



## 96 Words for Love

*Rachel Roy , Ava Dash*

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**A modern retelling of a classic Indian legend, *96 Words for Love* is a coming-of-age story.**

Ever since her acceptance to UCLA, 17-year-old Raya Liston has been quietly freaking out. She feels simultaneously lost and trapped by a future already mapped out for her.

Then her beloved grandmother dies, and Raya jumps at the chance to spend her last free summer at the ashram in India where her grandmother met and fell in love with her grandfather. Raya hopes to find her center and her true path. But she didn't expect to fall in love... with a country of beautiful contradictions, her fiercely loyal cousin, a local girl with a passion for reading, and a boy who teaches her that in Sanskrit, there are 96 different ways to say the word "love."

A modern retelling of the classic Indian legend of Shakuntala and Dushyanta.

## 96 Words for Love Details

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Author : Rachel Roy , Ava Dash

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## From Reader Review 96 Words for Love for online ebook

### Danielle says

I feel like I need to start this review off noting that there's a white side character who's super insensitive whose comments are pretty much all not taken seriously. One of them is not understanding why black/brownface is wrong. This joke did not land well given recent current events.

I'm not sure how much of this Roy wrote and how much her daughter wrote, but this definitely felt dated in weird ways. It uses the term "smexiness" (which no one has said in YEARS) and the protagonist, Raya, says "making love" a lot, which no one I know says at all. Also, no one is niche for liking Coldplay over Travis Scott - I really hated how one of her sole personality traits was liking indie bands and having a superiority complex. (Also, who actually hates Nick Jonas? He's a cultural icon)

I think Raya is supposed to be based on Roy's daughter - both are black and Indian - and while the story focuses on her Indian side, I wish she was able to say more about being black than the part about someone touching her hair. It kind of felt like that part of her identity was slipped in but was a side note to the story - I know her being part black is not the entirety of her being, but in my experience it's really obvious when someone incorporates their identity into the story v. when someone being marginalized is just simply stated. This felt a lot more like the latter and I wish it had explored being mixed race more.

There's a pretty diverse cast of characters across different races and sexualities, but that's all they are. Aside from race, I really felt like the LGBT characters were based on stereotypes and not well-developed at all. One has a scandal after (view spoiler) and the other is only used for sex jokes. I really wish it didn't feel like we had to sacrifice good LGBT representation for good POC representation.

If you aren't familiar with Indian mythology, the book references it over and over to the point that you won't forget this is a retelling. I know it's based off of something that already exists, but I wish the basis of the story - that Raya travels to India to stay at an ashram after her grandmother dies - was given more gravitas than it was. Raya discovering herself is frequently overshadowed by the romance and how hot she thinks this guy is.

(view spoiler)

This book is so superficial. I'm happy that it's more diverse than a lot of books today, but it totally misses the mark in every other sense.

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### Mandi Schneck says

This is definitely a book where the insides match the beauty of the cover. 96 Words for Love by Rachel Roy and Ava Dash is full of beautiful references to Indian legend while simultaneously tackling the important issues of sex trafficking and racism.

This story follows Raya, who is full of anxiety after receiving her acceptance to UCLA and having to decide a path for her future. Then Raya's grandmother dies, and her parting words to Raya include mentioning that she hid some things for Raya and her cousin at her beloved ashram in India. Now, Raya and her cousin

journey to the ashram hoping to find what their grandmother left them and reconnect with her, but they may find more than that along the way.

I really enjoyed my time spent with this story, and it was an incredibly quick read. The imagery and vivid descriptions made it easy for me to place myself in the ashram with Raya. I loved getting to learn more about Indian legend and culture, and I identified with Raya's struggle to figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

I am glad that this addressed sex trafficking, as this is a major issue that you don't see a lot in YA fiction. I also appreciated how it addressed racism. A character in this book isn't intentionally racist, but many of the things she says are hurtful, and she has the opportunity to learn why they are wrong and offensive. I do think everything wrapped up too quickly and perfectly. I would have appreciated a more gritty ending, and think that would have been more realistic to some of the subjects at hand.

