



## Not Even Bones

*Rebecca Schaeffer*

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*Dexter* meets *This Savage Song* in this dark fantasy about a girl who sells magical body parts on the black market — until she's betrayed.

Nita doesn't murder supernatural beings and sell their body parts on the internet—her mother does that. Nita just dissects the bodies after they've been "acquired." But when her mom brings home a live specimen, Nita decides she wants out — dissecting living people is a step too far.

But when she tries to save her mother's victim, she ends up sold on the black market in his place — because Nita herself is a supernatural being. Now Nita is on the other side of the bars, and there is no line she won't cross to escape and make sure no one can ever capture her again.

Nita did a good deed, and it cost her everything. Now she's going to do a lot of bad deeds to get it all back.

## Not Even Bones Details

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Author : Rebecca Schaeffer

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## From Reader Review Not Even Bones for online ebook

### Carrie says

Nita has always had an interest in anatomy so jumping into the family business didn't seem like a bad thing when it let Nita study the corpses her mother brought home. You see, there's a market for the body parts of supernatural beings and Nita turns a blind eye to how her mother acquires these beings in the interest of her studies.

Nita however never expected her mother to show up one day with a live boy captive and still expect Nita to still procure the necessary body parts for profit. This is the line that rattles Nita to her part in the family business and when she defies her mother then next thing Nita knows the tables are turned and she's waking up in her own cage having been captured on the black market.

Well now, it would probably go without saying that *Not Even Bones* would not be a read for the faint of heart. Gone are the super special heroine who uses her super special powers fighting the evil of the world and in walks dark and twisted Nita and her diabolical mother. Yep, a bit of a gruesome tale right from the start but certainly a creative young adult paranormal fantasy read.

This one has the urban fantasy feel being set in a world like ours only with paranormals existing among the humans but does take place in areas not often used in novels. Nita is also completely different than regular characters with the *Dexter* comparison really showing. Not sure I ever really "rooted" for her but some may and her story was certainly compelling. This is one I'd recommend to those looking for a more dark and twisted read out of the norm.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

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### Amy says

*ARC provided by HMH via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review*

I truly wish I loved this book more! I feel like the description was made for me. Anything that's compared to *Dexter* gets my vote. But this was such a huge disappointment for me. As the synopsis says, Nita dissects bodies of "unnaturals" for her mother to sell on the black market. But after a betrayal, she becomes a victim herself; locked away in a cell and tortured.

To be honest this book gave me major *Hostel* vibes. There are characters that feel a high from inflicting pain on others, and some take pleasure in dismembering and eating people. Y'all, I'm usually a huge fan of serial-killer-thrillers but the graphic nature of these torture scenes felt really weird. Like some of it felt really pointless and just dragged the story on and on...

And once the story is set in motion, everything just kept going around in circles. I felt there was zero resolution, a lack of world building and character development, and Nita was such an idiot.

However, here is my biggest praise for this book: **There is a Thai main character.** If you know me then you'll know that I am Thai, and I have NEVER read a single YA book where there is a Thai character. So I was literally jumping for joy and tweeting about it when I was introduced to Kovit. Not only is he Thai but he also tells us the creepy story about the *krasue*, a Thai folk tale involving a female monster that's nothing more than a floating disembodied head with its spine and intestines still attached. Yes, that's right, MY OWN GRANDMOTHER used to tell me that a *krasue* would come take me away if I didn't fall asleep right away. HOW are you supposed to sleep after knowing about THAT THING!?

Okay, but seriously, I really did like Kovit a lot. He was the type of unapologetic, morally grey character I like in a horror/fantasy stories. I just wasn't a fan of Nita or, really, the entire plot. But major props to Rebecca Schaeffer for including such diverse characters!

Another thing is that I didn't realize this was going to be a series (this is entirely my fault.) Imagine my dismay when I reached the 90% mark to discover literally nothing has happened and NOTHING was resolved. Oh, you want any sort of resolution and answers? Gotta wait for the next book. Which I do not plan to read. Bummer.

I'm sorry I didn't love this more, and I hope my negativity didn't ruin this for you. If you're okay with gore/torture scenes then this may be a good read for Halloween. I just wish the story had more depth and world building to it, and overall it needed way more things to happen to keep the story moving forward to justify a sequel.

