



## **A Song to Take the World Apart**

*Zan Romanoff*

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**What if you could make someone love you back, just by singing to them? Fans of Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* and Leslye Walton's *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender* will be captivated by this contemporary love story with hints of magical realism.**

Hanging out with Chris was supposed to make Lorelei's life normal. He's cooler, he's older, and he's in a band, which means he can teach her about the music that was forbidden in her house growing up. Her grandmother told her when she was little that she was never allowed to sing, but listening to someone else do it is probably harmless— right?

The more she listens, though, the more keenly she can feel her own voice locked up in her throat, and how she longs to use it. And as she starts exploring the power her grandmother never wanted her to discover, influencing Chris and everyone around her, the foundations of Lorelei's life start to crumble. There's a reason the women in her family never want to talk about what their voices can do.

And a reason Lorelei can't seem to stop herself from singing anyway.

## A Song to Take the World Apart Details

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Author : Zan Romanoff

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# From Reader Review *A Song to Take the World Apart* for online ebook

**Erica says**

I LIKED THE ENDING

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**Alyssa says**

This was an absolutely gorgeously written book, like a lyrical, modern fairytale. Highly recommended for all those with an interest in myths and music, or a love of poetic language.

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**Tanya Grech Welden says**

A beautifully written title, with consistently delectable language, there is a lot to like about this book. I always enjoy a Contemporary with a touch of the paranormal and this did not fail to disappoint. Romanoff manages to engage with the serious issues of love and belonging in a fresh way that will certainly captivate a YA audience. Thank you for the opportunity to read and review.

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**Eva • All Books Considered says**

Review originally posted at **All Books Considered: 3 STARS**

This started off so good! I really liked the feel of this when I first started reading it but that feeling was a bit misleading. I liked Lorelei as a Sophomore with a crush on Chris, the lead singer of a local band (and a Senior at her high school). I liked her anticipation of going to shows and of little interactions with Chris in the hallway. The real problem with this book was when the magical realism started to happen. This book is loosely based and/or has elements of the Sirens myth and when those elements started becoming a part of the story, they were not explained well enough/described with sufficient accuracy as so to actually be interesting or a realistic narrative. Still, even considering that, I liked this more than most probably will. I really liked Lorelei and her twin brothers, Nik and Jens. They were well flushed out characters for me and I liked reading about their lives without any of the mythology. I seriously wish this had just been a straight up contemporary YA -- trying to infuse the paranormal/mythology just muddled it up and, ultimately, didn't help this book.

I think this book is described a contemporary YA with magical realism -- that is fairly accurate but I'm not sure to what I would compare this. I did have definite vibes of both *Kissing Ted Callahan* by Amy Spalding (LA + band vibes) and *My Soul to Take* by Rachel Vincent (not knowing what you are/paranormal vibes) so you may want to give this a try if you're a fan of either. *A Song to Take the World Apart* comes out today September 13, 2016, and you can purchase [HERE](#).

She didn't recognize the gentle lick of warmth in her belly as want. She only knew that it was unfamiliar, the way the sensation lit her up. That was the day she discovered why they call it longing: because desire is full of distance and unfilled space.

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### **Kt says**

I finished this book on the plane to Minnesota, and it was honestly the perfect thing to read while travelling (super compelling but not very dense). I love Zan, I'm a HUGE fan of "Grace and the Fever" and I've been wanting to read this book for a while. I just adore the way Zan talks about music and sound. It's breathtaking and something I will never forget about her writing. What I loved most about this book was how there was an underlying feeling of unease throughout the whole thing, so that even though it was terribly fantastical or paranormal, you could tell that something was slightly askew the whole time (which, now that I'm thinking about it, there was an a certain unsettling feeling about the narrative of "Grace" that I loved, too). I would definitely read anything that Zan writes, and I can't wait until she publishes her next book.

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### **Emma says**

I'm sorry but with names like Lorelei and Chris, all I can think of are these two...

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### **Kelly says**

**A book about first loves, female power, and consent (spoiler alert: there is none in love spells).**

*(Full disclosure: I received a free electronic ARC for review through NetGalley.)*

"No one remembers when it was that our ancestors first found their way out of the sea. It seems now that all human life might have begun there, and that makes sense to me: that the womb of the world is water and salt. But I am speaking more specifically about a kind of ancestor that not everyone on this earth shares. And of course that makes sense to me too. How could a world so vast produce only one kind of human being?"

"Lorelei didn't know whether she liked the boy or the guitar more."

