



Apprentice

Rachel E. Carter

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She survived a trial year at the Academy of Magic, but that was the easy part...

Now sixteen-year-old Ryiah is an apprentice of Combat, her school's most notorious faction. When she finishes, she will be a war mage, but in order to do so, she has to survive four years traveling across Jerar, training with a master she hates, her old nemesis, Priscilla, and Prince Darren, her sometimes-rival sometimes... more?

Ry's new apprenticeship is nothing like what she prepared for. War is on the horizon and her lessons aren't just for practice anymore.

It's time to fight.

Apprentice Details

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Author : Rachel E. Carter

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From Reader Review Apprentice for online ebook

Cece ☀Rants, Raves &Reviews☀ says

This book took everything **I loved** about the first book, and **shot it**. Shot it in the goddamn face.

RIP hopes and dreams

Remember Ryiah, the **independent character** who focused on training? Now its just love triangle, love triangle, random fight scene, and....love triangle!!

“You aren't afraid of making the wrong one, Ry, it's the fact that you want to make the wrong one.”

~~I hate you! I want you! But don't want to! But i cant stop~~

Flashback to the **friendships**, bonds and clever relationships the author wrote. Sequel focused on **BREAKING** all of those ties.

“My victory had come at the cost of a friendship. I swore I would never make the same mistake twice.”
Except for the next fifty times, but besides that... NEVER!

Another thing that really bugged was there was **no real sense of time**. Often authors use unique holidays of the kingdom for some world-building and to mark time passing. This book literally stated '**Its been three years**' So i was like ok sure, if you say so...

“I needed to make a choice now: the cold, distant prince or the laughing friend. And once I chose I needed to fight for it. I would never win the former, and maybe not even the latter... But I could try.”
Oh dear christ when will it end?

I mean Ian is the backup plan who doesn't deserve to be one! He was dating Lynn and she STOLE HIM because she decided she shouldn't want Derran. I mean **damn girl just chose yourself!** at no point was it required to DATE one of them. Back and forth, back and forth.

“You always do this. You swoop in and ruin my life and then you run away leaving me to pick up the pieces! Haven't you done enough?”

Apparently not, we still got two more books.

“His eyes stayed on my face. "Ryiah. I'm not running away. I'm in lo-” "Don't!" I clapped my hand over his mouth, suddenly afraid. "Don't you dare say it!"

How dare he? After 200 pages of wondering what he really feels, how DARE he finally put all the cards on the table. Seriously rude!

“I didn't know why I was so being so cruel. I didn't know why I continued to draw out the problem when the answer was right in front of me.”

Yeah I don't know either. But hey acknowledging you have a problem is the first step to recovery of the

awful personality disease (recent plague has broken out in YA novels everywhere)

"You love Ian, I screamed silently, your heart is not breaking – you do not love the prince."
Wait haven't we already done this?

"All Ian knew was that I had chosen him, told him I loved him, and then tossed him aside the moment I was alone with Darren."

Glad we both know you acted like a total b*tch.

Power of love is bullshit ~ Power of violence and swords is where its at.

"I'm alive?" Though I had spoken the words aloud, they still seemed at odds with my memory. Wasn't I supposed to be dead"

I wish you were dead.

