



Dreamfall

Amy Plum

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Cata Cordova suffers from such debilitating insomnia that she agreed to take part in an experimental new procedure. She thought things couldn't get any worse...but she was terribly wrong.

Soon after the experiment begins, there's a malfunction with the lab equipment, and Cata and six other teen patients are plunged into a shared dreamworld with no memory of how they got there. Even worse, they come to the chilling realization that they are trapped in a place where their worst nightmares have come to life. Hunted by creatures from their darkest imaginations and tormented by secrets they'd rather keep buried, Cata and the others will be forced to band together to face their biggest fears. And if they can't find a way to defeat their dreams, they will never wake up.

Dreamfall Details

Date : Published May 2nd 2017 by HarperTeen

ISBN :

Author : Amy Plum

Format : Kindle Edition 293 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Horror, Science Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review Dreamfall for online ebook

noor says

4.5 STARS

WHAT!???? WHAT!!!!!! OHMYOGDGSHAHDAHHDHAJS MY WIG HAS BEEN RIPPED OFF. I HAVE ZERO TIME TO REVIEW THIS, IM MOVING ON TO THE SECOND BOOK NOW.

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

You can find the full review and all the fancy and/or randomness that accompanies it at It Starts at Midnight

This was interesting. I went from "hmm I am not sure about this" to "need book two NOW, please and thank you" pretty quickly. It was a slow start- and kind of weird, if I am being honest. I also wasn't sure about the likelihood that parents would sign their kids up for this with it being so unknown, but I guess if you're desperate... I certainly can't judge. The science part of it I didn't fully get- nor do I know if I was supposed to, but it didn't really matter. All that matters is that the author made clear that the stakes are very, very high. This could result in death, this was no joke.

The characters were great too, and we got to see inside their minds so much while they were "dreaming". And I don't want to say a ton, because I am afraid that I'd spoil stuff, but it was a very unique way to get to know characters. There was some unbelievability, especially when it came to letting the random med student stay in the room when stuff started going haywire. But, even though it was a little "off", her POV was essential, so it didn't bother me.

There were some amazing twists too that I definitely hadn't seen coming, and the book kept me guessing the whole time. I am seriously excited for the second book, because I have no idea what the endgame is and I love that!

Bottom Line: After a slightly shaky start, I got really, really hooked on this book. It was very unique and wholly consuming, and I am eager to read the sequel!

*Copy provided for review

Sabrina The Trash Queen says

They wanted dreams.

What they got were nightmares.

This book has been in my shelf for over a year now.

I guess is time to read it.

It sound incredible.

rachel • typed truths says

4.5 stars

I wish I could bottle up my feelings about this book so I could convince you to give it a shot. Unfortunately, these meagre words are going to have to do. This book perfectly achieved its purpose: it creeped me out. This is honestly the first book to ever do that to me. *Ever*. I am trying to seem more macho than I am, but it honestly takes a lot to actually scare me in books. Even if a book is well-written and engaging, there is always a distance between me and the story that stops me from getting creeped out. It is not real - so it doesn't scare me. Plum managed to completely erase that barrier though. I do not know how she did it but she managed to capture that surreal feeling of dreaming, of having a nightmare, and make it come alive on the page. The whole book felt like one of those dreams where you know you are dreaming and that the events of the dream are unrealistic nonsense... but there's nothing you can do about it. You have no control. It's terrifying. It's got that awful nauseous quality to it and Plum got that feeling on the page perfectly. I was engaged the whole time. The plot had me salivating for the next page. I wanted more. I need more; more answers, more of the characters. I wanted to know what was happening and why. It was absolutely brilliant in that sense. I could not put it down.

I also *adored* the characters. All of them. They were all rich and complex. I loved that they were realistically flawed. Some of them were rude or had a quick temper but it was done in a way that did not make them unlikable, just more human. Their interactions were fascinating and I liked that none of them developed a romance. It would have been so unrealistic. The diversity was so rich and incredibly written. All of the main characters suffered from some sort of neurodiverse condition/s like (PTSD, OCD, depression, narcolepsy) which caused chronic insomnia. I have never read a book with about a character with a sleep disorder before, let alone an entire cast, and I thought that added another layer to the story so effortlessly. There was also a lot of racial diversity so yay for that. My favourite part of all of this was definitely how George called out the other characters when they said judgemental comments. I highlighted so much of her dialogue! I also have to say that the multiple perspectives were incredibly well written. I had no problems distinguishing the different voices and enjoyed all of them equally.