-- 3.5 stars --

Lorelei Felson is a second-generation German immigrant - although, with her long, blonde hair, wispy figure, and perfect English, she's really just another pretty face in LA. Her family - mother Petra, father Henry, and Oma Silke - came to the United States eighteen years ago, when Petra was just seventeen and already pregnant with the twins, Lorelei's older brothers Nik and Jens. Lorelei always assumed that Petra fled from shame - of being an unwed teenage mother in a small coastal town - yet details are difficult to come by

in their stern, quiet household. The true circumstances of their exile are much weirder and more mythical than Lorelei could ever imagine - and they're all bound up in her grandmother's longstanding prohibition on singing.

Despite the oddness of it, Lorelei never questioned Oma's decree; it was just another rule she was raised to follow, like *eat your broccoli* or *be home by curfew*. And so Lorelei's voice remained silent - or at least shackled - until two fateful events converged to change her world forever: Lorelei fell hard for Chris Paulson, a charming senior and the lead singer for The Trouble; and Oma passed away after suffering a massive stroke. Suddenly Lorelei's soul is filled with a volatile mix of raw, aching grief and crazy, careless first love that all but demands a musical release.

Lorelei begins to experiment with her voice and its seemingly impossible ability to mesmerize, manipulate, and captivate others. With her voice, Lorelei can cast love spells, tell others what to think and feel, and leave them hungry (always hungry) for more. Lorelei is a siren, and almost as soon as she grasps the sheer awesomeness of her power, she must find a way to rein it in, and fix the many broken people she's unwittingly left in her wake.

*A Song to Take the World Apart* is an unusual little book. (At 320 pages, it isn't exactly tiny; but it felt a little shorter than it needed to be.) A few days out, and I'm still not quite sure what to think of it. It's got the bones of a pretty epic story, but it falls just short of its potential. I wouldn't call it underwhelming, exactly ... understated, perhaps? Not quite as monumental and catastrophic and gut-wrenching as I expected, particularly given the title.

Much of Romanoff's writing, especially those passages related to music, are enchanting. She captures the essence of music in a way that's both compelling and lovely; even without Lorelei's magical ancestry, her raw, naked urge to make music is bewitching. I could all but feel the music swelling up out of my own throat. (But trust me when I say that absolutely no one wants to hear that.) Plus you've got to appreciate a book that quotes the Foo Fighters in its epigraph.

I loved the relationship between Lorelei and her best friend, Zoe: easy and comfortable and forgiving. In the few scenes that she appeared in, Zoe's older sister Carina really piqued my interest; I wish we'd seen more interactions between her and Zoe, though I understand why this didn't happen. (She was really there to help guide Lorelei on her path.) There's a wonderful "under the gaydar" subplot with Nik and Jackson that explores the decision to come out (or not) in high school with compassion and nuance.

I also liked watching Lorelei interact with her older brothers (and the twins, with each other); I kind of wish they'd been a little more involved in the family's mythology. It seemed that Lorelei and Lorelei alone wondered at and worried over the Felson family's troubled history; given that the twins' conception was the impetus for their immigration, you'd think that Nik and Jens would have been a little more curious too.

On the other end of the spectrum, I never felt like I got a good handle on Petra and Henry - and especially their relationship with one another. *A Song to Take the World Apart* feels rife with unexplored avenues and not-quite-seamless threads, particularly in relation to the adults: Petra, Henry, Silke, and Hannah. Take, for example, this passage:

"Is this mania? Lorelei wonders. Is this her mother's way of losing her mind? But it doesn't seem like that, not exactly. Petra has always been distant and quiet, like bare, dry earth. Now she's swelling up and filling out, like she was just waiting for Oma to wither and fade before she could blossom."

To me, this hints at a possible mythological detail: maybe, in this world, the matriarch wields the greatest power, and when she dies the mantle is passed down to her oldest daughter. Or the next oldest siren in her line. Perhaps Petra just feels freer and lighter now that she's no longer living in the shadow of her overbearing mother. (Their relationship was complicated, to say the least.) Petra might even be entertaining thoughts of singing again. But we never find out, as Romanoff detours from this path, never to return.

If Lorelei's gift of song can be read as a metaphor for female sexuality, or feminine power more generally, I'm still not entirely sure what *A Song to Take the World Apart* had to say on the matter. On the one hand, Lorelei is angry and frustrated to be barred from singing, especially when abstention comes at great personal cost: "She doesn't want to be like those communities of women wherever her family comes from, keeping their power private the way women always do." And yet, upon seeing what her power can do, she frets over the men who will "shipwreck" against her, as if her body is a treacherous shore, lined with sharp, cutting rocks and swift currents. A hard, unyielding natural landscape instead of an impressionable young woman. Of course, these conflicting perspectives could very well be a window into what Lorelei herself is feeling, as opposed to a statement on womanhood in general.

