



## Broken

*A.E. Rought*

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*Imagine a modern spin on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein where a young couple's undying love and the grief of a father pushed beyond sanity could spell the destruction of them all.*

A string of suspicious deaths near a small Michigan town ends with a fall that claims the life of Emma Gentry's boyfriend, Daniel. Emma is broken, a hollow shell mechanically moving through her days. She and Daniel had been made for each other, complete only when they were together. Now she restlessly wanders the town in the late Fall gloom, haunting the cemetery and its white-marbled tombs, feeling Daniel everywhere, his spectre in the moonlight and the fog.

When she encounters newcomer Alex Franks, only son of a renowned widowed surgeon, she's intrigued despite herself. He's an enigma, melting into shadows, preferring to keep to himself. But he is as drawn to her as she is to him. He is strangely... familiar. From the way he knows how to open her locker when it sticks, to the nickname she shared only with Daniel, even his hazel eyes with brown flecks are just like Daniel's.

The closer they become, though, the more something inside her screams there's something very wrong with Alex Franks. And when Emma stumbles across a grotesque and terrifying menagerie of mangled but living animals within the walls of the Franks' estate, creatures she surely knows must have died from their injuries, she knows.

## **Broken Details**

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## From Reader Review Broken for online ebook

### Heidi says

Three and a half stars: A book with wonderful writing that borrows on the famed tale of Frankenstein.

Emma hurries through the dark splashes of shadow stretching across the sidewalk. It is nearly dusk on a crisp October evening. The leering jack o' lanterns on the porches, a reminder of the season, watch her every move as she rushes home after spending the afternoon in the graveyard. It has been four months since her boyfriend, Daniel, accidentally died. Her heart still hurts from missing him, her hand aches to hold his....The next day, she meets Alex, a new boy, and she is unexpectedly drawn to him. Is it because something about his eyes remind her of Daniel or the inexplicable electricity that tingles between them? Alex is quiet and mysterious but kind and nice, and she feels she knows him. He is an enigma. Emma slowly, with Alex's help, puts her feet back onto the path of living, but a terrible secret threatens to destroy everything.....

What I Liked:

\*First and foremost, what I loved the most about this book was the writing. Ms. Rought's YA debut book shows she is an immensely talented author. I absolutely loved her unique way with words and her well defined descriptions. She utilizes smell and touch and sight and blends them into powerful passages that were astounding. I am always a fan of books with creative writing, and this one is a gem. There are books that use basic writing to tell a tale, and then there are books that enthrall you with mesmerizing words and stunning details. This book excelled on the writing aspect, so much so, that I felt like the writing itself was a character all on its own. Time and time again, I was enchanted by the details. For me, it was like watching a movie with awe inspiring cinematography, where the shots of the background are so interesting that they play a pivotal role in the movie. The background details and descriptions are so vivid that they overshadow some of the other aspects.

\*I liked that this book borrowed on ideas of Frankenstein, but for the most part it is an original story. It made it a bit more unpredictable.

\*I enjoyed Emma's character. She is a young lady reeling from the accidental death of her boyfriend. Her pain is gut wrenching and the reader really feels for her. I liked that Alex slowly teaches her to live again. There are so many emotions in this one and I think Ms. Rought does a great job of capturing them all and conveying them to the reader.

\*I have hit a bit of a lucky spell as of late, as I have read several book in a row that are stand alones. That means no horrific cliffhangers, and can I just say, I love reading a book that has a definite conclusion. If you are like me: tired of books with jarring endings pick this one up. It has phenomenal writing and a nice, neat conclusion, that alone is worth reading this book!

And The Not So Much:

\*I admit, I picked this one up because I love Mary Shelly's Frankenstein, and I couldn't resist a retelling. I have learned, though, not to expect these modern day retellings to mirror their familiar counterparts, so I went in with no expectations that this would be reminiscent of Frankenstein, and indeed this tale borrows on Ms. Shelly's ideas, but is is nothing like the original, and I liked that. I know other readers will be disappointed that this isn't more like the classic story, but for me I liked the fresh ideas and original story. I think that these respins of the classics might be better introduced as books that are inspired by or based loosely upon instead of a retelling that way people aren't expecting a familiar story line.

