



The Underground Princess (The Balderdash Saga, #1)

J.W. Zulauf

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Not all fairytales take place in rolling hills or along sparkling beaches. Some happen right below our very feet like the corpses they are....

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Princess Scarlet is on a journey to find true love, but a malevolent force, Maleer, is in the process of dethroning her father, King Hurlock. Maleer intends to rule the underground kingdom of Balderdash, build an army, and break through the ground to invade the land of the living.

As Scarlet runs out of options to save those that matter most, she is forced to make decisions that will determine the fate of her entire kingdom.

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Meet many friends, and a couple foes, on your visit to Balderdash. Whether you're searching for true love with Princess Scarlet, or fighting for honor with Roland, the pirate knight, there is something for every reader within this coffin tale.

The Underground Princess (The Balderdash Saga, #1) Details

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Author : J.W. Zulauf

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From Reader Review The Underground Princess (The Balderdash Saga, #1) for online ebook

Gillian Bradtmueller says

Love this book! My daughter is 7 and is obsessed with these amazing books. I love them myself. She has 3 so far and has asked for the rest for Christmas. I promise you and your children will not be disappointed with these series.

Niki Driscoll says

I was given an ARC for an honest review.

I found this to be a unique and interesting story that would appeal to a wide variety of ages. The cast of characters are easy to like, colorful and very entertaining. The storyline was well written, easy to follow and delivered a strong message about looking below the surface to find the beauty beneath. An unusual tale to be sure as our characters were once deceased, are still sporting knives in their backs and exposing skeletal bones. Keeping to the form of a fairy tale feel, our princess dreams of finding her prince and true love, a evil villain is set on destroying the kingdom and our knight in shining Armour is slightly clumsy and talks like a pirate. This was a fun quick read and a good choice when spending quality time with your child.

Renee says

Princess Scarlet has long been dreaming of finding a prince to fall in love with and to marry. Unfortunately, princes are rare in Balderdash - - an underground Kingdom created by a shaman and populated with the previously living, who manage to stay “un-dead” by drinking a special Preservation Potion. Until one day, a prince is buried in the cursed cemetery above the Kingdom and Scarlet’s prayers are answered. But before the prince can be exhume and brought to Balderdash to be revived, the evil Maleer kidnaps the King’s apothecaries, revives the Prince himself, and plots to overthrow the King and rule supreme over Balderdash. It is up to Scarlet and the royal family’s trusty pirate knight Roland to save the day.

This fabulous book completely took me by surprise. When I read the book summary I thought to myself “Oh dear, a zombie book for middle grade”. But, this book is nothing like what I expected. This book features brilliant writing from the author, believable and relatable characters (yes, even though they are “dead”), and a clever yet simple plot. The story uses basic themes pulled from classic fairy tales (e.g., girl wants to fall in love, evil person trying to rule the world, girl finds true love, etc.); but, the twist of having dead (and decaying) characters living in an underground world provides unique and innovative scenarios which resulted in the creation of a riveting and original story.

With her constant yearning for finding love, I found myself comparing Princess Scarlet to some of the Disney princesses (much to my dismay); but, once again I was surprised by this character’s development over the course of the story. In the end, she proved herself to be loyal, strong, and intelligent; thus making her a good role model for girls. I also thought the author did a great job with the secondary characters such as King Hurlock, Maleer, Roland, the Prince, and even Screech the Owl, making each unique and interesting.

There was never a dull moment with this colorful cast of characters!

The Underground Princess is the first book in a planned series (The Balderdash Saga) and the author does a great job establishing the setting without bogging the reader down with unnecessary details. I felt that the author provided the correct pace for the story and infused just the right amount of information and humor to satisfy a middle grade reader, or even to make it a great choice for reading aloud to children. Aside from the delectable plot twists and turns, there are several examples of exceptional writing in this book. For example, I thought it was very clever how the origin of Balderdash was explained through a puppet show witnessed by Scarlet during a festival. But, for me, the most satisfying part of the book involved the simple messages underlying the story... about courage, loyalty, beauty, and love. The story wraps up in the most satisfying way while still leaving the reader with a range of possibilities for what adventures are still in store for Princess Scarlet and the others.

A word about the illustrations ... the book features roughly one illustration (by Luke Spooner) per chapter and for a middle grade audience, that is definitely a good thing! Because the book features characters who are in various states of decay, I felt that it was not only appropriate to include images of the characters but advantageous so that children's imaginations would not lead them to something more frightening than what is depicted in the story. While the illustrations are creepy, they are not frightening so I felt the illustrator did a good job in depicting various scenes and characters in such a way to not give children nightmares.

My Bottom Line:

Underground Princess is a fabulous and unique book that completely took me by surprise. It features exceptional writing, relatable characters, and a very clever plot with underlying messages about loyalty, courage, beauty, and love. I highly recommend this book to children ages 6 to 12 as a great read-aloud book or for those interested in reading something with a touch of macabre. This one is definitely a candidate for a Hidden Gem Award by MDBR in the future!

** This book was provided to me by the author free-of-charge in exchange for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own.*

Jessica Mitchell says

A cute little story. Of kind a princess, and a evil wizard. A little princess who is undead. She has a dream to fall in love with a prince. But is that really what she needs or is there something in front of her that will be better for her.

Rosanna says

I didn't read the blurb at all when I chose it so I had no idea what it was about.

I really liked the book. This is a chapter book more for Tweens.

It's a story about love between two unsuspecting people. It reminds me of what we as humans think love is and how we are supposed to be looking for the perfect looking guy. We tend to be shallow at times.

