



Shadow Scale

Rachel Hartman

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***Seraphina* took the literary world by storm with 8 starred reviews and numerous “Best of” lists. At last, her eagerly awaited sequel has arrived—and with it comes an epic battle between humans and dragons.**

The kingdom of Goredd: a world where humans and dragons share life with an uneasy balance, and those few who are both human *and* dragon must hide the truth. Seraphina is one of these, part girl, part dragon, who is reluctantly drawn into the politics of her world. When war breaks out between the dragons and humans, she must travel the lands to find those like herself—for she has an inexplicable connection to all of them, and together they will be able to fight the dragons in powerful, magical ways.

As Seraphina gathers this motley crew, she is pursued by humans who want to stop her. But the most terrifying is another half dragon, who can creep into people’s minds and take them over. Until now, Seraphina has kept her mind safe from intruders, but that also means she’s held back her own gift. It is time to make a choice: Cling to the safety of her old life, or embrace a powerful new destiny?

Praise for *Seraphina*:

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A *New York Times* Bestseller

An Indie Bestseller

Winner of the William C. Morris Debut Award

Winner of the Cybil Award for Teen Fantasy and Science Fiction

An Amazon Top 20 Teen Book of the Year

A Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year

A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Teen Book of the Year

A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year

A *Library Journal* Best Young Adult Literature for Adults Selection

A *Booklist* Editors’ Choice

An ABA New Voices Pick

A *Publishers Weekly* Flying Start Author

An ALA-ALSC Notable Children’s Book

An ALA-YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults Book

Recipient of 8 Starred Reviews

“Beautifully written, well-rounded characters, and some of the most interesting dragons I’ve read in fantasy for a long while. An impressive debut novel; I can’t wait to see what Rachel Hartman writes next.”

—Christopher Paolini, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eragon*

“A novel that will appeal to both fans of Christopher Paolini’s *Eragon* series and Robin McKinley’s *The Hero and the Crown*.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

Shadow Scale Details

Date : Published March 10th 2015 by Random House Books for Young Readers

ISBN :

Author : Rachel Hartman

Format : Kindle Edition 610 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Dragons, Fiction, High Fantasy

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From Reader Review Shadow Scale for online ebook

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

Seraphina is a half dragon/half human musician who, in the last book, was trying to hide her identity from those around her because, in this world where dragons are real, her existence was considered an abomination by religious authorities. How would a human and a dragon come together to make such a child, you ask? Dragons can take human form when they choose to, the trouble is that, they're not very human-like in their actions and behavior, even when they do. Dragons consider emotions to be beneath logic, so, to put it in Star Trek terms, Hartman wrote them like Vulcans.

Seraphina, for a young adult novel, was rather complex. Not only was Seraphina dealing with her species identity, there's also religious conflicts, internal/emotional conflicts, a meditation based "magic" system, a burgeoning war between the humans and dragons, factions on both sides who are opposed to the majority, dragon culture and hierarchy questions, tricky cross species friendships, the obligatory romance that every young adult book seems it MUST have and, in *Shadow Scale*, the added complication of Seraphina trying to find other half dragons like herself. It's mind-boggling really when you write it all down and try to sort it out. I enjoyed trying to keep it all straight but I can see how *Seraphina* might not be a good fit for reluctant readers. There is a long list of characters at the end so that if you get confused, you can look each one up. If that kind of thing makes you crazy, you may want to pass on this one.

Seraphina has really come into her own in this story. Hartman certainly doesn't skimp on the characterizations: *"These scales, my visible emblem of shame... which I had hidden, suppressed, and even once tried to pry off with a knife- how was i now able to laugh about them with strangers? Something had changed in me. I was such a long way from where I had started."* pg 436, ebook.

My favorite parts of this book were anything to do with dragons! :*"Dragons lay one egg at a time, and we grow slowly. Each death is significant, and so we settle our differences with litigation, or with an individual combat at most. It has never been our way to fight on this scale; if the war continues, our whole species loses."* pg 38, ebook.

Seraphina has a dream- to bring all the half-dragons like herself together to create a family, of sorts: *"I am on a mission to find all our kind. Goredd requires our assistance with the dragon civil war, but once that's over, I hope we might form a community of half-dragons, supporting and valuing each other."* Dame Okra rolled her eyes so hard I feared she'd give herself an aneurysm." pg 112, ebook.

The intolerance taught by the religion in Seraphina's world was terrifying, perhaps because it sounded so real: *"I was no great hand at scripture- I avoided most of it- but I knew every line written about my kind, thanks to the pamphlet Orma had made me. "Half human, all malevolence" was one of Abaster's best. Or: "If a woman hath lain with the beast, beat her with a mallet until she miscarries or dies. Let it be both, lest her horrifying issue live to claw its way out, or the woman live to conceive evil again."* pg 287, ebook. One of the main messages of *Seraphina* is tolerance for different cultures- that everyone has something positive to contribute in their own way.

As much as I gripe about the romance that always crops up in the young adult books, at least this one is well written: *"However strenuously the world pulls us apart, however long the absence, we are not changed for being dashed upon the rocks. I knew you then, I know you now, I shall know you again when you come home."* pg 491, ebook. Awww, right?