Overall?

I adored this book and would happily recommend it with all my heart. It was so, so engaging and thrilling. I was sucked into this world and could not stop flipping the pages to see what would happen next. It was so addictive! The cast was also amazing. There was not a single POV I did not enjoy and I felt that all of the characters were fleshed out and realistically flawed, complex characters. The cliffhanger has left me dying for the sequel, which I was eagerly anticipating for the rest of the year. *sobs*

Review copy provided by the publisher for an honest review.

Maggie ? (Reader in Wonderland) says

3.5/5 stars

“Yes, I’m scared. But if this is what I have to do to be able to sleep again, I’m ready to sign my life away.”

Dreamfall was actually pretty intriguing read. I liked the idea of this story - Seven subjects suffering from insomnia for different reasons and traumas are being tested for a cure, but... The lab equipment malfunctions and they are all thrust into simultaneous coma and together joined in some kind of dream state, in their nightmares.

The concept of *Dreamfall* was very intriguing one, but it didn't entirely live up to it. While this book was quite captivating read overall, it was also a bit boring at times, with some blank spaces and rather simple plotline going, for the most part, in circles.

Vesper is staring at her like he’s challenging her to do something impossible. “Call it,” he urges. She sighs and says, “As of seven fifty-five a.m., I declare all seven subjects comatose.”

This book is told in first person from 3 POVs - Cata, Jaime and Fergus. Jaime's pov being outside of the dreams so we get to see some scienc-y explanations and what is actually happening in real world in the lab. I liked that all three POVs sounded distinctive from one another. While I enjoyed reading from all of the characters, no one truly stood out for me. They ended up being a bit flat and one dimensional. There simply wasn't enough characterization for any of the them, which was one of the reasons why I couldn't truly connect to the story.

The other fact, though not necessarily a bad thing, was that there was no romance. Just a forewarning, because it was kind of breath of fresh air for me. The story is mainly centered around the nightmares and its adventures, lab and the characters as a group.

Dreamfall has short chapters and is very easy and fast read. It was pretty enjoyable overall, but nothing especially stood out for me. I'd recommend this book if you want to read something entertaining but average set in (I guess) contemporary world with some science fiction elements, with no romance and a few creepy scenes.

“A chill goes through me when I understand what he said. The clowns.”

Fans of Plum's *After the End* duology will definitely enjoy this one as well.

Saania Zee Jamal ? says

WE HAVE A COVER!

And I am loving every trippy bit of it.

Color me *very* intrigued.

Now dear book,

The Girl Murdered by Her TBR says

5 mind blowing stars!!!!

This book was a total mindfuck!!!

From the beginning till the end, it will make you guess who is who and what is what...

There are so many things I loved about this book! Like really loved!!!

1. The plot because its so freaking awesome!!!
2. The different psychological illnesses and conditions used by the author to make the different characters' personality.
3. How the author combined realism and fantasy. Trust me only few can managed to create a novel and this book managed to combine the two and ends up to being great
4. The freaking plot twist people! It was very unexpected and jaw dropping!
5. Its creepy, weird and surrealistic. But sooo sooo good!!!

I honestly adored this book. It was very informative, imaginative and just... brilliant. Honestly, I'm great in guessing about what's gonna happen next or what plot twist will happen. But this book... I don't really know what will happen. I didn't have a single clue about what will happen in every chapter, its like I'm totally blindsided; and that people, is the reason I absolutely loved this book!

Every scene will take you by surprise, it will make you guess what will happen next then once you've think of a possible explanation, it will shock you because it'll turn out to be wrong and you'll realize that there is more than meets the eye. OMG!!!

Reading this thrilled, shocked, intrigued, and left me wondering what the fuck is going to happen next. It was a cliffhanger but it still worth the wait...