The princess Scarlet was looking for the ideal love. Desperate for it even that she goes against her father the Kings orders and goes out to the city with no bodyguards in search for this love.

She thinks she has found love with the prince. But is it really love? You have to find out!!
It's a young paranormal tween romance novel.

Jaime Kurp says

Underground Princess

by J.W. Zulauf

Reviewed by Jaime Kurp

This is a wonderful story for a child to read. I really enjoyed the story and the pictures helped bring the characters alive. This is a story about a princess that wants to find her true love. But she has to go through so horrible things in order to find her true love. She almost loses her father and the whole kingdom. But she conquers evil with the help of some friends and finds her true love.

Note: I received a review copy of the book.

Kaila says

I ended up reading this one to just myself. My girls aren't into zombies much yet and were more interested in playing, but I am planning to read it to them soon. So this review is my own :) I enjoyed this one, I wasn't sure because I'm not big on zombies and especially for kids. However, this was so well written that it wasn't scary and it was very interesting story. I enjoy how much she grew up through the story and became less annoying lol. It was a sweet read and I am glad I got to review it.

Hannah says

The Underground Princess is a great children's book. I was wondering how the book would have the "undead" and not be scary, but this book was an adorable twist on the perfect fairytale.

Princess Scarlet just wants to fall in love and marry her prince charming. When the Shaman made them into the undead, she put Scarlet's father, Hurlock, in charge of Balderdash, but his rival, Maleer, comes back to claim the throne. When a new prince is buried in the graveyard the town celebrates, but Maleer sees it as an opportunity to dethrone Hurlock. Scarlet takes it upon herself to save the town.

I love the twist on a true love fairytale. I really enjoyed this book even though I'm not the targeted age group. Great book!

HeidiLynns BookReviews says

First I would like to thank JW Zulauf for providing me with this book so I may bring you this review.

The Underground Princess By J. W. Zulauf is the first book of the Lower Grade Adventure of the The Balderdash Saga.

J.W. Zulauf did a really great job with his detailed descriptions of his characters in his book. However, it was Luke Spooner that made those mental visualizations come to life in your mind. Between the two of them they made a good team.

I really enjoyed this story about Princess Scarlet whom wanted to go out and find love like she had read about in her books that she read. She had wanted to attend the Renaissance festival that was going on in her kingdom on this day. However, her father forbid it and made sure that Roland did not let her attend. However, Scarlet had other plans in mind.

One of my favorite passages in the book was:

“How am I ever to fall in love if you keep me trapped in this musty castle?” Hurlock laughed. “How long have you been going on about falling in love, Scarlet? I told you its something we can’t experience. If love were real, it died when we died. You can care for someone, much like I care for you, but this ‘falling in love’ thing is some fiction the humans above ground created to make their lives seem tolerable.”

Hannah says

Such graphic detail, you can't miss much with this story. Not only did it keep my 11 year old daughter glued, it did me as well. I enjoyed this twist on the princess with her happily ever after. I did get a huge kick out the knight/pirate! so funny! Great novel for all ages!

Hunter says

While The Underground Princess may not be aimed at my age group, I thoroughly enjoyed reading it! Finding wonderful new literature for younger readers is something I will never tire of searching for, and this tale shines within that context. An engaging story filled with well defined characters that not only is fun to read but also imparts important lessons upon the reader? Wonderful!

If you have (or will have) a budding reader in your house I cannot recommend The Underground Princess more! Eagerly awaiting the next tale from the Kingdom of Balderdash!

Zeinab Dh says

I got this book in exchange of an honest review, I was extremely surprised a lot in this book it was quite

interesting to see how a princess desires a prince yet could not find out that easily and the cool thing was that the princess had to work out a lot in order to save the kingdom from the evil Maleer it was nice to see a princess get out of her normal world to show strengths courage and fight for love this is great for my students

Jean Smith says

What's a fairy tale with a princess without a happy ever after? I loved this story for its combination of fairy tale and paranormal but then I really thought about it. What classical fairy tales have I read that didn't have an element of the paranormal? And how many of them don't have underlying messages to teach us a valuable lesson? This story is chock full of the lessons in life. Just one of which is the measure of beauty that we see through the eyes of Roland.

Fairy tales allow kids to learn to suspend their beliefs and truly imagine another world. The characters in The Underground Princess are truly engaging and lovable. I fell in love with Scarlet from the get go. At first she seemed like a bratty little princess that wanted things her way and darn the consequences but as the story progresses you see her grow and mature. You see her eyes open to the fact that what's on the other side of the fence isn't always as green as what's right in front of your face.

When I was young it seemed that all the books I was given to read were unisex or male centered. I loved the fairy tales my parents read to me at bed time but they weren't written for the beginning reader to read on their own. When my own children began to read I went out of my way to find them books that would appeal to their gender and interests. I wanted books that would stretch and flex their imaginations. I'm a firm believer that asking "what if?" and using your imagination are the mothers of invention. Some would argue for necessity but without our imagination we wouldn't be able to envision a solution. So when I share a story like this one with my children and grandchildren I know I am opening their own imaginations and helping them to look for solutions in life.

Besides our princess this story has a loving father, protective pirate knight, faithful pet, evil villain, deceitful prince and sleeping savior. All of the characters were engaging. The illustrations were wonderful and age appropriate. I can't wait to share this story and the rest of the series with my granddaughters. I would highly recommend it to other parents for their young readers.

This book was given to me for an honest review.
