



Bright We Burn

Kiersten White

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Haunted by the sacrifices he made in Constantinople, Radu is called back to the new capital. Mehmed is building an empire, becoming the sultan his people need. But Mehmed has a secret: as emperor, he is more powerful than ever . . . and desperately lonely. Does this mean Radu can finally have more with Mehmed . . . and would he even want it?

Lada's rule of absolute justice has created a Wallachia free of crime. But Lada won't rest until everyone knows that her country's borders are inviolable. Determined to send a message of defiance, she has the bodies of Mehmed's peace envoy delivered to him, leaving Radu and Mehmed with no choice. If Lada is allowed to continue, only death will prosper. They must go to war against the girl prince.

But Mehmed knows that he loves her. He understands her. She must lose to him so he can keep her safe. Radu alone fears that they are underestimating his sister's indomitable will. Only by destroying everything that came before--including her relationships--can Lada truly build the country she wants.

Claim the throne. Demand the crown. Rule the world.

Bright We Burn Details

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Author : Kiersten White

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From Reader Review Bright We Burn for online ebook

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

Nina (Every Word A Doorway) says

Well, my soul is properly full and ruined at the same time. This was good but I'm not sure I liked it quite as much as the sequel. Will have to ponder.

RTC.

Actual footage of me wondering whether the final instalment will put historical accuracy before unicorns and rainbows, and then wondering which option I'd rather have because I have feelings

Delirious Disquisitions says

You should read this if you like: historical fiction, strong/badass female protagonists with anger management issues, ruthless women, villains/antiheroes, LGBTQ characters, enemies to lovers trope, dysfunctional relationships, murder, war, strategies, gore, etc.

A bit of warning, this is going to be a long one. I spent about 70% of this book sobbing my heart out, dreading the ending, and generally being an emotional wreck. This book burned a hole through my heart and I'm just so incredibly sad that it's over.

Bright We Burn picks up sometime after the events in book 2. Lada, as Prince of Wallachia, is busy systematically disposing of her enemies, establishing new rules in place, and generally ruling with fear and an iron fist. Meanwhile, Radu has returned to Mehmed's side, weary but wiser from his time at Constantinople. The story is fast paced and action packed. Kiersten White weaves an intricate plot rife with political intrigue, military strategies, jealousy, love/hate, and heartbreak. Amidst all this is Lada's struggle to hold onto her beloved Wallachia.

It's historical fiction so we know how it all ends going in. And yet, in White's hands these facts come to melodramatic life as she expertly transverses that thin line between historical accuracy and creative liberty. At times it blurred the lines between fiction and fantasy in my mind, so invested was I in these characters. I've never been more heartbroken then that moment when I suddenly remembered that Lada wasn't a real

person and that even if history remembers Vlad Tepes, it will never remember her name.

She was a dragon.

She was a prince.

She was a woman.

It was the last that scared them most of all.

While Vlad the Impaler was a fascinating character in his own right, there is an added subtext to his story when seen through a female lens. Lada embodies all the extra challenges of woman born in an era where ambition, ruthlessness, and drive were firmly masculine traits. She had to fight twice as hard for any semblance of respect; to gain an inch and fight to keep the things she has won. Lada's struggles are real and relatable. Her frustrations understandable. We sympathize with her and applaud her victories even as we feel the horror of Lada's actions.

This isn't to say that Lada is a likable character, either as a protagonist or a villain. In writing Lada, the author had her work cut out for her. Unlike so many YA female protagonists who flirt with the concept of unlikability, Lada jumps right off that edge with no holds barred. She has all the markings of a true villain. Lada is violent, destructive, ruthless, and an all round terrible person. Lada has no qualms about murdering men, women, and children on her way to the top. She doesn't care about winning over her people, she would rather over them with fear and her nightmarish reputation. Yet in spite of everything she does to get to her throne, I just can't help but love her.

Maybe it's because Lada's ambition has always been in service of her country. Everything that she does is for the betterment of Wallachia and her people. There is a strange kind of kinship between Lada and Wallachia, so much so that one becomes an extension of the other. Both Lada and Wallachia grow up under the shadow of the enemy. Both find ways to adapt and survive under those conditions. Wallachia's hardened landscape parallels Lada's personality, their soft and vulnerable hearts tucked away under an impenetrable armour. They are both small, fierce, and incredibly hard to love. And yet, like Radu and Mehmed, you come to love them anyways.

"Then do not aim for greatness. Aim for goodness. And however you get there will be the right path for you, my sweet Radu."

Radu's voice has grown steadily stronger over the course of the last 2 books. In *Bright we Burn* we are met with a Radu haunted by the choices he made in Constantinople. His indecision cost people their lives and now on the other side of the fence, he no longer knows what he's fighting for. I liked this older, wearier version of his character who questions his decisions and no longer blindly follows behind Mehmed.

Radu's experience has made him stronger. It's forged a confidence in himself and his abilities; he is no longer driven by feelings of inadequacy or shame. Rather, he is driven by love for his family made up of Nazira, Fatma, Kumal, and even Cyprian. Radu is not Lada or Mehmed. Where their decisions come from a place of ruthlessness and ambition, his comes from a place of love and mercy. Radu's strength of character lies in his sheer likability and his skill for manipulation that comes from years of trying to fit into and carve a place for himself. In some ways, that makes him stronger than Mehmed or Lada.

"Do you think it was him that came between us? Or were we destined to end up on opposite sides?"
Lada felt an unfamiliar heaviness behind her eyes. "We had to survive. We just figured out different ways to do it." It struck her then, how they had lived the exact same childhood. How had the same circumstances shaped them in divergent ways?

Radu and Lada are two other side of same coin and their interactions has always been fascinating to read. In this book, they match each other step for step, making moves and countermoves on either side. And in between, as always, is Mehmed. Theirs is a messed up relationship with Lada chasing Wallachia, Mehmed after Lada, and Radu trailing behind Mehmed. It's as it's always been except this time the stakes are higher with a war, two countries, and millions of lives on the line.