Overall Rating: 4 out of 5 Stars

Thanks so much to Jimmy Patterson for a copy of this read! 96 Words for Love by Rachel Roy and Ava Dash is out on January 15th, so be sure to pick up a copy!

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### **rachel says**

[missing child, sex trafficking, and kidnapping (hide spoiler)]

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### **Shala says**

This book was lovely. The writing was simple, but descriptive. It is a very character driven story, with a small plot to help move things forward.

This book talks about some serious things, and I feel it was handled in a delicate enough way. If this mother/daughter duo decided to write another book together, I would give it a try.

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### **Shannara Petty says**

This was one of those rare books that I wanted to reread as soon as I finished it. I absolutely love Raya and her journey to find out who she was reminded me of when I was a teen facing the future. This story drew me in from the beginning and I was eager to read about Raya's trip to the ashram to follow in the footsteps of her grandmother. I also loved the way her relationship with Kiran unfolded and grew. This book was funny, heartwarming, and also faced some serious issues that most people never have to think about. This was very well written and was the first of the James Patterson presents imprint that I have read. Needless to say, I'll be diving into more of them after having read this one. I recommend this to young adult book lovers over the age of 14 or 15 due to some vague sexual content.

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## **Kelly Hager says**

This is an incredibly readable book. There were parts I loved (learning about Indian culture; the ashram setting; Raya and Anandi trying to find what their grandmother left for them) and it made up for the parts I didn't (instalove; a ton of slang that makes the book feel dated even though it just came out).

Also, if you're not good with swearing, you should know that there's a lot of it in this book. I'm not particularly delicate, but if you are, definitely proceed with caution.

The pacing also seemed a little off. It's a little slow in the beginning (not ridiculously slow or to the point where I was ever tempted to stop reading) but then it seemed to go into hyperdrive and it almost felt like I had skipped some chapters.

I think a lot of that is because it's a first novel. The raw materials are definitely there, and I hope they write a second book. I think they'll end up doing really good things.

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## **CleverBaggins says**

This would be an amazing book for certain teen girls. It was enjoyable to me and I like what it's doing and I have no real complaints. It's just one of those things where they're trying a little too hard to appeal to "current" teens. But- the characters and story itself was interesting enough that it was still fun to read.

The setting is wonderfully described, the characters well developed and it's a great look into a part of the world that most people don't get to see. I'll definitely recommend it and hope the authors write some more books together because I think they have a lot of potential.

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## **Jessena Johnson says**

2.5/5

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## **Sara (A Gingerly Review) says**

Y'all... all of the no. I mean, the biggest NO you could ever imagine.

What in the fresh hell was this mess? Besides a full dumpster fire, that is.

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My full review can be found here: <https://aginglerlyreview.wordpress.com...>

I tried so hard to like this story but it just was not in the cards for me. I struggled to connect to any aspect. I mean, with a cover like that I expected more. (I'm so shallow, I know.) I will do my best to logically explain my reaction to strongly not liking this one and giving it a 1 star review.

First, the characters. Holy mother of all things bacon. The characters were just so shallow, vapid, and flat. The main character, Raya, was supposed to be traveling to India to pay respect to her recently deceased grandmother and spending her last “free” summer trying to find her “center” before her life becomes busy. That sounds great but Raya comes across as more of a boy-crazy diva and petulant child than anything else. In order for her to travel to India, she basically bullied her parents into letting her go. It was obvious who was the child and who was the parent in that household. I don’t know many teenagers (aka “minors”) that could do this without throwing the biggest temper tantrum. I knew nothing substantial about the MC other than she was overly obsessed with the Jonas Brothers. Is anyone still obsessed with them? I didn’t think so. The rest of the cast was completely forgettable so don’t ask me about them.

