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Eyes Like Stars: Theatre Illuminata, Act I



Synopsis

The fantastic first novel in Lisa Mantchev's Theatre Illuminata trilogy Welcome to the Theatre Illuminata, where the characters of every play ever written can be found behind the curtain. The actors are bound to the Theatre by The Book, an ancient and magical tome of scripts. Bertie is not one of the actors, but they are her family. And she is about to lose them all because The Book has been threatened, and along with it the Theatre. It's the only home Bertie has ever known, and she has to find a way to save it. But first, there's the small problem of two handsome men, both vying for her attention. Nate, a dashing pirate who will do anything to protect Bertie, and Ariel, a seductive air spirit. The course of true love never did run smooth. . . .With Eyes Like Stars, Lisa Mantchev has written a debut novel that is dramatic, romantic, and witty, with an irresistible and irreverent cast of characters who are sure to enchant the audience.

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Customer Reviews

Beatrice Shakespeare Smith is a girl whose life revolves around the theatre and its "players." (To be clear: "the Players" include every person in every role that the theatre has ever produced, and they are all magically immersed in their roles, and they cannot leave the theatre because they are all

bound to it by magic. This is actually a lot to take in during a review but believe me, this is something the book delves right into, and it took me a fair minute fully understand it all, which is why I am sharing it up front.) The theatre's magic brings plays and productions to life by making scene changes really authentic, from a foggy streets of London scene complete with rain to a Turkish bath scene that people can actually bathe in. Bertie has lived in the theatre with the players and the various theatre managers as long as she can remember. Even her bedroom is on the stage, and it disappears below stage when there is a scene change. But after Bertie causes too much mischief at the theatre, the Theatre Manager tells her that she has to leave the theatre unless she can find some invaluable way to contribute--a challenge that Bertie takes very seriously. She enlists the help of all her friends at the theatre, and together they help her rise to the occasion. There are appearances of many of Shakespeare's characters in this book, which was great (Ophelia shows up and asks if she can drown herself). Also, the depiction of theatre dynamic, with people arguing about what constitutes a prop vs. what constitutes a part of a person's wardrobe vs. what constitutes a part of the scenery was hilarious. There were two romantic interests for Bertie. One was Ariel, a seductive ghost-like creature, and the other is Nate, a pirate. I personally am pulling for Ariel, even though I hope she saves Nate eventually. I know it looked like she really liked Nate and all, and he is really protective and caring of her, but I can't resist Ariel's charisma. And he really did come through for Bertie in the end. Anyway, it's a great book. And it's different. It paints a magical picture of theatre drama, what goes on both on-stage and off.

The story is pretty intriguing with the whole of it happening in a magic theatre and all. I did find the main character a bit immature but then again... Maybe everyone that age seems immature to me now that I'm in my thirties haha! I liked the love triangle tension, but then again I'm really into that story line anyways from various animes, so... there is that. My main reason for docking it one star is that, without spoiling anything, the uh... Way it wraps up and "reveals" the main suspense answers was... Convenient. And not only the actual culmination, but the WAY it played out.... was also well, it could have been more ... Grrr... Trying to explain it without giving up anything... Let's just say, us as the readers who have gone through the story can get it but, it could have been filled out better for those actually within the story but not necessarily privy to the backstory.... I imagine those in that category would have been somewhat lost and therefore their reaction was predictable but not believable. And we have already agreed to suspension of believability since this is basically an enchanted theater and all, but I just didn't find the rather tidy and convenient revelations to garner the reaction they did from those privy to the reveal.

I really wanted to like this book because it was one of the first books I marked as 'to-read' on my GoodReads profile. But from the first chapter, I knew it wasn't going to be what I was expecting. The reason I kept reading it was because I kept telling myself, "It's gonna get better. It's gonna get better." But it didn't get better. 'Eyes Like Stars' did have an original premise and nice world-building, I'll admit. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough to save it. The plot was uneven, the characters were unlikable, and worst of all, the ending made it too obvious that this is just the beginning of a franchise. All in all, not my cup of tea.

Confession: I bought this series because the covers are gorgeous. I was also looking forward to a whimsical fantasy with heaps of romance. There IS romance, it just feels rather forced and well, not all that romantic. In fairness, love triangles aren't really my favorite, and the description certainly makes it clear that will be a primary focus of the book. There was just rather too much "I cannot trust him, he is a scoundrel! Hmmm.... I think I shall make out with him now". The world itself is intriguing and you are thrown right into it with little explanation of how it works. That was actually something I enjoyed. It made it seem like an actual world that had an existence apart from the reader. (However, it did make for a bit of confusion.) This book also contained some incredibly beautiful descriptions. I had quite a lot of fun imagining all of the outlandish and lovely things that were happening. Bertie herself is rather mischievous and usually likable. I was a bit smitten with her tendency to dye her hair. Her pastry obsessed fairy companions were mostly adorable, though their antics grew tiresome at times. Nate the pirate doesn't get well fleshed out in this book, and I honestly felt bad for poor Ariel. (Nate shines more later in the series.) On the bright side, the covers are even more gorgeous in person.

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