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## **Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says**

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Fantasy stories often have magic potions that are made up of the body parts of living creatures, even in Harry Potter, where bits of unicorn can be put into potions or wands - but *where* do those parts come from? NOT EVEN BONES explores that grim and unsavory concept in the form of Nita and her family, dealers in the magical black market, selling magical body parts to collectors, perverts, and criminals. Nita *enjoys* her work, with a blood-thirsty joy that's reminiscent of Kerri Maniscalco's heroine, Audrey Rose, in STALKING JACK THE RIPPER. NOT EVEN BONES is a much better book, however, with tight plotting, morally grey characters, and a grim world and setting that at times seems almost *too* dark to be YA.

The summary for this book is vague and a little misleading. It isn't really like Dexter, except for the whole cutting up dead bodies thing, and I haven't read anything by Schwab to completion, but - unpopular opinion time - what I *did* read by her seemed pretty bland and fanfictiony, in that way that all Tumblr-popular writers seem to have. NOT EVEN BONES is set in our world, which came as a surprise to me at first because the summary made me think this was going to be high fantasy. There are magical creatures and everyone knows they exist, and governments are in disagreement about how many rights they should have and what should be

done about them.

The heroine is Latina and the "hero" is Burmese/Thai. Most of this book is set in South America, which will be a pleasant surprise to those of you who often find yourselves complaining about the Western bias in fantasy settings. The characters actually swear instead of saying those made-up swear words that sound so stupid in everything that isn't *Firefly*, including dropping a few F-bombs. The story, as I said, is DARK. Graphic torture scenes, and discussions of incredibly unsavory topics like organ and body-part harvesting, eugenics, and abuse in virtually all forms. I'm pretty hard to shock, but this book made even me think, "I'm going to need a thousand hugs when this is over."

I'm honestly shocked this book didn't make more of a splash when it came out, since it's virtually everything readers have been asking for every time they criticize YA fantasy for being what it is.

Warning: ends on a mean mother of a cliffhanger.

*Thanks to Netgalley/the publisher for the review copy!*

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4 stars

### **Stacee says**

Everything about this book — from the cover to the tag line — seems like it's for me. Sadly I was quite disappointed.

I liked Nita well enough. She didn't come across as developed and I found it sort of hard to root for her {excluding the captivity part} because I wasn't invested in her story. My favorite character was Kovit and I did like the interactions between him and Nita.

Plot wise, it was sort of meh. There isn't any sort of world building or explanation for the hows and whys. The relationships were all very shallow and lacking background. I see that it's not a stand alone, which is what I expected going in, but I don't think that makes up for the lack of information.

Overall, it was an amazing idea with an intriguing ending, but the execution wasn't for me. I'm not sure if I will be giving the next book a try.

\*\*Huge thanks to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for providing the arc free of charge\*\*

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### Rebecca Schaeffer says

Many will call my main characters monsters. Many will call them villains.

They would be right.

I wrote this book for the people who watched movies as children and screamed, "why don't you just kill the bad guy already???" For the people who watched heroes proselytize on screen and said, "It's not that simple." For the people who watched the villains with fascination and whispered softly, where the normal, good, proper people wouldn't hear, "I want to see *their* story."

This, my friends, is their story.

If you're still interested, then, please, crack open the cover and delve into the darkness. But you've been warned.

Here be monsters.

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### Elise (TheBookishActress) says

Wow, so.... the "Dexter meets This Savage Song" comparison really encapsulates this? This is a deeply fucked up book, in a good way. You know how sometimes, you read YA fantasy and you just feel like it could have gone darker and it doesn't? *Not Even Bones* just keeps Going There.

*Not Even Bones* follows Nita, a girl who dissects other supernatural beings for the black market - until she's sold into the black market herself. So first of all, this book is impossible to put down and *so* addicting. It's almost a thriller and almost an urban fantasy book and either way, it's so fun to read. I never knew what was coming next - all I knew was that I was desperate to find out.

And better yet, this book features some seriously **cool worldbuilding**. Nita lives in a world where supernatural beings are prized for their parts but despised for their being, but also look exactly like other humans.

