

Keturah and Lord Death

Martine Leavitt

Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 17

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

Keturah is sixteen when she follows a deer and gets lost in the great woods beside her village. On the third night of wandering around, a handsome figure in black approaches her and tells her it is her time to leave the world. But Keturah bargains with Lord Death and promises him a story as long as he spares her life for one more day. And so Lord Death complies and gives her an offer that as long as in the next day, she can find her true love, she will be able to have her life. Keturah returns to her village and she searches hopelessly for her soulmate, in hopes that it can save her life. But Keturah fails and she returns to Lord Death to spin him an unending story about a girl who could not find love, and a man who was filled with darkness. Every night, she refuses to tell him the ending of her story unless Lord Death gives her another day to live, and thus for the next days, Keturah vows to desperately find her true love and to fight for her life, all the while knowing that her story is ending and time is slipping out of her hands.

This book is suitable for readers age 12-18. It's meant to be a young adult novel, and I think younger children would enjoy the fairy-tale-like storytelling, except that Lord Death may seem a little frightening, and a younger child may not fully understand and appreciate the deeper symbolism and literary beauty in the story.

This was a short book, but I was completely spell-bound by the entire thing. I really loved that the story was simple and yet powerful. The story plot was so purposefully and intricately wound together, with a kind of folk and fairy-tale charm to it. Every event and character seemed thoughtfully and perfectly placed, and as it grew to the climax, every stray detail seemed to assemble into one beautiful and striking event. Beyond the brilliant storytelling, I really appreciated the hidden lines about life and death. By being in Lord Death's presence, it only made Keturah appreciate her life so much more, and it made her consider the sacrifices she would make to give life to the people she loved as well. This not only served as an enchanting romance novel, but it also helped to uncover a deeper reflection on the concept of life and death as well. I appreciate the fact that the author could have easily turned the novel into something more of a cliché romantic tragedy or a love story focused more on passion and intensity. But instead, the story was kind of unpredictable and worked in mysterious ways. I think that by excluding the unnecessary drama, the story felt a lot more purposeful and captivating.

I would recommend this to readers who enjoy folk tales, fairy tales, and romance. To be honest, I'm not that big on romance novels, but this one left me in a kind of magical trance that made me reconsider my opinion on romance novels. So even if you may feel like this may be a little far for your taste, I would still encourage you to give it a try. *Keturah and Lord Death* would be especially great as a gift for someone, but even if it's just for a nice casual read, the whole thing will still leave you quite contented and a little awestruck.

Recommended Titles:

East by Edith Pattou

Tiger Lily by Jodi Lynn Anderson

The Goose Girl by Shannon Hale

Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast by Robin McKinley

Thorn by Intisar Khanani