



## Descendants (The Arete Series 1)

*Rae Else*

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## **Descendants (The Arete Series 1) Rae Else**

There are lots of stories about the children of gods. But what about those cursed by the gods, and their descendants...

El, a seventeen-year-old has inherited an ancient and deadly power. She loses control of it, causing a horrific accident, and becomes the prey of a secret organisation, known as the Order.

Forced from her family and home, she hides in plain sight amidst the crowds of London, and is thrust into a world she never knew existed; one full of arete: beings with extraordinary powers like hers.

Arete are beings that can trace their lineage and powers from ancient Greece. They do not claim their inheritance comes from the gods, rather legend says they are descended from cursed beings, such as Medusa.

At the heart of their world is the kerykeion, the symbol that protects them from the humans and the humans from them. El is trapped between two factions, one that has built an empire around the kerykeion and another that is determined to bring it down.

As she is drawn deeper into the conflict, the only way to find the truth is to take matters into her own hands, and the line between friend and foe becomes dangerously blurred.

Descendants is the first book in the Young Adult, Urban Fantasy trilogy: The Arete Series.

## **Descendants (The Arete Series 1) Details**

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Author : Rae Else

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## From Reader Review Descendants (The Arete Series 1) for online ebook

**Kei • lovelypagesreviews • says**

I thought was going to be a bit like Percy Jackson to be honest but it was far from that. El has powers that she's been forced to hide but she gets exposed after an accident which takes place so early into the story there's no time to even wonder about her. There's a lot of fire and thriller-y stuff with things happening just because and so many plot twists in such a small book that everything were happening so fast.

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**Ronan says**

I received an advanced copy of Descendants before it's release in April. I'm not great at reviews, but here goes.

Descendants was an excellent read, one of those where I found myself reading cover-to-cover, even if it kept me up later than it should be!

It's set in the modern world, with ties to Greek mythology. We follow El, as she learns to control the abilities passed down to her, and explore the exciting world of elemental powers. I found the world incredibly immersive - picturing the kerykeions, the elements, the feeling of the powers being used. The storyline was excellent - striking a perfect balance between improving our knowledge of the world and it's characters, and at other times, the kind of action packed read that makes you pull in words as quickly as you can!

I can't wait for the next in this series to learn more, and find out further about the powers present in this world.

Thanks for an excellent read!

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**Kirsty Hanson says**

Who doesn't love a good book about people who can manipulate the elements, a book where it is good versus evil? *Descendants* is a book about exactly that. With its **captivating storyline and heart-wrenching plot** points, I can guarantee that this will be a book that you won't be able to put down.

*There are lots of stories about the children of gods. But what about those cursed by the gods, and their descendants...*

*El, a seventeen-year-old has inherited an ancient and deadly power. She loses control of it, causing a horrific accident, and becomes the prey of a secret organisation, known as the Order. Forced from her family and home, she hides in plain sight amidst the crowds of London, and is thrust into a world she never knew existed; one full of arete: beings with extraordinary powers like hers.*

*At the heart of their world is the kerykeion, the symbol that protects them from the humans and the humans*

*from them. El is trapped between two factions, one that has built an empire around the kerykeion and another that is determined to bring it down. As she is drawn deeper into the conflict, the only way to find the truth is to take matters into her own hands, and the line between friend and foe becomes dangerously blurred.*

You know what's so awesome about this book? The fact that **El and her family are descendants of Medusa... How cool is that? MEDUSA!** Now, I know she was evil and all (or misunderstood if you read the poem by Carol Ann Duffy), but to read about the family who inherited parts of Medusa's power is brilliant.

**I found the pace of this book to be good as well.** We were thrown straight into the storyline and **Else reveals information about the characters and the different organisations as the book develops.** There is this whole concept of good versus evil, the Order versus the Opposition and El is trying to figure out which side is the 'good' side. Which is the side that she can trust? Which side does her heart want?

