



Oasis in the Clouds

Esther (Queen of Fantasy)

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Niri wakes up in a beautiful garden, and finds that she has no memories. She is sure she will spend the remainder of her days there, until an unknown friend comes to her aide and reveals the truth about her personal paradise. Discovering that she is Wicca, she embarks on a journey to learn about her powers, the extent of which surprises her at every turn. She must ultimately retrieve her memories and help the higher order of witches imprison the Wicca who stole her memories before she takes the kingdom for herself. A mighty task for a woman of only seventeen.

Oasis in the Clouds Details

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From Reader Review Oasis in the Clouds for online ebook

Sassa Margot says

Oasis in the Clouds
C. Esther
YA Fantasy, 248 pages. \$9.99 paperback, \$2.99 Kindle

Dragons and a Complex and Nuanced Tale of Frenemies

Disclosure: I received this book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

When I finish a book, I close my eyes for a moment and ask myself, “What stands out? What do I first think of or feel having met this story and these characters and this world?” In the case of YA fantasy author C. Esther’s “Oasis in the Clouds,” the first book in her “When Worlds Collide” series, the answer came fast and strong.

Dragons.

C. Esther portrays for her readers the most fully realized dragons I’ve ever had the privilege of meeting in literature, with distinct personalities and a well-developed role and history in the world. Close on the heels of the several dragons Esther introduces to readers would be her gift for showing us the reality, a moment-by-moment gritty reality, of riding those dragons, and learning to control one’s magical powers and other joyful duties of being a fantasy heroine. Thanks to Esther, I now know what it is to ride a dragon, to see magic particles take shape and learn how to shape them myself. For this, I thank her with my whole heart, for she has gloriously captured the essence of fantasy in making these experiences so real for readers.

The story itself is a classic fantasy journey quest, of an heir who must recover her birthright and claim the destiny intended for her. Various skills must be discovered and mastered, allies befriended, enemies sought and overcome, and the world restored to its rightful order. All very well and good, and having read and forgotten more stories of this type than I can now remember, I can attest that this part of the journey is straightforward and solidly done if predictable enough.

More unexpected and special, though, is the unique relationship between heroine and villain in this story. Using the devices of the need to recover stolen memories from the villain, and the heroine’s inborn ability to retrieve selected memories of her forebears, the story is structured to give us an uncommonly deep understanding of the villain and the villain’s motivations, an understanding made richer by the friendship the two once shared. I often had an odd but distinct sense that the author’s personal experience may be closer to that of the villain than of the pampered princess heroine Niri, for Wicca Melody’s anguish over her terrible choices was so sympathetically and believably portrayed and the reasons, twisted though they may be, behind her choices deeply rooted in the villain’s own vividly portrayed personal suffering. Out of sympathy for the Wicca Melody, I found myself rooting for some kind of rapprochement between Niri and her former friend, knowing all the while that in the realpolitik of a proper fantasy world, where villains must be overcome, my hope was a foolish and vain one. Major kudos for creating a sympathetic villain along with a likable enough heroine and a complex and nuanced relationship between the two frenemies.

I also found myself thinking long and hard about the ending. I don’t want to write a review with spoilers, so I’ll have to speak around things a bit. The predictable punishment of the villain at the end of such a fantasy

story occurred, yes, but in a fresh and, I must say, somewhat disturbing way. I found myself pondering how I felt about the heroine after she executed such a punishment on her rival. Without sharing where I came down on the matter, I will say the author's decision on this matter was neither obvious nor expected, and certainly falls in far more interesting and morally ambiguous territory than one usually finds in more typical black and white YA fantasy. As for the outcome for the heroine at the end of this book's quest, I have both hands clapped over my mouth lest I spill any beans regarding the wholly unexpected and magnificent choice the author made for Crown Princess Niri. Well done, brava!

The book itself is obviously lovingly written and carefully edited, although the honest part of the review compels mention of a few nits on writing style and craft. While punctuation and spelling are otherwise flawless throughout, the writer or editor occasionally mangles homonyms (taught/taut, phased/fazed) or tosses in modern business memo jargon, e.g. "process the information." The nit that caused this grumpy old curmudgeon the most distress was the use of "Crowned Princess" in place of "Crown Princess." As citizen of a loud democratic republic that long ago overthrew our monarchical chains, perhaps I am mistaken in believing "Crown Princess" to be the correct term for an heir to the throne whose royal parents are still alive and ruling, for if she were crowned, then she would be Queen Regnant and no longer Royal Princess. But these are the difficulties of a pedant and not those of most readers.