The end.

~~~~~

### **Expectations**

- \* Derran and RyL figure your shit out- friends, rivals, or lovers (idc just make up ur mind)
- \* **Ella and Ry start up chaos in Academy** ( adventures and figuring out magic together)
- \* 1st book briefly alluded twins have power together ~Alex and Ry special twin magic stuff ??
- \* More about mages
- \* Keep up awesome teachers' personalities
- \* Life outside the academy,
- \* **Cute guy from the ball** to come back

LETS GOOOOO!!!!

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### **Ben Alderson says**

"Magic and romance clash in this epic follow up to First Year."

WOW. This series is just WOW.

I am loving this world, the characters. THE MAGIC. I mean, I've never read a book with 'MAGES' in. AND NOW I WANT TO READ THEM ALL!

Loved this

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### **Aj the Ravenous Reader says**

Oh well, there is no point in hiding it.

The first book was awesome but this one is:

This book has everything in a book I am looking for. It has the perfect dose of every element. No event was underdone; no characterization was over pushed. The scenes elicited so many intense but worthy emotions from me. I laughed, I cried, I mourned, I swooned a lot, I worried so much, I loved and hated Darren and hated and loved him again! Every character is unforgettable (Ry has now become my next favorite heroine) and the writing was well, it rocked!. How Rachel E. Carter managed to put a touch of so many great series I've read (Harry Potter, Divergent, The Selection, Shadow and Bone) in this particular book and yet maintain a definite originality is beyond me. I am absolutely impressed and may I say, I am now your official fan, Rachel!^^

What is more astounding is the way this book teaches its reader in a very subtle and yet most effective manner, important and necessary human values as teamwork (despite the factions), perseverance, patriotism, love, diligence, friendship and even sacrifice. Gosh, I just love this book so much!

Also, how the author implanted the romance and love triangle in a great story of adventure is truly commendable. Nothing about it was annoying.^^ Everything was so well planned out and I enjoyed every page of the book especially the last chapter which made my heart slamming so hard against my chest and clenching my fist so hard as I anticipated the ending. And when came the last few pages of the book, I have no words to describe how I felt so let me just illustrate it. I was like this:

and this...

and this...

Dear friends, do I have to say it?

**READ THIS BOOK! READ THIS SERIES!**

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**Ebook of the 1st in series, First Year the Black Mage 1, is 99 cents all February 2015 on Amazon, B&N, KOBO, Smashwords, & iTunes to celebrate Apprentice's release this month.**

## **Rachel E. Carter says**

**SERIES TEASER TRAILER:** [https://youtu.be/AJcWes2y\\_\\_s](https://youtu.be/AJcWes2y__s)

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### **LINKS TO BUY BOOK:**

AMAZON: <http://amzn.to/2j5q13p>

AUDIBLE: <http://www.audible.com/pd/Teens/Apprentice-Series-Book-1>

BOOK DEPOSITORY: <https://www.bookdepository.com/Apprentice-Series-Book-1>

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## **Dannii Elle says**

Actual rating 3.5 stars.

This is the second instalment in the Black Mage series. Ryiah and Alex, twins from a lowborn family, are entering into their second year of training to become magical mages. After the trials accompanying their first year their continued studies promise to be just as full of drama and complications.

I had stated in my review of the first book that I am absolute trash for magical boarding school settings, and this hasn't yet changed. I was initially disappointed to see that a whole three years of their magical education had been packed into this book and I wasn't sure how Carter would be able to adequately recount it all. I was quickly put at ease however, as each year is given enough of a focus without becoming repetitive, and with enough action in each to make them all equally as thrilling.

As with the first book, Ryiah's feelings for a certain aloof prince dominated the book. Whilst I initially enjoyed seeing the progression of their love/hate relationship, certain of the royal attitudes I found hard to reconcile. This meant that I couldn't fully appreciate the ending and didn't wholly enjoy that such large a focus was demanded by his presence.

I found enough other intrigue to distract me, however. Ryiah's growth in both maturation and competency as a mage made for fascinating reading. I found both her petty school dramas and the larger dominating intrigue stimulating and she remained a feisty and focused protagonist despite all this book deigned to throw at her! The way each consecutive twist was implemented into the narrative made the tension grow with each passing page, until the climatic battle that had me reading long into the early morning hours!