\*I was disappointed that the villain in this one didn't have a larger part. I wanted to get inside his head and learn what motivated him, why he chose to do what he did, how he went about creating his "monster" and what exactly happened with the death and the subsequent resurrection. I was also perplexed by the scene where Emma meets Dr. Franks and his reaction to her. Why did he act that way? It is never explained and it bothered me, was it because he recognized her name from his son's rantings? I think this book needed his

POV integrated into the story, perhaps with journal entries?

\*This storyline tries to utilize a "surprise" element with the whole Frankenstein monster concept, but it fails because the reader goes into this knowing that it is a retelling so when the big reveal comes it is expected. Trying to keep it in the dark fails. Maybe this is why we didn't get more insight on Dr. Franks as the author was hoping to achieve the big twist but it just doesn't work. I think alleviating the surprise and integrating the villain's POV would vault this up from a good read to a great one.

\*While I adored the writing, I found myself a bit bored by the repetitiveness of the plot. I liked the depth of emotions and the descriptions so I was entertained, but there was just too much repeating of Emma going to school, getting coffee, meeting her friend and arguing with her mother. I started to feel like been there done that.....

Broken is a very loose Frankenstein retelling. If you go into this expecting a mirror of the classic, you will likely be disappointed. I personally liked that it borrowed on ideas but blossomed into its own story. The big selling point for me for this book is Ms. Rought's mad writing skills. It is isn't often that I am blown away by stunning metaphors and rich descriptions, but this book has both and more. If you are a fan of detailed and creative writing you should definitely check this out. Not having a cliffhanger is another great reason to read this. I am certainly now a fan of Ms. Rought's writing, and despite this book having some flaws, I will gladly pick up another one of her books in the future so I can once again experience her unique writing.

#### Favorite Quotations:

"With Daniel, it was so much more. He wasn't just in my heart, he was my heart."

"It's such a lovely promise. Promises are like hearts, easily broken."

"Glittering frost coats the world, sharpens grass and leaves to fragile glass-like weapons."

"Talking drags the jagged ugly truth out and tosses it into view of anyone who cares to listen."

"No more leering pumpkins seeing their echo in me. Autumn is over. Novembers are fickle, but the constant chill in the air tells me the dying is done. Now comes the frigid death of a Michigan winter, bitter winds, suffocating snow."

"Do I tell him he isn't a dream for me, but a memory I've almost forgotten?"

"The snow softens the world's edges, buries its sins under a powdery blanket. Too bad it can't work the same with life."

A big thanks to Strange Chemistry Publishing for the ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

All opinions are my own and I was not compensated for my review.

Posted @Rainy Day Ramblings.

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#### **Vivien says**

I received this e-ARC through Netgalley.

Emma Gentry's life is forever changed when her boyfriend Daniel is killed. Her best friend, her love, her life. For months she is numb, going through life like a zombie. Without Daniel she isn't the same. It's like half of her is missing and her connection to life itself is broken.

Alex Franks is new to town. Cloaked in his ever present hoodie, he has a reputation to match his mysterious appearance. After an incident with a sticky locker results in a broken bone, Alex has to deliver Emma to medical care. An immediate connection is made. One that feels familiar, yet is new. But what exactly is Alex's secret? And why is Emma drawn to him?

With a Gothic feel to it, *Broken* stands out as a refreshing read in the young adult genre. Told in first person, you really get to feel and understand Emma's grief. The prose is hauntingly beautiful. At times the honesty so raw it made me ache. With death an underlying theme in *Broken*, the macabre tenor is present throughout the novel.