For the readers who loves horror, mystery, psychological, and twisted books, this one is for you... TRUST ME!!!!

? Kaira ? says

Plot - 5

Characters - 4

Writing style - 4

Romance - 5

In which a group of sleep-deprived teenagers got stuck in their nightmares together.

This is one of the creepiest books I've ever read, no joke. I can't even read this when I am alone because it gives me chills.

Plot - hands down to the author for this. It is utterly genius. This is the type of novel you want your friends to talk about when alone in the dark.

The plot twists seriously got me, it's been ages since I was actually shook from the revelation. Man, the last 20 pages were amazing!

Writing style - fast paced although there's some boring moments. Right from the page 1, this whole thing got me hooked.

Read it in one sitting.

Characters - I love them all, okay? Especially the flirt even though the revelation about him.

I just wish we get to know more of their backstory and the messages about their nightmares.

Romance - minimal romance which is okay for me since the plot was really just amazing.

Although I have to be honest, at first, I kinda despite the whole romance because all they do were flirt to each other instead of really paying attention on how to survive this shit.

Spoiler:

It kinda intrigue me that Sinclair is a psycho but I just hope he'll remain his romance with Cats although I don't think that's possible.

Since the day one, I already have a feeling CAta is gonna end up with Fergus which is kinda okay with me because they're cute together. However, isn't it a bit, I don't know, awkward that they only ended up together because they have no choice? Fergus' romantic interest in book 1 was actually imaginary while Sinclair was a psychopath which means he'll probably kill them in the sequel.

Jennifer says

Dreamfall is the first book in a new YA duology by author Amy Plum

I am not sure what genre the book is. I've seen it listed as YA horror, YA fantasy, YA science fiction and I've also seen it referred to as a psychological thriller. IMO it is not science fiction, fantasy or a psychological thriller. I guess it could be YA horror. The book starts off feeling like our world. The only difference being the experiment and the severe insomnia experienced by the teens. But then there is also the dream/scary aspect.

The narrators are Cata, Jaime and Fergus. Cata is a 16 year old girl with insomnia and PTSD. Jaime is a premed student observing the sleep experiment. Fergus is a boy with insomnia. Both Cata and Fergus are part of the experiment.

The book is about seven teens between 13-19 who all suffer from chronic insomnia. They are undergoing a new electroconvulsive technology to try to cure them. I found the idea of the experiment to be very interesting.

I am a fan of the author's Revenants series. So I knew that I wanted to read this book. It started off well. I loved the idea of teens undergoing an experiment to try to cure their insomnia. I actually wish that this was the focus of the book (curing the insomnia). But something goes wrong with the experiments and the dreams the kids experience become the focus of the book.

The dreams are supposed to be scary. There are creatures and other scary stuff in them. All the kids end up in each other's dreams. Unfortunately this aspect of the book was not for me at all and I ended up skimming a lot of the dreams. I would have liked more of an explanation as to why this was happening (I guess this will be examined more fully in the next book).

What I did love was everything to do with the doctors and the experiment. We get to learn about this from Jaime's POV. I found Jaime's chapters to be very strong and I absolutely loved his/her POV. Apparently we are not supposed to know whether Jaime is a boy or girl (the author discusses this in the acknowledgements). It honestly never occurred to me that Jaime wasn't a girl. I've never seen that spelling for a boy and the character just felt like a girl to me. But apparently half of the people assume that Jaime is a girl and the other half assume that Jaime is a boy. And the author purposely left it ambiguous.

The book has a cliffhanger ending and it was a good one. But overall I just didn't enjoy the dreams.

Thanks to edelweiss and HarperTeen for allowing me to read this book!

Laura says

And what, exactly, will they be doing? Well, in a few short days, they'll be laying us out in a lab, fitting our heads with electrodes, and running electrical currents through our brains until our insomnia is fried into extinction. They'll be shocking us into normalcy.

Yes, I'm scared. But if this is what I have to do to be able to sleep again, I'm ready to sign my life away.