Something I liked here is there is some seriously biting social commentary slipped in there? Set in Peru and following American characters, this book doesn't shy away from the obvious discussion of colonialism and privilege in America. With a lead cast of almost entirely characters of color, it's a very interesting read. There's *also* some discussion of eugenics-ish politics, which as some of you may know is something I'm super passionate about.

Okay, I've enthused a lot about the worldbuilding and all that, but I really think what made this book for me was the character work. All these lead characters are so awful and I love them. This is one of those books where the leads toe the line between villain and hero. Also, if you don't like villain leads, you should probably not read this. Lol.

One of the things I really liked about this book is that the lead character doesn't prioritize the survival of other people over herself. In a lot of fiction I've read with these vibes, the leads are something I'd like to call Unrealistically Good. Not to shit on unrealistically self-sacrificing people, but people do not tend to be willing to risk their lives for others at the drop of a hat. Nita, by contrast, is out for herself. And it's not even what makes her an antihero!! She's a total antihero, don't get me wrong, but I think this book really understands the general human impulse to save your own skin [haha. Skin.]. Instead of prioritizing normal morals, this book puts the emphasis on a personal moral code, and the lines we refuse to cross so we do not lose our humanity. Nita is willing to kill and dismember and dissect, but she has lines.

Oh, and Nita? I love Nita. I would die for Nita. Her character development is incredibly excellent. And also Kovit is... a character. I can't spoil shit but I love them and I also really like a certain side character and I am so here for it.

Oh, and this book in general was pretty twisty, but there was also this one twist in this book that I think might have been the end of my brain. I guess plot twists a lot but this was just... fucking wild, I feel like I should have guessed it and I did not at *all*. I need the second book immediately. @Rebecca Schaeffer where are you give me the fucking second book I need this

I guess if I were to critique this, I would say that the writing is a bit... fanfictiony? I don't know, man, it's a debut and it happens.

Anyway, you should read this. It is so fucked up and the lead and love interest are both so terrible and it scared me shitless and it is the BEST.

TW: so much body horror, sadism.

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### Lauren Stoolfire says

#### **I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.**

Nita doesn't murder supernatural beings and sell their body parts on the internet—her mother does that. Nita just dissects the bodies after they've been “acquired.” Until her mom brings home a live specimen and Nita decides she wants out; dissecting a scared teenage boy is a step too far. But when she decides to save her mother's victim, she ends up sold in his place—because Nita herself isn't exactly “human.” She has the ability to alter her biology, a talent that is priceless on the black market. Now on the other side of the bars, if she wants to escape, Nita must ask herself if she's willing to become the worst kind of monster.

*Not Even Bones* by Rebecca Schaeffer is a fantastic debut YA fantasy. I didn't know quite what to expect going into this aside from that blurb, but I'm glad I went in nearly blind. It was such a pleasant, refreshing, and unique surprise. Well, when I say that I mean it was intense and bloody and I totally need more. I loved that it's fast-paced and had me on the edge of my seat throughout - I wasn't sure at any point how exactly everything was going to work out. The cast of complex characters, regardless of their species, are fascinating to follow, especially Nita's journey. Her growth as a character is amazing to watch. While I could describe this gritty fantasy as a bit of a slasher story, it also works as an intriguing examination of what it means to be human or monster and how our choices reflect our humanity or lack thereof. Finally, I'd also like to mention the world-building - there isn't a lot in regards to why and how the world is the way it is, but it is still

suitably dark and vivid.

Overall, *Not Even Bones* by Rebecca Schaeffer is a darkly unique debut YA fantasy with a dash of horror. While the world-building was a little underwhelming for me, it makes up for it with its fabulous character development. You may like this novel if you enjoy *Dexter*, *Stalking Jack the Ripper*, and bloody and slightly deranged fantasy. I know I'll be back for the sequel and future projects from this author.

Thanks again, NetGalley!

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### **sofia (sam willows) says**

okay but why is this synopsis literally everything I've ever wanted from a book in my life

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### **mith says**

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Originally, I'd given this 4 stars on goodreads and honestly?

