

Infandous

Elana K. Arnold

Reviewed by: Mikha Kounouho, 14

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Sixteen-year-old Sephora Golding was born into her mother's fairytale. With beauty paralleled only by a mermaid, her mother fell in love with a man who abandoned her, leaving her to raise her daughter on her own. But Sephora and her mother were like best friends who took care of each other and never needed anyone else. Nevertheless, the magic of Sephora's own fairytale was ruined by an encounter with Felix, a grown man who spent a night with Sephora one summer a few years ago. She grew up, no longer believing in the perfection of Disney but rather the gory reality that mirrored her own story. She found comfort in her art and kept that secret night hidden in the depths of her heart, but her story doesn't end in happily ever after—Felix came back. The summer of his return, Sephora finds the haunting truth of Felix's identity. Her life isn't a perfect fairytale, it is unspeakably horrible—*Infandous*.

Throughout *Infandous*, old fairytales such as "Sleeping Beauty," "The Rape of Lucretia," "Demeter and Persephone", and others are scattered to create interesting comparisons between Sephora's own life and these tales while also illuminating the grim aspects that are so often hidden in modern fairytales. I personally found this book particularly grim, but that aspect was evidently important to home in on its realism. It takes the reader through the complexity of the girl's life illuminating her loneliness, fear, confusion, and ultimately her strength to face reality. It really is the story of her strength to bear the burden of so much horror on her own shoulders and the cruel realities of so many young girls and their unfortunate fairytales.

However, the book does have its downsides. The book contains an abundance of explicit language and sexual content, thus making it suitable only for mature audiences. The book also has a very heavy message that is harder to grasp, so it may require rereading or extra thought to truly understand. Unfortunately, if you do not grasp the message and its parallel to real life, the plot does not seem substantial or engaging. Since this book is very much a book meant to reveal the hard truth about some of the horrors of the world, it seems suitable for mature readers 14 and up who are ready to stop believing in happily-ever-after's and perfect fairytales. This may be a good book to begin to expose young adults to some of the harsh realities that are present in the real world, however, I would not recommend that this book be bought as a gift.

Recommended Titles:

What Girls are Made of by Elana K. Arnold

Red Hood by Elana K. Arnold

Sacred by Elana K. Arnold

Hello? by Liza Wiemer