While I love this trio's fucked up relationship dynamic, I just cannot bring myself to like Mehmed. Objectively I can admire drive/ vision. But I just hate him as a love interest! He genuinely pisses me off the way he completely disregards Lada's ambition. For Mehmed, Lada is something to be conquered and possessed. He has never understood her obsession with Wallachia and frankly, is a condescending douchebag whenever they talk about it. As if Lada trying to give Wallachia is a game and she will come back to him when she grows tired of it. Mehmed's dismissal of Lada's dreams just undermines everything that she has worked so hard to accomplish. It infuriates me that despite everything, he still refuses to see Lada as an equal adversary. Nothing can be more insulting and I just hate him for it. Beyond everything, Mehmed is a selfish prick. His refusal to let go of either sibling just reinforces that idea. But at least now both Lada and Radu have more important things to worry about.

"He had all the power in the world, and he would extend none to help me. He did not want to see me succeed. He only ever cared about me in relationship to himself."

And now that I'm done ranting about the trio, a few other things I loved about this book:

Secondary characters: I just love the secondary characters in this book! Everyone from Lada's men and women, the people of Wallachia, Nazira, Fatima, Kunal, Cyrian, Mara, and even Stephan! Each character had their own role to play here, no matter how small. White did such an incredible job of fleshing out these characters that any one of them could have their own spin off book and I would love it!

Sexuality: I don't have words for just how much I love the LGBTQ representation in this book! Amidst all the hate and bloodshed, Radu, Nazirza, Fatima, and Cyrian form their own little utopia of love and acceptance. I cry everytime I think of this family and the struggles they had to go to find each other. White treats this subject matter with so much love and care especially in the context of religion. It's never preachy or one sided. Rather, White allows these characters to make peace with themselves and support in each other. It's just so incredibly pure and sweet it makes my heart hurt!

And lastly, the ending: I ugly cried through 70% of this book but that last 50% really broke me. With how much I love Lada, it was bloody devastating to see her lose pieces of herself along the way in the people she loved. She is such a flawed character. And yet she inspires so much loyalty from the people who love her. I did not want the ending to reduce her legend in anyway. I did not want to see her humiliated and stripped of all power that she sacrificed so much of herself to get. In that regard, the ending was both bittersweet, satisfying, and extremely sad.

It was hard to think of a future where few would remember Lada's name. She is so vivid in my mind that it hurts, it really hurts, to think she's not a real person at all. So kudos to Ms. White for writing such a character and wrecking my heart in the process. In the end it doesn't really matter if history doesn't remember our Lady Dragon, The Prince of Wallachia. I doubt that I'll ever forget her. 5/5 Stars.

P.S. This book makes me so damn bloodthirsty, like it makes me want to vanquish my enemies and bathe in their blood. Honestly, 10/10 would recommend to anyone to read this when they are in a bad mood. It will cure everything.

? Mira ★ says

[on my wedding night]

me: I love you

the person I just married: but do you love me as much as you loved The Conqueror's Saga 10 years ago?

me: ...I'll get back to you on that.

Simona Bartolotta says

EDIT 20/01/2018

My favourite fruit on the cover is a sign from Kiersten White that she's writing this book for me. So no worry, buddies, our babies will be fine! Because if they aren't, I'll probably burst many a vessel! Yay!

EDIT 04/12/2017

TITLE REVEAAAAAL oh gosh how on Earth are these titles so pretty?

EDIT 11/05/2017

We bookworms always say it, right? "The wait will kill me," or, "Give the book to me now and nobody gets hurt." But this time I mean it.

The wait will kill me. Or I will kill someone else first. And, Radu, my precious. You *will* find happiness.

Em says

I genuinely feel like my heart belongs to so many fictional characters and I wish it would just come home to me.

I love this series so much. The only way I could accurately get across my passion is either in multi-page, overtly dramatic, 19th-century-style rose-scented love letters or just a live footage of me breakdancing while crying for five minutes straight.

Yeah, I know I have things to be happy about but my heart kind of hurts knowing this series had come to its end. I really wish I could live forever in the peaceful feeling I got after I finished this book where everything seemed softer and the lights were all tinged in hues of blue and pink and the world felt silky and light and surreal and it's like my heart was auditioning for cirque du soleil and all my feelings were bursting into tiny

pieces of heart-shaped confetti!! But since that's ruled out, I guess now my heart and soul will just float aimlessly in this empty universe....

She was a dragon.

She was a prince.

She was a woman.

It was the last that scared them most of all.

So before I get into what this book is about, I want to say this: I can't possibly convey what reading **a series that centers queer Muslim characters** meant to me or come even close to describing the quaking moment of recognition, the shock of the familiar and how it all felt like being held close in a dimly lit room and being told "*I see you, I'm proud of you and I'm rooting for you.*" In a time when our community still gets little to no representation at all in the media, seeing myself in these characters was truly a cathartic experience. And for that, I honestly feel like I should have a whole separate heart for loving this series because it's an entire different feeling than anything I feel for everything else.

so what is this book about?

Okay. My entire stance on reading **Bright We Burn** is that it felt like me just metaphorically trying to live peacefully in a secluded cottage and do my own thing while also wanting to witness the fall of empires right next door. I was reading with probably the same frequency others smoked cigarettes, the bags under my eyes were darker than the inside of Hollister and I'm pretty sure I have aged at least three lifetimes over the course of four hundred pages.

*Who was she? **She was the dragon.** Her country had teeth and claws and fire, and she would use every last bit of them.*

Bright We Burn was the embodiment of war, the spitting image of chaos. It was ruptured loyalties and a country in disarray. It was desperate calculated plays for power, a capital filled with snakes and people cursed to fight amongst themselves, while everyone else suffers for it. This was a wild journey, like the fury that's been building up in the previous two books has come undone, and everything came equipped with rage, flying in on a hell chariot. Things were pretty terrible in the previous books, but I had no idea just how much *worse* they were going to get.

But mostly? This is the series finale we all deserved. It absolutely exceeded my expectations. Kiersten White sure knows how to end a series with a *bang*.

the characters:

LADA:

I think it's time to say it again and with more feeling: **I fucking love Lada's character.**

Lada lives by one statement that she maintains the truth in: there is very little that she needs, and even less that she wants. There's a pyre in the lighthouse of her wayward morality and it ignited for one thing and one thing alone: **Wallachia**. This is the closest thing to religion that Lada knows; her faith unwavering. She has vowed to take her country back, no matter how many times she's been told that she never stood the chance to *fight like a man*. So she showed no mercy and she wreaked havoc on everything. Her anger was quick and unforgiven, messy and inevitable, a direct blast like the sun exploding.

Lada reigned and raged and burned.

After all, they asked for it. ***She fought like a girl.*** And it was fucking glorious.