The reason why I gave this read three stars, instead of more, is because of the ending. (view spoiler)

But, don't let my rating deter you. This is a well written fantasy about dragons- fire breathing, scaled, roaring dragons! There's nothing in here that parents should find objectionable for their teens to read and the messages that it teaches are worth while and should be repeated. Some read alike: Daggerspell by Katharine Kerr (first book in a long, adult series, but, eventually, there's dragons!) or The Last Dragonslayer by Jasper Fforde (appropriate for young adults).

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

Shadow Scale is the long-awaited sequel to our beloved Seraphina, and it's a worthy one. There's no denying the value of Rachel Hartman's prose, the vividness of her imagination, or the quality of her many characters. Shadow Scale may have been "a beast to write", but the end result is a book the likes of which we rarely see.

That's not to say that Shadow Scale is without its issues, but those only come to light when we isolate the book and judge it by much higher standards. When analyzed comparatively, side by side with others of its genre, it becomes abundantly clear that Shadow Scale is a superior work. The clarity of detail in Seraphina's Goredd is marvelous, and the sheer amount of information offered is staggering.

Emotionally, though, Shadow Scale leaves something to be desired.

As much as I appreciate having a heroine that's just as clueless and powerless in extraordinary circumstances as I myself would be, I expected more from Seraphina Dombeg. I can forgive much stumbling, but I find lack of thought interspersed with bouts of self-pitying truly exasperating and disappointing. In Shadow Scale, Seraphina seemed to just wander about aimlessly, suffering defeat after defeat and not doing much about it.

To be fair, Hartman gave her a formidable enemy. As another one of Seraphina's kind, albeit far more powerful, Jannoula appeared to be everywhere at once. It needs to be said, however, that all-powerful enemies generally lack nuance, and the very fact that Jannoula arrived everywhere before Seraphina by anticipating her every move and being much more clever, while Seraphina kept losing precious time by focusing on all the wrong things, was nothing short of exasperating.

For most of this book, Seraphina's situation seemed to be hopeless on all sides. Luckily, the ending gives us some closure, although it too is a bit too open for my taste. Clean cut endings aren't always the best choice, but after six hundred pages of struggle, a more substantial epilogue would have been a nice reward.

There remains the fact that Hartmann writes YA fantasy of unparalleled quality and that her worldbuilding lends itself to a ten-book series, and not just a duology. My own emotionality aside, these books will likely become classics, and their status will be well-justified.

Valeria says

Finds out there's a sequel

But then see's publication date

Is no longer happy

Lisa Andres says

This was, hands down, one of the most frustrating and disappointing sequels I have ever read.

****Warning: Spoilers Below****

First of all, I have to say, I loved Seraphina. Devoured it. Stayed up ridiculously late reading "just one more chapter." And I love those kinds of books -- they usually inspire an undying loyalty to the author. But in this case...I'm more than a little angry. (Which is not a good thing to be at 3:00 in the morning.)

Where to start?

Perhaps with the pacing. Seraphina took a while to get into -- but then, so did *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. In both cases, it took about 100 pages -- those first 100 seemed to drag on interminably, but then, it was like a switch was flipped and things just took off, racing steadily towards a perfectly timed climax.

In the sequel -- and, I will admit, I had NO idea that this was a two-book series; I honestly thought it was a trilogy and everything that Hartman was setting up seemed to reinforce that -- the pacing was just...off. I anticipated a slow start and thought that things were starting to pick up about a 1/3 of the way through, with the (re-)introduction of Jannoula. That's when things started to get interesting.

But most of the first half of the book was Seraphina journeying places. She went to Ninys and then to SamSam and then to Porphyry and then, eventually, to Lab Four. And all along the way we met brand new characters, had to establish a clear setting (which, ultimately, didn't matter, because we never went back to that country!), and forge new relationships. Not much happened -- or, at least, what did happen fell into a quickly established pattern: Seraphina arrives somewhere new. She meets new people. She searches for ityasaari. She attempts to befriend them only to find out that Jannoula has already gotten to them. EVERYONE falls for Jannoula, leaving Seraphina pretty much alone and miserable for the majority of the book.

Gone is my strong, witty, sensitive heroine. Gone are her relationships with her family, with Orma, with

Kiggs, with Selda. Gone is the court intrigue, the suspicious characters, the MUSIC. (The first book dealt SO much with music and now...it's just gone.)

And as long as Seraphina is journeying places, not much happens. Even when things do happen, Seraphina seems to be sidelined for one reason or another.

The novel only seemed to pick up once Seraphina arrives back in Goredd -- perhaps because we're back in familiar territory and we get a chance to see her interacting with all the characters she's established relationships with. But even then...everyone from the first book is conspicuously absent and all the other ityasaari are hooked into Jannoula so, again, Seraphina is alone and miserable. Most of the last 1/4 of the novel is Seraphina trying to find a way to defeat Jannoula and failing because, apparently, Jannoula is, like, the best evil villain EVAR.