I immediately had a connection with Alex. The bruises under his eyes and visible scars were only the beginning with this tortured soul. His protectiveness was never overbearing and at times, he could downright make me melt. Yet underneath his strength, I could see his pain. His struggle was much deeper and darker than any other human.

*Broken* is a modern retelling of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. But it is more than that. The air of death permeates every page, testing your morals even more than the original. It will have you questioning your beliefs. How far would you go for love? What would you sacrifice? Could you love something *Broken*?

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### **Anna (Bobs Her Hair) says**

#### **2.5...A Fair and Flawed Story**

*I cry for everyone I've hurt withdrawing from life. Mom never stops stroking my shoulder, or my hair, a gentle contact anchoring me. I pull in a slow, deep cooling breath and realize the hurt has lessened. I feel scraped and stinging inside, gutted like the jack-o'-lantern sitting on the ground outside the clinic door. Except somewhere in the aching emptiness I see a spark, a flicker of my own, the light Daniel would've wanted me to finally find.*

*Hope.*

Emma Gentry has been comfortably numb since her deep connection with her boyfriend was severed. An unexpected tragedy took Daniel from her. Her heart feels hollow and broken. Emma's grief guides her to the cemetery on a regular basis, as her parents wait for her funk to lift. After months of haunting memories, she finally accepts it's time to let go of Daniel's ghost.

Then, Shelly High School's newest student has her reeling. Alex Franks resurrects all the feelings she felt with Daniel, the only boy she felt was made for her. A confused and guilt-ridden Emma is extremely drawn to the scarred boy. He is also captivated by her. His similarities to Daniel wound. Alex excites, but a voice in Emma's head whispers that something is very wrong.

***Broken*, at its core, has a provocative premise;** unfortunately, it's realized in an excess of repetitive prose and teen angst. Emma's character is fully developed, yet wasted much of the time, as she mopes through the majority of the book. Her emotions were complex in dealing with the death of a loved one. **Her confused feelings of guilt, love, anger, and hope make her a compelling character in the few tantalizing moments written. Emma could have had a potent story.**

The story is completely told from the heroine's point-of-view, and I needed a better picture of Emma's love interest. There are empty spaces where missing pieces of Alex should be in the puzzle, especially in his story. Alex is enigmatic, charming, strange, and intelligent. It would seem his intelligence should have been

convincingly portrayed. His characteristics don't reveal a dependable composite.

I did enjoy Emma's interactions with her overprotective mother. There were some stereotypical moments with teenage high school girls and also entertaining interactions with Emma's friends. Overall, I feel this book is a fair, yet flawed, read. **Viewing it from the perspective of a teen reader, some may enjoy the realized romantic elements between Emma and Alex if he or she overlooks the 'same day, different shirt' redundancy and pat ending.**

*ARC courtesy of Angry Robot/Strange Chemistry via Netgalley*

*Buddy Read with Stacia starts Nov. 15.*

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### **Teno Q. says**

First off, the blurb for this book spoils most of the story, so if you've read the blurb, then you've pretty much read the story up to page 340.

When I first started reading this, I was convinced that the author had been re-reading Frankenstein, and then Twilight for the first time, and decided to simultaneously deconstruct and also add a dark spin on Meyer's cliched love story. You've all heard this tale by now: There's a new kid at school. The protagonist feels instantly drawn to him or her for some reason they can't explain, and they start a relationship after a ridiculously short period of time, even though they barely know each other; then the protagonist discovers that their new 'love' is a vampire or a fallen angel or a demon or an Elvis impersonator or what have you.

The twist and deconstruction that Broken offers on this is that the protagonist is mourning her dead boyfriend, and this new guy, who is a normal human, eerily reminds her of him. (Why Alex feels suddenly drawn to Emma is explained later.)