She had dug through the mountain to reach her heart's desire, and found the mountain had a heart after all: the beating pulse required of all those who would not stop, would not accept what the world offered, would not bow.

Lada's character is a blessing to tiresome routines. She bloomed whether they watered her or not. Whether they provided her with light or not. She was dressed in fortified independence and she spun herself a crown of gold. *She exists without their existence.*

However, the one thing Lada wasn't prepared for was what a lonely existence that would be. Because Lada may be stone-hard and stubborn, but she still suffers toil and loneliness and hurt of soul perhaps more hardily than all others. **We see many glimmers of her heart in this book, many fleeting moments of quivering vulnerability**, and yeah, she then does something that immediately reminds you how basically dead inside she is. But for those moments — Lada mourning her friends, Lada curled up sobbing in her brother's arms, you glimpse all the people she's used and left in the cold or, you know, crystallized into just that, a means to an end; you glimpse everything that *could have been*, and you can't help but feel a sharp pang of ache in your heart.

RADU:

There's not a single person I wouldn't throw off a cliff for Radu, including myself. He deserves pure hearted happiness and relish in the world and my gay Muslim heart is literally bursting for him!!

First of all, can we talk about how Radu's character development added 70 years onto my life? How he's cultivated his inner strength to pierce through the ugly times and into a lighter state of being? How he could've turned cold after everything he's been through but still chose *love* anyway? And how there's so much strength in that; the kind of strength that only comes from empathy and compassion? How he ended up being the hero because without the soft touch of vulnerability, he would have been the villain?

Gone was the Radu who's worn his emotions, his susceptibility to people, like a badge of shame; who's constantly suppressed half of himself to accommodate to others' needs; whose downfall was always putting the *wrong* people first, giving them all of him, never asking for anything to be given to him in return. **Lada's**

preferred stage might be the sharp edge of a sword. But Radu has become ruthless in his own way.

He's become ruthless with the thoughts he entertained, with the people he chose to spend time with and the things he chose to fight for. He's become ruthless in culling, stripping his life of the unnecessary and making room for the things that matter.

"Do you think it was him that came between us? Or were we destined to end up on opposite sides?" Lada felt an unfamiliar heaviness behind her eyes.

"We had to survive. We just figured out different ways to do it."

Radu's whole arc was centered around *choice*. How the choices we make will always come back to us, in a different form, different person, different event. However, in any way, those choices will always come back. **Radu has chosen love, kindness and family.** He's chosen not being cold-hearted and aloof, but being amicable in the face of bitterness and gentle with those who deserve to be loved. And that choice has echoed backwards in time and undid the things that hurt him.

MY GAY FOUND FAMILY:

It really is unbelievable just how much love I hold in my heart for Nazira, Fatima, Radu and Cyprian!!

I can feel the solid lump of ice that is my heart melting just thinking about them. How fucking beautiful is the bond they share and how no other bond can even touch what they have. Their foundation is built on a solid friendship and is an extension of a deep love found in mutual respect, trust and understanding. It's ever-lasting because it's the kind of bond that was not cultivated by something as accidental as blood, but something much stronger – by *choice*.

They truly give a new meaning to the word family: a word that should now only be reserved for the people who love you without demanding that you hide the parts of yourself that you think are unlovable; the people who genuinely make you feel safer, even if they're far away from you because their existence is so calming and beautiful and it makes everything seem better somehow; and the people whose hearts teach you something which makes you more gentle and human and remain soft for you always.

Lada had always known exactly what shape she would take. She had never let it be determined by the people around her. But Radu could not escape the need for love, the need for people in his life to help him see what he should—and could—be. Lada shaped herself in spite of her environment. Radu shaped himself because of it.

And gosh, **I love their simple intimacy.** Radu and Cyprian's forehead kisses mixed with laughter, the innocent feeling of Fatima laying her head on Nazira's lap and Nazira always needing to be near her for no other reason than pure comfort and love and closeness. The brushing of hands and the knowing looks, Cyprian gently asking Radu about his and Islam's boundaries and Radu cherishing all of these moments and how it all "*never stopped feeling like a miracle*". Everything they do is soft and rose scented. I swear they're

like tea or a soft blanket: warm and gentle and *healing*.

A heart did not have to be stone to be strong.

I think the greatest takeaway from this series as a whole is that the greatest battles are fought and won by the heart, not the bloodied fist. That softness is never a weakness, that staying delicate in a world so cruel is the biggest testament of courage. That life is too grand to revolve around one person, one feeling, one place, one memory, one goal. And that the complexity and diversity of the world is so beautiful and you have the right to explore it. You should never settle for less.

BLOG | TWITTER | INSTAGRAM | TUMBLR

Tweebs♥? (semi-hiatus) says

*Radu laughed. "I still cannot quite believe we all found each other."
"I can. You were always ruthless about finding people to love you."*

Well slap me on a grill and call me BBQ

You know what Kiersten White did to my heart?

She **buried it, nailed it, crushed it, crucified it, blasted it, murdered it, roasted it, demolished it, and destroyed it**. After, she was thoroughly done with my heart; my brain was the next target. It didn't even stand a chance because I remember I was at work one day and a customer hit me with the "*what's your name again?*" question and I said, "*Fuck, I forgot.*"

Jsdfhjkdfhdsjkhfhdskjfhdsjkfhdsjkfhdsjkfhdsjkfhdsjfhdfdsjfds

Translation:

Goodbye everybody. I died well pleased.

Bright we burn, made me lose like 35 years off my life. It was **bloody, ruthless, gut-wrenching and absolutely beautiful in every single aspect**. It made me scream at humans, inanimate objects or just...screaming in general. It made me cry so much like the floor clearly doesn't need any mopping now like I can see my own reflection. It made me happy, proud, afraid but most importantly, **satisfied**.

*"She was a dragon.
She was a prince.
She was a woman.
It was the last that scared them most of all."*

I erased this review countless times because I'm just in complete awe. It's over. This is it. I never knew my heart could ever hurt so much. Every time I type up something, it's just never enough. I can't capture what I truly want to say through words. Maybe, just go on YouTube and search for someone laying on the floor surrounded by a puddle of tears if you wanna understand me.

Ugh.