Second, the setting of the story felt very underdeveloped. Wait, it may not have even been developed... it felt like a case of “tell the readers, don’t show them” and I am not ever a fan of those stories. There were many, many times where the setting – INDIA – felt like an afterthought. If the author could not pull me into the setting and make me feel as if I’m there, then I’m out. Nothing was described as more than “a beautiful temple”. Really. That was the best that could be done?

Third, the actual plot left a lot to be desired. I’m not exactly sure what the plot of the story was. Yes, Raya went to India but it felt as if she was not there to pay respect to her grandmother who passed. It felt as if she traveled part of Europe to stare at boys. Oh, and disrespect a sacred garden by having a sexual experience in front of a Holy Statue. You read that right, my darlings.

Everything else about the story was either boring, predictable, and/or downright dreadful. A lot of cussing, bad dialogue, instalove, and lack of development on anything is what lead me to not like this book as much as I wanted to. I don’t ask for much out of a story but I do have basic requirements. This story did not meet any of them. Do I recommend it? Nope, not at all. Am I sorry I read it? I am, actually. It pains me to say that. If you read this and enjoyed it, I do wish I could have read it with your eyes. It just did not work for me.

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## **Olivia says**

This is petty, but what the hay? Raya dissed on Almond Joy and LOVES Coldplay. For that, she is my enemy.

Nah, but genuinely:

Maybe I could've tolerated this book more if I hadn't just read another book ( The Love & Lies of Rukhsana Ali) that is set in India and features family relations and a "forbidden" love. The book prior was superb. This was not. This was a book I only finished due to obligation. I'm not saying it's the worst book ever. I think some people could like it. For instance: People that don't normally read, people who are merely looking to check off a Diversity Bingo square for a book that takes place outside of America; with absolutely no want or care to learn about another land and culture. So, ya know, there's that I guess. I just found this to be extremely disappointing and lackluster. There is absolutely nothing special about this.

This story had so much potential. I thought I'd absolutely love this, I had it on my TBR shelf for months! What was given was not what had been promised.

-A book that seemed to promise depth and heart, was superficial and hollow.

-A book that promised culture and rich landscapes had next to none. If it weren't for the fact that Raya

constantly mentioned being in India, I would have figured we were still in California. The extent of describing her surroundings? A billboard in Sanskrit, women in sari's, statues of Hindu gods, terrifying roads, one street vendor, and Ghandi's cremation place. Throughout the entire book, that's all we get. I think that is positively ridiculous. I may be pushing it, but I'd border on saying it's unforgivable--- to just overlook the scenery, to ignore the culture.

-Also! Everyone in India --- in this remote village, speaks perfect English. All the time. No one speaks Hindi or any other language, apparently. This bothers me a lot. A LOT. In other books that take place where English is not the first language, we normally get everything in English, but with certain words that are specific to their native language thrown in as a bare minimum, I don't see why they didn't do that here. In my mind, that is literally the bare freaking minimum you can do.

-This book is inspired by a famous Indian legend called Shakuntala and Dushyanta. I'm not familiar with this tale, though it is roughly summarized in the book. It's a story that has been passed on for centuries, it serves a place in their culture. This book does not live up to the monument that that story must be to have survived all these years. I feel that whatever it is that made that tale so unique, so timeless --- it's only been commercialized to and for a(n) Western/ American audience. What remains of the legend in here is what I would describe as a muddy paint-by-numbers replication by someone with poor eyesight and misplaced reading glasses.

-The characters are flat. One dimensional. Every single one of them. Each had one trademark and that was all they were aloud to be. A pretty boy, an offensive Brit, a Nick Jonas obsessed cousin (seriously, I think Nick Jonas sponsored this or something), a wise and mysterious woman. And then Raya. Raya is clueless. Not because she doesn't know what she wants to pursue as a career, but in every other aspect imaginable. This book relies solely on her being an idiot.