*"Music had a mysterious power all of its own."*

*- Rae Else, Descendants*

**The only part of this book that annoyed me was the whole romance aspect.** One minute El is feeling a connection to one character, and then the next, she's kissing a different one. Then she starts to feel betrayed by one character, so she goes to the other guy. But when the other guy betrays her, she doesn't like him anymore and thinks she likes the first guy! Sound confusing? It isn't when you're reading it, but **it does get annoying because she seems so flippant about 'who should I like at the moment'?** I know that she's having trust issues and she's finding it hard who to believe, but she shouldn't be so blase about her feelings. **It shouldn't be: 'oh well this guy lied to me for my own protection, but that's ok. I don't like him anymore, so I'm just going to like this other guy instead'.**

However, **I did find the 'magic' element of this book really cool.** El is a drakon - meaning that she can manipulate fire with her eyes. At first, she doesn't know how to control her power but after quite a few shocking events, she is forced to face her power and learn how to use it and fight with it. **Witnessing El fight against other arete was amazing.** I loved reading about her throwing fireballs and dodging her opponents attacks!

Overall, **this book was really good apart from the small romance part of it,** but hopefully, all of that will be smoothed out in the second book - which I absolutely cannot wait to read! **I can't wait to find out what happens to the Order and the Opposition** and I also cannot wait to read how El continues to grow as a character and develops and learns about her power even more!

**Disclaimer: this book was sent to me by the publisher in exchange for an honest review**

*Released 12th April*

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## **Atlas says**

**I used to wonder if we were carrying Eve's sin: to always bear the temptation of the serpent**

\* \*

**2 / 5**

Descendants sounded and started off like it was going to be in the vein of Percy Jackson, before diverging in a wildly different direction at breakneck speed. Everything happens so fast in this short novel (210 pages) that I felt like I was getting whiplash. There's betrayals, characters appearing and disappearing and dying, plot twists occurring so quickly that I found it difficult to care all that much about what was happening. I think Descendants would have done better as a longer book.

*the power was her curse to bear as it was her mother's and had been her grandma's and all of Perseus' descendants before them*

El is a descendant of Medusa and/or Perseus. This is the idea that piqued my interest but unfortunately it doesn't get much exploration beyond "this is your ancestor so you get special magical powers". El is a drakon - she has fire elemental powers and can sometimes manipulate people into doing as she wishes. When a magical incident occurs El is whisked away from her guardian, her blind grandmother, into the heart of London and the arete community. From there she is bound up in all kinds of conspiracies.

First off, some positives. Fight scenes take up roughly the last third of the book and they are reasonably cool and well written. There's elemental powers and things exploding everywhere. I also quite liked El's grandmother, Helena, who was a badass older woman who had at one point been a badass younger woman. I love it when books include older female figures and Helena was a fine character. I also liked the mythology that Else drew into her book - the role of the kerykeion is pretty big, there's lots of ancestors of different types of Ancient Greek monsters, and there's descriptions of famous paintings woven in.

*for she who carries the weight of the world on her shoulders, may she know both her strength and the joys she holds*

Our protagonist, El, I was rather ambivalent about. At the beginning she got my sympathy, being thrust into a world that she knew nothing about. She made understandable choices given her circumstances. But she was also just so bland. El masters fire magic after literally learning that she can do it after a week, El has a crush on a fit equally bland boy who we (and she) knows virtually nothing about, and El decides to commit her life to a cause she betrayed about 5 days ago. She rather trope-y and there isn't much to set her apart. Likewise, the rest of the cast is so-so.

The writing is a bit rough, but that wasn't too much of an issue once I got into the book. What was an issue was the actual narrative. It simply went too quickly for me. It alternated between telling you nothing and info-dumping via El reading some books someone gave her. There were too many specialist terms being thrown around. Then there's the quick way that plot elements are being tossed around without being tied up

or given the correct emotional response - El's friend, El's mother and grandmother, the Triad.

The worldbuilding had a fair chunk in common with Percy Jackson and other YA fantasy novels to truly stand out. There's magic that clouds the arete from the human gaze, El, like Percy, is raised not knowing anything about her ancient heritage and the people like her, for example. The enemy, the Order, is fairly nondescript - they're a group of arete who occasionally do bad things. The novel clearly had some great original ideas but these really weren't developed enough.