I don't know why. I loved this book. Why would I give it 4 stars? *Not Even Bones* was everything dark and morally grey I wanted in a book for so long. Screw 4 stars. This deserves all 5 of them.

Past Mith was not thinking, evidently, but current Mith—me!! current me!—is thinking. And I say that this book is a solid debut and you need to pre-order if you can.

If you're like me, you've probably craved a dark YA that pushes the boundaries. Or wished a book dug a little deeper, got a little—a lot—darker. Schaeffer does that. I hope she continues to do that.

I just loved it. I loved how messy and grey the main character was. How deeply Not Good all the other characters acted. But, Nita. Man, if Nita doesn't have my heart—I'll refrain from including a bad line here. She was such a badass and she got things done. She was logical, level-headed, and didn't suffer from that self-sacrificing nonsense. She was always her first priority and I adored it.

*Not Even Bones* has a lot of great things going on for it, but one of my favourite parts was how Schaeffer talked about privilege in the book. It's not something I'm super nuanced in actually, properly discussing, unfortunately, but it is something I'm becoming more and more aware of and I'm glad Schaeffer brought it up.

There wasn't a lot that really bothered me? I mean, maybe a small thing here or there, but mostly that was the different supernaturals mentioned. They each had something that made them unique, and dropping stuff like that doesn't help my confusion lmao. I loved that they were part of the world, though.

I was not expecting most of what happens in this book outside of what's mentioned in the synopsis. So all the twists? Definitely caught me off guard and definitely added to my enjoyment of the book. It was also what made *Not Even Bones* so difficult to put down!

Would I recommend this? Oh, yes. Yes, I definitely would. Dark, sort of gory, and bloody, this was a wild start and a wilder finish. If you're squeamish, maybe skip this one. But if you're not, I definitely say check it out!

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## Vicky Who Reads says

4.5 stars

This book is FANTASTIC! It's **fresh, it's exciting, it's got all the nitty gritty** plus a morally questionable protagonist.

I loved reading it just for how **different it is compared to traditional YA**. It was **darkly fascinating** and was kind of like a train wreck you can't help but watch. (Except that this book is the furthest thing from a train wreck.)

It's got a lot of dark characters, and basically **nobody in this story is a completely good person**. They've all led to one person or another's death, and it's really horrifying, when you actually think about it. But some murderers (or murderer adjacent people) are better than others, and that's who we end up rooting for throughout the novel.

I loved Nita's character. Even though she's not a great person (\*cough\* SHE DISSECTS MONSTERS FOR THE BLACK MARKET\*cough\*), I loved **reading a protagonist who has a passion for science and is willing to question how far she'll go**. And her narration and how it incorporated healing the body and the specifics of clotting blood or sharpening vision or building muscles etc. was really cool and not at all like the much more awkward narration in *Heart of Thorns* where the narrator's science talk was...less believable.

The sort of paranormal abilities monsters (flesh eating, organ eating, pain eating, self-healing, glowing, vampires, chupacabras, unicorns, and everything under the sun) have were cool to read about, but not overwhelming.

I mean, the **world is built really well** in my opinion, because you're introduced to all sorts of monsters and knowledge about how the world works in the book, but it's all integrated in a way that never feels like an infodump or just being thrust into a bunch of words that you don't really know what they mean.

The **monsters were just so interesting** and I love how Schaeffer incorporated monsters from multiple cultures and also thought about how the world would react to monsters' existence, and what she ended up doing made a lot of sense.

There were only a few things that I wasn't so keen on, but I also feel like they'll be addressed more in the sequel, because this is just book 1. Nita's story is far from over, and there are still quite a few loose ends around (PLUS THAT CLIFFHANGER--OMG).

I guess I just **wish Nita's morals were explored a little more**, but she also has character development to go through in the next book! Even though she did learn about drawing the line and deciding where her morals lie, I did feel like she could have learned more and understood more.

And I just thought that **the writing could have been more emotive and more horrifying** for the reader--

more shocking in a way. I mean, when you look at what's happening--Nita being taken and sold on the black market, potentially for people to chop off her body parts and eat her--it's a really really *really* scary situation.

I would be freaking my mind out if I was ever in a position like that, and so I thought the novel didn't portray the horror of the situation quite accurately? It just felt like it was all well and good because *that's just how the world works*.