On more of a style and personal preference side, I found the writing style to tend toward over-explaining at times, whether on dialogue tags, emotions or facts that we already knew or could easily guess. Perhaps that extra attention to explaining the whys and wherefores of a story is necessary in fantasy for young readers, but the tendency occasionally slowed the flow and pacing of the story for this reader. However, I forgot all my complaints every time the dragons took flight or Niri learned a new skill, so in the grand scheme of things these nits are unimportant and will not harm the reading experience for most readers.

Recommendation: wholeheartedly recommended for young readers of fantasy, especially those who have longed to meet a dragon. I can still taste the wind blowing in my face as my dragon dives and I desperately hang on lest I fall. Thank you to the author for sharing this experience with me.

The Book Whisperers says

New Author Spotlight!! Caitlin Esther

Just in time for your weekend reading we have a new YA author for you all to check out. Her new book *Oasis in the Clouds*.

Oasis in the Clouds

If you think the cover is awesome wait till you read the book. The main character Niri wakes up in a beautiful garden with no memory of who she is or how she got there she believes she's going to spend the rest of her life alone in this beautiful paradise..but come on!!! This is YA fiction you and I both know that's not gonna happen.

Once of Niri's friends from the life she can't remember finds her and brings her out of the garden where she discovers that a powerful Wicca stole her memories. Now Niri has to fight to regain what was taken from her and save the kingdom.

This is an action packed, fast paced read and it's the first book in what will be a series so no spoilers but don't expect everything to be wrapped up by the end of the book.

I thoroughly enjoyed this story and I want to thank C. Esther for thinking of us when she reached out for a book review. The characters are so well developed you'll swear you can still hear them talking long after you finish the last page. Niri's journey through this first book is daunting and you'll find yourself cheering out loud and gasping in dismay as she discovers the powers that she didn't know she had. C. Esther doesn't skimp on the secondary characters either which sets her up in my humble opinion as a great story teller. Truly I can't decide which of the characters I like best and that almost never happens to me. As a lifelong reader I'm usually pretty set by the end of the first book on who I'm going to like and who I'm not but C. Esther makes it too hard to pick a favorite that I find I just like them all. Also dragons!!! I have always been obsessed with dragons since I was a little girl I even have a collection of them from all over the world so how awesome was it that one of the secondary characters is a dragon! His name is Arach and he's the one that comes to warn Niri of impending danger. He is AWESOME!

If you have been a long time reader of our book review blog then you know that between the two of us I'm the one that LOVES the villains. A good villain is essential to a story like this and because I'm such a fan of the bad guy I'm also extremely picky about my ratings of them. I am beyond pleased to announce that you will love to hate the villain in this story. The Wicca Melody is delightfully wicked. She is so awful that you'll find yourself going mafia on this chick.

You can pick up this book online at Amazon, Kobe books, googlebooks, barnes and noble, and apple i-books and slip into another dimension this weekend.

Katherine Espano says

This engaging YA novel is a sweet and light read that has the feel of a fable. At its heart, it is a story of friendship gone wrong between Niri and Melody. This author shows much promise in her writing. The characters are likable, and for the most part, the language is clear and smooth with steady pacing.

Young adult fantasy readers will enjoy Niri's adventures. The clean nature of this book and easy style would also make it accessible to middle-grade readers. The ending has an interesting twist, but it may not be completely emotionally satisfying for some young readers. I look forward to seeing more novels from this new author. I could easily see Esther delving into some lovely, joyful middle-grade narratives, or perhaps even entering the darker world of adult novels. Whatever choice this author ultimately makes, I'm sure her stories will make for an engaging read. Overall, I enjoyed *Oasis in the Clouds* and recommend it to young adult fantasy readers.

I received a free copy of this book for an unbiased review.

Vivien says

More of a 3.5

When I started the book, I really enjoyed the writing. I thought it was really smooth and it had a really nice flow. As I got deeper into the book, the writing began to get wordy and boring. Don't get me wrong the story is great! A bit predictable, but still great. I don't understand why this is a series though.

I'm also confused by the cover and title because I find it awfully misleading. The title and the illustration clashes too. I'm also not that pleased with the age of the character. This is a YA book, but the main character was not in the YA "range", a little too old. I think 16-18 is the ideal age. The vibe of the book is also slightly misleading. It more middle grade than YA. As you can see, I'm conflicted about "age range".