Descendants would have benefited a lot from being longer with more time to explain what was going on and develop the characters properly. There were some solid scenes and fun ideas, but Descendants was ultimately too confusing and fast-paced for me to properly enjoy.

*My thanks to Netgalley, the publisher, and the author for an ARC.*

**Read this review and more on my blog: <https://atlasrisingbooks.wordpress.co...>**

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## **Pouting Always says**

El is gifted with powers that she has been forced to hide her whole life, living secluded at home with her grandmother until one day an accident happens with El losing control of her powers which brings her mother back into her life. El is forced to go into hiding with her mother in plain site of the Arete government, the Order. I enjoyed the book, it was faced paced and short which was nice, I kind of tire of reading fantasy books with huge info dumps about the fantasy universe because I mostly lose track of everything that I'm supposed to keep in mind. That might not work for everyone but I personally liked that it was straight to the point and the writer only put in the things necessary to the story and to keep it moving. I did enjoy the ending but not really psyched for the inevitable love triangle that was set but I'm not opposed to it either. I liked that (view spoiler) but (view spoiler). All in all a good fantasy read and it has potential to be a good series, can't wait to read the next one to see how it continues to unfold there's potential.

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## **Ann Marie says**

I have read many books this week but this particular book struck me and left me attached to the story. I would describe this book as a combination of Percy Jackson and Mortal Instruments. If those two stories would have a child it would be Descendants: Book One of the Arete Series written by Rae Else. The story revolves around El. She grew up under her grandparents' care and was very sheltered. Knowing her capabilities at a very young age she longed for freedom and a normal life though she is frightened to what might happen to people around her when her powers gets the best of her. With that being said she never questioned her grandma for her upbringing rather she just abide to the rules given to her until the day her grandma gave her the some freedom to finally interact with the outside world.

El was working at the Cobbold House when a tragic incident happened. To others this incident is just another suicide attempt or an accident but to El it did more damage to her life than to the one who is laying on the hospital bed. This was the night she will never forget. This is where the story opened up a can of worms and this is where I should stop telling a brief description of the story or else it would be a HUGE spoiler.

It took me a while to read this book because I didn't want the book to end. It was that good. The story is so vivid that it almost feels like you've seen the world they're in. This book has a lot of twists and turns; at one point you thought you knew what was going to happen but then the story will take this turn then you're back to having trust issues with the character and the story. The author plays with your mind and emotions! But, she does it in a way that makes it impossible to put down the book. Its crazy! If you were to ask me if I would recommend this book to others, I would say heck yeah! this is such a great story to pass up. Just be prepared of spellbinding twists and turns of this storyline because you won't be able to put down this book even when you want to.

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Visit my blog at <http://www.ipanabook.wordpress.com>

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## Miguel says

This review first appeared on The Quirky Reader.

**Rick Riordan sort of ruined other young adult novels with (Greek) mythological storylines for me.** His Percy Jackson series is one of my all-time favourite books to read and even now many years later I still get a kick from them whenever I skim through the pages. But recently, I think I may have found a new series with a *lot* of potential to rebuild what Riordan has ruined for me in YA mythology.

**Descendants revolves around seventeen year-old El Devereux, who has lived a sheltered life and has been hidden away from the world because of the deadly power that slumbers in her.** She is an arete - powerful beings that trace their lineage to Ancient Greece and inherited their powers from cursed beings like Medusa. So, not your typical demigod. And through the kerykeion - a powerful symbol that conceals the aerate world - they are able to protect themselves from the humans and vice versa.

**Our heroine El is a serpent or an arete with the ability to manipulate humans with their gazes.** She is a drakon or serpents that have the ability manipulate and control fire. Other types of serpents include the hydra (water), typhon (air), and ladon (earth). And all of this information thrust into her full force as she is drawn deeper into the conflict between two factions: those who want to build an empire around the kerykeion and those who want to take it down.