But I also understand how this is basically all Nita has ever known, and writing the book in **third person limited** for Nita both made us fit into her POV of this not being *that* horrifying, and also just **distanced us a little**, because that's what third person does.

Overall, I really enjoyed reading this and found it to be a fresh, gruesome tale that YA readers will love. I definitely recommend to fans of *This Savage Song*, although this novel remains very distinct in its own way. But also, monstersssss.

*Thanks so much to HMH Teen for providing me with an digital review copy in exchange for an honest review!*

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### Beatrice in Bookland says

*"Betrayal is a bloody business."*

**This book is completely fucked up. That's why I love it so much.**

The headline speaks the truth, this is a perfect blend of Dexter's blood and gore and This savage song's monsters. You're never going to find a more original young adult book, do yourself a favour and pick Not even bones up.

Are you tired of protagonists who have one goal that they never achieve because of their one true love?

Are you tired of protagonists who couldn't care less about their survival (unrealistic af)?

Are you tired of protagonists who are as pure as Tinkerbell's fairy dust?

**GET READY TO MEET AND LOVE NITA.** She's awesome. She fights to tooth and nail save her own life and if that ain't realistic I don't know what is. And yeah, okay, she loved dissecting bodies but everyone has a hobby, just leave her alone.

You're also going to fall in love with **Kovit**, tho. He's the male protagonist and he's one of Nita's ... captors, more or less. His hobby is torturing people and eating their pain (what a perfect match lol). I'm not gonna say anything else about him because his characterisation is a joy to read. Also, **get ready for an enemies to lovers slow burn.**

**The atmosphere is amazing**, too. The story takes place in the Mercado de la muerte, The death market. A market where people can sell monsters, supernatural creatures and body parts. Awesome.

Now I don't know how I'm going to wait for the sequel(s) - **btw this is going to be a trilogy** - cause it ends with such an interesting cliffhanger, I can't wait to see what Nita's going to do next!

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### **Lola says**

Once this book hits the shelves and readers all over the world pick it up, YA Fiction will never be the same again.

Because this book doesn't sugarcoat. Because it treats its teenage readers like adults. It expects them to understand and plunges them into a world that is, yes, dark and, yes, gruesome and, yes, extremely raw.

But readers can handle it.

One too many times, YA main characters turn soft or give the impression that they are invincible in body and spirit when in fact a simple kiss from a love interest shatters their resolve and turns them to mush. They forget what their main goals were.

Please. You will not find that here.

Nita is not like that. It's not just that she takes pleasure from dissecting corpses and hurts herself only to heal her own body afterward, she doesn't gag and she doesn't hesitate to save her life, even if that means dissolving her moral values.

She kills people. She lets people die. She betrays and hurts and steals and cuts. Don't get me wrong, I don't think she's an exemplary citizen, but the world she lives in needs people like her who aren't afraid to get dirty to fight the shadows that roam the night.

And YA Fiction needs strong heroines. It also needs to realize that sixteen-year-olds, fourteen-year-olds and even twelve-year-olds can stomach the visualization of blood and broken bones. I don't know about you, but I've fallen when I was a teen and felt pain all over my body. Even kids understand all of that... unless they've been completely kept away from, you know, the outside world.

I am pleased with what Rebecca Schaeffer did here. It's true that her actions scenes could have been more exciting and her writing more emotionally affective, but this is the first book in a promising and unique new YA series. I simply cannot wait for the sequel. Why the cliff-hanger, though? So mean.

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### **emi says**

The synopsis says "Dexter meets This Savage Song"

I don't care about Dexter, but This Savage Song? Sign me up.

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## Nina-Tala (JustAddAWord) Shannak says

This was hella weird, but in the best way possible.

I wouldn't be exaggerating at all when I say that NOT EVEN BONES is my most anticipated 2018 YA read (and I say YA because there's Queen Schwab's VICIOUS coming out, which is adult). I mean, dissecting monsters and selling them online to shady customers? \*crashes though the door to enter dramatically\*. I AM SO HERE FOR THIS. Plus, you know, one of the comp titles for this one was Schwab's This Savage Song, and I mean ... come ON. This is guaranteeing my interest.

