

The Shadow Queen

C.J. Redwine

Reviewed by: Sierra Irvine, 19

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With her father dead and an evil queen in his place on the Ravenspire throne, Lorelai Diederich (17) has one mission in life, to kill Queen Irina, avenge her father and retake her kingdom. To do that, she'll have to use her magic against Ravenspire's most powerful sorceress. In a nearby kingdom, Prince Kol has a similar interest in magic. With his kingdom and family destroyed by an army of ogres, he needs magic to save his people. However, to get that magic he must make a deal with the Queen of Ravenspire, a deal that will take a death to complete, the heart of Lorelai. When Kol finally encounters Lorelai, he is struck to find she is nothing like he envisioned. As the two grow closer, Irina's threat grows and Kol's deal compromises his own heart, Lorelai's battle to retake her home could not be more important.

The Shadow Queen is the beginning of a wonderful series by C.J. Redwine and even on its own is still a good book. I think the biggest draw to this story is its interesting plot and world building. Being a retelling of Snow White, we've seen this story a few times before but Redwine manages to make it her own full of lore, interesting kingdoms and lots of magic. The Shadow Queen does a good job in setting the tone and premise for the following books of the Ravenspire series. Kol is a really interesting character and his dragon abilities make for some interesting action scenes. In addition, Irina is a good take on the "evil queen" character, despite not adding anything new.

I think what draws *The Shadow Queen* back from being an incredible book is the pacing of the plot and the relationship between Lorelai and Kol. With almost 400 pages, the story drags on in portions a little more than it needs to, which can lead to some of the more dramatic and action scenes feeling uneventful, especially towards the end. While Kol is a great character, the same might not be said about Lorelai who comes off as egotistical and stereotypical to the YA female protagonist trope. The dialogue between the two doesn't always land perfectly and can be a little awkward at times and I didn't find myself invested in their relationship as much as some of the other relationships in the following books.

Overall, *The Shadow Queen* is a decent start to a book series and while there's nothing overly innovative, the book still does a good job of retelling a classic story. I would recommend the book for a teenage audience due to some of the fighting scenes and the overall tone that may not be suitable for younger audiences. I would recommend giving this book as a gift, especially if you know someone who loves Disney or fairy tales. I would not however recommend buying the book yourself unless you know you are interested in the series as a whole. I think as a collection, the books are a great buy, but individually I would recommend renting it and maybe buying it after if you really want the full collection.

Recommended Titles:

Throne of Glass by Sarah J. Mass

Ash Princess by Laura Sebastian

Caraval by Stephanie Garber

Slayer by Kiersten White

Aurora Rising by Amie Kaufman, Jay Kristoff