**So that's pretty much the best I could do in summarising the plot of this series.** And now let's move on to what I thought of the story. **I found the first few chapters of the novel to be really confusing.** There was a lot of information being thrown at the reader, and at the same time the plot was escalating all too quickly. At one chapter you have El casually observing in an art gallery and suddenly a man dies and she's being taken by her long-lost mother into hiding. *Like whaaaaaaaaaaat.* When I finally got around to understanding what the heck is happening, I really enjoyed how things escalated further as the story progressed. Though I would say overall the pacing was a little too fast, for me, and it missed the opportunity for more detailed descriptions of the world of the arete.

**Since this is only the first book, I'm letting the characters off the hook. While I liked our protagonist El enough, there's still a lot of room for character development.** She's pretty weak for the most part and not's until the final moments of the novel do we really see her blossom into this full-fledged powerhouse who can manipulate fire at her will. Also, in the first half of the book she allows herself to be tossed around by

people that's why she's stuck between the conflict of the two opposing factions. *Get a hold of yourself together, girl!*

**I didn't care much for the side characters because for the most part they were literally just *sidelining*.** But we do have two *possible* love interests here that are really interesting (I use the term 'love interest' loosely here because there's hardly any romance yet to develop in this book). There's **Dan Pinton, a drakon such as El**, who is one of the primary persons in the novel in charge of keeping El away from the Order - sort of like the Fates, if you will, who want El's powers. He's a very broody character but I like him, for the most part. And lastly, there's **Luke Laukas, a ladon, who is one of the Order's supporters**. I also liked him but again = more character development please!

**To conclude, I thought Descendants is a pretty solid debut for a series.** The ending set up the events for the next book (hopefully!) really nicely and it left me hanging, tbh. Despite it's shortcomings in terms of plotting, there's a lot of potential to be had in the story and I can't wait to see what Rae Else writes next. Overall, I recommend this book especially if you enjoy mythology and Rick Riordan (which btw has met his match hehe).

*This book was sent to me by the author for review. This has not affected my overall thoughts in general. This is all just my opinion, alright?*

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## **Georgi\_Lvs\_Books says**

I was given an ARC of Descendants, book one of the Arete series.

The story focus on El, who has a power that she has tried her best to contain all her life.

She has always been kept in the dark about what she is and has had to deal with a strict upbringing for her own safety.

Occasionally she can lose control and with that follow's consequences.

Word has spread of her power... The Order want her.

I found this story to be really intriguing. Kept me wanting more, loved all the characters.

I loved the idea of inheriting a power from descendants who were cursed.

I look forward to continuing on with this series in the future.

If your a fan of The Mortal Instruments, Red Queen and Fallen, I would check this series out!

4\*\*\*\*



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## Becca says

I've just finished reading my advance reader copy of *The Descendants* and I can't wait for the second book - what a rollercoaster it takes you on! It follows El, a young woman, who has grown up knowing she's different, inheriting powers far beyond the human world. She's been sheltered throughout her childhood but suddenly an accident happens which opens up a whole world of danger and mystery, which has been kept from her - with some terrifying consequences.

I found myself really connecting with El - you feel for her as she struggles with so much new information and the pressure put upon her to quickly make sense of what she learns. The world which the author creates is fascinating and I love that you can picture such a different and magical realm, drawing from ancient mythological ideas, but based right in the heart of London. The descriptions were so vivid. I enjoyed all of the characters - especially the plot twists when people you thought you understood were really not as they seemed! And, even more than that, I thought it was really interesting that the different powers really shaped the personalities of those that had them. Some of the action scenes too were so full of suspense - I really couldn't put the book down at times.

I felt myself getting more and more immersed in the story the further I got. And the way it's finished up means I'm so excited to get the next instalment - so much has changed in El's world in such a short space of time. Thoroughly recommend it!

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## Veronica says

This was a fast paced YA novel that has elements of Greek mythology in it. A teenage girl has mysterious powers that she is forced to hide until an accident forces her to come to terms and understand who and what she is.

I have to admit I had trouble reading this one at times and had to force myself to finish. More for the resolution than anything else. The writing seemed a bit choppy to me but then again it could just be that it was just not the novel for me. I think it will appeal to teens who enjoy fantasy fiction.