Seriously, she makes a big deal out of everything, turns the most obvious things into stupid "mysteries" and when she "solves" them, I, as a reader, made this face:

-Honestly, I made that face a lot. Because clever, Raya is not. I feel like the authors were desperate to fill space and so they just threw everything and hoped something would land. Pacing? We don't know her. "What can we do to meet our page quota?" Mystery? A love complication? Family drama? A disappearance? Surely something has to stick! Uh...

-Non-problems are made into HUGE problems and HUGE problems are treated as non-problems. I can't go into specifics, but it's ridiculous. Disgusting, even!

-There were many a attempt at jokes throughout. Somehow, none of those stuck either. And I thought (trying to be kind and all ((I promise I'm generally nice!))) "Perhaps the hilarity of these moments are ""You had to have been there"" moments." (Yes, I'm the person that starts sentences with the word "perhaps".) But... THAT'S EVEN WORSE, if that is the case! It's the authors job to make you feel a part of that moment, as though you were really there. To fail at that is just... well, it ain't great.

Also, let us talk about the Jonas Brothers for just a minute. I understand it's 2019 but Dash and Roy started this.

Okay, so Raya is 17/18. Presumably the year this takes place during is 2018. She said she was obsessed with the Jo-Bros back when they were big when she was still in middle school, there were mentions of her sharing their first ever album with her cousin when she was 12. Now, I am 18. I was a Jonas fan, I think we all were, secretly. I was a Jonas Brothers fan when they first hit the scene in 2006. 2007-08 is when they got real popular. If Raya was a fan of them from the very beginning of their career, or at the least, at the height of it (and as she is a music fan/ reviewer, all signs indicate she would've), then something isn't adding up to her being obsessed with them when she was 12 (presumably in either 2012/2013) as they practically dropped off

in 2010/2011. They wouldn't have been huge when she was in middle school. Their first album came out long before she would've been 12.

I don't know guys, it's 3:23AM and I am too invested in this thing that doesn't seem to add up. There is red yarn everywhere. I'm being strangled by it. S.O.S.

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### **Sarah says**

I received this through Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

Raya is your classic good girl, who plans to unquestioningly follow the path her parents have set before her. However, when she gets her acceptance at UCLA, where she intends to take part in the law program, her true anxieties begin showing through. Raya doesn't know if she wants to go to UCLA, become a lawyer, or even go to college at all. She is given the opportunity to explore her feelings, when she goes to live in an ashram in India after her grandmother dies. Raya's grandmother left behind something at the ashram for her and her cousin to find. This place encourages self-reflection, which allows both girls to explore their desires. Raya quickly makes friends with many of the others staying in the ashram, and begins to have forbidden feelings, because no physical romance is supposed to take place in the ashram, for hot playboy, Kiran. Raya also begins volunteering in the local community, where she makes a strong connection to one of the students there who is determined to learn to read. This coming-of-age tale is a re-imagination of an Indian legend.

I enjoyed this book. I liked the idea of Raya and other characters reflecting upon themselves. I thought it was an interesting exploration of an ashram and the various areas of India. I never truly warmed up to the romance between Raya and Kiran, but I don't think their romance was the point of the book...ish.

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### **Skye Chanel says**

This book had so much potential but it's was just meh for for me ??????????

The story arc with the two little girls was beautiful but other than that it was alright.

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### **Allison says**

Thank you kidlitexchange for this book! All opinions are my own. This book will be available 1.15.2019  
96 Words for Love by Rachel Roy and Ava Dash is a realistic young-adult fiction story about Raya Liston's, a high school senior who has just been accepted into UCLA. Raya is struggling to figure out what she is going to do in college and as a career, a character detail that deeply resonated with me. Tragedy strikes when Raya's grandmother, Daadee, calls to say her final goodbyes before passing away around her family in India. Daadee's final wish is for Raya and her cousin, Anandi, to visit the ashram that meant so much to her and where she left some items for her granddaughters. While there, Raya meets a handsome young man, Kiran and she struggles to find her path for her future while unfolding a story about Daadee's past.