I had to push myself to keep reading. This one almost ended up on the dreaded "DNF" list that I try to avoid if possible. I am happy I decided to keep reading if only for the twist at the end that becomes semi-predictable at a point, though I admit the dream sequences started to get skimmed because it was just so wtf and even bordered on repetitive as they'd fight to survive/escape. It felt like the same questions asked over and over as the characters would reiterate what we already knew. And as we get in a new dream, it starts all over.

What was refreshing was Jaime's POV (one of only three). Jaime is a premed student observing the experiment. There is also Cata and Fergus, both subjects in the experimental procedure to cure sleep disorders. Jaime's perspective gives us the opportunity to see what is going on in the lab, while the seven subjects are all comatose. While Cata and Fergus allow us to see two different perspectives within the dreamworld. The only problem with these two is their voices don't feel distinct from one another. We don't know a lot about the characters to start - only that the seven subjects have sleep disorders and fall between

the ages 13-19. Through their experiences in the dreamworld and Jaime's in the lab where Jaime has access to each subject's file, we slowly learn about the characters.

There is a diverse cast. And Jaime's gender is not mentioned at all. I applaud the author on this decision. I actually hope it never gets brought up because gender shouldn't hold that importance. It is who you are as a person, not what appendage you have between your legs.

Here is the thing...I am a huge horror buff. So maybe I'm desensitized to certain horror scenes. But I didn't find myself scared one bit in this book and that's the main thing I was hoping for. It probably doesn't help that I've had some terrifying nightmares that these just don't measure up to. Younger readers may find scenes in the dream sequences to be frightening, but I wouldn't recommend going into this hoping for some scares. It might not happen for you.

While this book offers a few very wonderful things, it wasn't exactly for me up until that twist at the end making me interested in the sequel. Jaime's chapters were the most interesting for me. This wasn't quite as *Nightmare on Elm Street* as I was expecting.

Stacee says

I have always been a fan of Amy's words, so I was pretty excited to get my hands on this one. Added bonus for it being creepy.

There are a good amount of characters, but we only get the POV from 3: two patients in the experiment and one pre-med student observing. And between the three of them, we get quite a story.

There's not much I can say without spoilers, so just know that it's imaginative and eerie and maybe scary for some and absolutely delicious. I wish I had book 2 in my hands right now.

Huge thanks to HarperTeen and Edelweiss for providing the arc free of charge

Sarah says

(I received an advance copy of this book for free. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

***“A chill goes through me when I understand what he said.
The clowns.”***

This was a YA fantasy story, about a group of insomniac teens caught in a shared nightmare world.

I liked the characters in this, they all made the best of things, had their own coping strategies, and didn't give up, even in the worst of circumstances. I also liked how we learned more about them as the book went on, and that there were twists in store as information about the teens was revealed.

The storyline in this was about seven teens taking part in an experiment to cure their insomnia. During the experiment, which used ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy), there was an earthquake which interrupted the electrical supply, sending the teens into what the doctors thought was a coma. However, the teens all found themselves thrust into a group dream, where they were forced to battle their way through their nightmares together. I did like the action in this book, and I also liked how we had Jaime back in the lab letting us know what was going on outside of the dream world. I thought that the nightmares were quite creepy, and I wouldn't have wanted to battle through them myself.

The ending to this didn't really tie much up, so it will be interesting to see what happens in the next book.

6.5 out of 10

Ishmeen {hiatus} says

You know your tastes are messed up when your favourite character is revealed to be a psychopath ?

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

2.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/08/19/...>

In Dreamfall, a group of teenagers are signed up for an experimental study that is supposed to help treat their individual sleep disorders, which range from chronic insomnia to debilitating night terrors. However, the equipment hooked up to the teens ends up malfunctioning during the trial and the seven of them fall into comas—or at least, that's what it looks like to the researchers overseeing the project. In reality though, they're all dreaming, trapped in one nightmare together. Worse, they're being hunted by their deepest fears come to life, and in this dream you'll never wake up if you die.