I really liked reading how Niri accessed her magic. I don't know, it just felt "visceral". But sometimes the details went overboard. Tone down the details, delete repetition, and info dumps.

Hobart says

This originally appeared at The Irresponsible Reader.

I started this with a degree of trepidation -- I've been burned lately by sub-par fantasy novels, and try as I might, I couldn't ignore that when I pulled this up. Thankfully, it took less than a chapter to dispel the trepidation, and not much longer to win me over.

Niri is the Crown Princess and the subject of prophecy. Which is why she's been kidnapped, imprisoned in an idyllic floating island, and had her memory wiped. Or so she's been told by a rescuer. She's really not sure, because, well, that whole memory wipe thing.

Why don't bad guys, misguided people's champions, pranksters, etc. ever learn what prophecy means before trying to defeat it? We're not talking weather forecasting, punditry, or statistical analysis -- we're talking *prophecy*. It's going to happen. (not really a spoiler, here) Sure, we'd lose out on some good stories if not for this stubborn refusal to pay attention to definition -- or self-deception. And, it needs to be remembered, not every prophecy is going to be interpreted correctly.

Anyway, I need to jump off of that particular rabbit trail . . . her rescuer helps her start to retrieve her memories, as well as to develop magical abilities she didn't know she had (even before the memory wipe), in an effort to confront her kidnapper, fulfill the prophecy and save the kingdom.

The book blurbs give away less than most, and I'm going to try to honor that here, so that's it for plot from me.

I liked the characters -- the King and Queen aren't as useless as most authors would make them, Niri's kid sister is a pretty good character, Love Interest Guy seems pretty decent, too. Niri's allies are great (I wouldn't have minded the snarky one being snarkier). I liked Niri and started rooting for her almost instantly. The villain of the story is believable and fairly sympathetic. Really well-drawn.

The writing is warm and engaging -- it could be better, some of the dialogue is stilted; there are goofs like using "implicated" instead of "implemented" (just a guess, but given context, I'm betting that's what she was going for); commas out of place, someone having a "photo" in a fantasy kingdom -- minor, and relatively rare, goofs. The story and people C. Esther has wrapped around these flubs are entertaining and compelling enough that you shake them off and move on.

This is a fun book -- it could've used a little more polishing, sharpening up some plot points and character beats a little. But it's good enough as it is to recommend it. Fun, a little out of the norm, with a satisfying conclusion. That's good enough for me. Check this one out.

***Disclaimer:** I received a copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest opinion. Honest, not punctual. Really sorry for the delay, C. Esther.*

Hannah Charlesworth says

I was contacted by the author of this lovely book (thank you again!). I do enjoy reading upcoming authors books and also appreciate being of help to the book world by reading and reviewing such new work.

This novel follows Niri as our main character who has awoken in a beautiful garden but has no memories of how she came to be there and seems to be unable to find a way out. As Niri carries on spending her days in her 'paradise', she eventually comes across a friend (a dragon) who explains she has been imprisoned by a witch and that she herself is Wicca. Niri must now find a way out of the clouds, recover her memories and imprison the Wicca who stole her memories.

I always look forward to reading books that have a magical element to them. Though this wasn't one of those books that was fuelled by action/anger/darkness or that sort of thing. This was more of a magical journey with elements of mystery I suppose. Not sure how else to explain! But this was a nicely flowing storyline and was definitely easy to read which gave it that fast paced feeling. I read this book in only two short sittings because of this. It's also nice to take a break from horror/action to read something which is a lot easier on the mind. The characters were also nicely developed and there was quite a lot of description (which could possibly have been damped down on) but sometimes books can be a lot more different to this i.e. not enough description or overly developed. I wouldn't say the descriptions put me off but it didn't effect the story as it was. I did enjoy this book overall and I will look forward to seeing how and where the next books in the series go.

Overall, this is definitely a solid piece of work especially as a first time YA book by this author. I think the series will be also be solid and will definitely be read by many. A nicely written piece and definitely something to whisk you off from those books that make for hard reading or if you want a break from all the high action. Thanks again!

Liz says

Niri is a 20 y/o Princess and has very nice and lovable Royal family members. Younger sister Isabelle is 16 and the King and Queen are just a picture perfect fairytale come true. The story has elements of magic. Royal Court has always been assisted by a Wicca who's chosen by the Coven and as a bonus, the story has dragons. I liked Arach the dragon. Reserved and grumpy but totally cute.