The writing is peppered with fleshy, gory imagery, but whether or not it manages to create the intended dark and Gothic atmosphere, I can't rightly say, because this book takes place mostly in a high school, but the emotions I associate with such places mainly include boredom and anxiety. Examples of some particularly interesting metaphors and bits of imagery, not including the one that compares a ringing cellphone to a mugging victim:

*"A wooden boardwalk clings to the side of the dune, an exposed spine riding over dark flesh, meant to preserve the fragile ground."*

*"Storm weight is oppressive, humid, tainting the air. The school looms dark and brooding, waiting for the last of its victims."*

*"The sky chooses now to open and hemorrhage water like a slit vein. People scurry, rats running for dry ground."*

*"The wrought iron fencing looms into view, black rotted teeth ripping through the tufty brow fur of the grass edging."*

I thought this was clever, considering the subject matter. And then...

*"He smells of leather, and lightening, and Alex."*

Note that the person this is describing is Alex. So, apparently, Alex smells like Alex. Interesting. (And what, praytell, does *lightening* smell like? (view spoiler))

Anyway, in all seriousness, reading this book made me feel a tad uncomfortable. I wouldn't let a guy I barely know hug me, get into a fight over me, or undo my hair for me, and those are just a few of the things that Alex Franks (Franks? Frankenstein? See the allusion?), our resident dark and mysterious hero, does. So the romance that takes up a good chunk of this book made me feel queasy, never mind that Alex reminds Emma of her recently-dead boyfriend. If I had a dead boyfriend and some new guy at school reminded me of him, I wouldn't try to date him, I'd get the *hell* away from him!

This also begs the question: How much of Emma's "love" for Alex is really for Alex and not for the memory of her dead ex that he invokes, and respectively, how much of Alex's "love" for Emma is really love, and not just because of the [spoiler]? But how many of the people who liked this book would tell me, "*Oh, but they're teenagers. It's just lust and hormones*"? Because despite what YA romances might be feeding the general public right now, the truth is that most teens are *not* horny idiots who have nothing on their minds but the mysteries of sex and/or the opposite sex. I'm a real teen, and I'm not buying that specious explanation.

Also, what is it with this need to describe every single detail of the main character's day that some books have? I don't need to know what subtle variations there are in Emma's cholesterol-drenched breakfast every day, nor do I want to know, unless there's some plot significance in it - for example, if Emma's partially-uneaten breakfast burrito slips out of her backpack while she's on the run from the villain, and he trips over it and lands on his face, thereby buying her some much-needed time. This detective-like style of documenting ultimately causes the story to drag a bit, at least until it reaches the explosive, over-the-top ending (and when I say it was over-the-top, I mean, *it was over-the-top*, and not precisely in a good way). It worked for Stieg Larsson because he was wrote crime dramas from the perspective of actual detectives. It doesn't work for paranormal romance.

I'm not sure if I can say I enjoyed this book. It was...interesting...especially near ending. I'd recommend it to people who enjoy horror and romances with scarred, brooding, and mysterious heroes, because sometimes we can overlook a book's flaws, if its content appeals to us greatly enough, now can't we? (\*hides Scarlet and Graceling behind back\*)

Obligatory disclaimer:

My copy of this book is another ARC I received from Netgalley.com and the publisher, so thanks to them for the opportunity.

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### **Anzu The Great Destroyer says**

He wasn't just in my heart, he was my heart.

Long story short

Emma is your typical Mary Sue who lost her boyfriend and is trying to live with it. Lost as in he died. So you get lots of emo moments, of course. Some random day at Emma's school a mysterious new guy appears.

Aaaaand insta-moment.

Aaaaand electricity and thunderstorms.

After reading the ~~spoiler~~ ~~rant~~ book description you can probably guess the rest. If not, then this might be **THE BOOK** for you!

#### My thoughts

I requested *Broken* because, duh, Frank reboot. I mean, Frank reboot. You know? What I failed to see is that the genre of the book is *Young Adult*. And like all those *Young Adult* reboots that are out this year, *Broken* does not disappoint. It does not save the genre from its idiotic downfall.