*A Song to Take the World Apart* contains the seed of a beautiful story, but it doesn't quite bloom; not the way I expected it to, anyway. Still, it's great to find a book that doesn't romanticize "love spells," which is essentially a whimsical way of describing rape.

<http://www.easyvegan.info/2016/09/12/...>

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## Jenna (Falling Letters) says

**Review originally published 13 September 2016 at Falling Letters.** I received a copy from the publisher via Netgalley.

I have to admit, I was completely baited in to read this book by the comparisons to *I'll Give You the Sun* and *The Strange and Beautiful Sorrows of Ava Lavender*. Those novels are two of my favourites in young adult, a category I'm very picky about. I didn't expect *A Song to Take the World Apart* to stand up to those two books, but if it was even just a bit like the two, then I could see myself enjoying it. In general, I enjoy magical realism and mythical creatures and ocean settings, and I'm interested to see what can be done with them in a contemporary setting. At first, I wasn't sure how the plot was going to go. The story starts out a bit slow and very much as typical teen romance. But as Lorelei's abilities began to play into the plot, the story took on a more serious tone and became the kind of YA I adore.

What I liked most about this book is that the story isn't just about first love. It's also about love between friends and family. Lorelei's best friend Zoe was one of my favourite characters in the book. She helps to ground Lorelei. Lorelei's brothers, parents, and Oma also play a significant role in the story, just as important as Lorelei's love interest Chris. Where the story is about teen romance, I appreciated how realistic it felt. I also appreciated how other characters reminded Lorelei that her high school romance was just that - a high school romance, of the sort rarely built to last. I've noticed some reviews crying 'instalove!' but for me, the development of Lorelei and Chris' relationship was very natural and how I would expect a young relationship to grow, from my experience. (view spoiler) With regards to the relationships, I think that's where this book finds some comparison with *I'll Give You the Sun*. The relationships here aren't as strong or striking but I think they're just as real.

I also liked how Lorelei experiments with her ability and doesn't fully know how to control it or use it. She gets caught up in it, as you might expect her to. She has darker moments of negativity where she allows her to use her abilities impulsively and selfishly, as she can't really imagine the consequences. I thought this worked well as a something of a metaphor for growing up and realizing or learning how we can manipulate ourselves and others for our own greedy desires, even when we're trying to be decent people. I think this is why I enjoyed the book. It's not really a love story. It's a story about growing and finding yourself.

When I think of *Ava Lavender*, I think of the particular and lovely prose. The prose here doesn't really hold up to *Ava Lavender*. It's standard contemporary YA stuff. But there are some great moments, particularly in 1) the descriptions of how Lorelei feels when singing and in 2) some dialogue that captured important concepts. I wondered how the music scenes would play out, as listening to music can be such a unique and individual experience. Not to mention it's a very physical thing! Reading a description of music is nowhere near the same as listening to that music. However, Romanoff doesn't try to describe exactly how or what Lorelei sings. She instead describes the emotions of the experience, which she does very well. As for the dialogue, there were moments that touched on topics I considered important, things that maybe teens don't hear or talk about enough. That being said, I was frustrated that Zoe and Lorelei (and Lorelei and Chris) don't have any frank discussions about their relationships. Chris just becomes Lorelei's boyfriend, without any talk about it. There's a scene between Lorelei and Chris that I thought implied sex but later on when Lorelei speaks with Zoe, there's talk about how Lorelei might be jealous because Zoe had sex before Lorelei, and Lorelei doesn't comment on her own experience. I don't like the dancing around the subject, though I suppose it is realistic. At that age everything is new and exciting and therefore a bit scary too.

**The Bottom Line:** Overall, Romanoff makes a solid debut with this contemporary YA tale and its good twist of magical realism. I recommend *A Song to Take the World Apart* for those who love high school setting YA but could use a little shake-up.

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## Rupali says

Okay-ish.

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## Stephanie (Bookfever) says

I didn't like *A Song to Take the World Apart* all that much, but I won't deny the uniqueness of it. And it's this uniqueness that is this story's strong suit, in my opinion. But even so, for me, it felt a little flat.

I just don't know what my thoughts are about Lorelei. Do I like her, don't I like her? I'm really not sure, even now that a couple of days have passed since I finished this book. I do have to say I liked her romance with Chris to a certain point.

Most of the story was rather vague and it dragged quite a bit, which is a huge part of why I had a hard time connecting with it. It's deep, though. And I did like the magical realism part of the story. It's still an element in books that I love to bits and pieces. And the way the author described music was also beautiful.