Whilst I can't say I adored every element of this book, any of my distaste was purely due to my personal opinions accompanying one character and I am eager to see how Ryiah will continue to astound and intrigue me as her adventures continue outside of the academy.

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## Melissa (Ever So Mela) says

First Year Book 1 review

Candidate Book 3 review

Last Stand Book 4 review

**4.5**

**...Well color me flipping surprised.**

In all honesty I was expecting to hate this or at least *severely* dislike it. I've had this for a week or so but dove into other books to actually get in a good mood cause lately I've been a nitpicking bitch. I'll even admit it to myself.

The funny this is...

**THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO NEED!**

I don't know if I'm the only one but I am one wary girl when it comes to second books in a trilogy oooor third books in a 5 book series. I mean look at The Evolution of Mara Dyer-which I can't even bring myself to finish-, Unhinged, Siege and Storm, The Infinite Sea, Heir for Fire, Opal, etc, etc, etc. And those are just off the top of my head, I could keep on going for *days*. I can seriously count with one hand the exceptions to this rule.

**So you can imagine my ridiculously giddy behavior when this turned out to be one of them.** You, my dear Apprentice, are the exception to the rule.

Every character I loved was back, the trials were harder and the expectations were greater.

The triangle....ahh the triangle. Now I know a lot of people have problems with them...but I'm not one of those I have a shelf called heavenly triangle \*shrugs\*. I mean triangles do irritate me sometimes, oh dear Lord do they ever Mal/Jeb but in the bigger picture I like them. I'm petty like that. I want my characters to show that other love interest that they're not the last coca cola in the dessert. I thrive on competition. I've actually bought books for that sole reason alone, like The Infernal Devices, Throne of Glass or Kiss of Deception, to name a few. So to say they're not a pet peeve is an *understatement*. And here it was glorious. Because they both won a place in my heart more so Ian.

Better world building, awesome side characters that really played a role, rollercoaster of emotions, hold-on-to-your-seat action, bite-your-nails-and-chew-your-lips tension filled story. I probably got heart palpitations.

**This book over shadowed it's predecessor by miles on end.**

Oh! And that ending?

(I received this ARC copy by the author in exchange of an honest review)

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### **Sakina says**

Gosh I feel like the black sheep here. But in my defence I really did want to like this book.

After reading First Year, I was really excited to read Apprentice. My hopes were high! In fact Apprentice started out well but after a few chapters it dwindled down badly.

While unlike First Year, the world building in this book is better, it lacks in all the departments that First Year stood out in viz. Characters, character development, romance and training. Apprentice was half sappy romance and half fast forward unsatisfactorily explained events with a few good action moments sprinkled in between.

I have no clue what hit Riyah in the head. The girl who was strong and determined in the first book turned into a complete blockhead in this one. Half the time she is either pining for Ian or Darren or chossing between Ian or Darren or moping over Ian or Darren or both.

I love a good romance! But I hate it when it takes over the plot unless of course if it's suppose to be a love story-which this isn't- and even then I expect it to be good. The love triangle, I felt was unnecessary. There was no connection between Ian and Riyah, no build up. And in one case when Ian and Lynn are dating and Riyah asks Ian for a dance and tells she wants to be with him we are fast forwarded in time in the next chapter and suddenly they are dating with no explanation about what happened to Lynn.

I understand the author wanted to show the 4 years of Riyah's apprentice life in this book but the way things were rushed was so messy. One second you are reading about Riyah being in her second year and then two chapters later she is halfway through her 3rd year!! No explanation as to what her training rigime is as a third year or what she did after she finished an academic year as an apprentice. Did she go home or stay at the academy or what? And this continues throughout the book. I didn't feel Riyah's growth as a character. Sure with every passing year she gets stronger but the years are fast forwarded and it feels like she hasn't grown at all. Just jumped through time.

