



A Tyranny of Queens

Foz Meadows

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Saffron Coulter has returned from the fantasy kingdom of Kena. Threatened with a stay in psychiatric care, Saffron has to make a choice: to forget about Kena and fit back into the life she's outgrown, or pit herself against everything she's ever known and everyone she loves.

Meanwhile in Kena, Gwen is increasingly troubled by the absence of Leoden, cruel ruler of the kingdom, and his plans for the captive worldwalkers, while Yena, still in Veksh, must confront the deposed Kadeja. What is their endgame? Who can they trust? And what will happen when Leoden returns?

File Under: **Fantasy**

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A Tyranny of Queens Details

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From Reader Review A Tyranny of Queens for online ebook

Megan Leigh says

This review originally appeared on Pop Verse.

The trouble with writing a spectacular opening novel of a series is that every follow-up is held up to a bar already set incredibly high. Of course, writing a smashing first instalment encourages readers to pick up any follow-ups, so it is a bit of a double-edged sword. I really enjoyed *An Accident of Stars* (read the full review [here](#)). It was original and thoroughly intriguing. I liked the worldbuilding, the characters, the culture. *A Tyranny of Queens*, however, didn't quite live up to his predecessor.

'It wasn't OK. It could only be endured. Which meant it was high school as usual, just turned up to eleven.'

I was very pleased to see Foz tackling the issue of 'aftermath'. Many portal fantasies have their characters suffer no consequences from having skipped out on their Earthly lives for a time. Saffron's attempts to re-acclimate to normal life are very affecting, as is her burgeoning friendship with Lita. It is high school that is unendurable for her. In a world where bullying is both acknowledged and reviled while still being poorly dealt with, the frustration of the one being bullied is something we can all relate to. If this were Kena, Saffron would have been free to act, but back on Earth, she has to behave within social rules that unfairly protects those it is meant to ward against.

Meanwhile, Leoden – a mostly absent, villainous figure in the first novel – is given an active role in *A Tyranny of Queens*. The author does an admirable job of creating a character who is neither good nor evil, nor entirely a victim of the evil done to him either. He has personality and strength, staying on the path he has chosen until he is presented with very good evidence to suggest he should do otherwise. Creating flawed characters is something of a specialty for Foz, deftly writing characters that feel true to life. Her skills in creating interesting, relatable characters with consistent internal logic, provides a thoroughly enjoyable read.

'I chose this, and I'd choose it again. I'm sorry for a lot of things, but not for wanting this.'

I did say, however, that this follow-up wasn't as rosy as *An Accident of Stars*. The problems come about through pacing issues and the enormously complicated world and culture I so loved from the first book. Following so many different story tangents at once breaks up the plot too much. As I was reading, I kept wanting the focus to go back to whatever the last focus was, wanting to know what was happening there. Meanwhile, Foz did such immensely dense worldbuilding in *An Accident of Stars* the learning curve when coming back for the second instalment was killer. The cast of characters is enormous, particularly when it comes to peripheral characters who are often referenced but never make it into starring roles. Many of them also have fairly similar names – it reminded me of reading *The Illiad* when I kept having to look up who was who. It was impossible to keep up and certainly took me out of the story. I felt that she should have limited the narrative to just two characters with p.o.v. focus – Safi and Yena. This would have helped the pacing and exposition issues enormously.

'A part of her was morbidly curious to see what was being printed, but a shred of self-preservation woke to speak that ancient digital adage: don't read the comments.'

While it's a great issue to tackle, Foz approaches what is essentially a moral ('there are two sides to every story') a little heavy-handedly. Everyone is an unreliable narrator and she throws into question everything

Saffron and the reader took for granted in *An Accident of Stars*. Every plot thread in the narrative has at least some element of characters showing they are 'grey' – and while on the one hand, I may praise this as realistic characterisation, the specific circumstances often feel a little too obvious and contrived. I'm all for thematic consistency, but I felt a little condescended at times.

Having said that, for the most part, Foz is very good at throwing in neat little references to cultural issues in our own world and presenting a better way to approach them in her imaginary ones. For instance, Saffron shows herself to be very sympathetic to genderfluidity when she visits a new planet. Before a newly introduced character's self-identified gender identity is made known to Saffron (by their own confirmation or through language usage of those around her), she automatically refers to them as 'they', avoiding making snap judgements based on their appearance. Foz similarly looks at prostitution with several off-hand comments that are just enough to make the reader potentially evaluate their ingrained social prejudices while not focusing on something that isn't central to the narrative.