*Broken* comes with a nice gloomy start, and that made me expect a creepy book. The cover art is also amazing, and it fueled my expectations for a creepy, maybe horror-ish, book. Rule number one: never trust a book's cover, especially if it's *Young Adult*.

I actually gave up this book very early, about twenty percent along the way. A.E. Rought's writing style is disappointing mostly because it's simple to the point of making me think that the target audience for *Broken* is the typical low-IQ teenager. Which is probably true. Another thing that bothered me was the constant reminder of Daniel since the beginning of the book. Having this reminder come without a proper introduction of Daniel was making me feel like I'm reading about a random person, thus have no feelings whatsoever for Emma's loss. And last but not least, the immaturity of the story. Or the useless blabbering and random events that are supposed to form the story.

All I could think is that Rought's missing the point. Where's the creepiness?? All I'm reading is a typical *Twilight* teen romance book. No. Just no.

#### To read or not to read?

What are you expecting from *Broken*?

- a. A horrific retelling of Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, but with teens, lots of action and a bit of romance;
- b. *Twilight* but with a super-hot-designer-dressed Frankenstein instead of sparkling freaks.

If your answer is b, then go ahead and read the book. You'll like it.

*ARC courtesy of Strange Chemistry via NetGalley*

Review also posted on

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#### **Nadia says**

**I'm not that nice of a person. Yes I frequently bash books I don't like and I don't know how to act nice**

**so take it or leave it.**

What is a nightmare? According to the dictionary definition, Nightmare is a frightening or unpleasant dream or a terrifying or very unpleasant experience or prospect.

This is what I would like to call a nightmare. To call it otherwise would be sugar coating it.

**The plot**, well the plot...can't discuss it here, because then I would be saving you all from getting the experience yourself. Just let me tell you this, my suspicion came out to be true in the end. The book was way-too-slow at first, with a hasty climax towards the end.

**The writing**, The writing was not for me as I didn't get most of it. There's a scene where the girl and boy are 'supposedly' flirting. Here goes the exact scenario -

*Well, they were until Josh strolls up to my locker reeking of a fresh layer of some dark-bottled knockoff cologne. He leans against Alex's locker. Damned if I don't appreciate the annoyance he represents. At least my heart doesn't want to feel when Josh is around. "Your guard dog have some kinda magick? Never saw a more timely spew in my life."*

*"Really? All eighteen years of it?" I ram my shoulder into my stubborn locker.*

*"Let me get your walker with the tennis balls on the front. You're just stooped over with experience."*

*"Right after I get you protective gear for when your dog turns against you."*

*"So says he who's jealous." I glare at my lock, spit a swear word under my breath and spin the combination again.*

*"Resulting to Yoda Speak, Emma?" He crosses his arms, duffle bag at his feet.*

*"He might've been a shriveled up green dude..." My knuckles scream after I punch my locker. "But Yoda was a brilliant Jedi master."*

*"You are such a geek." Fingers stroke over my hair after Josh scoops up his bag and walks behind me. "See ya tomorrow, Gentry."*

I don't know what the hell this was all about, went right above my head. But that could be because of my un-nerdiness towards whatever they are talking about. Meh.

**Character Building:** Without talking much here goes, with examples, the characteristic traits of the heartbroken, damsel in distress heroine, Ms. Emma Gentry.

Emma has a *best friend* called Bree, here's what she thinks about her -

*She's all in black, which has the unfortunate side-effect of highlighting her dark roots. It also makes her dramatic eyeliner more obvious.*

Did I mention that the same thing of Bree not being a natural blonde (Which Emma the charming princess is) is mentioned only for like 943 times again?

Emma's mom, being an overprotective lioness of her poor heartbroken cub, is described as below -

*My ears sting, my cheeks burn in angry flush. Mom was as angry and narrow-minded as I thought she'd be, bitching at me from the school curb to our home garage, calling Alex "out to ruin me," "a troublemaker," bitch, bitch, bitch.*

Mind you that Emma's mom is always **bitching** for being suspicious about a boy her recently heartbroken daughter has known for about two weeks.