Unfortunately, books like this one remind me of why most YA horror doesn't work for me these days. As much as I wanted to like it because of its compelling blurb, Dreamfall reads like a made-for-TV movie complete with all the thriller clichés and teen drama archetypes. What makes this even more of a shame is that I sense a sincere attempt from the author to make her cast diverse, but none of it really matters in the end because most of the characters are so easily forgotten and expendable. The multi-narrator format that was intended to give us a well-rounded picture of everyone also meant the focus was diluted and no one stood out, and from there things went downhill. After all, I can't bring myself to enjoy a story unless I first care about the people involved; without that as a basic foundation, everything else just becomes an empty experience.

Still, I don't want to make it sound like I hated the book, because at the very least the plot was fast-paced and fun. However, apart from maybe that twist ending, Dreamfall was entirely unmemorable. It's only been a day since I finished the book and I've already forgotten half the characters' names, so I very much doubt I'll be continuing with this series despite things finally getting interesting in the last couple chapters. There are plenty more other books I need to get to on my YA shelf.

La Coccinelle says

This is, without a doubt, the worst book I've read so far this year. It may also be one of the worst books I've ever read, but surprisingly, it's not for the reasons that usually make me hate books. This is going to be a long review, so buckle up, grab your marshmallow on a stick, and get ready for a roast.

While the premise of *Dreamfall* appears to be okay on the surface, it runs into problems almost right away, starting with the study/experiment. I understand that this is fiction, but when you're writing about medical matters, you need to somewhat stick to reality. And in the real world, you wouldn't do a study on one particular therapy for insomnia (in this case, a variation of electroconvulsive therapy) on a group of minors whose insomnia results from different causes. There's no way to account for variability in such a group. The kids in the study have conditions ranging from PTSD and narcolepsy with cataplexy to FFI (Fatal Familial Insomnia); so, before we even get going, the study is already comparing the outcome of a treatment on patients whose condition is caused by psychological factors to patients whose condition is caused by genetic ones.

So, with that shaky foundation, we're launched into one of the dumbest stories I've ever read. The problem with writing about nightmares is that they're totally subjective. What's scary for one person might not be scary for another, and since this is supposed to be horror, you need something that's fairly universal. Walking statues are not. Lakes of mucus are not. Clowns are definitely not. Heck, I've had nightmares about kittens. But if I tried to write that into a book, most people wouldn't be able to relate to my fear.

I think the best way to work through some of the problematic elements of this book is to discuss the characters. There will be major spoilers here, so you've been warned.

Cata

She's one of our point-of-view characters, a bland and generic heroine with such an indistinct voice that I kept forgetting when I was in her head. (She and Fergus, one of the other point-of-view characters, sounded exactly alike.) The only thing that reminded me that she was narrating were the unpleasant little comments that she'd make from time to time.

I'm disgusted with Remi's defeatism when we've barely even tried.

She's got some sort of barely disguised racism going on, because the way she talks to Remi is pretty rude. And there's really no reason for it that I can see. What she calls defeatism, I call common sense. She makes up her mind early on that he's a bad person, and then speaks to him accordingly.

“For God’s sake, Remi, just shut up and push.” I place my hands back on the lid. “And really try this time instead of giving up before you’ve even given it any effort.”

Cata's backstory is stereotypical (complete with her father beating her with a strop; who even owns a strop these days?), and we never do find out what happened to her mother. Did her father kill her? You'd think that, if a woman mysteriously died and one of the kids came forward to say their father was horribly abusive, there'd be an investigation, whether the other kids denied the abuse or not. Anyway, Cata has insomnia because of PTSD, and she also dissociates from time to time (sometimes conveniently for the sake of plot complications).

Fergus

He's our second point of view character, and is also one of the insomnia sufferers participating in the study. If I can point to a favourite character in the book, it's probably him, but only because he didn't annoy me all to hell. He's probably the smartest one in the group (IQ notwithstanding... I'll get to that in a moment).

With a Scottish-Indian background, he almost feels like part of a diversity quota. His ethnicity isn't really relevant, especially since he doesn't know much about his background. (He made some comment about how destroying a Christian cross in a dream would cause karma or something. I'm pretty sure that's not how it works, and if he really did have a Hindu mother, he would've had a better understanding of the belief.)