All in all, I'm a little disappointed by this book because it has everything in the story that I should've loved ? magical realism, beautiful writing, the mystery surrounding Lorelei's family. But in the end it just wasn't

enough for me.

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### **Kelly says**

[ a siren who discovers her family's history put under the spell of such (hide spoiler)]

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### **Nick Fagerlund says**

A story about a teenage siren who Makes Some Mistakes.

I liked this. It's overheated and bombastic in the way a story about dumbass teenage first love kind of has to be, but it has an admirable... hmm, I might need a word other than "restraint," here. "Economy," maybe — it's un-redundant, and resists the temptation to waste your time.

Here's my review: I wasn't really in the mood for this kind of book when I read it, but it was so well done that I loved it anyway.

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### **Kate says**

As I said on Twitter: Hot DAMN.

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### **Olivia-Savannah Roach says**

A Song to Take the World Apart was a novel that caught my eye as soon as I saw the cover. I looked into the book a little further by reading the synopsis and that was where I was really hooked. All signs in the synopsis pointed to this one being about sirens. It also had elements of magical realism which made me wary as I hadn't enjoyed much within that genre previously, but this novel has made me sure that the issue with those novels themselves, and not the genre at all.

It was almost scary how the writing style of this novel seemed to be so perfectly attuned to what I look for in a writing style. Despite it being of the young adult genre, this lent a little more on the adult side when it came to the writing style. It was written beautifully, with gentle and discreet foreshadowing and literary devices slipped into it to really represent what was occurring in the plot. It has a very slow and steady pace to it, and I have to admit that the pacing might not be for everyone. However, in my opinion, it added to the overall theme and aesthetic of the book – the writing style made me think of the gentle and yet forceful ocean, which has a key part to play in the novel.

I really liked the characters. We don't get too much of a deep connection with them as this is told in third person but mostly focuses on what Lorelei is feeling and what is happening to her. She really is the center of the novel. But we do get to see some storylines which belong to other characters, and Romanoff expertly winds all the individual storylines into one. And somehow, they all come together to have an effect on the



main storyline and the trouble that Lorelei manages to get herself caught into. So even though we don't get to know too much about the lives of the secondary characters, we do get to see their significance.

The plot was perfect for me. It is suitable to read this one as a summery, light-hearted contemporary. Yet at the same time Romanoff shows the reader the difficulties within relationships, and how they are never straightforward. This is woven in well with the magical realism element of the story, which highlights how complicated relationships – whether those of family, friends or to do with love – can be.

There are other themes included as well as love. Again, if I have to describe these themes it would have to be like the ocean: present, but discreet at the same time. There is that of the romance, but also of how parental issues can reflect on the family, themes of death, love, and also LGBTQ+ themes. Music also has a large role to play in the novel, and not only when it comes to Lorelei being forbidden to sing. Also in terms of how music sets people free, how people can fall in love with it, and how music itself has a large influence on people.

The ending to the novel isn't quite a closed ending, but isn't quite an open ending either. I thought that would be something that bothered me. It didn't, though, because it was perfectly suited to the novel and wrapped everything up in a way befitting of sending a particular message about life.

I loved reading *A Song to Take the World Apart* and can't wait to read more by this author. I am aware that even though I loved it, it probably won't be everyone's cup of tea. Hopefully this review will direct the right readers to it, and help you decide if it is something you might be able to enjoy.

This review and others can originally be found on Olivia's Catastrophe:  
<http://oliviascatastrophe.com/2017/09...>

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## **Dana says**

Unfortunately this story was not a hit for me. The description pulled me in, and I thought that the idea of a teenaged Siren was very interesting and unique. However this book turned out to not be anything like I expected and not in a good way.

Overall this story is not bad, it's decent, some people might even say good. But for me I just wanted *more*. The plot just ended up being so much smaller than I had hoped. I thought it would be about a teenaged girl coming to grips with a newly discovered Siren ability. I thought it would follow her adventures as she used her power for good, bad and all the grey in between.

Instead what I got was essentially her using her power on a boring dud of a boy that she had become obsessed with...although obsessed is probably too strong of a word. It wasn't nearly as intriguing enough to warrant obsession...it was more....a young girl moaning about her first lust with the usual teenaged relationship drama except that she just so happens to be a Siren.

The moral quandaries in the book never managed to interest me because I just found myself not caring about any of the characters, so what did it matter if they all treated each other like shit?

Overall, good idea but bad execution. 2.5/5

**Buy, Borrow or Bin Verdict: Bin**

[Check out more of my reviews here](#)

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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