Things just...fell apart here. Why is Jannoula so persuasive? Why can she persuade everyone -- humans and ityasaari alike -- but none of the other ityasaari can? She is ALWAYS one-step ahead of Seraphina because she can, quite conveniently, be in everyone's heads at once. How does she manage it? How does she manage to siphon information from everyone? Early on, she can really only manage one person at a time. It just doesn't make sense.

And don't even get me started on Seraphina's mind garden. What was once a really cool, unique concept in the first book just seems to have run away from Hartman. It's inexplicably shrinking this whole book (and I don't think it's a coincidence that Seraphina ultimately abandons it in the end, much like Hartman seems to have done). And all this business with inside-outside houses? It's like wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff; it's more confusing than anything and was incredibly hard to follow.

But Seraphina apparently understood it, even if I didn't, because she has this miraculous epiphany at the end -- literally 95% of the way through the second book - and everything is instantly taken care of in an ending which smacks of deus ex machina. Literally. Seraphina has her miraculous inner realization but, since it's not enough to take care of Jannoula, even with Abdo's help (who has also miraculously reappeared), who intervenes but a larger-than-life monstrous saint. He literally plucks Jannoula off the castle parapets and whisks her away -- to do heaven-knows-what with her; her fate is decidedly unclear.

You know what's NOT unclear though? Two things.

One--the whole big battle between the dragons and the humans and the ityasaari and the neighboring kingdoms? Doesn't happen. This evening, I was talking about the book to my husband, mildly complaining and saying that maybe this book just suffered from middle child syndrome: we'd set up everything here and then get to the good stuff with the climactic battle in the third book. Only...there is no climactic battle. After Jannoula leaves, Queen Glisselda magically restores peace and everything comes up roses. The great, big, belligerent dragons are perfectly content to follow law and order and go back home. WHAT?

Two--Seraphina's fate as a lonely spinster with no one around her in her life. Why? Because all the other ityasaari go home, even Abdo (who decides to return to the temple he once denounced). Okay--they were visitors anyway. Let's focus on the characters we loved in the first book.

Orma? Oh yeah. He DID have his memories excised, despite Jannoula saying that they weren't. He can't remember Seraphina and he may or may not eventually remember her, since he may or may not have made a memory pearl.

That's okay--Seraphina has her other family right? Her dad and stepmother and half-siblings? Nope. Not even mentioned in this book.

But even that's okay, because Seraphina still has her BFF, Selda, and her love, Kiggs. **WRONG**. And this is where I completely and utterly lost faith in the novel. We have been building the relationship between Kiggs and Seraphina since the first book -- they are completely and utterly compatible, complement each other, and love each other. And once Glisselda finds out, she gives her blessing -- because, apparently, she's in **LOVE WITH SERAPHINA TOO**. Is she a lesbian? Is she bisexual? Is she just going through a phase? No one knows -- because this is casually thrown in and then never acknowledged again.

Unless you count the fact that Kiggs and Glisselda get married. **MARRIED**. Despite the fact that they **BOTH** love Seraphina, they decided to marry each other. And all of this is, again, casually thrown into the end of the novel in **ONE SENTENCE**. We don't even get a satisfactory answer--they want to honor their grandmother's wishes? (That didn't seem to matter before.) Glisselda couldn't imagine marrying anyone else because she had always thought that she would marry Kiggs? (That's a complete cop-out, even if you take into account that most royal marriages are political alliances.) And Kiggs was basically married to Goredd? No. Just no. He loves Seraphina and this whole marriage-isn't-actually-about-love is an awful, unsatisfactory message to readers who just slogged through 900 pages.

TheBookSmugglers says

Shortly following the events of *Seraphina*, *Shadow Scale* shows us a different side of the eponymous heroine. For the first time in her life, Seraphina is free. For the first time every, she's free from the fear of hiding her half-dragon, half-human parentage, and lives as a valued, important, even loved member of Goredd's court. Serving openly as a trusted adviser to Queen Glisselda, Seraphina helps Selda grapple with her new rulership in the midst of a draconian war that threatens the lives of all in Goredd and to the south. In order to protect from impending attack and devastation, the Queen turns to Seraphina and the legend of a magical net that she and her other halfling kind, the Ityasaari, alone can cast. It is up to Seraphina to gather the other half-human half-dragons she has cultivated in her mind garden, and band them together to protect the home, the people, and the dragons she loves.

Fellow readers and Seraphina lovers, this is a hard review for me to write.

It's hard because I loved Seraphina so very much when it first came out. I loved the pressures that Seraphina faced in Goreddian society, the thread of music and magic that ran throughout the book, the quiet romantic storyline between Seraphina and Kiggs. I loved the lyrical writing and the fascinating realm of magic and draconic lore that Rachel Hartman wove into every page of that first book. This is, in some ways, an unfairness to *Shadow Scale* because I came into the book with such lofty expectations and hopes -- especially considering that I had to wait years for this sequel.

So in full transparency, all cards on the metaphorical table: *Shadow Scale* is nowhere near as fulfilling as *Seraphina*. While it's still a solid fantasy novel in its own right, *Shadow Scale* never quite manages to hit the high, sweet notes that made me fall in love with the first book.