Fergus has insomnia as well as narcolepsy and cataplexy. The narcolepsy isn't really touched on much, although the cataplexy is brought up. For whatever reason, he lies about it at the beginning and blames his passing out on blood sugar (as if cataplexy is somehow a worse thing to admit to than hypoglycemia). As far as I can recall, though, he only did this once. Mostly, when strong emotions seemed to be about to trigger an attack, he'd rub his tattoo and magically stave it off. (From what I know about this condition, I don't think he'd have it so easy. Even laughing can cause sufferers to keel over. Just imagine that. If you've ever tried to not laugh at something hilarious, you'll know it's next to impossible.)

BethAnn

We don't really get to know much about poor BethAnn before she's taken out in a hail of dream bullets. Because she's got anorexia, her heart supposedly couldn't take the stress of dying in the dream.

BethAnn's backstory highlights another problem in this book, which I'll talk more about later. Basically, she feels guilty because her younger sister drowned while she was babysitting her. Her arc is short, and ends when she steps in front of a bunch of bullets to try to save the others (the scene is so badly written, however, that it doesn't appear that they really needed saving--or that taking those bullets would've helped... so her sacrifice comes off as completely pointless).

Sinclair

Here's another stereotype: the rich, handsome bad-boy. Except Sinclair is, apparently, *very* bad. A psychopath, in fact. There are very few clues, other than when he kills a tiger that was trying to eat them and Cata makes a big deal about how it wasn't necessary. (It wasn't necessary because their escape was too easy and convenient, but I digress). Aside from flirting and making jokes, Sinclair doesn't really exhibit any inappropriate behaviour. One thing that the author *could* have done, if she indeed wanted to cast him as a realistic psychopath, was to have his heart rate different from all the other kids. Psychopaths have a lower resting heart rate, and often don't have their hearts speed up in stressful situations the way other people's do. In the study, though, the heart rate acceleration was consistent across all the subjects, which was a missed opportunity to give this character a little more realism.

His backstory is that he probably killed some kids, but his parents covered it up. I don't know why he has insomnia. A psychopath wouldn't lose sleep over killing people.

Remi

Oh, Remi. Poor Remi, the token black kid from "Africa" who speaks with an "African" accent... but with perfect English syntax (even though, as we find out later, he's from a former French colony). I was kind of offended by this character. He's written as if we're *supposed* to dislike him. He's intolerant of Ant, to the point where it isn't even realistic (yelling at the top of his lungs--in all caps--at the latter's counting rituals and taking it completely personally for some reason).

His backstory is that he's a genocide survivor. Why the author didn't just pick one of many real genocides is beyond me. Instead, she makes up a place called Matangwe, which we find out at the 65% mark is supposedly a former colony. I assumed it was a village, since, when I Googled it, I came up with a village in Kenya. So when he says he's from Matangwe in Africa, it just sounds like the author doesn't realize that Africa is a continent. Still, by making up a fictional place, it looks lazy, as if the author didn't want to do any research. When I looked it up, I found an article about five genocides that were still going on at the time this book was written. Three were in Africa. There was no need to make anything up, especially since the extent of Remi's "African-ness" was the colour of his skin (there are very few details given, and even the nightmare based on his experiences is so generic that it could've taken place almost anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa).

Ant/George

Yes, that's a spoiler. George doesn't even exist. I figured it out long before the characters did. George is basically just a figment of Ant's imagination, somehow manifesting as a real person that the other study subjects can see. This may be because Ant is a Mary Sue. Yes, a Mary Sue, not a Gary Stu. We find out almost at the end that Ant is actually a girl, not a boy as everyone had assumed. And she's not just a Mary Sue: she's an autistic savant Mary Sue.

We don't really know her backstory, other than the fact that she's got an IQ of 160, is autistic and has OCD, but eschews any sort of labels. (This character is probably going to be offensive to multiple groups, but I'll discuss that more later.) She's like a Swiss army knife, always there providing answers (or even weapons conjured out of thin air) whenever they're needed. I'm still not sure why she has insomnia. Maybe it's just due to anxiety.