The only reason I even rated this book 2 stars was because of the last 20% that seemed a little more organised and where the action took place.

There are many who would and do like this book. I wasn't one of them. I found it was okay-ish. So I am not sure if I will continue with this series.

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### **Katerina says**

Since Goodreads doesn't allow us to rate more than 5 stars, then 5 stars it is. But in my heart, Apprentice deserves **all the stars in the sky, and maybe some more.**

First Year was a great book,a really pleasant surprise that showed us what a talented writer Rachel E. Carter is.And yet Apprentice was even better,a **shiny gem** among the other YA fantasy books that kept me up all night and forced me to eat my feelings because it hurt.**It.hurt.so.damn.much.**

“Someday,Ry,you are going to realize who Darren really is.He’s a prince, and he’s only going to break your heart.”

The second instalment of the Black Mage series follows Ry's apprenticeship in order to become a Combat mage,the physical and emotional trials she has to endure and her evolution from a lowborn girl that was bullied to a powerful,strong woman who despite the hardships proved to everyone her value.Of course there was a certain non-heir that made her life miserable but didn't seem to let her go, and a curly-haired kind boy who was doomed from the start because let's face it,dark and forbidden princes are always more alluring.Plus,it's Darren,duh!

Before I start babbling about the element of romance in this novel I have to praise everything else! I absolutely adored the glimpses we got into the country of Jerar,its structure and the politics and their relationships with their neighbors!**I could literally picture the forests,the port,the desert and the rebels in the mines,the battles and the dead,I could smell the salt of the sea and fresh pines and taste the metallic tang of blood,feel the rough walls pressing against my back and my muscles going sore from the training!**Everything was so **realistic** and **vivid**,I was sucked in the book with such a force that it took me way too long to adjust to real life again!The mock battles were my favorite parts,my stomach dropped to the floor every single time,the surprises and the agony left me breathless and shaking.It was a unique experience!

But that was the easy part...

“We couldn’t be friends.  
We couldn’t be enemies.  
So what were we?”

The relationship between Ry and Darren was a **crazy roller-coaster**,one moment I was grinning like a fool and the other I felt the sting of betrayal in the core of my being and my eyes watering from grief and frustration!And there is also the matter of the love triangle...I do *not* like love triangles but I have to admit in this case it was fitting.I didn't always like Ry's decisions towards her love life, but **I understood her**.There was this frustrating prince her heart craved against all reason,a boy who could never be hers,so she tried to move on.I liked Ian, but like I said,he didn't stand a chance.Not when a single touch from Darren could set Ry on fire,not when he haunted her every thought.

**Darren.Darren.Darren.**

“You always do this.You swoop in and ruin my life and then you run away leaving me to pick up the pieces!Haven’t you done enough?”

He also broke mine.I can still hear my heart shattering, and when it was pulled back together it shattered

again. Take the solstice ball for example. At first I was so happy, lightheaded and squealing and laughing and then, I gaped in shock and agony and tasted ashes in my mouth. This kept happening and happening, joy and then sorrow, hope and then disappointment, laughter and then tears, love and then hatred. And although during this book you hurt me a lot Rachel, **I forgive you.**

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## Clara says

### **\*\* 3 "THIS WAS DISAPPOINTING" stars \*\***

I loved the first book sooo much, it nearly kills me now to give this sequel only 3 stars, but I can't overlook some things that either disappointed or annoyed me ! :(