Now please do not misunderstand me: there are plenty of things to love about *Shadow Scale*. The mere fact that there is more to Seraphina's story is intoxicating, and I love the expansion to her world that Hartman employs in this second novel. The different cities, cultures, customs, foods, and people are varied and

fascinating (I particularly enjoyed the completely unexpected inclusion of Lab Four). I also very much loved getting to know other half-dragons on Seraphina's travels and their interactions with each other; if you'll recall, Seraphina is one of the lucky few who can (and, more importantly, who has) passed for human, but not everyone she meets is able to do the same (in particular, the figure of doctor Nedouard is so striking and solitary at the onset of the book). The politics of Goredd for both human and dragon (and ityasaari) are also wonderfully detailed and a strong point for *Shadow Scale*, as the motivations for war and Seraphina's mission to gather her half-dragon brethren make sense.

For each of these very good things, however, there are... well, less good things. The plot, on the whole, is incongruous and oddly stunted when it comes to pacing. Much of the book follows the same pattern: Seraphina travels to find another ityasaari, finds them incredibly easily and with a high success rate, but then STUFF HAPPENS and there are problems because of the Bad Guy (I don't want to spoil anything but it's pretty obvious from the start). This happens several times for the first half to two-thirds of the book – there is much hand-wringing and Seraphina feeling tired, and lonely, and disheartened. Where is Seraphina's agency? It's almost as though in this novel, the heroine and heart of book 1 has become relegated to the sidelines of book 2. For all that she is the one on whose abilities, smarts, and diplomacy the fate of Goredd rests upon, Seraphina is decidedly without power, happiness, or drive. (Also MIND CONTROL BAD GUY POWERS are an incredibly frustrating cop-out. That is all I will say about that.)

More important than an uneven, repetitive plot, however, *Shadow Scale* is disappointing because it lacks the heart of Seraphina. Where is the music that was so potent and present in the first novel (and prequel novella)? Where is the sensitivity and the underlying romance, and the emotional identity that powers the first book? For that matter, what the heck really happens with Seraphina's Dream Garden and why is it so quickly and easily abandoned? Why is there a Deus Ex Machina of an ending, that effectively dislodges the Big Bad Guy (who has been pulling all of the strings so far ahead of Seraphina since the get-go)? Why is the war, similarly, so easily resolved so late in the book without the big flippin' battle the book description promises and that *Shadow Scale* seemingly builds up to?

Frustrations.

The one thing about the book's resolution that I did appreciate, however, concerns the romantic subplot between Seraphina, Kiggs, and Selda. The romantic subplot is firmly relegated to the background in *Shadow Scale* (as is Kiggs, basically), because though Kiggs and Seraphina love each other so very dearly, there is duty to consider and Seraphina genuinely cares for her darling friend (and Queen) Selda. I love the idea of the subversion that Rachel Hartman employs here with Selda and Seraphina's relationship, and the ultimate direction of the royal political marriage... at least in theory. In execution? I truly wish that more time was spent on this particular subplot and ending, instead of being glossed over in passing.

But, of course, your mileage may vary. For me, *Shadow Scale* sadly was not quite what I had hoped for in a sequel – certainly, it's not what I had hoped for as the second half of a duology.

I still enjoyed parts of the book very much, but I had hoped for more.

Keertana says

When it comes to *Shadow Scale*, I confess I remain conflicted. Hartman's highly anticipated sequel to *Seraphina* is the type of novel I've gone and pinned all my hopes and dreams on. I loved *Seraphina* like I've

loved few other books when I first read it and its beauty never dwindled upon my multiple re-reads. Thus, I expected to adore *Shadow Scale* just as much as I loved its predecessor. Unfortunately, though *Shadow Scale* is a beautifully written sequel and a truly impeccable ending to this unexpected duet, I still have a qualm too many with it.

Shadow Scale picks up roughly three months after the events of *Seraphina* which the country on the verge of civil war. Queen Glissenda and Prince Lucian Kiggs send Seraphina on a mission to gather all the half-dragons she possibly can as magical abilities only they possess may be the key to winning a war against dragons. The first half of *Shadow Scale* is devoted to Seraphina's journey as she travels the kingdom in search of other half-dragons. Hartman's world-building truly shines within these pages for every region of this fictional country is teeming with its own customs, religion, and bias. Everywhere Seraphina travels, she is treated differently as a half-dragon and, what's more, the other half-dragons she meets have endured circumstances far removed from her own. Though Seraphina expects to gather a group of people who can instantly connect to one another due to their shared experiences, the reality is far more complex than she can imagine. Building upon Seraphina's insecurities from its predecessor, *Shadow Scale* continues to challenge Seraphina to think beyond her own life experiences and bind these half-dragons for the betterment, not only of her nation, but of her own heart as well.

Hartman infuses each of these half-dragons with personalities so distinct that getting to know them feels like falling in love with aspects of Seraphina herself. From living in her mind's garden, there is already such a strong link between the strangers Seraphina meets and our beloved heroine herself and though the first half of this novel feels slow, in many ways, as it is the build-up to the tension in the last half, it is also necessary. Despite tackling such a large host of characters, most of them newly introduced in *Shadow Scale*, Hartman maneuvers them with ease and the end result--the reader feeling just as close with nearly ten half-dragons as Seraphina does--is remarkable.