In any case, her character is kind of inconsistent. At times, she's written as autistic... but only so that people can comment on it. Many of those traits sort of fall by the wayside later, and instead of coming across as autistic, she just seems... young. (She is, at thirteen, the youngest in the group.)

Jaime

He's the third point-of-view character, but he's on the outside. Jaime is a pre-med student, in the room where the experiment is taking place and watching everything that goes on. I do *not* like Jaime. He keeps doubting himself, deferring to the doctors who are running the study, viewing them like gods.

If this famous scientist hasn't yet seen a pattern, who am I to point it out to him?

The thing is, the two doctors running the study are a couple of the dumbest doctors I've ever seen. If Jaime thinks he's not as smart as they are, then he's got a problem.

Anyway, Jaime's just there to observe, and yet the "genius" doctors do things like leave him in a room full of medically unstable teenagers while they go off to do a Skype call (I still don't understand why they had to leave a room full of computers to do that) and then yell at him when he has to defibrillate one of the kids to keep them from dying.

Which is why I am able to follow through, even when my peripheral vision catches Zhu rushing through the door, and I hear her scream, "Jaime! What the hell are you doing? Stop right now!"

Of course, he succeeds.

"Jaime," Zhu says, her face drawn in wonder, "you just saved that boy's life."

She seems awfully surprised, doesn't she?

Jaime may be studying to be a doctor, but I sure wouldn't want him treating me. Before the previously mentioned incident, here's a little sample of his thought process:

What am I doing? I'm a premed student, not a doctor.

This boy is dying, a voice says from inside me.

If this doesn't work and he dies, it could be blamed on me. If I do nothing, I'm blameless.

A life is in the balance.

This could cost me my degree . . . my entry to med school . . . my career.

If you stand by and let him die, you will never forgive yourself.

This could mean ending up back in Detroit.

Better to be safe than sorry.

And then the voice inside me becomes that of my dad's. My dad, who was always proud of me, no matter what. I hear pride and amusement blend in his low baritone voice. *When have you ever taken the safe way?*

That is the push I need.

So, in other words, he'd been about to let the kid die to save his potential career. That's not exactly the sort of person I'd trust with my life.

There's also something that happens near the end of the book that just made me roll my eyes. Through a hacker friend of his, he finds out what's really in Sinclair's sealed files, and realizes he's a psychopath. When Fergus emerges briefly from the dream state, Jaime tells him about how the experiment went wrong and that the doctors are trying to find a way to bring them all out safely. And then he figures Fergus should know that they might all be in danger. Does he tell him Sinclair's a psychopath? Oh, no. That would make far too much sense. Instead:

I pray with all my heart he heard my last words: *One of you is a psychopath.*

Seriously, Jaime?! I almost suspect that he's a psychopath himself, after a stunt like that. It's like he wants to see what they'll do with that information, if they'll tear each other apart. Don't psychopaths love to create chaos?

Dr. Zhu and Dr. Vesper

These two... What do I say about these bumbling fools? They're like the medical equivalent of the Keystone Cops. Aside from the fact that their initial study premise is riddled with holes, they don't seem to know much about medicine in general. And they're so over-the-top dramatic that it made me roll my eyes (see quote above about Zhu's "wonder").

Vesper is staring at her like he's challenging her to do something impossible. "Call it," he urges.

She sighs and says, "As of seven fifty-five a.m., I declare all seven subjects comatose."

When BethAnn goes into cardiac arrest, they do call the EMTs, but like every other medical personnel in the building, they're not much better.

The EMTs are there within seconds. I stand to the side, watching in horror as they take Vesper's place, charge the paddles, and begin delivering shocks to the girl's chest. After three attempts, they stop.

"No response," one says.

"Try again," Vesper urges.

They shake their heads. "It's no good. She's gone. She was past saving by the time we got here."

You want to talk about defeatism? Those EMTs were called almost immediately when BethAnn went into cardiac arrest. They were there within seconds. But she was "past saving" by the time they got there? Remind me never to go to this hospital for anything; they sure don't try very hard.

There are so many medical things in this book that just don't ring true. Like people under general anesthesia being in REM sleep. Or Zhu having ventilators brought in just in case "care becomes extended". Ventilators are used when people have trouble breathing... not just because they're unconscious for a long time.