I can't wrap my mind around the fact that it's truly D O N E. There's no more being sucked into this world and being amazed by everything. There's no more putting myself in these characters shoes and being apart of their wonderful yet terrifying journey. There's no more clutching my chest whenever the plot takes a turn....and by turn, I really meant A TURN. There's no more sacrificing my sleep and obviously representing that eye bag life. I mean, my eye bags are pretty much designer now....Louis Vuitton got nothing on me.

The point is...

There's just simply no more.

As you can see, I'm not okay and I don't think I ever want to be. There's a reason why I usually never review a final book of a series. It's very difficult to calm yourself, sit down, gather your thoughts together and type up a review when you could be dealing with other priorities such as sobbing. I have absolutely no idea how to produce a review anymore since I've been kind of MIA on this website for several months. So, yeah I'll give it my best shot.

Enjoy the front row seat to this hot mess :)

Where do I begin???

Oh, this is a spoiler-free review :)

PLOT

? Intense

? Everything was intense.

? It was **filled with action, betrayal, tragedy, conflict, romance, incredibly dark, and emotionally gripping.**

? Every word, page and chapter will have you.....idk about you but my family didn't appreciate being grabbed like every 3 seconds. Or witness me hyperventilating which I don't blame them because I'm overly dramatic. Or having to frequently ask me if I'm alright because I'd look at them like my eyes will pop out of their sockets.

? The plot will clearly drag you left, right and centre.
? It will make your veins explode.
?You'll experience like 1000 mind blowing plot twists and sadly you will not be prepared for a single one.
?Your heart might be fucked up after this book but look on the bright side, it will be filled with everything you never knew you needed in your life.
? I think this is the part where I mic drop
?*mic drop*
? Idk why I had to announce that.

CHARACTERS

?Fuck you.
?And Fuck you.
?That is all.
?I lied I forgot one more thing.
? FUCK YOU
? Can't believe I'm saying this but I, Tweebz, emotionally connected to the pomegranate on the cover.
? Let me explain myself before you judge my entire existence.
? These characters sliced me in half just like that pomegranate on the cover.
? Now onto the characters that sliced me in fucking half.

Lada

■ I should hate her
■ She is vicious, absolutely broken, savage and literally will carry out on every single threat. And yes, she's crazy but once you get a taste of her vulnerability; everything you ever thought of her will disappear. Okay, not really but you'd develop a sense of understanding and sympathy. You will cry for her because she's just.....a broken and lost girl who deals with everything in such a different yet cruel way.
■ I love the fact that her character wasn't afraid to do anything. She doesn't think, she acts. She's so freakin stubborn. She will fight, no matter who you are, if you pose a threat to her accomplishing her goals and ambitions. And yes, she has me shaking in fear and being left in disbelief in like every chapter but hey THAT'S MY CHILD I LOVE HER.

Radu

■ You ever just like someone so much that you bring them up for no reason at all in every conversation because that's me with Radu.
■ He is my smart little scrumptious cinnamon roll
■ He is the biggest softie who just wants to spread love and kindness everywhere.
■ He faces so many obstacles that plague him yet he always turns toward his faith for guidance. I just....his faith in Islam is so beautiful. So pure. So innocent. It really touches me as a believer of the religion.
■ Lada may appear to look like the most troubled sibling but I feel like Radu is the one. He's troubled by so many things and internalizes it. I'm just so happy that Radu received everything he ever wished for. He's had his own fair share of being on the same "I should hate this character" boat but I just can't stay hating my child.
■ Honestly, someone fetch me tissues. I'm in desperate need of them.

Other Characters

- We have so many characters and I have so little brain cells left so I'll sum it up really quickly.
- I just love how the plot doesn't just revolve around Lada and Radu. It revolves around everyone. From Mehmed, to Nikolai, to Nazira, to Bogdan, To Fatima, to Cyprian, and many more.
- You will feel their struggles, their fears, their expectations, and their happiness.
- These characters are just simply unforgettable.
- Heck, even the ones you HATE are unforgettable.

WRITING

- ? Everything in this book is magnificent.
- ? It makes picking quotes very very VERY difficult
- ? The devil works hard but Kiersten White works harder
- ? She has this amazing talent to lure you in with her writing. It's sticky like syrup. Once you're caught. That's it. There's no going back.
- ? I just....ugh. Everything was refreshing.
- ? The storytelling was enthralling.
- ? Is it possible to remove whatever is left of my heart and give it to Kiersten White?

OTHER THINGS I LOVED

- ? I loved the politics, history, and finding one's true self.
- ? I loved the relationships in this book
- ? I loved the representation of different sexualities within this story and how it was thoroughly explored. I believe, a lot of people will be so freakin excited with the things that occur in this book. Why? BECAUSE I AM.
- ? I loved the fact that I realized how my religion, Islam, is interpreted by different perspectives. It was very eye-opening to me.
- ? There's so many things I loved, admired and cherished. I'm incapable of justifying my emotions. I have absolutely no faith in the English language to capture what I truly want to say.
- ? I just loved every fucking thing.

CONCLUSION

- ? Wow even typing the word "conclusion" is making my eyes fucking twitch.
- ? I CAN'T BELIEVE ITS OVER LIKE CAN YOU ? BECAUSE I CAN'T
- ? I might be unsatisfied that the journey has come to an end but deep down, I'm so fucking satisfied. I choked on my saliva like 7 times because everything wrapped up so beautifully.
- ? Bright we burn was stunning, breathtaking and the perfect finale. This series is probably going to be one of my favorite's because I will never forget the amount of tears I've shed. I will never forget the characters who, quite literally, demanded to live inside my heart. I will never forget, amidst the chaos, this book delivered so many genuine messages filled with hope. And lastly, I will never forget to repeatedly thank Kiersten White for writing and blessing us with this beautiful gem of a series. It may be the end of a remarkable journey but this story and the characters will never end for me. They'll always remain fucking alive in my heart. And hey, re-reads. We can't forget re-reads.

Kiersten White, I look forward to all of your future books.

Thank you so much.

Now let me go cry.

Just three bodies mattered. The same three that had always mattered.

Radu's.

Lada's.

And Mehmed's."

Now, y'all already know what to do by now.