Yet, the first half is not merely about Seraphina discovering and meeting these half-dragons. No, Hartman introduces our villain into these first few hundred pages as well and the depth and moral ambiguity she is given from the start makes *Shadow Scale* a fascinating read. Jannoula, a half-dragon with the capacity to take over the minds of other half-dragons, is both pitiable and dangerous. As Seraphina travels, finding new half-dragons every region she goes to, she also discovers that many of these half-dragons have been possessed by Jannoula who has her own agenda. Though she claims to want to help Seraphina gather the half-dragons, her unwillingness to let go of their minds is frightening, particularly as neither Seraphina nor any other half-dragon knows how to fight her and combat her powers.

Jannoula's shadow follows Seraphina on her journeys in *Shadow Scale* and as the tensions come to a head during the last half of the novel--Seraphina fighting to discover where her uncle Orma is, the half-dragons attempting to expel Jannoula from their minds, the civil war creeping closer to home--Hartman proves her incredible ability to *write*. Just as with *Seraphina*, I couldn't predict the plot twists revealed in the second half of this narrative and the resolution reached by the end was truly satisfying. Moreover, I loved the heart-breaking plot line concerning Seraphina's uncle, Orma. Within the pages of *Shadow Scale* is a rare epilogue that is truly *wonderful*. Although I didn't expect, at first, for *Shadow Scale* to be the end of this short series, I couldn't have asked for a better ending to the duet and Hartman's scope of imagination has convinced me that she will--hopefully!--return to this world as there remain many stories left to be told.

Where my disappointments with this narrative arise, however, are with the romance. *Shadow Scale* could have easily simply been the first half of itself, forcing readers to wait for a third novel to discover how the plot thickened and came to a resolution. By choosing to write a duet, Hartman allows her plot to thrive as readers are able to witness the back-to-back nature of the tensions at once instead of with a year in-between.

Yet, the rich relationships developed in *Seraphina* between our heroine and her friend, Queen Glissenda, or her lover, Lucian Kiggs, are minimal as a result. At just over 600 pages, it would be remiss, likely, of Hartman to extend her narrative for the sake of the romance. Nevertheless, I wish that was the route at hand.

I was incredibly invested in the romance outlined in *Seraphina* and though it reaches a conclusion--of sorts--in *Shadow Scale*, it also leaves many unanswered questions. Moreover, the interactions between Kiggs and Seraphina in *Shadow Scale*, though full of the intelligent conversation these two adore and incredibly supportive, lacked the longing I felt palpable in *Seraphina*. Kiggs isn't a significant character in this plot line and though he is important to Seraphina, there are so many other characters--half-dragons and dragons alike--that her relationship with him doesn't pierce the heart. I wanted much, much more on the romance front, particularly due to some last-minute revelations that were sprung upon readers. Especially because Hartman tells us that there has been much discussion as to matters of the heart but the reader is not privy to these discussions and, on the love story angle, I needed more closure.

With such a large host of characters, Hartman managed to make *Shadow Scale* an incredible novel with distinct character personalities and relationships. I only wish the few we had seen develop in depth in *Seraphina* continue to be as strong in this sequel. While *Seraphina* was a distinctly character-driven tale, *Shadow Scale* is more firmly plot-driven. Nevertheless, Hartman accomplishes so much with this sequel. From her world-building to her plot development and beyond to the diversity of race, sex, and gender that she includes within these pages, *Shadow Scale* feels revolutionary. For fans of *Seraphina* this one is worth waiting for, minor disappointments and all.

Madeline says

When I realized that it was the sequel to *Seraphina*:

When I saw the date:

Why do I have to wait so long?

Steph Sinclair says

Why, hello there, lovely. :D

Ferdy says

Spoilers

So long and boring, I thought it would never end. The only parts I somewhat enjoyed were when Seraphina was back in Goredd or when she was interacting with Comonot, Orma, Eskar or Glisselda. Everything else

was utter rubbish.

-I wasn't impressed that most of the plot consisted of Seraphina travelling to different places so she could find other ityasaari (half-dragons). It was all very repetitive, Seraphina would go somewhere and search for her fellow half-dragons, she'd find them, then there'd be some sort of obstacle that had to be overcome (usually evil Jannoula popping up to cause trouble), then she'd travel to some other place and do the same thing, and rinse and repeat.

All the travelling and the random new characters/places introduced didn't make for engrossing reading. Way too much page time was spent on that instead of on established characters and plot lines.

-The last quarter of the book was more entertaining with Seraphina going back to Goredd and the characters and story finally coming together. The last couple of chapters were quite bad though with some deus ex machina character (Pandowdy) appearing and saving the day, and Seraphina after struggling with her powers through the entire book suddenly having a revelation at the eleventh hour and managing to turn on her snowflake powers and help save the day. It was all very contrived and convenient.