Okay... and now we get to the problematic aspects of this book. Aside from the Africa thing and the subtle racism, there's the undercurrent of judgment that runs through the text. One thing I found pretty offensive was equating the homeless with being dirty, shabby, and crazy.

His eyes look as mad as the homeless guy that sits outside the art supply store Mom goes to in Manhattan.

Considering that most of these kids have conditions that are described in the DSM... well, glass houses and all. And that brings me to my next point. This is a book that's probably going to offend those in the neurodiversity movement, as well as those who are often antagonized by those in the neurodiversity movement (the parents of kids on the low-functioning end of the autism spectrum).

"Like I said before, I'm not autistic," Ant says, straightening his back and speaking forcefully for the first time. He looks Remi straight in the eyes. "I'm not autistic. I don't have Asperger's. I'm not obsessive-compulsive. I'm just . . . me."

Remi looks at his feet, taken aback by Ant's defense.

"Haven't you ever heard of spectrums?" George continues, visibly controlling her rage. "Anyone with half a brain nowadays knows that everything falls on a spectrum. Sexual preference. Neurological normality. Who doesn't have a bit of ADD or dyslexia or addictive personality? And if you don't, I'll bet you've got something else going on."

When you do this, you basically deny the experience of anyone who doesn't share yours (which is something that a lot of people with high-functioning autism tend to do, which makes Ant/George's defense even more insufferable). Despite what Ant/George says, there *is* such a thing as neurological normality. But if you put *everyone* on a spectrum, you start to normalize whatever the problem is. Where do you draw the line for who needs help? You can't. As a result, some people won't get it.

This theme is continued with BethAnn, as well. Her sister was thirteen, "developmentally disabled", and drowned in the family's pool... which points to severe autism (drowning is one of the leading causes of death for people with autism). And yet, that diagnosis wasn't mentioned. Again, the lower end of the spectrum gets glossed over in favour of a glowing example of the extreme upper end (Ant/George, in this case), which is far rarer and wasn't even consistently written in this book.

Which brings me to the writing. Oh, my god. I have no idea how this got past any editors. The writing was stilted, juvenile, and downright annoying. If we're not being told what's supposed to be funny--

“My Little Pony . . . the stuff of nightmares,” Sinclair says, with more gallows humor.

--we're being treated to endless "said bookisms":

“I’m scared of heights,” Remi admits.

“Then don’t look down,” George instructs.

“Famous last words,” Sinclair mutters and continues shuffling forward at a snail’s pace.

“You have to go faster,” Fergus urges, peering nervously behind us as the humming nears.

(That's not a compilation, either. That's verbatim how it was written, with one said bookism after another.) It's almost as if this was an elementary-school writing assignment where the teacher asked the students to come up with as many synonyms for "said" as possible. This continually pulled me out of the flow, and made reading this book take way longer than it should have. Added to that was the author's insistence on preceding the dialog tag "yell" with a comma rather than an exclamation point. It made it really hard to get a sense of tone or urgency:

“Hold him still,” I yell...

Plum also has this weird relationship with contractions. They're just not there where they would seem natural, leading to a rather robotic feel in the narration at times:

This definitely isn’t the Void—it is too cold here.

The editing was crap. Sorry, but there's no other way to say it. When you have characters quoting conversations they weren't present for, actions that aren't consistent (like when the "slow-moving" zombie monks suddenly "raced" forward), and glaring repetition, it makes me wonder if *anyone* besides the author even read the book before publication.

“I know everyone wants to relax,” I say finally. “But we’ve lost two people. We really need to figure out what we’re doing here,” I say finally.

The tone is also really cheesy in spots. Cata's narration comes to a close with the following:

How long will our dwindling group survive? Can we hold out long enough for those outside the Dreamfall to rescue us? Or by the time they figure it out, will we all be dead?

In my head, this was followed by: *Tune in next week to find out in--dun, dun, dun!--the Dumbest Series I've Ever Read!* Yeah... that's not going to happen.

Continued in comments...