And I'm supposed to like this girl because she's the heroine.

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### **Stacia (the 2010 club) says**

From the summary : *Imagine a modern spin on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein where a young couple's undying love and the grief of a father pushed beyond sanity could spell the destruction of them all.*

**2.5 stars. Yet another case of "great concept, poor execution."** Don't get me wrong...I can appreciate a love story as much as the next romantic, but when a story is being marketed as a spin on Frankenstein, I expect to see more to *that* side of the tale. Throwing in names like *Shelley* and *Franks* every few pages isn't enough to bring the concept to life.

What makes this story even stranger is that there was no real break between one life-changing incident and the introduction of a person who was too closely tied to it all. The main character Emma was so confused in her own head, that I felt uncomfortable watching her pick and choose her emotions because she wasn't sure which feelings were even appropriate for her to feel. I can't say this enough : it's not hard to write in a chapter header which says *two years later*, or something to that effect.

Where the story did finally manage to break out into interesting territory was in the last 50 or so pages. I almost wonder if this story could have been more interesting had it been told in reverse, or if more of the facts had been given upfront. The supposed 'air of mystery' wasn't really a mystery, since the reader knows what's coming before they even pick up the book. So instead of wondering what's going to happen, the observer is required to sit through pages and pages of everyday angst. A book centered on Frankenstein should have less attention given to basic day-to-day activities and silly drama. Some of the details did manage to tie in with the rest of the story, but by the time we got to that point, I felt like I'd been lulled into a place of not caring.

Granted, there is going to be an audience for the book. Even though *Broken* is being marketed as regular YA (probably because of some violence), I'm thinking the middle grade/tween crowd is going to better love this one.

As well, I think fans of the 2005-2010 (ish) style of emotion-driven YAPNR will probably be less harsh on the slow build to action. If your favorite books in the genre are the old-school style ones in which the romance carried the majority of the plot, you'll probably be a bigger fan of this book than I was. Like I said, I'm all for romance, but when you're bringing out the *Frankenstein* angle as a draw, there needs to be more on the story/background side (for my tastes) than what we got with this book. A better balance would have pushed this book from okay to something special.

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## **Joy (joyous reads) says**

A modern interpretation of Frankenstein, Broken has the romance some readers would like. Unfortunately, I never did see the romantic side of Mary Shelley's original work. Hence, this book simply missed the spot for me.

Emma hasn't really recovered over the loss of her boyfriend, Daniel. She spends most of her time at a cemetery where he should've been interned but by his parents' choice, he's reduced to ash encased in a jar perched on a mantle at home. She goes through life grieving for Daniel and on some days, it didn't look like she'd get over him any time soon. Alex Franks' appearance gave way to a resurgence of life. Daniel still haunts her memories but the newcomer has given her another set of emotions other than sadness. But there's something odd about Alex - something that's achingly familiar and haunting.

This book was drawn out. It could've used a lot of trimming - especially those parts where Emma spent a lot of time lamenting and mourning. She's also very descriptive, so much so, that I found her thoughts tend to drift while in the midst of her melancholic angst. It took me a while to finish this book as well. But when I realize that a lot of what I was reading was excess weight and was pretty much a practice in repetitive story telling, I had to stop and do some selective reading. And some of you will probably notice this too.

The writing may be pretty at first. But after a chapter or two, I was fighting off the urge to keep my eyes from rolling to the back of my head. But that doesn't mean the author's writing was pedestrian. I think she's so much better than a lot of other authors out there. She just got too carried away with all the pretties.

The synopsis of the book sounds so charming. I mean, who wouldn't want to read about a Frankenstein retelling? But Broken's pretty generic, actually. And it's why it'll be a hit with a number of readers who loves the good old mysterious newcomer pining for the girl. It's also quite predictable and the synopsis pretty much aided to expose the majority of the plot.