-I wanted there to be more focus on Goredd and the dragon civil war, instead most of the focus was on Seraphina going to random new places and meeting random new people. She just seemed to float from one place to the next feeling sorry for herself and not actually doing much - Abdo had far more agency and sense than her, whereas Seraphina achieved very little apart from meeting some new half-dragons. The ridiculous thing was that if she had stayed at home in Goredd (instead of spending months finding other ityasaari) things would have turned out exactly the same anyway. Seraphina's whole trip was pointless.

Also, whenever things would go wrong like when Abdo, Dame Okra or another ityasaari were taken over by Jannoula or when someone was in danger, Seraphina would just monologue about it and then take her sweet time actually doing anything about it, sometimes she would do absolutely nothing and instead ponder about her loneliness or some rubbish. It was so frustrating.

-For the most part I didn't find Seraphina interesting. Her self-pity, whining, insecurity, naivety, and her constantly blaming herself for everything was boring and beyond irritating. Also, her nobody-understands-me-or-my-inner-pain attitude was nauseating, she really needed to get over herself and realise that she wasn't a speshul snowflake (although annoyingly at the end she did turn out to be a total speshul snowflake). Another thing I disliked about Seraphina was how she only ever seemed to care about the men in her life, it was all about Abdo, Kiggs, or Orma. There weren't any female characters that she truly cared about as much as the menfolk in her life. Bloody typical.

-I wasn't impressed that Jannoula, who was a non-character in the first book was a such a huge, pivotal character in this one. The entire story was more about Jannoula than the dragon civil war/threat of war in Goredd.

Also, what the hell were Jannoula's powers all about? She could randomly enter the minds of some half-dragons and take over their body yet she wasn't able to enter other ityasaari minds? But then magically she could. And sometimes she had complete control over somebody and was able to fully take over, and other times she'd conveniently disappear from a body or just stay in the background all depending on whether it suited the plot or not. She was also able to randomly charm humans by showing them her aura or some rubbish, it came out of nowhere. She was able to do so much with her mind and was super powerful, which didn't add up to her past/lifelong imprisonment, why wasn't she able to somehow use her powers to escape sooner? She seemed to change from powerless prisoner to all powerful being overnight. Jannoula even said she could use that dragon mind trap by herself, what was stopping her from using it to escape sooner? Then there were times where she could only control one person at any given time but in other parts of the story she was able to control dozens. Her powers were inconsistent and made no sense.

-I liked that Kiggs married Glisselda at the end, it was the right thing to do for their country/people. However, the fact that Kiggs/Selda loved each other like brother and sister made it all very creepy and incestuous. But I guess that was realistic since it was a political/arranged marriage.

What did bother me was that despite Kiggs/Selda getting married and starting a life/family together, Seraphina didn't take that as a sign to walk away and move on with her own life. Nope, she decided to be Kiggs's mistress for the rest of her life, and be his dirty secret and live in the shadows of his marriage. I thought by the end she'd grow a backbone and gain some self respect, instead she turned out to be a desperate, pathetic loser.

Seraphina spent her whole life living a lie and hated herself for it, so I expected after all that that she'd finally embrace being free from all the lying and hiding, but the silly cow ended up living an even bigger lie. How could she be happy being the other woman? Why would she give up a chance to live an honest life? Why would she give up the chance to find love again and start a family of her own? Why would she give up so much for Kiggs when he'd done very little for her in return? Why was she happy to demean and degrade herself for a guy who clearly didn't respect or care for her? If Kiggs really loved and respected her, he would have shut Seraphina out of his life so she could have a chance of moving on and finding her own love/family. But the greedy, selfish bastard didn't do that, he only wanted what was best for him, never mind how much he was fucking up Seraphina's life. Also, why was Seraphina so cool with Kiggs having kids with Selda? Did she really have that little respect for herself that she was happy to watch him play happy families with Selda, whilst she got thrown the occasional scraps? He got the best of both worlds whilst she was alone with no kids or family of her own, all she probably got were a few seedy nights with him. Sick, sick, sick.

-Ugh, why do all YA books end with the heroines giving up so much of themselves for a love interest that's treated them like nothing but crap? Why aren't heroines allowed to play the field or fall for someone else later in life? Why are they always stuck with their douchey love interest? Why couldn't Seraphina work on her music or meet someone new and start her own family? Why did she have to be content with being Kiggs's bit on the side? What a horrid ending for a YA heroine. The author could have shown that a young female character could have a healthy and happy ending by being on her own, but no she had to end up with a married man, making her a cheap tart with no self-worth. Seraphina could have reconnected with her family, she could have gone on to education or some other passion, she could have become the backbone of the half-dragons, she could have had loads of different lovers and gone on loads of adventures. But instead, she got to be a mistress. None of it worked for me, Seraphina was a blah heroine for pretty much all the book, but at the end she went from being a blah heroine to a cheap-classless-tart-with-no-morals-or-dignity. Kiggs was even worse than Seraphina, he wasn't honourable or decent, he was a slimy-opportunistic-greedy-slutty-sleazy-loser who only cared about himself. I'm guessing since he was cool with having Seraphina as a mistress, he must have been cool with having loads of other mistresses too. Ugh, I hated him.

