

## **Stepsister**

**By Author, Jennifer Donnelly**

**Reviewed by: Harini, 14**

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

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Stepsister by Jennifer Donnelly is a darker version of the original Cinderella, but told from the perspective of one of the ugly stepsisters. Isabelle, our main character and her sister Octavia cut off their toes and heels in order to fit into the glass slipper; their ticket to being more than just the ugly stepsisters compared to their perfect sister Ella. Isabelle and Octavia know that what they're doing is wrong, but don't try to stop it. But when she meets the forest spirit, Tanaquill, the same spirit who helped Ella get to the ball, but instead of giving her a blessing like she did Ella, all she gives Isabelle and three seemingly worthless objects, and tells her to find the "missing pieces of her heart." But when disaster strikes in the form of war, Isabelle needs to overcome her reputation and do the right thing to learn that being ugly doesn't mean you're worthless.

This book is the first of two spin-off novels by Jennifer Donnelly. Usually, the stepsisters are portrayed as the evil, mean, vain ones. It was refreshing to know the other side of the story. I loved this book. It was full of female empowerment and getting rid of gender roles. There were so many interesting, lovable characters and I felt myself relating to them more and more. It was an amazing experience and I will definitely be reading this over and over again.

For the most part, this book is pretty graphic. At the beginning, there is a scene where the ugly stepsisters cut off their heels and toes, and there is a lot of blood. Later, there is war as well, so more injuries and gore. Overall, this book would be recommended for upper grades, probably seventh grade and up. I would not recommend anyone who is sensitive to blood and gore to read this book.

### **Recommended Titles:**

Poisoned by Jennifer Donnelly

The School for Good and Evil by Soman Chainani

Deep Blue by Jennifer Donnelly

The Winter Rose by Jennifer Donnelly

Cinder by Marissa Meyer