

Dare Mighty Things

Heather Kaczynski

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In a confidential, experimental space program, sixty-two of the most gifted and daring young adults of the nation will train and compete to win only one available spot as a crew member of a once-in-a-lifetime space expedition set to happen. As the youngest of the contestants, eighteen-year-old Cassandra Gupta is determined to survive the competition until the end and to fulfill her dreams of going to space, even if it means leaving behind her family and friends. But competition is fierce among the grueling tests and trials, and a public ranking of remaining contestants soon dwindles to a smaller and smaller number, as more and more students give up or succumb to the harsh environment. But as the tests become even more brutal than ever, Cassandra doesn't find herself getting any nearer to finding the truth behind the secret space mission. Despite all the risks and doubts, Cassandra is adamant to do whatever she can to win the spot on the space expedition.

This novel is suitable for readers 12-18. This is a young adult novel in the field of science fiction, and it delves mostly into astrology. Some of the terminology or technical specifics in the novel may be hard to comprehend for younger audiences, but it's not too overbearing that it makes the story less enjoyable or hard to follow.

This was a pretty good book. I enjoyed the plot and I'm glad that the author added so much detail and nuance into Cassandra's voice as well as her personal fears and thoughts. Each mission seemed thrilling and daring, and the imagery was quite vivid. I love the regard and thought put into Cassandra's friends as well. They each had really distinct personalities and voices, which developed and grew in depth over time. Throughout the novel, the whole secrecy of the space expedition and its purpose was a big mystery. It was not until the last few pages, that the big secret was finally revealed, and shortly afterward, the story ended on a shocking cliff-hanger that had me itching for more.

There's nothing I really dislike about this book except for Cassandra's personality at times. At times, she often seemed really arrogant and ignorant to the feelings of her friends. Although many of them are there to support her and cheer her up, she didn't always encourage others in the same way. Cassandra was quite self-centered and persistent to beat out the other candidates and claim her rightful spot as number 1 in the rankings. Although in the story, Cassandra admits that the whole experience changed her previous thoughts on having friendships, I still wish that her transformation could have been more dramatic. This was more of a personal thing that annoyed me at times, but I think Cassandra was just meant to have this kind of personality on purpose.

Overall, I enjoyed the idea of the once-in-a-lifetime space competition and I think the author did a great job in making the personal voice of her characters distinctive and compelling. I would recommend this novel to readers who like astrology and science-fiction novels.

Recommended Titles:

One Giant Leap by Heather Kaczynski

The Final Six by Alexandra Monir

Honor Among Thieves by Rachel Caine

Heart of Iron by Ashley Poston
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card