-What was with Glisselda kissing Seraphina and saying she was in love with her? It came out of nowhere. Was Glisselda bisexual or gay? And what did Seraphina mean when she said she realised something about herself after the kiss? Why wasn't any of it elaborated on? Did Seraphina suddenly realise she was bisexual after one kiss? Really? Why was Glisselda cool with her husband hooking up with a woman she loved? Yea, I didn't buy the throw away line at the end that Seraphina/Kiggs/Glisselda had a mutual agreement about their relationship and knew what they meant to each other. There were chapters and chapters of pointless travelling yet the author couldn't even be bothered to show what happened between Kiggs/Glisselda/Seraphina and explore the dynamics between them, there was no discussion or thought processes involved. Their ending just didn't fit with what we knew about the characters. Apparently, none of them were bitter or jealous about how things worked out. I was just expected to believe that Seraphina was magically fine with Kiggs being married and having kids with someone else and her not being able to have any of that, that she was perfectly content to never have a family of her own and was fine with hiding her feelings and relationship with Kiggs from everyone. Yea right. And then there was Kiggs

who was apparently okay with being unfaithful to two women despite claiming to love them both, also he didn't seem to care in the slightest that by being with Seraphina he forced her to live another lie. Yet I was meant to believe he was honourable and loved Seraphina when everything actually pointed to him being a low life scum who loved no-one but himself. Whilst Glisselda was supposedly happy to give her blessing to Kiggs/Seraphina shagging around behind her back, even though she was in love with Seraphina, and Kiggs was her husband and would-be-father of her children. Also, it-sort-of-kind-of-might-have been implied that Seraphina would possibly be Glisselda's mistress too, and Kiggs just so happened to be totally fine with that. Ugh, it was all too ridiculous, the characters I'd gotten to know in *Seraphina* and *Shadow Scale* would not be okay with all of that. As fucking if someone like Seraphina who wanted nothing more than family and honesty was cool with being 'the other woman' for the rest of her life and having to live with such a seedy lie. Ugh, no fucking way.

-There wasn't enough Orma or Glisselda, the way their arcs ended was very unsatisfying. I wanted to know more about Glisselda and how she handled her sexuality and queenly duties. Then there was Orma, the best relationship in the books was between Orma and Seraphina and that ended up completely destroyed, there were barely any scenes between the two and when there were any the emotional connection between them was gone because Orma/Seraphina were no longer Orma and Seraphina instead they were pretty much random stranger and Seraphina. Why couldn't Seraphina have one thing at the end that was pure and untouchable? All she got was a sleazy relationship and isolation from any real family. Her and Kiggs and Glisselda weren't family, she was nothing but their bit on the side and possibly the creepy-sort-of-aunt that hung around like a bad smell when it came to their kids. Yea, what a great ending for a YA heroine. Ugh.

-Liked that there were diverse characters.

-The computer/camera/phone like devices seemed out of place and didn't fit in with the fantasy setting.

All in all, I hated it. It was boring and Seraphina's 'HEA' as a mistress to a married man was disgraceful.

Melodramaticfool says

2015? ARE YOU SHITTING ME?

Angelica says

2014!!!!!!

Seriously how are you going to publish one book in 2012 and then the next two years after. That's not cool, not cool at all man! The suspense is absolutely killing me, when it comes out I might have forgotten important things about Seraphina and will have to skim through it again or something. I'm just, just:

UPDATE 4/30/13

So...it has a title. How very interesting. Now I can look forward to the cover release, then finally the actual book!!!! *looks at release date, cries on the inside *

Why Rachel why?!?!?!

By the way didn't it used to be titled 'Dracomachina' or something? Oh well at least I can pronounce it now.

UPDATE 10/30/13

WTF?!?!?!?!?

Did they just change it to 2015!!!!!!!!!! I'm going to go crazy waiting for this darn thing to come out!!!!!!!!!! I'm having issues right now. I will have forgotten everything by then and will have to re-read it. I'm so angry!!!

UPDATE 1/01/14

So it has an official release date, March 24 2015.

That's over a year away!!!!!!!!!!

WHY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THIS IS!!!

SERIOUSLY

GUESS WE STILL HAVE MORE TO WAIT.

Roya says

Shortly after finishing *Seraphina*, Argona and I decided to read *Shadow Scale*. The first half of this book focuses on Seraphina and her search for her fellow ityasaari (human-dragon hybrids). It was interesting, but sadly that was as good as it got. We were then introduced to Jannoula, who is Seraphina's nemesis. That's around the time when things started to get a little dull. Towards the final 20%, things picked up and I had hope again. I even finished this book two days in advance out of sheer curiosity. Now that I've finished it, I feel so let down! In a way, it has erased all of the first book's toil. I feel cheated, but mainly disappointed. I wouldn't recommend this book, even if there are far worse books out there. If this review is short, it's only because the book has exhausted me so thoroughly that I can't say much about it.

Renata says

Escamas es la segunda y última parte del libro *Seraphina* donde la protagonista es una semi dragón. Realmente no sé que decir, Seraphina me encantó por que fue la primera vez que leía algo sobre dragones y la ambientación me pareció increíble y las descripciones y todo. Pero en esta segunda parte sentí que habían muchas cosas que básicamente sobraban, o por lo menos en vez de que tenga sus 600 páginas podría haber acabado en 450 o así. Sé que el estilo de Rachel es así pero la verdad me aburrí bastante en las últimas 200 páginas y no podía esperar a que lo acabe ya y generalmente cuando quiero acabar un libro es por que me encanta y no por que se me está haciendo muy pesado. No lo sé la verdad.