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## Christopher Schmitz says

Rae Else's *Descendants* was a quality read and I found it intriguing and engaging. It has a Percy Jackson kind of flair (which I noticed especially in the buildup of the main character,) but this world views the gifting of powers as more of a type of curse than a gift (kind of like how Marvel Comics has happy super-powered people like Spiderman but then it's also got all of the X titles with its signature mutant characters... As much as I love Spidey, I'm more of an X-men fan than any other title, so I may have been genetically predispositioned to like this book.) Within the first few chapters there's a great scene that drives home the severity of the situation (El is talking to her grandmother who also had a "gift/power" but chose instead to lose her eyes rather than live with it.

Characterization is great and writing is tight. Honestly, one of the things that made me want to review this ARC (it's not quite out yet) was the cover. It all just seemed right—and when an author has everything

coming together like this it's a book that's sure to do well. (and it promises to have more future releases by its subtitle: Book one in the Arete Series).

As far as genre goes, this title is urban fantasy which has an ever present and growing demand (think fantastic elements also present, but perhaps hidden from most, within the real world ya silly muggle.) It really does have a Percy Jackson twist, but with a more Twilight tone.

You will have to wait until April 12 to get a copy (but should be able to preorder). I received a prerelease ARC for free from the author in exchange for an honest review. You can get your own copy on Amazon.

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### **Angela Neylin-D'Alton says**

I was lucky enough to receive an ARC copy of *Descendants* which is Book no 1 in the Arete series.

Its great to know that more is on the way.

I am out of my comfort zone with this genre but found myself completely drawn in and carried along with the story. It is a powerful book that is extremely well written. I would recommend it without reservation. A definite must read.

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### **B says**

A very atmospheric story set in an intriguing world. A page turner which I can highly recommend.

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### **Jess ✨Harbinger of Blood-Soaked Rainbows✨ says**

This is a low 3, which means that parts were enjoyable, but it needs a lot of work.

I love Greek mythology. I was that nerdy 10 year old who read *The Odyssey*. I also read Ovid at 10. And every other myth I could get my hands on. I love the Greek mythos, the idea of Olympus, the gods and goddesses watching humans, interfering in their affairs, and causing all kinds of mischief. So when I saw this title on Netgalley, I thought it would be a little this:

and a little this

And it was. But kinda like the watered down version.

El is a member of an ancient race, called Arete, who are descendants from Olympus. But instead of being descended from the Olympians themselves, they are descended from the demigods, like the gorgons and the nymphs. Each Arete can manipulate one of the four elements: earth, fire, wind, and water. And just like any elite and ancient race, bloodlines and families are important. El's family are descendants of Medusa, and so they have the power of the serpent behind them which is one of the more powerful bloodlines. Just like Medusa, the eyes have much power, and they can wield a lot of influence over humans. El is a drakkon, or a serpent which can wield the power of fire, a particularly powerful gift. She has also been kept from this secret world by her mother and grandmother, and when her power comes out unexpectedly, she finds herself

suddenly thrust into the world of people like her, and the culture shock hits her pretty hard.

While hiding among her own kind, she is educated about the secret war being waged against The Triad, or the all-powerful leaders of The Order (kinda like Arete government), and the resistance against them. She meets Dan, a drakkon like her who works for the resistance, and also Luke, a powerful hydra (serpent who can manipulate water) who is the son of a high ranking Order official. Both boys fill her head with why each side is better, and poor El can't figure out what side she's on. When she is thrown headfirst into the heat of the conflict, she must decide for herself who she trusts and where the truth lies. She also has to come to terms with lies and secrets that her family have been hiding from her.

The PROS:

The book is fast-paced and interesting. I like the unique take on mythology, and the fact that the Arete are descended from demigods instead of Olympians.

There is a big sporting event called the Olympia and I loved that it is kind of like Arete Olympics, where each family is able to fight (sometimes to the death) for eternal glory and bragging rights. Kinda like The Triwizard tournament in Harry Potter, but on a much larger scale.

