't. Seriously, grow up a little. You have a crappy best friend, you got caught by the scary people, you know go to a supernatural kid school and no one likes you. Really, let's work out a few things. I find her whiny, and then I read about her kicking ass in fights. I am not talking about insecurities. I mean her inner monologues make her sound like a bratty whiny baby.

I liked the concept of this story. I like when there's multiple types of beings placed together and you get to make a culture for each, and then one for them together. But I wanted more explanations on the little things. Like the incident at the arcade. Well, it ended abruptly and I wanted a little more. I also very much like the action. There's a ton of fight scenes. I happen to like that. And there's the mystery, as there's a killer on the loose. And there's some very interesting plot twists.

I like that it reads quick because of all the action scenes. Those always make for a fun read. But I think I would like some more depth into the characters. I think if Scarlet had a little more feeling and insight, than only her fighting skills, I would have liked her more. She has a very interesting concept for her character. I

believe I will continue with the next book, because I really am a fan of the original plot and storyline. I mean who wouldn't think it's cool to go to a supernatural school with a fight club. Yep, Fight Club hehehehe. Anyways, if you are a fan of the vampers in a story, and like some fun, fast paced action with mystery, this is your book. 3.5 ASS KICKING PAWS!

CCAM&GZM says

Assuming that Shadow Embraced is the first volume in a series that continues the plot throughout all (or more) volumes, I can say that: (1) I liked this first volume, (2) I have high expectations, even demands from the next (or more) and (3) Haven has chances to become one of the best and/or interesting (contradiction in terms? ... hmmm I don't think so) series.

I liked that the author did not hide in the sand and did not touch too much that "idyllic" side of the supernatural. Yes, we have a special school for them, but here the prejudice, hate or at least the resentment among breeds, the contempt for the "nons" and the violence are at their home and characterize not only the students, but also those that are put there to educate them. All that is good is more like a hope, as a possibility and is attached rather to the individual than to the group. From here till to the violation of any rules, to turn a blind eye to something that can become lethal at any moment is less than one step.

In this new and harsh world our heroine must adapt. A heroine who actually is not as bad as the authorities want to declare her. But only the idea that you can be executed at any time simply because you exist can influence everyone and push you astray and to make mistakes. I like Beth. Alone in the midst of all, she is powerful both in fighting with others and also in the fight with her own demons, but her background is certainly a good one – I'll not tell you how I know that, as usual I do not want to give spoilers but just to make you give the book a chance.

The action is very paced and full of violence, but which does not exceed the limits for a Young Adult book and it's not gratuitous and I hope that the next volume will confirm this statement. It shows and points the trials which our heroine must face. Flaws of the society, betrayals, manipulations, hidden agendas, stated hates and deceiving loves, hidden friendships and the improbability of a happy future or even of a future itself will consume her. If she will endure and prevail and how she will succeed in this battle remains to be seen, especially that her closest ally is also the most fierce and deadly enemy.

The secondary characters are varied. Among the overt or potential enemies, declared or hidden friends, you'll find some very interesting and promising characters, and their disappearance in the second half of the book makes me wonder what the author prepare for us. They intrigue so much and were placed so well that it would be a shame to not be exploited properly and at full capacity.

There is also the romance, but it's on my taste in the way that, even it acts and plays a role in the story is not the main theme.

With a sustained action, with twists and unexpected, with many opportunities and possible ways to develop the story itself and the characters, with some mystery and suspense, with some universal mythological elements, a pinch of romance and a lot of adrenaline, Shadow Embraced is a very good and promising start for the Haven series and I certainly will keep an eye on it!