Los personajes me encantaron, eso siempre, por que Rachel hace que aunque hayan cinco mil personajes puedas enterarte de la historia y particularidad de cada uno y no te lías con ninguno. Me encantó como le dio tanto precio a la amistad entre Seraphina y Abdo, puedo decir que son mis personajes favoritos y simplemente están para adorarlos.

La relación entre Seraphina-Lucian-Glisselda también fue algo muy bonito, quiero decir, desde un principio hasta el final sus historias y sentimientos están muy bien explicados y los entiendes cuando uno hace una u otra cosa y lo que llegan a quererse se queda corto en palabras para describirlo. El final no me acaba de convencer mucho pero lo entiendo y creo que es el mejor para los tres pero no lo sé, realmente esperaba algo diferente y no me refiero a algo bueno, Rachel podría haber escrito un final trágico y hubiera quedado genial pero quedó muy simplificado y es una lástima.

El epílogo bueno, me ha dolido. No puedo decir por qué ya que sería spoiler pero ese sí que fue un epílogo 10/10.

En general el libro está bien y tiene un final bastante bueno para esta bonita historia, pero como dije, me pareció que la autora se enrolló en temas cuando no tocaba y el final fue bastante precipitado.

Kaora says

I was so sure this was going to be a 5 star read. I was so excited to start.

So what happened?

The kingdom of Goredd is heading towards war as they are caught in the middle of a conflict between Loyalist dragons who want to keep the peace with humans, and those that wish to go to destroy humans. Seraphina is sent on a quest to bring the other half-dragons called ityasaari together in defense of Goredd. Her travels bring out an old enemy, who has the ability to take over others' minds. Seraphina must find a way to stop her or risk losing everything forever.

This book pulled me in pretty quick and had me hooked. Seraphina is a strong character, and in Shadow Scale we learn more about her mind garden and her struggles with Jannoula, who was touched upon in the

first book. We also learn about the history of this wonderful world Hartman has built and the creatures within it.

I love a well developed world with memorable characters, and this one is no exception. Meeting the ityasaari and their abilities was fascinating.

But once I hit the 80% mark it started to go downhill.

Seraphina never struck me as a naive girl. She seemed strong, and determined and although she had the tendency to rush into things without thinking I felt like Kiggs was her anchor. So when she places herself in danger with no plan or defense and Kiggs happily goes along with it, it seemed out of character.

I knew it was going to go downhill from there and I was right.

I struggle with the fact that she could stand by for weeks while those she considered her friends and "family" were effectively tortured and she did nothing. Except complain about how she felt she had done nothing. Which was completely true. I wanted to reach in and shake her. Grow a pair and help your friends.

Oh wait you can't because you left your shit behind in favor of a peaceful approach.

Then to top it all off Seraphina, a girl who struggled her entire life with having to lie, who had finally come clean and no longer had to lie ends the book by jumping feet first into another major lie. WHY? What are you thinking? Have you learned nothing?

So frustrating.

Cross posted at Kaora's Corner.

Tammie says

What happened? I loved Seraphina. I gave it 5 stars. But Shadow Scale has left me so bitterly disappointed I could cry. All the things I loved about the first book were gone in this one.

This book was so slow, and so long and just dull. It was hard to get through, and it took me forever to read it. Seraphina was slow paced as well, but it wasn't dull.

In this book Seraphina spends the whole book blaming herself for things that aren't her fault and not doing what needs to be done. She was very much a pacifist because she was so guilt ridden over her treatment of someone who was just plain bad. What Seraphina did to Janoula had to be done because of Janoula's behavior. There was nothing wrong with what Seraphina did, she had to protect herself and she should have protected everyone else as well, so I don't get the guilt over it. She just wasn't the Seraphina from the first book at all.

I thought Janoula was very villainous and well done. I truly hated her, which is what all good villains cause me to do. I just wish the heroine would have been her match. She just really wasn't.

There was a lot of world building in this book done mostly through Seraphina traveling. The traveling got old after a while. We get to meet all of the characters that are in her mental garden and I enjoyed meeting most of them, however the character development was not there. This was partly because of Janoula invading their minds and taking over, but not entirely. There was one character that was thrown from his horse and terribly injured and Seraphina was upset about it, but I wasn't because he wasn't developed enough as a character for me to care.

The ending makes me kind of angry. After reading all those pages there couldn't have been a resolution to the whole thing with Orma? And the romance was just a huge disappointment the way it ends up. (view spoiler)

On top of the way the romance ends up, the resolution to their problems is a huge deus ex machina. How disappointing! I looked forward to reading this for three years and now I wish I had not read it. It pretty much ruined all the good things about Seraphina.

Oh and one more thing, I have no idea why this book is called Shadow Scale. I found nothing that eluded to the title in the book, but maybe I missed it.

Review also posted at [Writings of a Reader](#)
