

## **The Dark Tide**

**Alicia Jasinska**

**Reviewed by: Nicole Carusetta, 16**

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

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*The Dark Tide* by Alicia Jasinska presents a story of desperation and hope amidst a backdrop of mystery and magic. Surrounded by the sea, Caldella is home to not only islanders, but also witches who have escaped from a hostile mainland. Despite the safehaven that Caldella provides to islanders and witches alike, the sea demands a yearly sacrifice from the Witch Queen. Without this sacrifice, the ocean's hunger will claim the entire island. Lina Kirk is the heroine of this doomed fairy-tale, and her story is not only one of hopelessness and magic, but also love. What does real love look like, whether that love be platonic, familial, or romantic?

The novel begins with Lina Kirk, an injured ballerina, who must prevent her brother from attending the annual festival on St. Walpurga's Eve else he become a victim of the Witch Queen. During the revelry, the islanders compete for the chance to earn magic from the witches who normally seclude themselves in the Witch Queen's castle. Meanwhile, the Witch Queen prowls the festival, choosing to kiss one boy who will be sacrificed on the full moon to keep Caldella from sinking for another year. However, the former queen's inability to sacrifice her chosen boy two years prior has caused the tide to claim more and more of the island. Will the new Witch Queen Eva be able to avoid her sister's fate and fulfill this year's sacrifice? Or will the ocean claim Caldella for good?

After reading this book, I realized the importance of different takes on sapphic romance in literature. Not only did Jasinska's story put a spin on traditional gender roles, but she also introduced a romance between two unlikely characters in a beautifully written world of magic and mystery. I appreciated *The Dark Tide's* ability to capture not only the beauty of magic, but also the darker aspects of witchcraft without the book becoming entirely focused on witch trials and persecution. I also enjoyed the multifaceted nature of our character's personalities and how Eva treaded the line between good and evil. Besides the sapphic romance, the lighter moments of friendship and familial love made this book worth reading as well.

I would recommend this book to older high schoolers or young adults. There are some violent scenes which would not be appropriate for younger readers. However, for readers who are looking for a dark fantasy with LGBTQ+ representation, I would say look no further. I would also recommend this story to anyone interested in morally ambiguous characters. And if you are a fan of magic of any kind, then this book is a must read for you as well.

### **Recommended Titles:**

Inkmistress by Audrey Coulthurst

Girls of Paper and Fire by Natasha Ngan

When We Were Magic by Sarah Gailey

Among the Beasts and Briars by Ashley Poston