**And really, this was rather fun.** There is a sufficient does of action sequences and moral-questioning and break outs and etc. One of the coolest things ever, too, was the fact that this was set in the Amazon rainforest?? Like, why didn't anyone tell me this sooner?? I love this.

**Nita is a fabulous lead.** She's vulnerable enough for a story this bloody, and her reactions are realistic (<— something that proved no longer a concern to me, because I like my heroines realistically vulnerable, especially with all the body chopping going on). Also, Nita's talk of how dissecting brings her inner peace did not, in fact, strike me as weird because let me tell you: lab dissections are the most fun activities ever in the hellish things that are college courses. I love 'em. Yay for dissection appreciation.

**The plot went in a direction I hadn't anticipated.** And I don't mean plot-twist wise. I expected more .. action, a la THIS SAVAGE SONG (also: Kovit felt a bit toooo similar to August with the whole eats pain/eats soul thing? Maybe? Idk.) This was more of a escaping, planning thing, which is fine. It IS a thriller, but without much running and shooting things? More like lock-picking and escaping. Still fun! But not what I expected.

**Heads up: this was legit a gore fest.** There was ear slicing and toe dicing and skin eating and all sorts of blood galore. And, shockingly, it even bothered ME, and I'm usually not really bothered by blood 'n guts, honestly. But here? Y'all, I legit nearly threw up. Like, really. So heads up, because when this book says dark, it means dark. It ain't kidding.

**All in all?** Fun, hella bloody, and with an ending that just WOAH-ed me. Pass me book two, please and thank you.

Thanks to HMH Teen for the ARC!

First impression : (2017)

Okay, but this legit sounds like everything I look for in a book. And referencing THIS SAVAGE SONG? Hell yes. Gimme.

## Xiran Jay says

\*\*SPOILER FREE\*\*

**Personal Rating:** i'd let this book murder me and toss me to the bottom of the Amazon River

**Recommended For:** Those that go NOOOOOO WHYYYYYY whenever a protagonist chickens outta doing something seriously fucked up but would've been so! fucking! juicy to watch!

This book plunges unapologetically into the darkest parts of humanity. No selective filter that only presents the "cool" sides of violence while protecting you from getting too traumatized. No shying away from issues 'cause it's scared it'll make you uncomfortable.

Rebecca Schaeffer doesn't give a shit if you're disturbed.

SO, uhh... **do think twice about reading this if you'd be unsettled by human trafficking, bodily mutilation, detailed dissection sequences, and general human depravity that makes you stare off into the distance thinking of how shitty the world can be.** Not everyone is into reading about that, and that's fine. *You've been warned though.*

It's too simple to describe this book as just "dark". Lemme tell you a big problem I have with a lot of books and media that get slapped with that label. In the end, they either 1. don't actually let their protagonist get their hands dirty, 2. just has them do "badass" things to be ~ \* COOL AND EDGY \* ~, or 3. try to convince you the correct thing to do when all odds are against you is to hold on to your honor and never lose your "humanity". Because falling to the level of your tormentors would make you no better than them. Or something.

Nah, FUCK THAT.

This book is about breaking all the rules other people made and living by your own. Because if all those other fuckers are laughing and running around being comfortable with what they do while you're sitting there doubting yourself at every turn, how are you supposed to win? Especially when you're a person like our dear protagonist Nita, who secretly likes some of the fucked up shit she does. She just thought she wasn't "supposed to". Well, when she's betrayed and thrown into a cage in a hidden black market in the rain forests of Peru, where there are "spiders that eat birds", she has to determine what she's willing or not willing to do real fast. You cannot hope for some mystical force made up in your head to punish those you hate. If you want them to pay, the only reliable way is doing it yourself.

Not Even Bones is ultimately a story about a girl coming to terms with her true self. Not what other people want her to be, not what she thinks she should be, but the raw, complicated human under all the social constructs and expectations forced onto her by both others and herself. She faces the vilest parts of humanity and then grasps it within herself for power. A big theme: **morals are optional**. They have no real binding power. If you make life-or-death choices expecting others will abide by the same principles you do...

Full review at my blog.