Over all, this book is an orthodox YA; nothing remarkable and actually quite disappointing. I liked the first quarter of the book and the last quarter. I think half of this book should've remained unwritten.

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## **Ingrid Jonach says**

I was lucky enough to get an advance copy of this achingly beautiful book (disclosure: we share the same publisher!).

If you are into romance - read it. If you are into the macabre - read it. Heck, if you are into reading read it! You will not be disappointed by this haunting novel about love and loss and oh-so-much heartache.

I actually started missing the characters as soon as I read the last line. I even missed Daniel who - as you know from the blurb - dies before the book even begins. He is as much a part of the novel as the other characters though and I am sure you will agree once you read it too.

HANDY HINT: Keep a box of tissues at your side. There are a few tear-jerker scenes, such as the soon-to-be

infamous deer scene.

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## Ava says

*ARC supplied by NetGalley and Strange Chemistry in exchange for an honest review.*

So after some pretty hilarious business while reading BROKEN, I have finally finished... and color me slightly impressed.

Damn.

BROKEN is a FRANKENSTEIN retelling. It was very creepy and intriguing - though I'm probably biased because I'm a sucker for retellings.

Emma Gentry is a high-school girl who has just lost her boyfriend, Daniel, one of many victims to die or disappear mysteriously in a small town in Michigan. Emma and Daniel's relationship was real love, which made his death so much harder for her.

During the school year, Alex Franks enrolls, and like in most stories, he and Emma are "drawn to each other".

I'm really starting to wonder why young-adult novels authors insist on adding insta-love. Gah. That definitely took away from the story.

Anyway, Alex Franks is really, *really* familiar. He has Daniel's eyes, his habits and knowledge, but most of all... (view spoiler). Alex's dad, Dr. Franks, is a freaking creep and he *hates* Emma, since she's a distraction to Alex. Drama, action, and horror follows.

You guys can all guess who the monster in BROKEN is going to be. It's not even a spoiler - it screams "ALEX ALEX DANIEL DANIEL" in the *blurb*. The story would've had a lot more potential if it was more surprising.

I'm going to give Emma and Alex's fast relationship a little slack because technically, (view spoiler). Real-life soulmates, I suppose. Their relationship was extremely fast (about two weeks), but (view spoiler).

Alex and Emma were cute, but I was a bit uneasy with their declarations of "you're mine" and "you belong to me", however.

I usually don't go gaga for any books with insta-love, but I suppose BROKEN was an exception, since it had a reason. It just made me feel like this, which is a definite sign I'm going mad:

I thought the characters and the character development was okay. I kind of liked Emma - she seemed like a interesting protagonist and I was fond of her voice. She didn't give two shits what other people thought of

her, and she didn't let it get to her. Most of the time.

I also liked Alex. He's like a lost, sensitive puppy that needs a hug. He's a sweet, protective little German Shepherd. ~~I sound like a creep. Moving on.~~ Alex hates himself because his father (view spoiler). He's a tortured soul, and I'm not just spitting out bullshit. I mean, (view spoiler).

I originally didn't mind Josh - the game he played with Emma was funny and I loved it. And then, little by little, my patience for him waned... and waned... and waned... until I got to the last straw, and, oh, look what I found!

*HAHAHA, FUCK YOU.*

BROKEN itself gave me semi-nightmares. It didn't horrify me while I was reading it, but when I went to bed, I did dream about someone cutting out my heart. The animals scared the living crap out of me - the deer, mostly - and Dr. Franks made the story.

I do wish there was a lot more horror to counterbalance the romance, however.

Strangely, one of the scenes in BROKEN reminded me of when the victims of THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE are tied to the beds ready for surgery, which is *probably* not the best comparison. That movie scarred me for life, and I have my friends to blame for forcing me to watch it at the party they *threw for me*.

BROKEN is a guilty pleasure for me because there are things wrong with it: insta-love that made me roll my eyes at times, choices that annoyed me at times, and tiny details that should've driven me insane but didn't.

