

Fever

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Rhine and Gabriel are on the run to find Rowan, Rhine's twin brother, who is their only living hope of refuge left. Although one of them is a wife leaving her husband and the other is a servant leaving his master, both are determined to find freedom after living in the beautiful but prison-like mansion of Housemaster Vaughan. But although they succeed in escaping the isolated mansion, they realize they have no money or idea of what to do, now that they're out in the open streets and the dystopian cruelty of the world and its notorious virus is more of a reality than ever. Without their previous luxuries and confines to protect them from the knowledge of the horrors of life beyond the mansion, Rhine and Gabriel find themselves getting into more danger and trouble as they accidentally stumble into the hands of distrustful organizations and dangerous predators. To make matters worse, Vaughan, Rhine's father-in-law, is a constant lurking threat, out searching to retrieve his prized possessions, and Rhine seems to have contracted an unknown illness along their journey as well. Despite the trials, Rhine's last hope is Rowan, but even Rhine can't help but have an unrelenting fear that her brother may have questionable intentions of his own and is no longer the person she used to know.

This book is recommended for ages 15-20. Some content warning to keep in mind is that there is a brothel and some instances of sexual assault. In addition, there is ableism and misogyny.

This book had a very different feel compared to the first book of the Chemical Garden series, *Wither*. The ending of the last book left off on a happy and hopeful note, but almost immediately in *Fever*, Rhine and Gabriel run into serious trouble. Since the last book was a lot more utopian in a sense, this book had a stark contrast, and seemed to highlight the worst in humanity. The threat of danger was a lot more significant, and while the first book was more delved into romance, ignorant of the other ongoing world issues, this one seemed more in touch with these horrors. Something that I disliked was Rhine's lack of organization and planning. All she wanted was to get to her brother, but without any resources and concrete plans about how to find her brother, she seemed really naïve and unprepared for the dangers of the journey. I almost hated her submissiveness and lack of problem solving when she encountered a problem. I noticed that throughout the series, Rhine seems to always want to run away from her problems, instead of facing them. Her approach as well as her character doesn't seem to go through too much of an improvement in the story. I was also hoping that we would get a deeper understanding of Gabriel as well. In the first and last book, he was really more of a disregarded side character, but since he was present in the major action of *Fever*, I was hoping we would get to know more of his background, or hidden sides. In this novel, we do see probably the worst side of Gabriel, but at the same time, I was left with a lot of questions about him as a character and he lacked some depth and complexity beyond this new uncovered weak side of him. I was hoping we could have more depth and development in Gabriel and Rhine's relationship, but unfortunately, we didn't get so much of that in this novel, either.

I also felt the plot was hard to keep up with. The events were unpredictable, not in the sense of building suspense and mystery, but instead, in the sense of unpredictable randomness and irrelevance to what was going on. I get that by being on the run, you can really run into any

random situation, but I still felt that there was a lack of substance in the plot that was really driving the whole story forward. *Fever* felt the most distressing in the series. The events only seemed to become even more tragic than the next, and I couldn't help feeling exasperated as one mistake led to another. After finishing *Fever*, I felt a bit infuriated and exhausted. I understand that putting lots of conflicts in the story, can make the plot more complex and exciting, but it felt a little overwhelming. Nearing the end, there was a great sense of defeat and failure, for the reader and also the main characters. I will say though, that at the very end, the story plot seemed to improve and take a clearer direction, as a foundation for the third book, *Sever*. But the events leading up to the end was just a little crazy and infuriating.

Despite the struggles I had with this book, I was still eager (although less eager than when I first started *Fever*) to go on to the next book. It was a little nice to see the more darker sides of reality compared to the first book. But in a way, it still set up an appropriate tone and setting for the final book, which finally started answering more of the questions I had regarding the virus and context of the series. Like *Wither*, *Fever* was less about science fiction, but unlike *Wither*, it had less romance, and instead more of a dystopian, apocalyptic-style genre. Although it was a different take compared to the last book, readers might find it more genuine and thrilling by the danger of it all.

Recommended Titles:

Sever by Lauren DeStefano

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

Insurgent by Veronica Roth

Legend by Marie Lu

We Set the Dark on Fire by Tehlor Kay Mejia