#### **The world-building and the plot :**

Well, I was okay with the first book not having much of a plot and being only about training and character's development, but I was convinced it was just a way to introduce the series and that things were finally going to take off in book 2, but unfortunately it didn't happen and I couldn't find myself enjoying it as much as in the first book. I really wish there had been a real intrigue in this sequel, but what I got was **only more training**, watching Ryiah and the other characters go through all four years of their apprenticeship : and since the book is not that long and stretches from their second-year to their fifth-year of apprenticeship, it just felt like everything was **rushed** with a lot of **fast-forward and unexplained events**, going back and forth between the Academy, the Palace and the regiment they were training with over and over again, without focusing on Ryiah's struggles and growth as a future mage as much as in the first book. At first it was nice, because there were new sorts of mock battles and all, but then I realized it was going to be the same for each year of the apprenticeship and ultimately, it was just **repetitive**. We got a glimpse of a possible conflict with another kingdom trying to attack the kingdom the story is set in, but it was **not enough developed and not used to its fullest**, and it never created an epic, badass or complex intrigue putting the characters in the middle of the action and plotting, and that was really a shame because this series has so much potential. In the end, this second book turned out to be almost **solely about the romance**, and more precisely about the **love triangle** between Ryiah, Darren and Ian which I'm afraid I was really not a huge fan of because it felt like the story had become a **soap opera with all the drama and angst** and it completely overshadowed the fantasy world and plot that we might have gotten !

As for the **world-building**, there was a bit much more of it than in book 1, but it was still **not enough** to help me really grasp what kind of world we were in, how it worked, what it really looked like, and what the people as well as the rulers were like. I just wanted more.

#### **The characters :**

Oh why, why did you turn out like that *Ryiah* ? That's such a shame really, because you were really awesome and I loved you so much in book 1 ! You were strong-willed, smart, entirely focused on training and keeping up with the rest, willing to do anything to realize your dream of becoming a mage ! But it's like now that you were an apprentice, you suddenly became badass and one of the best out of nowhere when you actually barely made it to the apprenticeship ! It led to you completely stopping focusing on your training and stopping making smart decisions and instead becoming **reckless, childish, naïve, insecure** and waaaaay too much **focused on your love life!!** It's like you became an **entirely different character** and lost everything that made me love you so much in book 1 ! You're supposed to be around 20 at the end of this book, but you **sounded much younger** than in book 1 when you were actually only 15.

As for you *Darren*, I'm sorry but it felt like you had a **split personality** in this one ! One minute, you would be **cold, distant, sarcastic and cutting**, and the next you would become a **love struck boy, jealous, overly**

**sweet and romantic** and it didn't really suit you, but then out of the blue, you would once again become your old aloof self. That became quite irritating and like there were 2 different Darrens !

#### **The romance :**

Like I said before, I felt like the romance **took over the plot and world-building**. And I'm so disappointed with the turn the romance took. All of a sudden, we were thrown into a **love triangle** that felt unnecessary and only led to Ryiah becoming annoying because she couldn't choose ! It came to the point where the two love interests would fight over Ryiah, and from that moment it became **cheesy drama** and **lost all its subtlety** that I had enjoyed so much in the previous book. Ryiah kept going back and forth between the two guys, and I didn't always like how she handled things, getting a bit self-centered and hurting the two guys with her indecisiveness.

Overall, I still very much enjoyed the book, it was still very entertaining, but the characters lost their personality along the way, the plot and world-building could have been way thicker and the romance became way too teenage-like with too much drama for my liking. I'm now left wondering if I even want to read the rest of the series.

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#### **Claudia Ramírez says**

3.5 stars :)

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#### **Nasom says**

My 100th book of the year had to be this ?.

Took me like 2 months to complete and I read 13 other books in-between smh. A waste

RTC

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#### **Naomi &#x1f428; says**

Magnificent ❤?

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#### **Katerina Kondrenko says**

3 out of 10

????? ? ????

[This review on my blog](#)

**Living A Thousand Lives** (please use Chrome/Yandex browser or Android/IOS to see the page; otherwise,

*(spoiler-tags I use to make my post compact may not work)*

### **Short-Soundtrack:**

The Red Paintings – You're Not One Of Them