While this story has so much going for it, I struggled with Raya's character and her personality. She was quick to judge others but couldn't see flaws within herself and how her own beliefs and treatment of others



affected her perception of them. Raya talks down about her cousin's taste in music, which may not be music I like, but it struck a chord with me on how I've had friends be judgmental about music or my taste in books. This was perpetuated through out the story with how she thought about people she interacted with at the ashram. While I wanted to love this book, it just wasn't for me. With out giving spoilers, if certain story lines had unfolded earlier, such as the Hindu love story of Shakuntala and Dushyanta, social justice problems in India, and how those were interwoven within the plot, this story could be phenomenal and a wonderful tool for discussion on these issues. I disliked how these particular aspects of the story line just felt like plot devices pushing the story to the end. I do think many will be able to relate with Raya and her own personal struggle to figure out what her future is. This book does have occasional adult language and discussion of sex. I would say this book is for 16 and older.

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## **Kristen says**

*I won a free copy on Goodreads thanks to FirstReads in exchange for an honest review.*

Spoilers ahead. Get lost if you actually want to like this book. I don't want to ruin it for you.

### **This book was pretty hollow.**

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't necessarily *bad* or hurtful or a waste of time... per se. It just wasn't much of anything. It wasn't deep enough to earn the heartfelt blurbs on the front and back covers from a bunch of different celebrities who knew the famous fashion designer turned author. It definitely feels like Rachel Roy used her celebrity to get her daughter's book published, is all I'm saying.

Before I get into my nitpicking, I just want to say that the actual writing style was pretty decent. There was never a point while I was reading where I wanted to put the book down or toss it at my wall in frustration. The writing has a TON of potential. It just isn't quite there yet.

This book needs more editing almost as much as I need a better social life.

Keep in mind that my copy was an ARC, therefore the problems I found in the book may have been taken out before publication.

But anywhoozle, I had some ISSUES.

1. Minor logic issues - Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's impossible to have a 13.5 hour time difference. Pretty sure time zones are hours apart, not half hours. Also, at one point it was stated that the main character last visited India 5 years ago. However, after that, they keep saying that the last time she was there she introduced her cousin to the Jonas Brothers in 2010. If this book was written in 2018 and published in 2019, than "5 years ago" should have been 2013 or 2014. No Jonas Brothers required. Which brings me to my next problem.

2. WAY TOO MANY JONAS BROTHER JOKES - That weren't even funny the first time. I shit you not, Nick Jonas is mentioned in this book more than 10 times, possibly upwards of 20. It was pretty irritating and it made me feel like I should have just read a book about Nick Jonas, since he was clearly supposed to be the

most interesting thing about this book. Obviously, the author had a bit of a Jo Bro obsession back in the day. I feel ya girl. Me too. But I was more of a Joe Jonas girl myself.

3. Characters flatter than my ass - Pretty much all of the characters, especially the side characters were some of the most one dimensional ones I've ever seen. Not much depth to any of them. For instance, one character was a bit of a bigot, and that's all she was. The Guru was like a sage, with less personality than white bread, whose only purpose was to give (very obvious) advice. The MC's best friend was a sexually aggressive lesbian, and that's all she was. I could go on but I won't since I'm boring myself.

4. Jokes cornier than my teeth - I like my contemporary YA reads peppered with a little humor. I have to give this book a WELL, YOU TRIED sticker because there were obvious attempts at jokes made throughout the book. I just didn't find the jokes very funny. There was one pun I thought was cute though, so I'll share it with the rest of the class.

"HEDGEHOGS NEED TO LEARN HOW TO SHARE THE HEDGE."

That was it kids. The best line of the book. Does that tell you what you need to know about it?