PRE-REVIEW

my thoughts on the cover

mom: what do you want from the grocery store?

me: a pomegranate

mom: but you don't even lik-

me: WELL

me: **dramatic pause**

me: I DO NOW

~~you know you won at life when kiersten white liked this review~~

Nikolae Keaveney says

Update after reading August 2nd, 2018

Words cannot describe my love for this series, this tale, and these characters. In my heart, they are already more than characters, they are companions for life. I'm sure that I can pick this series back up at any time in my life and enjoy the story again. Lada, Mehmed, and Radu are already real. I just have not met them yet. This series should not be labeled as "Young Adult". It is too mature, too deep, and too meaningful to be so. This book should not have a rating. It is not without its flaws, but for the first time since I started using goodreads, I don't want to talk about its flaws and perfections. I only want to talk and to express my love for it.

This series has been in my life for three years now. I grew up with it. It changed my life in ways more than I can describe. I remember times in my life, when I was so beaten by hardships and emotions and depression, when I didn't want to continue fighting anymore. Then I would reach for this story, devour it, and continue fighting.

Lada became my model, my idol, and also the person I fear I would become. I hated her, and I also loved her. My feelings now are simply so muddled that I do not want to sort them out anymore. Just let them be, as things will always be grey, not black and white.

The characters in this series have all hurt each other greatly, but they have also loved each other wholly and

completely. They forgive, but they don't forget. They simply let their complex history exist.

One of the ways that I feel this series is so different from many other young adult series I've read is that it is eerily similar to real life. Isn't the relationships in this book the relationships real humans experience? (minus the killing of course). We as people are bound to fight, hurt, forgive, and eventually continue our lives.

If I were to be completely honest, the ending is a little disappointing. I was looking for a BANG, but instead, this series ended on a wimper. But sometimes life ends on a wimper, like a candle finally dying with nothing but a thin trail of smoke and a soft hiss. However, an ending is still an ending, and I still love it like how I would still love my friends no matter what happens.

The point that the story left at still left many events untold. But I don't think that this is necessary. After three books, I knew what was going to happen to the characters. They would continue to hurt each other, and forgive each other, and love each other, as all humans are born to do. Emotions are too complex to figure out or understand. We don't have to sort everything out, we just have to live.

Just living is more than enough.

Update April 30th, 2018

I woke up extra-emotional today, and I want to say something.

This series has been such an immense part of my life for the last two years. All of the struggles I faced in school, in life, I survived. Because I have Lada's courage and Radu's faith. Every time I feel like I won't ever get up again, I think of all the impossible things that my precious babies have conquered, and I keep going. Now that AP exam seasons are coming, my life is just slowly deteriorating. The next three weeks are going to be full of tears and pain, but I will be fine. I have this amazing series with me. I believe that Lada and I are going to go through this together. I feel relieved.

Title prediction:

LAST I BURN

OMFGOMFG I got one word right??????

I've been blessed by the book gods. If only I knew to switch "I" for "we".

January 18th, 2017

THE COVER IS SO BEAUTIFUL MY LIFE IS COMPLETE ♥?♥?♥?♥?♥?♥?♥?♥?♥?

Now I just need to get it in my hands. Please, Kiersten, take good care of my heart, it is fragile.

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

personally, I feel as if my heart was ripped out of my fucking chest and my life was just changed for the better. I do not have the Words To Convey how much this ending for a series meant to me

here was my lowkey spoilery initial list of what I wanted out of this sequel:

- please let Radu be happy
- you know exactly who I want him to be happy with
- LET NAZIRA REUNITE WITH HER WIFE
- Mehmed dying maybe
- honestly I think Lada's going to die no matter what for historicity if nothing else

- please just let Radu, Nazira, Fatima, and Cyprian be gay in peace. please Kiersten White I'm a nice person **did all of this happen? not necessarily. but did I find this conclusion incredibly satisfying and one of my favorite series conclusions ever? hell yes.**

Okay, so basic TL;DR: This book is my second favorite series conclusion I have ever read [after literally my favorite book ever] and nothing can ever beat it and oh my fucking god, I loved this.

This series is political and character driven, which is... such a deep mood for me. **This series is about misogyny, about internalized homophobia, about religion, about learning what you deserve in a world that wants you to accept nothing.** It is a character and theme study that I just... adore. So much.

Radu had been wrong all this time. He had felt guilty for the way his heart yearned for other men. But it was not his own love that was poisonous and destructive. His love destroyed nothing, hurt no one. Lada loved Wallachia above all else, and this was the result. What Mehmed and Lada did—because of what they set their hearts on with both people and land—was far worse than anything Radu's love could ever lead him to do. It was an odd sort of thing to take comfort in, but he accepted it.

Nazira was right. His love had no evil in it. He could not say the same for his sister's.

Radu's characterization has come so far since And I Darken - in Now I Rise, Kiersten White really made me love him, and I just... relate to him so much. I love how well Radu's sexuality is written. He is so careful about expressing his love for other men, and it's so realistic not only to the period, but also to my experiences in our current world. Kiersten White is really one of the few not-openly-queer authors I trust most with writing queer characters.

There was something to be said for having his heart broken so many times. Broken things healed thicker and stronger than they were before. Assuming one survived long enough to heal.

And then... there's Lada. Lada, who I hate and empathize with at the same time. I love how cunning Lada is, how she does everything differently than expected. Every moment of planning she has made me want to scream with joy. And my favorite Lada quote is a spoiler, so I can't put it here, but I think she's one of the best-written antiheroes I've read recently and I really like it?

I really feel like this series went so far past its original sort-of-fucked-up-love-triangle focus. The most important relationships here are predominantly platonic. Lada and Radu. Lada and Nicolae [I'd die for them]. And then there's Radu and Nazira, who I basically ship platonically harder than I have ever shipped anything romantically.

"I am sorry, then."

"To be right?" Nazira laughed. "It is a heavy burden, always being right. But some of us must bear it."

"I am grateful you bear it for me, as I am not qualified to carry it myself."

Speaking of which, I AM GIVING RADU AND NAZIRA THE PARAGRAPH THEY DESERVE. Kiersten White is really out here givin the gays everything they want!! They touched cheeks! They held hands!!!! They platonically love each other so deeply and it's fucking gorgeous!!!! They are... literally worth the world to me and I adore them and I'd just die for them. Nazira and Radu invented mlm / wlw solidarity and

that's so valid.

Radu put a hand over his heart, wondering if he would feel her death, if he would know. They had been separated for so long. She had looked at him that night in Mehmed's tent as though faced with a memory, not a man.