Freelance Whales – Follow Through

Jamie O'Neal – To be with you

**Genre:** high-fantasy, YA

**Stuff:** magic, academy, politics, looming war

**Fail:** plot-structure, romance

**POV:** 1st person, female

**Love-Geometry:** hard

### **Quote-Core:**

*"We couldn't be friends. We couldn't be enemies. So what were we?"*

Nope. This installment didn't change my opinion about the series. I'm still bored and don't get the romance, only now the situation is even worse: we have horrible **time-jumps**. And I won't tired of repeating myself on this topic! If you want to show readers how everything began but plan to lead your story far in the future in a matter of one book, then start in the future and use flashbacks! That helps not to tear the thread and not to ruin timeline of events and proper characters development. When you do otherwise, you end up with a bunch of bitty scenes, a lot of blank spots, and heroes with stuck personalities. It doesn't feel like a story, it feels like a draft-collection.

So, yes, as you might already notice, **Apprentice** is all about missing pieces. One book, 300+ pages, and 4 (!) years of MCs' lives. No, you won't learn anything new. Everything will be very **repetitive**: same ships, same problems, same schemes. A lesson or two, a year competition, a ball, a visit to palace, a lesson or two, a year competition... Yeah, you got it right. 4 circles around the same chain of events. There were good moments during group battles, but even them grew old in the end.

The **romance!** Oh God, that was painfully stupid and far-stretched. A million break-ups, a million *I-love-yous*. Darren acted like a self-centered prick and made Ryiah to finish her courting with Ian, Ian had been too patient and sweet for Ryiah and her fickle heart, Ryiah had no brains at all. But the ending made everything even worse! When you get that Darren did hurt Ryiah on purpose, 'cause he "had no choice" and only thus "could reach his goals" and blah-blah-blah, you want to kill this idiotic bastard and to scream "**MANIPULATIONS FOR THE PLOT'S SAKE!**" at the top of your lungs. He could say Ry about his plans. It were the King and the Crown Prince who mustn't know of Darren's intentions, not Ryiah. So, yeah, that was stupid. unnecessary and bleh. Plus the King was rather lazy. He needed money for the war, but it was his son who found a real good dowry, after all.

Plus cinnamon! Every kiss of Darren tastes like cinnamon. Or pine. Or HOME. So Darren loves to chew cinnamon, needles and... houses. Nice.

Oh, and can we talk about Ry and Darren the Bastard as of main characters? Did you notice that these two are perfect Mary and Marty You-Already-Know-Their-Last-Names? The best of the best of the best! So powerful and smart and **WOWOWOWOWOW**. And it seems like Darren loves Ryiah only for her special skills. While she loves him back for his... em... muscles, I guess?

I don't know whether I'll finish the third book or not, 'cause at this moment I'm curious only about the older prince. So far he didn't use his evil potential (barks but no bites), so maybe he'll change his tactics and finally goes darken.

### **The Black Mage (?????? ???):**

- Non-Heir (????????????? ?????) #0.5/4
- First Year (????????????) #1/4
- Apprentice (????????????) #2/4
- Candidate (?????????) #3/4
- Last Stand (????????? ?????) #4/4

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### **Ashley says**

*first read: March 19-21, 2015*

*first reread: July 3-5, 2015*

*second reread: February 3-?, 2017*

*"My dear, each one of us is a hero. The irony, of course, is that most will never receive the title."*

**JULY 2015:** My feelings have definitely not changed in a negative way towards this book. I loved it the first time around, and I loved it even more on this reread. The world R.E.C. has created is truly beautiful, and I can't be more excited than I already am for book three.

**MARCH 19:** *I miss having a job.....but ONLY because then I could buy the books I wanted when I wanted.....I NEED THIS, but I just talked my husband into buying me a couple and I told him I wouldn't buy anymore for a while.....FML.....I have alllll these books to read, but I don't have THIS one, and I NEED TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.....If you havent read the first one, do it. do it RIGHT NOW!*

**MARCH 20:** *ooooooooooooooooooooo.....Im going to read this now, haha. Apparently my husband can just go broke because I can't stop buying books ;;) ooooooops.*

#### **MARCH 21:**

*WAIT...wait....it's over????? no! it can't be....go back....I read it too fast!!!!*

*I freaking loved the first one.....but I FUCKING LOVE THIS ONE!! it was awesome...and heartbreaking...and confusing....and happy and awesome.....and amazing....and beautiful...and awesome.....did I say awesome? I meant it was AWESOME.*