The action scenes were fun. And actually, even though the book was quite short, there was a lot of action.

THE CONS

The characterization was flimsy. None of the characters were well-written, and every single one was forgettable.

The worldbuilding needed some work. The bones are definitely there, but the history of the arête, including their politics, their bloodlines, and their types were confusing and shallow.

Everything about this story lacked depth. There wasn't really anything to take it to a level that was new or fascinating, or different from 99.99% of young adult paranormal or urban fantasy. And because of this, it was extremely predictable.

There is a love triangle. Enough said.

El is a speshul snowflake. Enough said.

I really wish this book was more complex, because it had a lot of potential. Enough that I am interested in reading book two when it comes out, but I won't be chomping at the bit to get it anytime soon. I think this book needed to be longer, and it needed more polishing, and more character and plot development. Like I said before, the bones are good, but the meat needs some work.

3 stars.

*I received a copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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**Kari Rhiannon (Moon Magister Reviews) says**

### 3 stars

I had mixed feelings whilst writing this review. On one hand, it was a quick paced YA thriller with interesting concepts and big ideas, but on the other, I finished reading this book and found it strangely soulless.

It has a great concept, binding mythology and technology, monsters and men. Why have your heroes be demigods when they can be the spawn of Gorgons instead? It's obvious that Else knows her classics and there are examples of that knowledge spread throughout the entire text. She's also got some big ideas; enormous sprawling structures hidden by kerykeion, contests of elemental magic, and enormous illuminati style corporations infiltrating the highest levels of business and politics.

So, why was I so underwhelmed?

I spent a couple of days trying to work out exactly why I felt that way, and came to an answer. There's not enough character development, by far.

El, our heroine, has no defining features that make her 'her'. We get some snippets of information about a childhood, a friend that doesn't get enough page space to really be called a friend, and, yet, we are expected to care when all of this gets torn away. I wonder whether it's due to the book starting in on the action, maybe we needed some interactions between El and her friend, or El and her Grandmother before she has to go on the run. It's very difficult to feel the loss of a life that you have not been shown. Likewise, what does El like to read? Is she athletic? What does she feel about the world that she lives in? I found that I was struggling to connect to El, or even to give her a face, and that made it very difficult for me to engage with the book in general.

When you can't figure out the protagonist, it certainly makes it very difficult to care about romance, especially when it's a love triangle. Once again, I wanted more from my love interests. Who are they? Why do they choose to do the things that they do? Dan, for example, should be our archetypal heart throb with his dark mussed hair, amber eyes and life spent travelling Europe, but we're just not given enough information to justify his choices and his actions. Obviously, there's a lot to be said about creating mystery, but if you don't put in enough clues then we don't know that we're supposed to be looking for it. Mysterious can quickly become one-dimensional if we don't have glimpses into what a character is feeling.

It was actually quite frustrating because there were some beautiful moments where I could see a rough gem shining through. I felt as if Else's vision of her story and world were bigger than what she'd put down on paper. There were some wonderful dream like moments where the heart of backstreet London was revealed, only to be shattered by sudden clunking introspection only moments later. Show don't tell. Slow down and let that heartbreaking moment of emotion spill over into three, four, even five sentences, rather than strangling it in one.

I felt that the book could have done with some injection of sensation. The world exists beyond just sight, it's brought to life by scent and taste and sound and touch. Describe to me the soundscape of a crowded bar, the scent of earth and rosemary on a Dryad's fingertips, the strange juxtaposition of speeding cars and tourists against a boy wending fire through his hands. There was so much possibility in this world, so much room for decadence and description, but instead I felt detachment. Distant from the characters and story.

Nevertheless, it was enjoyable in its own way. Quick paced, clever concepts and intriguing ideas; 'Descendants' didn't grab me as I was hoping it would, but Else is a young author and this is a debut novel. I

can already think of a handful of underwhelming debuts that grew into awesome series, so, hopefully, this one might be the same.

*Many thanks to Rae Else for a copy in return for an honest review.*

Review originally posted at Moon Magister Reviews.

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