Also... listen. Guys. Radu and Lada. **Every time Radu and Lada think about each other I want to cry.**

But honestly, the most important thing about this whole book was the ending. Because, okay, I have a lot of thoughts, but I don't want to say them, because this book is not even fucking released yet, but also, I have to say them? So please, **if you have not read this book, this is the end of the review. Pretend it's the end. Bye.**

Nazira had not exaggerated her intentions. She let go of Fatima only when absolutely necessary. Radu leaned back on his cushion, smiling to himself as Nazira tried to navigate eating dinner while keeping hold of Fatima's hand at all times.

So... the found family ending of this is the best-ever subversion of the bury your gays trope I have ever read in my entire fucking life and I... legitimately cried. You should have seen me and Em, one of my bffs on this hellsite, screaming in the DMs both reading this at the same time. We were such fucking messes and it meant even more to her, as a Muslim queer woman, than it did to me, and I just... wow I'm a wreck?

And also... Radu chose people over power. And that was the difference.

Blog | Goodreads | Twitter | Youtube

Alana • thebookishchick says

I have one word for you all to sum up this book.

OUCH.

My heart is shattered into a million pieces. I finished this two days ago and I keep going back and rereading the epilogue to make sure I read it right. While I understand that there is no better way for this trilogy to end, it doesn't hurt any less. In fact, it probably hurts so much more. If you have not read this trilogy before it's basically a YA historical fiction story that follows the most badass, ruthless, brutal, and bloody MC's we've ever seen, Lada Dracul. I cannot stress how much I love her. Even though I didn't agree with all the choices she made, she will go down as one of my favorite YA females ever because I love to love her and I love to hate her.

In case you thought I was lying about the bloody part...

"What sustains you?"

"The blood of my enemies."

This is going to be short since it's the final book in the trilogy and basically everything is a spoiler, but there are a few things I want to talk about.

-This book is slightly shorter than the other two and I think that made it so much better. Historical fiction can sometimes become a snooze fest for me but not in this book. I found with the other two books they were a bit slower than this one, but this one just hit the ground running and never stopped. I mean the middle of this book was **INSANE** and so brilliant.

-Radu, is still infuriatingly blinded by his love for Mehmed and I was so shocked by some of the choices he made throughout this, and as much as I've always wanted to hate him... I just can't.

-Mehmed is absent for the majority of this book and clearly I'm fine with it since he's the actual worst. Somethings just never change.

-I STAN NAZIRA AND FATIMA FOREVER AND ALWAYS

-There's a certain twist to the story for Lada, but I had a feeling for a long time it was going to happen. I'm just really not sure how I feel about because I have **A LOT** of emotions towards it, both good and bad.

-**THE EPILOGUE.** Gosh, I want to talk about this so bad, but I won't because it will spoil everything. Ugh, it was just everything I could have hoped for and everything I was afraid of all in one.

Favorite Quotes

"He could not have conversations about his future as though his past were not looped around his neck like a noose, choking him with regret and sorrow.

"Why were men always trying to claim different parts of her? Her body, her name, her soul. Why should they care where its allegiances lay?"

"It was enough."

""Impossible is where my sister excels," Radu said. "That and never backing down.""

All in all, despite how heavy my heart is, this was still amazing. I don't think I'll ever love a YA historical fiction story as much as I love Lada, Radu, and Mehmed's. These characters will always have a part of my heart despite how infuriating they all could be. If you enjoy politics, romance, blood & gore, and betrayals on top of betrayals on top of **BETRAYALS**, than look no further than this trilogy. It will hurt, but it's worth the pain.

Emily May says

“Disrupt stability. Petition for gold. Provoke the greatest empire on the face of the earth.” He paused. “This is going to be fun.”

Oh, it was. **So much bloody, nasty fun.**

I have *really* loved this series. I mean, why wouldn't I? There's a murderous antiheroine who's definitely more anti than heroine. There's battles and backstabbing and unrequited love. There's alt-history that's - let's face it - a lot more alt than history. There's Vlad the Impaler reimagined as a woman. In other words, this series is almost everything I've always wanted.

I say *almost* because Kiersten White is publishing literally everything I have always wanted next year: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>

In this book, we pick up right where we left off in *Now I Rise*. Lada is, unsurprisingly, on a murderous rampage, making many powerful enemies and a few important allies as she goes along. White pushes the limits on how much sympathy we can have for a character who is borderline villain, but I personally adored Lada to the end.

“The empire is coming for us, and I intend to win.”

While I doubt I would have had the same sympathies for the real, male Vlad, I think the author captured Lada's frustrations with the limitations of being a woman really well. She is obviously a very screwed up, disturbed person, and it was impossible for me to not feel sympathy for her. Even when she is at her worst (which is 95% of the time). And I love that, even though she is incredibly strong, she also has moments of weakness and self-doubt that remind us of her underlying humanity.

True to the character of this series, this final installment is **action-packed and gory**. Tensions between Lada, Radu and Mehmed reach an all-time high, with their affections for one another never far behind their animosity. Such page-turning goodness!

I love that this series positively portrays both a gay romance and Islam. Radu and Cyprian offer some light in an otherwise very dark trilogy, as does the respectful handling of various faiths (or lack of, in Lada's case). We need this warmth to counter the ever-growing pile of bodies and the tension created by the approaching climax.

War made monsters of them all.

Of course, I won't tell you anything that could spoil the ending, but I found it a very satisfying conclusion. White wraps things up just as they should be, in my opinion, with the perfect balance of historical fact and artistic license.

destiny ? howling libraries says

#1 And I Darken ★★★★★

#2 Now I Rise ★★★★★

#3 Bright We Burn ★★☆☆?

This series has been an incredible journey, and I was both eager and terrified to see how it would end. As many of you already know, I tend to avoid series finales like the plague. They're almost always my least favorite part of a series, probably because I like very particular types of endings where all the loose ends are tied and everyone has completed their tasks—and these are rarely synonymous with happy, fan-servicing endings, which is what this felt like to me.

She could not sleep in those stone rooms, empty and yet still crowded with the ghosts of all the princes who had come before her.

Lada has been one of my favorite heroines since I first read *And I Darken*, but she was perhaps my greatest struggle in this installment. You see, Lada has always been vicious, but she's been *clever* about it; she's made a habit of outwitting everyone around her, constantly, and her intentions have always been fair: to pull Wallachia out of the mud and see her people thrive without the shackles put upon them by men like the boyars and Mehmed.

After all, fire and blood and death were nothing to a country led by a dragon.