Verdict: Enjoyable fantasy read but a disappointment following the almost perfect *An Accident of Stars*.

Be sure to listen to my interview with Foz on *Breaking the Glass Slipper*.

Marita Arvaniti says

Good queer representation: ✓

Diversity: ✓

Interesting world building: ✓

Polyamory: ✓

All in all Foz Meadows owns me now

Nicole Luiken says

One of those books where I was far more invested in one storyline than the others--Saffron's traumatic return to Earth. It took me a good quarter or so of the book to get interested in Yena (a character I barely remembered from book one). After that things picked up. I was especially impressed with one particular plot twist of Saffron's, and I enjoyed the mystery of what the villain was up to. New character Naruet was nicely drawn.

Tsana Dolichva says

A Tyranny of Queens by Foz Meadows is the sequel to *An Accident of Stars*, which I reviewed earlier this year, and the concluding volume of the duology. I didn't actually realise it was a duology until I was nearing the end — I had assumed trilogy by default — and I'm still not sure whether I'm ultimately disappointed about that.

This book continues the story of Saffi, Yena, Gwen and friends, following on directly from the events at the end of *An Accident of Stars*. This is not a book to read if you haven't read the prequel as pretty much all of

the story depends on what went before it. In *A Tyranny of Queens* we follow each of the characters as we find out first what happens next and then how everything wraps up.

That was the thing I didn't expect about *A Tyranny of Queens*. I went into it assuming it was book two of a trilogy and, as I was approaching the climax/end, realised that it was going to wrap up too much of the main plot to leave much for a book three. And then it felt like it was over too quickly, with everything wrapping up a book earlier than I originally expected. This is partly my own fault for not realising this was a duology but it's also an effect that was amplified by the opening of *A Tyranny of Queens* being a bit slow. I was mostly interested in Saffi's story — initially back on Earth — but more time was spent on what was going on back in Kena, not all of which was as interesting, initially (although it was all ultimately relevant to the overarching plot).

The other thing was, I didn't find the overarching plot across the two books as innovative as I would have liked. Most of the interesting and exceptional elements were in the social worldbuilding (not to say that the physical worldbuilding wasn't also interesting). The overarching plot wasn't boring but kind of didn't go far enough to be really interesting. Part of it was interrogating the portal fantasy premise, but part of it could have dealt at least a little bit with colonial ideas, or at least have given us more of a historical context for , but didn't. The antagonist side of the story was fine, but there just could have been... more.

Basically, I liked this book but I didn't love it. I'm glad I read it because I enjoyed seeing how everything was resolved and what Saffi ultimately decided to do with her life. Also, it kept my interest enough that at no point did I actually put it down to go read something else.

I recommend *A Tyranny of Queens* to readers who enjoyed *An Accident of Stars* and I recommend the whole *Manifold Worlds* series to fans of portal fantasy or readers who like seeing less conventional gender roles and family groupings in their fantasy stories. Indeed, the latter is one of the really strong points of the series. Although I don't expect a direct sequel, I would be more than happy to read more books set in the same universe since there's a lot of scope there to tell a lot of different stories.

4 / 5 stars

You can read more of my reviews on my blog.

rosamund says

I enjoyed this even more than the first novel in the series. The narrative plummets us directly into the events following "*An Accident of Stars*" with a tightly-woven and engaging plot. Characters from "*An Accident of Stars*" return, and many mysteries set up in that book are solved here. If you found "*Stars*" a bit loose in places, you'll find the plot in "*Tyranny*" much tighter. I'm so impressed with the way Foz Meadows writes about so many different things: gender, sexuality, bullying, religion, and how well Meadows crafts the complex and vivid worlds within the story. The worlds are refreshingly diverse, and Meadows plays with the tropes of world-building and portal fantasy so imaginatively. Highly recommended, though this is not a stand-alone novel: it needs to be read in conjunction with "*An Accident of Stars*".

I hope there will be more books in this series!

Kam says

But what I love most about this novel, though, and which remains the main reason why I love its predecessor so much, is the focus on relationships, and how the quality of those relationships can either make or break a person. Part of the reason why An Accident of Stars was such a pleasure to read is that it showed me what relationships could be: the concept of the mahu'kedet is one I hold close to my heart because it articulates my notion of the ideal family. Throughout the first novel, the reader sees more of the positive, strengthening side of relationships, especially when they are not held back by such limiting notions as blood and gender.