5. Setting was an afterthought - I think that the choice of setting could have led to some absolutely astounding atmosphere. A beautiful Indian temple. Those words alone could inspire a million stunning images in my brain. However, my brain had to do all the imagining because there was almost no descriptive imagery in this book. Which is a real shame because I've never been to India, probably never will, and this book could have taken me there.

6. Is this Groundhog's Day or... - For the majority of the book, the same things happened day after day once she got to the temple. I get it. She has a routine but YAWN. How to be the main character Raya Liston: Wake up. Pray. Peel potatoes and judge people. Teach a kid how to read with all the enthusiasm of a deceased lima bean. Kiss a guy with less swag than your mom. Eat dinner. Sleep. Repeat. That's it. You're good to go.

7. Holy Hell - This book has a motherfucking awful lot of fucking swearing for a book set in a goddamn Holy place. Shit. Not to mention that one time when they have sex in a sacred garden right in front of a Holy statue that her grandma used to pray to. Classy as fuck.

8. If I could gaze into the future - you might think this book would be a breeze. (sorry. all the disney channel references in this book got me rememberin' the good old days.) What I'm trying to say here is that this book is WOW SO PREDICTABLE. I'm not even going to worry about this being a spoiler because if you couldn't see what I'm about to say coming, than you're probably too blind to read this review anyway, let alone an entire book, bless your soul. It was so obvious that she would want to become a teacher. It was so obvious that whatever his name was would be the love interest. It was so obvious that the man her grandma was talking about in her letters was the grandpa. Everything was so obvious, I was wondering if I was reading this book or if I was just making it up myself as I went along.

9. The author is madly in love with the main character - and thinks you should be too. Here we have another case of the too perfect MC (that is probably just the author inserting herself into the story but I don't know her personally so don't @me, okay). I swear to bajeezus everyone in this book was acting like everyone else sucked but Raya was God's golden cookie. If one more person kisses this main character's ass I swear to gOd i'M gOnNA riOT.

10. Main premise? - Pfft. Forget about that. Let's just put that there to look pretty on the blurb. So the set up in this book was that after Raya's grandma dies, she and her cousin want to go on some magical quest to look for some mysterious items that the grandma told them on her death bed to look for. ...O....kay... That could have been iNteReStiNG. I guess. Maybe. That's not what actually happens though. So no worries. The authors must have just put that in there as a red herring or something. It's all good. Once they get to the temple, I swear this brat spends no time with her cousin actually doing what they went there to do.

10. Subsection b) Main premise pt 2. - That epic retelling of an Indian love story? I'm still waiting on that. The actual story that they were referring to was easily 10.8 thousand times more interesting than this loosely based retelling. The resemblance to the two stories was thinner than Eugenia Cooney.

11. All that love interests need are good looks, right? - Cuz that's all this guy's got going for him anyway. He was honestly just a bag of meat. They should have just set the girl up with a set of pouty lips on a stick. She would have been just as happy and probably better off. And don't get me started on the chemistry, or lack thereof. These two went from lust to FAKE LOVE faster than I go from dinner to dessert. They were about as cute a couple as an eggplant and a goldfish and had even less in common. To say that this love affair was shallow would be almost as big an understatement as saying that this review is disgustingly long-winded.

12. All that Indians need in order to be Indian are brown skin, right? - Cuz that's about as Indian as the Indian characters got in this book. They. All. Acted. American. American slang? Yeah, that screams authentic Indian culture. Speaking 99.99% of your lines in English? Correct. Another common Indian habit. Where the bloody tooting stroopwaffle is all the culture? 911. I would like to report a crime. I have been robbed of what could have been a fantastic cultural experience. I'm white enough as it is. I don't need this book making me feel any whiter, thank you.