In this finale, something feels lost in her character arc to me. Gone is the conniving yet brilliant young woman who took from the rich to give to the poor, and in her place is a sloppy warlord who destroys innocents recklessly and stumbles into one trap after another. I understand character development and that sometimes, the characters we love become less than what they were, but I believe with my whole heart that this was the wrong direction to take Lada's story in.

Someday Radu would not long for a time when he was certain things were terrible but had no idea just how much worse they were about to get.

And then, there's Radu, who I actually admitted in my *Now I Rise* review was one of the most infuriating characters I've ever met in my life. He makes almost exclusively terrible decisions because of his affections for Mehmed, and he is blind to the entire world around him whenever he is in the sultan's presence. But, you know what else I mentioned in that review: I *liked* that about him. I enjoyed the drama he brought to the pages. That was no longer the case by the end of *Bright We Burn*.

He could not have conversations about his future as though his past were not looped around his neck like a noose, choking him with regret and sorrow.

As we near the end of the story, Radu finally begins to see the error of his ways, yet he doesn't do anything to *fix* his mistakes. Instead, he doubles down, and while I won't spoil the action for you, I will say that the direction he takes shocked me in the most awful way. Much like with Lada, I felt like I was reading an entirely different character from the one I'd grown to know in the first two books.

**Radu expected to find his friend angry. Instead, he found Mehmed sitting on a pillow, staring up at the ceiling of the tent with a bemused smile.
“I think she missed us,” he said.**

The one thing that remains entirely the same in *Bright We Burn* is Mehmed, who is still this insufferable, disgusting cretin of a man. I can't say anything at all about how I feel regarding Mehmed without spoiling the entire ending, but if you've read it, feel free to DM me—I have quite a lot of feelings about his story.

He had changed his faith, his life, even his name, but he could not change or escape his sister.

There are a million other things I'd like to fuss about, but they're all spoilers, so I'll leave them all be; however, if you've read it, there's a particular incident that occurs with Lada that is intended to be a “twist”, and it not only frustrated me that I predicted it so long ago, but it also positively enraged me with how she handled it. (Again, feel free to DM—lots of rage to get out over this one.)

“It seems to me she has tremendous regard for blood. She simply prefers it spilled on the ground.”

All in all, this wasn't a horrible book on its own; as you can see, I still thought it was worth a solid 3 stars. That said, it was one of the most disappointing series finales I have ever read, in terms of the direction the story took. At the time that I'm writing this review, however, my opinion is *definitely* not the common consensus, so if you have enjoyed the series thus far, I do strongly urge you to pick this up and give it a chance.

All quotes come from an advance copy and may not match the final release. Thank you so much to my friend Lynette for sending me this ARC!

You can find this review and more on my blog, or you can follow me on twitter, bookstagram, or facebook!

Yusra ? says

2nd reread- just wondering if this book will ever not make me cry.

this series means the world to me. I can never find the proper words to describe just how much I've loved this gory, bloody, brutal journey that Lada has taken me on, and the moving, spiritual way Radu changed me. it took me a straight three days to muster the courage to read the epilogue because I was not ready in any way, shape or form for the ending of a trilogy that's just established a place in my heart that no other book will take. I'm not even ashamed of how much I'll be gushing in this review, so here we go.

if you thought "and i darken" was historical... just you wait. this book is historical to the extreme, which honestly had my head spinning but also had me screaming because I love hist fic a whole lot. there's political intrigue that has you second guessing everything and honestly... i've never been so shook. it's a great thing. (update: it's actually... not that bad. I think I was rushing the first time around and therefore couldn't properly understand what was going on.)

lada

oh lada, lada, lada. i can't put into words just how much I hate her? but love her?

how many times have you read a book where the girl is pretty badass... but there's always a limit? like she's in love with the egotistic prince so she won't kill him, or his family etc etc?? she'll falter before the killing blow? or leave people just "injured" on the battlefield?

this book is like a breath of fresh air against all those stereotypes. i've said it before, and i'll say it again: kiersten white ain't worried about anything. she doesn't care if you think her heroine is too brutal. that's just my presumption, since she just keeps making lada worse and worse. and i'll be honest: you know that song, "i hate you, i love you"? god, i hate that song much, but it's the only thing that comes to mind when I think about lada.

i hate her, i love her, i hate that i love her.

because seriously, there's so much I don't think I can forgive her for. but there's also so much to admire and love about how she doesn't have a limit. she doesn't have a quota to fill or a "break". she has one goal: Wallachia, and she is willing to sacrifice anything for it. i'm almost envious of how sure she is about her life and her goals.

that isn't to say she's completely unfeeling. we're exposed to her true vulnerabilities in the most heartbreaking way. how much she values Radu, both as an ally and a brother. how much she cares for the group of Janissaries she started out with. how she deals with heartbreak and the loss of loved ones. I honestly have loved, screamed, and yelled at Lada privately in my head, but I never expected to cry for her. it felt like a piece of me was leaving everytime a goodbye was said.

y'all already know i could go on, and on, and on. but all i'll say is lada is one of the most amazing and crazy antiheroines to ever exist. and just...wow. i'm almost in tears, bye.

radu

in case you missed it, **i love radu**. I just love him. what more can i say? there's just a lot of room in my heart for radu and he will forever remain.

first and foremost: i was so beyond excited when he converted to islam/started showing an interest in islam in "and i darken". because I had already seen how much attention was being paid to the details, whether that

was historical or religious, and I knew I wouldn't be disappointed. and all in all; I wasn't. radu's faith was so pure and the peace he found within it was just... spiritually healing? he was just so real, and it mattered a lot to me.

just generally speaking, radu is the smarter sibling. *hope lada doesn't impale me for saying this* but he is tactical, he has a way with words, and he deals fairly. he knows the court games, and boy, he enjoys them. him and lada combined... i'd hate to deal with that, if i was the enemy.

and oh my god. i'm going to miss him so much. it feels like yesterday he was the young boy who stayed close to his nurse and wanted to join bogdan and lada when they played. just yesterday he challenged Colin for the honey cake he knew wasn't real. just yesterday he was tormented by mircea and used his clever mind to deal out punishment to his bullies. just yesterday he was utterly in love with mehmed and couldn't think past him. just yesterday he was befriended by kumal and married to nazira, trying to figure out his love and whether it was something dirty, unclean.