In A Tyranny of Queens, however, things are different. This time the reader gets to see the more negative side of relationships: how even the relationships we think ought to be the most loving, the relationships we hold most sacred, can stifle, and smother, and choke.

Full review here: <http://wp.me/p21txV-Au>

Siavahda says

I am not used to sequels surpassing the first installments - it doesn't happen often - but gods, it did this time. I *could not put this down*. I swear I inhaled it. In some way I can't define the emotions in this book struck me much harder than in the first one; right from the opening pages, when Saffron is back at school and dealing *once again* with the disgusting Jared and equally bad, if not even worse, school administration, the emotion was ramped up to 11 and I was *there*, living every moment.

I adore how much and how well this expanded on bits of worldbuilding from the first book, answering questions and revealing even more, deeper and more intricate mysteries. The pacing is perfect, just the right clues dropped at just the right times for the reader to start putting the pieces together as the characters do. It would have been easy to make this a rushed mess, but it absolutely isn't; the story is slower when it needs to be, fast-paced when things are happening *quickly*, and oh, the characters. As if I wasn't already in love with them all after *Stars*! Now I'm officially head-over-heels. Even the villain/s, while I don't like them as *people*, are fabulous *characters*, and I love how well and how completely Meadows subverted my expectations and pulled a magician's reveal on what was/is *really* going on.

And oh, all the female relationships. *All of them*. Women being friends with women, women working with other women, women in love with other women, women respecting each other and helping each other and even, sometimes, being terrified of another... Which is not to say that the male characters are not also awesome: Naruet was probably my favourite addition to the cast, as much as I love Louis to *pieces*. And it was so fricken' great to see an autistic character! As someone who was only recently diagnosed as being on the spectrum, it made me tear up (in the good way) to see him not just included but *featured*. Kudos to Meadows not just for the inclusion, but for getting it so right; this is a character clearly written by someone who either has experience with, or has done rigorous research into, autism, and I for one appreciated it so much.

He's also just a genuinely fab character, even without the 'diversity points'. I just plain loved him.

I can't pick a favourite thing about this book, but I did very much adore Saffron's arc. She grew into herself in *Stars*, of course, but in this book she consciously acknowledged that and *claimed* it, and it was

empowering and beautiful and fantastic. I was cheering her on the whole time.

And while I very much hope for more installments, *Tyranny of Queens* really wraps up the story perfectly. There's the possibility open for more, but this makes for a gorgeous conclusion that satisfies wonderfully. Either way, whether there'll be more to this series or no, Meadows had *definitely* jumped onto my automatic-buy author list, and I urge anyone and everyone to pick these books up if you have the slightest interest in fantasy at all.

I know I'll be snapping up whatever Meadows chooses to write next, for sure!

Mike says

A book of numerous flaws, but with strengths that, for me, outweighed them.

As with the first book, there's a whole lot of coincidence driving the plot, including separate people in different worlds repeatedly figuring out the same thing at the same time for different reasons. The author goes so far as to lampshade this abundance of helpful coincidence at one point, through the mouth of the central character, who comes very close to being what I call a "spoiled protagonist" - handed what she needs when she needs it. I say that she comes close, because she also has a rough time of it. Ultimately, though, she (and most of the other characters) lack agency at key moments of the plot.

This may be a deliberate choice, like a lot of the issues. Another problem with the book is that it does read a bit like it's filling a diversity bingo card, rather than exploring any issue of diversity in any depth. I heard an interview with the author on the Skiffy and Fanty podcast, and she mentioned that the world was one she'd started building when she was around the age of the main character (mid-teens); this may be why it seems a bit like wish-fulfillment at times; why the backstory to the matriarchal society turns out to be so banal and unsurprising; and also why the names are often confusing in their similarity. Here's a de-spoilerised sample:

"...Kadeja," Yena said. She sat at Yasha's bedside, flanked by Sashi and Safi, while Ksa a Kaje watched...'

I read the first book in the middle of last year, and I couldn't remember enough of it to make head or tail of the political bits of this one for a long time. I did what I usually do in this situation: let them wash over me and kept reading until I got back to something more interesting. Ultimately, the political maneuverings were background to the real story in any case.

