

These Witches Don't Burn

Isabel Sterling

Reviewed by: Ritika Chhabra, 13

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Hannah's grown up in Salem knowing the truth about herself and the world around her- witches exist, and she, along with her family, is among them. However, her secrets aren't for everyone; she must hide her elemental powers from non-magical humans or risk losing her abilities forever. Even though she learns spells on the side, she spends most of her time with her friend Gemma, or working a part time shift at a wiccan magic store called the Fly by Night Cauldron. But her normal senior year is interrupted when a bloody bonfire ritual is discovered at a school party. Her coven thinks it was just a coincidence, but Hannah isn't quite as sure. After signs of dark magic appear all over town, it's up to her to find the dangerous witch responsible for the attacks.

My favourite part about this story were the relationships that were in the forefront of the plot. The main focus of the book is the dynamic between Hannah, her ex Veronica and Gemma. Even though Hannah and Veronica have just broken up from a toxic relationship, Veronica persists in trying to get together again. Although she is tempted, I admired the strength and resilience that Hannah demonstrated in turning her down each time. I think this was a really positive and strong example that was approached with drama, humour and plenty of feminism. I also enjoyed the diversity in the book, which was integrated in various aspects of the plot. There were so many different kinds of relationships, identities and personalities, that really helped add interest and creativity to the story.

One area I didn't enjoy about the book was the lack of development regarding the system of magic, the setting and the overall atmosphere. With few descriptors or interesting word choices, it is difficult to immerse and relate to the story completely. At parts, there are random references to Salem and the witch trials, without actually highlighting the other aspects of this city. For example, a lot of attention is given to the "magical" shop Hannah works at, which is more of a tourist attraction, than the places or stores a local would actually visit. Lastly, there wasn't much emotional growth or evolution in the story, as the main character wasn't given enough time to process some of the major events and twists that occurred. This book would be best for readers ages 12+, as there are some triggers such as family member deaths, fires and car accidents.

Recommended Titles:

Her Royal Highness by Rachel Hawkins

The Falling in Love Montage by Ciara Smyth

You Should See Me in a Crown by Leah Johnson

The Henna Wars by Adiba Jaigirdar

I Wish You All the Best by Mason Deaver