While the plot was holeless (I know, leave me at it, it's a word!) and the characters entirely developed I would have liked to have more pace and race. The writing has no flaws, but there was a lot of description, inner dialogue and turmoil on Niri's part. I guess, a very coming of age feeling about it really. Niri finds herself in a rather strange situation, with no memories and as a reader you'll be taken on a path of finding out exactly what happened, where her memories are, standing up to the antagonist and making a huge decision with a neat little twist in the ending. I liked it. I really liked the ending. Talking about the villain... I think, all in all I find the villain the most developed character in the book. Their past, present and decision making

process is very clear and there will be no question what-so-ever as to why the villain is doing what they're doing. I like a character that gives me mixed emotions- while they're the bad guy, I can still understand where they're coming from and it's a great dilemma to have as a reader.

I don't know what to tell you guys. It was a really nice book but I felt a bit underwhelmed. I don't want to start comparing books here but I've read some mighty stuff over time and I am starting to realize, more and more so, that when I read I need things to be explosive. Like so explosive I cannot believe my eyes at the stuff I'm reading. My life is just so freaking boring and routine that when I read I want to be stirred, shaken and stunned. I recognize that not every book can do that for me, and every book shouldn't. It just tells me I'm starting to develop a set taste for certain genres.

So to be fair, I need to separate my personal preference and give credit where credit is due. *Oasis in the Clouds* is a solid YA fantasy book. It's entirely safe and adventurous for the younger ones and I appreciate the skill and thought that needs to be considered when writing for a certain audience. And for the intended audience it's a perfect book. No swearing, no graphic scenes, a bit of young love and quite a bit of food for thought. Niri could be a perfect role model when thinking about consideration and of respect, values and determination.

I received a copy of the book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

My rating: 3 ***- I liked it. And I would definitely, without a doubt, recommend this book for an adventurous, mystical experience for readers who like comfort and safe reading.

Sanna Hines says

What new can we say about a princess, a prophecy and dragons?

As it turns out, rather a lot.

Princess Niri awakens in a magical pastoral paradise, but she's alone and bereft of memories. It takes a cantankerous dragon to free her and to start her on the road to her destiny. Before she gets there, she must overcome the adversary who abducted her. Niri must also learn essential secrets about herself.

The story rises above simple fairytale due to the richness of descriptions and imaginative world-building. The author has clearly put a lot of thought into the hows and whys of such things as dragon riding and magical practice. Characters have complex personalities. Plot twists provide excitement and surprise.

Oasis in the Clouds is good fantasy for all but the very youngest readers.

Clabe Polk says

The Crown Princess as Wicca? Oh really?

In the land of Gorath, the monarchy is backed by the magic of a Wicca. The Wicca and the monarchy have a

long history in which each Wicca appointed as an advisor to the throne is required to sacrifice home and family in order to serve. There is a prophesy that a crown princess would be born, the first in centuries, and that this crown princess would serve as both Queen and Wicca, serving both functions. Princess Niri appears to fulfill that prophesy; accordingly Wicca Melody feels threatened by it.

Taking steps to imprison the princess whom she has known and loved since birth, Melody embarks on a conspiracy to mislead the royal family as to the whereabouts of the princess. She would have been successful except for the nearly unprecedented intervention of a dragon.

The author takes us on a journey through the wonder of the discovery of magic, through a dark conspiracy in which a person from a very bad background conspires to remain in a position of influence just a little bit longer. The reader is at once sympathetic to Princess Niri, while condemning Melody through strong feelings of empathy for her difficult position. It's easy to understand Melody's position, if not her means of accomplishing her goal. Meanwhile, Princess Niri acquires a few loyal friends along the way with extraordinary powers that will stay with her long into the future.

Despite deception and heartache, *Oasis in the Clouds* is a sweet tale of friendship, of overcoming obstacles, and ensuring that evil plots do not succeed. It has a most unusual and unexpected ending that makes it a great book for younger readers who love fantasy.

Aliya DalRae says

Niri wakes up in a beautiful garden, and finds that she has no memories. She is sure she will spend the remainder of her days there, until an unknown friend comes to her aide and reveals the truth about her personal paradise. Discovering that she is Wicca, she embarks on a journey to learn about her powers, the extent of which surprises her at every turn. She must ultimately retrieve her memories and help the higher order of witches imprison the Wicca who stole her memories before she takes the kingdom for herself. A mighty task for a woman of only seventeen.