The real story - or the one that felt real to me - was the story of Saffron, the teenager from our world's Australia (though it's never clarified in this volume that it's Australia, and that will confuse some readers). She's returned, maimed, from her difficult experiences in book 1 to her home, and nobody understands what she's gone through, and she can't tell them. She hasn't thought about her best friend much - the best friend seems to exist mainly because someone like Saffron would have one, not because she contributes much of anything - but she makes a new friend, who helps her escape the life that's now alien and intolerable to her, and then vanishes from the plot. Saffron and Yena, the transgender girl who she developed a tentative attraction to in the first book, have parallel plotlines for a long time, in different worlds, not really thinking about each other much (and certainly not with any kind of longing); they then, when they meet, fall into a passionate embrace and suddenly have a fully formed relationship. It's kind of like a romance, except with most of the beats removed, and, like other aspects of the plot, felt unearned and undeveloped.

Despite all these flaws, and the overuse of the metaphor of a heart "rabbiting" in someone's chest, I did enjoy this book - at least the Saffron parts, and to a lesser extent the Yena parts. That was because they were passionate about things and pursued them with determination, even if they sometimes lacked agency despite their best efforts, and at other times were handed solutions without working for them. I felt for them in their difficult situations, and that constitutes the book's success, for me.

I received a review copy via Netgalley.

Ksenia says

What a roller coaster and a joy. Sad to get to the end of this one, I hope Foz writes more in the Manifold Worlds even if we don't get to hang out with Saffi and Gwen again.

Maryam says

4.5

This review first appeared on The Curious SFF Reader

An Accident of Stars was one of the best books I read last year so I couldn't wait to read its sequel A Tyranny of Queens.

This book series is a portal fantasy following several characters including Saffron, a seventeen years old girl who stumbles into another world after being harassed by one of her schoolmates. We then discover Kena, a magical world where Saffron encounters wizards, treacherous kings and queens, badass women, dragons and, most importantly, people who understand her.

In case of haven't read the first book I am going to stay very vague about the events of the first book but, at the end of the first one Saffron has to go back to Earth (for reasons I won't disclose) and A Tyranny of Queens opens up with her dealing with the aftermath of her journey. In this, it feels pretty similar to Every Heart a Doorway since both works deal with the aftermath of children/teenagers being brought back from other worlds. I really enjoy reading about this aspect in books because it allows us to see the repercussions of the return on the characters. In this book, I felt deeply for Saffron, she doesn't come back from Kena unscarred, both physically but also mentally, and seeing her dealing with all the bullshit her entourage is giving her was both fascinating and troubling.

This book also follows other characters that remained in Kena and at first I was very confused because most of the names are pretty similar so I had trouble remembering who was who but after a few chapters, I managed to understand what was going on. Meadows also introduced us to new characters and I have to say that my favorite addition to the cast definitely was Naruet, an autistic male character who has a key role in this installment. It was very interesting to see his perspective on the various events of the first book and I could have read an entire book just focused on him.

I really loved that book however it's not without its flaws, as I said I was confused by the names at the beginning and I felt like Meadows didn't leave us time to remember who was who before starting with the

political maneuvering and it didn't help. When you have all those new names thrown at you and you are still figuring out who's who's mother/sister/daughter, it's a little hard. Also a few coincidences felt a bit too easy and convenient, everyone always ended up figuring out what needed to be right on time and a bit too often. It didn't bother me that much but it's still worth a mention.

So yes the book is flawed but I don't really mind. Reading this book just made me extremely happy, it's not perfect but damn I love it. It's so original and it deals with issues I can 100% relate to. It is rare to see books dealing so well with a lot of themes that are important to me like casual sexism, bullying and queer relationships. It's a great example of diversity and queer normality: in this world you can be whoever you want to be and nobody is going to judge you for that. All the characters are layered and I could even relate to the "bad guys" which is not always an easy feat.

So would I recommend this? Absolutely, it's not perfect but damn I wish I could have read it when I was younger and if a sequel is coming, I will devour it.

I received an ARC copy of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Kaija says

An excellent continuation of the first book, changes so many things and gave me a new perspective on some characters! Meadows, who's quickly becoming one of my favorite authors, does an incredible job of going against the traditional epic fantasy grain with a patriarchal society, and I also love how she turns this matriarchal society of Veksh on its head completely in this book. Even in book one it was clear that this is a harsh society, and while women ruling and being in charge is great, women also have flaws. A lot of Vekshi women are prejudiced against outsiders—and whoa, finding out about their true origins was fascinating and I can't wait to see what Meadows does with this 'Manifold Worlds' series, where they go, etc.