76. Uneven pacing - The first 100 pages are set at a pretty good pace. It gave you time to get to know the character and the situations in a fair amount of time. Just enough detail but not enough to bog you down or slow down the story. Then the middle chunk sped up a bit, not so bad, but still too fast for you to get attached to any side characters or get invested deeply enough into the plot. The last part was laughably rushed. Someone was facing a deadline or just stopped caring by that point. Just saying.

143. My biggest qualm - I'm going to get a little serious for a second to wrap up this monster of a review. My final issue is the almost cavalier way that the issue of sex trafficking was handled in this book. At one point, a little girl goes missing and it is suspected that she was taken by human traffickers. This came after a pathetically melodramatic reveal of one of the flat side characters admitting that she had been trafficked herself. The MC's reaction to that was so weak. Almost zero emotions were conveyed in the writing. It was like: "OMG, that's horrible. Wanna go get a chai latte?" Bitch, were you even listening? This is bad. Very bad. A little girl is missing and while you do show that you care enough to kinda sorta go looking for her, you all sure give up WAY TOO EASILY. I've looked for a missing pencil longer than these characters spent looking for a missing human being, I swear to GOOPLA! This issue was handled way too trivially and it deserved better and more serious treatment.

If you've made it this far with my review, CONGRATS! You deserve a cookie! Now go out there and read something good, you beautiful creature, you.

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**Amber Garabrandt says**

First and foremost, our Raya has some serious anxiety issues, which I think heighten her need to know what to do at all times. She's a thinker, a planner, a worrier. When Daadee, one of the most important people in her life, dies her world comes crashing down. Already, she was dreading the next year with UCLA- not that she minded the college or college in general.... just that this meant it was time to think about forever. What she studied here was what she would do for the rest of her life. I could kind of understand these things, being a worrier that needs to know how things are gonna go at all times (my coworkers work hard to be sure that I know what I am doing and who's with me every day, bless them. We even have a Money Center planner with schedules, helpful hints and things that need done... not the everyday, but when new paperwork comes through, procedures change or technology is being temperamental. It's embarrassing that this makes me feel more confident, but there we have it.). But I digress.... my point: I get Raya. Her anxiety, her drive to do everything well, the voices in her head that won't shut up so she can meditate... same.

I also loved the other character- even Devin. I am pretty sure we have all met the well-meaning girl that never thinks about how what she says or does comes across to others. Is she a tiny bit racist? Yes, but in a really weird way. She loves the exotic, the beauty, of different cultures and doesn't get that constantly pointing them out or having "can I touch your hair" moments are off putting. Anandi and Pilot were fantastic characters- multifaceted and interesting. I also thought Pihu was a fantastic addition, she not only helped Raya find something she loved, but with her warmth, spirit and determination she showed Raya that it was okay to not be perfect right away.

Kiran was odd for me. There were moments that I loved him and moments where I would have happily strangled him. He started out here with an eye for beautiful things. As a film-maker he saw the world differently and that appealed to Raya. That said, anything that wasn't beautiful and perfect was quickly glossed over. Problems with the village school? Instead of going to help, he was going to have his parents donate money once he was finally "out of here" (the gorgeous ashram that a lot of others had paid a great amount of money to get into). He seemed spoiled, juvenile at times. But then there were moments of kindness, like when he would find things to show Raya and how supportive he was of her. I do feel, though, that he and Raya definitely had the most character development and I appreciate that. I still don't know how I feel about their relationship. It's not the worst ever.... but I am not totally into it either.

The story line was really good, and the writing had a nice, even flow. It grabbed my attention pretty quickly, and I found it to be a fast and interesting read. I liked the bits of mythology and the addition of Daadee's things. There just seemed to be something missing for me. I can't explain it. I don't feel completely fulfilled with the story. ( I also want to know more about Pilot and Anandi- if they were to get their own stories I would totally read that.) For me, this was a three star book with one for creativity. It was really good, and I do recommend it, but it left me feeling a bit unfulfilled.

On the adult content scale, there's language and some sexual content. It is geared toward teens, and isn't too explicit though. I would give it a four.

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