

Stolen Songbird

Danielle L. Jensen

Reviewed by: Chi Mai, 16

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

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17-year-old Cecile de Troyes's plan to leave her small village and move to Paris is interrupted when she gets kidnapped and thrown into a world that she had once thought was a product of myths and legends: Trollus, a cursed city from which its inhabitants, trolls, cannot leave. There, Cecile is sold to the royal family and forced to wed the prince, Tristan. Their marriage was prophesied to break the curse and allow the trolls to enter the human world, but it fails to do so. Now trapped in Trollus, Cecile slowly sees that things aren't as black-and-white as she had thought. Not every troll is an enemy, including Tristan. She forges an unlikely alliance with him, and as they work together towards the same goal, Cecile finds that while their marriage had failed to fulfill the prophecy, she could still be the key to freeing Trollus.

Danielle L. Jensen is a master at worldbuilding. I've read three of her other books, so this isn't some hit-or-miss task for her. She doesn't infodump, and she doesn't give scarce details and hope the readers will fill in the blanks. She provides details regarding Trollus, relaying the information as Cecile sees or learns about it. The first big detail is that the trolls aren't like those rocky creatures from *Frozen* nor like those small, fluffy ones from *Trolls*. These ones are similar to humans in stature, but some are deformed while others are extremely beautiful. Then, we get to know about the politics within this world, the magic and legal systems, the geography, the history—you name it. And one of the best parts is that Trollus's citizens aren't all from the same mold; they hold different, often contradictory beliefs, and this makes for a gripping story because Cecile has to struggle with her loyalty to humanity and her growing fondness for the trolls whom she wants to help.

There is also an excellent enemies-to-lovers arc. Tristan and Cecile first hated each other: Tristan because he thinks humans are inferior, and Cecile because she was kidnapped and forced into marriage. It was believable because they didn't instantly like each other, which is common among many YA fantasy books. Then, they became allies, steadily developed a friendship, and eventually, they fell in love. The two were well-written and compatible, so their relationship was beautiful to read about. I'd recommend this book for readers ages 14 and up, who enjoy a good fantasy with an enemies-to-lovers trope and likeable characters.

Recommended Titles

Dark Shores by Danielle L. Jensen

Dark Skies by Danielle L. Jensen

The Bridge Kingdom by Danielle L. Jensen

Poison Study by Maria V. Snyder