I really appreciated Yena being a POV character and so much of the book focusing on her experiences in Veksh, as well as (spoilers) meeting Ksa, Evai, etc. As a brown femme, I really wouldn't want to live in Veksh or try to go through penance like that; Yena was very brave and committed to her love of Zech as a sister and I'm here for it. I honestly appreciated sooooo much how political marriages work in Kena, it's cool and interesting, and also does a lot to mess up how political marriages are often done in epic fantasy (particularly medieval-England inspired epic fantasy where polyamory isn't considered much at all). I love how many queer relationships are in this book/series. I love that Luy/Louis got some more book time and also had a bit of romance this time. Luy and Rikan were very sweet and I hope they fare well in future books or stories if Foz continues to write about them.

Big Spoilers: This book made me cry or at least tear up a few times. It was so complicated and difficult learning more and more about Leoden and his relationship with Kadeja, how he was manipulated, but how he also accepts that he still did those things and has to work on himself. By the end of the book, I was surprised at how much I liked Leoden and while I didn't want him to be Vex anymore, I wanted him to find the path to heal. I was surprised at how I liked his arc with Saffron, since when she first landed in his path I was VERY concerned and wasn't sure how this would go. It ended up being fascinating, an interesting look

into manipulation and hurt between brown men and white women.

Still spoilers: I definitely cried a bit when Yena and Saffron reunited! It was intense, given that they had so little time to try and save Kena and that whole world from the rest of Veksh literally crushing and killing everyone, and I had been truly hoping they'd be together again. Their scene at the end where Saffron said goodbye to her sister was also pretty emotional, and I wonder if Meadows is going to explore Ruby's story at all in future books should the series continue (I hope so).

Claudie Arseneault says

absolutely breathtaking. my only qualm is that any mention of Gwen's aromanticism completely vanished. it *was* well established in the first though

Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 3.25 of 5

I wasn't much of a fan of the first book in this series (this is book two), but this one took leaps and bounds to draw me and -hold my interest. Enough so that I'm very interested in going back to the first book.

The book opens with Saffron, having returned to Earth from the world known as Kena. She's bullied and shunned by many of her classmates and her parents believe she needs to be in psychiatric treatment. Saffron believes that she just needs to be left alone, and when not, that she should have the right to stand up for herself. But customs and traditions threaten the girl's chances for peace or tranquility. She's going to have to make some difficult choices (welcome to the world!) and either return to Kena - abandoning everything and everyone she knows and loves; or stay in the world that will never let her forget that she's wounded and maybe even broken psychologically.

You don't really need to read the first book - author Foz Meadows does a great job of summing up the events in the previous book in a portion of the narrative early on.

Seeing this side of Saffron really connected me to her. I loved her spirit and her unwillingness to bow to the pressure and to stand up for herself. The scenes in the school almost stand out as 'feminist women's rights dogma'. Almost. I loved her. I loved her spirit and I wanted nothing more than to see her succeed at whatever she wanted from that point on.

The story(ies) in Kena with some of the other players was less exciting. I think that a large part of it was that there were too many people who blended together and I had a tough time keeping them straight. Each chapter we spent with someone (and there were a few of them), I kept just wanting to know what Saffron was up to.

In a lot of ways this feels like a 'Mary Sue' story except that it's not taking place in a tried-and-true existing universe, but in Meadows' own world. Still, I can't help shake the feeling that we're reading a lot of wishful fantasy on Meadows' part. I think that's true with a lot of fantasy fiction, but it wears on the shoulder a bit more here. Perhaps I'm wrong, and I didn't feel that way with the first book. Even so, I enjoyed this journey

more than the previous one.

Looking for a good book? *A Tyranny of Queens* by Foz Meadows returns us to the Manifold World series with a stronger developing of character than the previous book.

I received a digital copy of this book from the publisher, through Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.

Patty says

The sequel to the portal fantasy I read last month. Most of the plot here is fallout from the climax of that book: Saffron has returned back to Earth from the fantasy world of Kena, but can she re-adjust to a 'normal' life? And if not, what choices will she make? Yena's adopted sister died in the final battle, but can Yena reclaim religious rights for her sister's funeral and learn more about her mysterious heritage? The evil king has been overthrown, but escaped – where is he and what caused his actions? What's up with the mysterious magic artifact he left behind in the castle?