*I love Ry. ...I love her personality and although she does stupid things, it's for a good reason and it's written*

~~in a way that I can't be irritated with (like SOMEONE.....in another book \*insurgent\*). And then there is Darren...I loved and hated him.....he keeps you wondering until the end what the hell is going on with him....I wanted to slap him.....a lot...and maybe punch him in the throat once or a hundred times.....I want him to be a book boyfriend but idk yet....~~

**....yep, I thought about it...of course he is :)**

*Rachel, you are awesome!! I'm excited for the 3rd. SO SO SO excited...so if you wanted to just finish it already and release it tomorrow (I'd say today but I figured I'd be nice and understanding...) I'd be okay with that.*

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**Inge says**

**3.5 stars**

*I received a free copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.*

I have to give Carter this: that woman knows how to keep me reading.

The first chapter excluded, I read the entire book in a day and a morning. Even though I had some issues with the book, I could not put it down. I had to know what happened next, if Ryiah finally grew some brain cells (the answer was usually no), if Ryiah and Darren would get together already (also usually no). It's an engaging story for sure.

So let's start with the positives.

#### **The world-building**

Still one of my favourite things about this series. I love the world that Carter created. I love the Academy. I love the types of magic, the pain casting, the Alchemy, the Restoration. I think it's a system that's really well thought out, and it works. Don't get me wrong, I still want to go to Hogwarts, but... the Academy would be a nice second choice. Actually, scratch that. I don't want to run until I vomit. But I like the idea.

#### **The battle scenes**

Carter knows how to write fight scenes and she does this about every other chapter. I'm not big on fight scenes, but I really liked these. I like how every Combat lesson was something different (and bless Lord Byron with his sexist ways, so annoying yet so funny). I especially loved the mock battles – they reminded me of Capture the Flag, only a tad more lethal.

#### **Derrick**

Since this story has a four-year time frame, we meet Ryiah and Alex's younger brother Derrick more and more often, and he is the cutest. He definitely has his older brother's charisma combined with Ryiah's penchant for having a big mouth and it was just lovely.

#### **The forbidden love**

Still love the idea of Ryiah and Darren wanting to be together, but they can't, because Darren is a prince and (view spoiler). I love a friendship where you can insult the other without any consequences, and this is just that.

My main problem with this book was **the love triangle**. THE LOVE TRIANGLE. Love triangles and I don't go hand in hand skipping around the country to begin with, but this one was particularly exhausting. Ryiah can't be with Darren, so she steals someone else's boyfriend because she knows he likes her too, and tries to make herself believe she's in love with him instead. Then she goes off kissing Darren again. It's enough to make anyone seasick.

I love Ryiah and Darren and I totally warmed up to them again towards the end, but while I was cheering them on last time, I could not cheer for them this time. Because Ryiah was cheating and leading another guy on, and I hate that. If you can't be with the guy you really want, stop stringing some poor guy along and choose to be single instead. I realise teenagers will do stupid things, but there's stupid and there's *stupid*. Ryiah's actions were the kind of stupid that made me want to chuck frozen eggrolls at her.

It was just all over the place. "*I like Darren. Now I like the other guy. Now I like Darren again. Now Darren is ignoring me. So I shall ignore him back! Now he kisses me again.*" Those guys change their minds more often than I change underwear. The constant back and forth was giving me whiplash, and it really bothered me for a good chunk of the book. Sometimes it felt like all Ryiah did was train for Combat or worry about guys. I think I would've liked it more if the romance had just been the forbidden relationship aspect, without the love triangle.

Having said that, I couldn't help but like the book, because there's so much to like. There's a lot going on in this book because it's got a four-year time span, which was a bit confusing at times, but otherwise worked fairly well. I liked being back with Ella and Alex, loved Ian (view spoiler), Eve (view spoiler), and even Priscilla (view spoiler). And I'm really looking forward to read about Ryiah's time as a mage (view spoiler).

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