and now? radu has changed. his character development... i'm crying. it was everything i've ever wanted for his character. everything from his past was wrapped up and he emerged a new person and...wow. so much love for everything radu.

mehmed

i feel the need to mention him because he was a critical part of this series. and he grew too, just not in the way i wanted him to. this book had a lot less mehmed, and honestly, i was fine with it. mehmed grew to only love Lada, and when that love got nowhere... he almost disappeared of the face of this book. it makes me real nostalgic thinking about the days when he was young, a carefree boy who no one paid attention to. now, he has isolated himself to adhere to his status as sultan and... i felt bad for him. his love for lada didn't really have any affect on me, but the fact that he lost the help of two childhood friends and allies is pretty heartbreaking.

nazira

i love nazira. i didn't realize the extremity of my love for her until this book. but honestly, her happiness, her love... it just really got to me and my heart goes for her. and fatima. and cyprian. all of radu's newfound family.

final verdict

this book is just really sad. for me, it was mostly just sadness at leaving this journey that i've been on with some of my favourite characters of YA, and realizing i'll never see them again. it's... depressing. also, this was a real quick review and pretty messy, but i'll be writing a better one soon (i hope).

in conclusion: #readthebook

(view spoiler)

a huge thank you to the publisher for sending an ARC!

Lola says

Saying goodbye to a series is rarely easy, especially an all-consuming one like *The Conqueror's Saga* never fails to be.

The moment I met Lada Dracul, I knew I would be making an old character unhappy by bumping her down my list of favourite heroines to make place for Lada.

The thing about this young woman is that she isn't easy to place. Is she a heroine? Yes and no. Is she an anti-heroine? Yes and no. Is she human? Yes... and no. And yet, you can't help but root for her. You can't help but want her to achieve her goals, regardless of the amount of murders she commits in the process.

Because Lada has something that few people do: sheer determination. Of course, many will fight night and day for what they want, but Lada will fight beyond that. She wants to conquer and, goddamn it, she will conquer until the end of her days!

Except, Lada's is not a journey to be completely admired. After all, she has to sacrifice so much – more than she ever expected – in the process of rising to power. It takes absolute strength, incomparable intelligence, unwavering perseverance and continuous faith in one's abilities, all qualities worthy of praise. But it also takes a certain amount of arrogance, skilful manipulation and a heart that knows deep betrayal, all of which I do not aspire to possess.

So while Lada will forever remain in my dear memories, I do not aspire to become her entirely. As she soon discovers, it is quite lonely at the top. I don't want to have to look over my shoulders every second of the day. Or actively question the loyalty of those who surround me. Or let my ego get me into trouble. But Lada doesn't need much to be happy: all she needs is a knife and a boyar.

This is an epic conclusion to an equally epic series, both an elaborate tale of triumph and a cautionary one.

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C.G. Drews says

This was brutal and bloody and so perfectly and epically satisfying. Which are words I'M CRYING AS I TYPE because finales scare the frick out of me...and this one managed to stab me in the soul (like 5 times) *and then* still give me everything I hoped it would. LOVE LOVE LOVE. Everything is perfect. I will also scream quietly into the void for 2-3 working days before I feel like rereading the whole trilogy agaaaaain.

THANK YOU TO THE AUTHOR FOR A PERFECT FINALE. I'M CRYING IT'S FINE. WOW.

+ The pacing and plot was absolute perfection here.

It's a little smaller than the other books, but I quite liked how it all panned out. The middle is SO INTENSE...like forget books where the middle drags. 0_0 This was terrifying and exhilarating. There's wars and betrayals, kidnapping plots and horror, and there are the softest quietest moments that just make my heart so full. Like some of my most *favourite* chapters were simply two precious characters getting to hold hands, fingers all entwined, and I just !!! 94% of the reason I'm sobbing right there.

+ Also it is DARK.

I love dark books. I love it when books don't pretend to be dark, but *actually absolutely are*. Lada is badass and terrifying and SHE FOLLOWS THROUGH. The battles are grim, the aftermaths are horrifying. It's just so well written and portrayed. Like Lada is so unlikeable, yet I love her. And Radu makes some awful betrayals, but I love him.

+ Um so obviously: perfect characters ARE PERFECT.

I can't even saaaaay how much I love Radu and Lada. I LOVE THEM OK. Absolute best siblings of softness and mURDER ever. Their arcs are *incredible*, with Lada being vulnerable between ripping people's throats out (um with her bare hands but what can you do) and Radu learning that he doesn't *have to be a warrior* to be brave. That kindness is sometimes the most daring and brave choice of all. I FREAKING LOVE RADU. HE IS SO PRECIOUS.

He is soft and he is allowed to be soft. Lada is harsh and she is allowed to be harsh. afjdksladjkl my favourite siblings

(view spoiler)

And quick shout out to our queen and ruler: Nazira. She is so sweet and lovely and conniving and will absolutely rearrange your life FOR YOUR HAPPINESS and loves Radu so so *deeply* while being absolutely incredibly in love with her wife, Fatima. I just !! I love this incredible queer family they are all precious 10/10 will die for them all.

+ It also managed to make me laugh AND wail.

Which is talent. I love the writing! It's not the typical voice or style...and I think that's what now draws me to it?! It's different. It's refreshing. I actually have not been this obsessed with a book pretty much all year (barring a few others!) so this just made my DEAD HEART BEAT AGAIN. THANK YOU.

Bloody, brutal, and unforgiving -- this series is totally unique and incredible and FULL OF HEART AND SOUL. It weaves actually really heartfelt and beautiful messages in amongst the wars and woes, the loss and the betrayals. It has one of my favourite love triangles (BEST conclusion) and an incredible cast of complex characters *that I just love love love*. With all their flaws! And their nastiness or weakness!! I LOVE THEM SO MUCH. LOVE EVERYTHING. I SHOULD GO SIT DOWN WOW.

~ QUOTES ~

She had always wanted him at her side. Had always known that together, they could accomplish what neither could alone.

The more Radu knew the women around him, the more he wondered if any of them were not secretly terrifying.

Radu laughed. "I still cannot quite believe we all found each other."
"I can. You were always ruthless about finding people to love you."

(This is from the author's note, but I just love it so much)

Thank you for embracing this fictional family of mine, for proving that no idea is too weird, no girl is too brutal, and no boy is too tender for readers of YA. You are going to change the world, and I can't wait to see how you do it.