Sadly, I didn't like this book nearly as much as its predecessor. The biggest problem is simply a shift in the use of characters; whereas the first book divided its pages fairly evenly among a vast cast, *A Tyranny of Queens* is hugely dominated by Saffron and Yena. And I'm sorry to say it, but they're the most boring characters in this series. Both are an example of the 'normal teen girl dealing with events outside her experience' archetype, which is a fine enough archetype as far as it goes, but not one that's particularly exciting unless you give her some sort of distinctive personality trait, anything other than 'determined', 'hard-working', 'smart'. Buffy wanted to date boys and wear cute clothes; Katniss wanted to be left alone and was unexpectedly ruthless; Saffron wants... ?

The characters who *did* grab my attention in *An Accident of Stars* are pushed mostly off-screen here. Yasha, the grumpy, staff-wielding elderly matriarch who was revealed late in the first book to be an exiled queen, gets something like ten lines of dialogue in this entire book. Viya, the young, spoiled but trying hard to improve noblewoman who is named co-ruler of Kena at the end of the first book, and thus should be navigating the delicate balance of maintaining equality of power while still learning to handle so much responsibility, gets literally two scenes out of three hundred pages. And so on through a whole list of really cool characters. Instead we get multiple chapters of Saffron arguing with her guidance counselor, then her parents, then her social worker over whether she should apologize to one of her high school teachers over a minor incident caused by a bully. Exciting fantasy!

My second problem with the book, unfortunately, is much more fundamental. The plot revolves around discovering that the evil king wasn't really evil after all, but was brainwashed. I'm sure this is an attempt to do an interesting redemption arc, or to look at how even the worst-seeming villains have their reasons, but it didn't work for me at all. It felt like a cop-out to remove blame from the king by passing it on to a historic figure from centuries ago (who never gets an explanation for *his* evil actions, so Meadows hasn't really complicated the role of villains so much as pushed the question a few steps outside the main narrative). None of the many people who died in the wars he started or were tortured in his pursuit of knowledge get a voice in this second book, so I kept feeling as though the suffering he caused was conveniently being swept under the rug to get readers to feel sorry for him. In addition, for a book that tries so hard to be progressive, ending with 'it's not the king's fault! He was manipulated by a foreign woman who made him fall in love with her!'

is, uh... not a great look.

All in all, a disappointing book. But there was enough good about the series that I'll give the author another chance.

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

[3.5/5 stars] Reading *A Tyranny of Queens* positively changed some of my overall impressions of *An Accident of Stars* (book 1). You see, the story arc and general issues with pacing in the first book (where I thought a lot of things were inconsequential) actually came full circle in this second book, completing the story. I'm now looking at it as one full novel separated into two parts and, as a whole, the story ultimately provided me with all the components I felt were missing in reading book one as a standalone. Honestly, I don't think that's necessarily the best marketing strategy, but luckily for me I was committed to finishing, so no harm done. It does make it a bit harder to recommend though.

That's not to say the first book was bad, by any means – it had engaging (LGBT friendly) characters who carried the story and were just as strong in *Tyranny of Queens*. The world-building was good, if a little shy of its potential (but still creative enough to keep me intrigued). And it gave the religion and politics a good base to expand on in the second book (which it did, kind of).

Tyranny of Queens felt like it had more separate POVs, and I did find myself more interested in some than others. However, when they all started to merge again, the story really gained momentum. I have to say, though, as interesting as the characters and the story were, I kind of expected more travel and adventure from a self-proclaimed "Portal Fantasy." I basically wanted a *Stargate* experience. I'm hoping Meadows continues to write in this saga with a heavier focus on exploration. The cover image world was really cool and exactly the kind of stuff I was after, but we didn't get to spend a lot of "page time" there, which is a shame.

One thing I'd like to mention about the author is how impressed I was with her writing (as in, the components that make up her sentences). She's really good at imagery and nuances within a scene, such as facial expressions and gestures, and I found myself admiring how well she could "articulate" her thoughts. It's hard to describe what I'm talking about (ironically), but every time I've seen other writers try to add what she does, it always comes off as overworked. So, issues with story components aside, the writing gets an "A" from me.

Series status: Up to Date. If Meadows writes more in this world, I'll definitely read it, but at the moment I'm sitting satisfied with what felt like a completed duology (with potential for more but no real loose ends). I'm going to mark this as a finished series until anything else pops up on my radar.

Recommendations: this "portal" fantasy is a great pick if you want something heavily character-driven. It's also LGBT friendly, which is always awesome to see on the market. I'd venture in with the mindset that you'll have to read both books to get the most out of experience.

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at www.NikiHawkes.com

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