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### **Sophie says**

This review can also be found on The Dreaming Reader.

Alex FRANKS goes to SHELLEY High. Oh my, could this possibly be a FRANKENSTEIN retelling? Except now the monster has become a hot seventeen year old boy?!?!

*Joker approves of my superb reasoning skills.*

This would've been a great book if it hadn't been so reminiscent of *Twilight* horrified. Rought had a lot of things going for her. She had a strong main character, a successfully enigmatic male lead, and a plot that any classic/YA lover would be drawn to. I love retellings, and this is the first retelling of *Frankenstein* that I've seen. In the first couple pages, I rushed through this book. It was exciting, exhilarating, and I wanted to know more about Daniel and Alex and Em. Even though the GR blurb pretty much ruined the big secret for me, I still wanted to get to the bottom of everything and understand it completely. Also, Rought's writing style? Gorgeous. Sometimes it seems to go into the realm of too dramatic, but most of the time, it contributed just the right amount of haunting beauty and really added to the dark tone that existed throughout the book.

There didn't seem to be much going wrong in the first, oh, 100 pages. And I thought this book would be great, but as is the case with my crappy badness-radar, I turned out to be wrong.

Alex Franks was great for five pages. Then his whole mysterious, hood-over-face thing got old fast. It's been done so many times before, and besides his apparent good looks (in which case, why would he need the hood? And if the hood was to hide himself and people had already seen his face, what was the point?), there wasn't really much else he had going for him. I know, I know, he's related to Em's old boyfriend, but despite that, I still felt like she was cheating on Daniel. And this sort of bothered me. Also, what was the deal with Josh? He seemed like such a comical mustache-twirling villain that I couldn't take him seriously. On top of all that, he was a ginger. Figures.

The beginning and end were pretty interesting. There's some action and guts in the last couple pages. But the middle is just mind-numbing backwards and forwards lovin' between Em and Alex, with a couple memories of Daniel scattered in to make her feel guilty. I was never sold on the love. Isn't Rought essentially showing that Em only loves Alex because Daniel's in him? That's messed up, man. What guy wants to be loved because he reminds his girlfriend of her old boyfriend? No one, unless he couldn't get a girl any other way. And given Alex's supposed good looks, I think he'd be able to get someone.

Em is a badass in the first couple pages when she punches people and throws insults, but she softens too much. Sadly, she follows the trend and starts crying a lot. Not that she doesn't have reason to, but sometimes the tears were just unnecessary. I appreciated Rought's integration of Em's mom and dad instead of making her some poor orphan, but I think she really could've done a better job with her characters. None of them really made sense to me.

I recommend giving this book a try, even if it does get redundant in the middle. The end is pretty cliche, but you should just stick with it for the writing style. I think that was my favorite part.

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### **Sarah says**

A good idea that was executed horribly. While I can understand every author has a vision of how they want their story to be told, there's still some things that just don't work. In this book's case, the writing was just all over the place with its tone. Sometimes it would delve into a darker gloomy prose and I'd think okay we're finally getting somewhere, but mostly it was just all shallow word vomit, complete with slut-shaming, subtle sexism, and awkwardly phrased ~\*teen talk\*~. Now I know the argument to that is always, "but that's realistic though because that's how teens actually are!!!!!!" Yeah, I'm aware of this, I was a teenager once upon a time, and I know that young people are capable of this type of behavior, but that doesn't mean EVERY teenager is like that. I think there are many other ways for an author to convey HEY! MY BOOK IS ABOUT TEENS! Sometimes playing the every character is vapid card can work, if the author is a talented enough writer to make the reader connect with non sympathetic characters. The writing in this book is not on that level. I found it nearly impossible to care about Emma whatsoever. Yes she's a young girl going through a painful time but her characterization was shite. If the writing had been on point then her horrid personality would have been interesting and even relatable, but it wasn't, so she was just an annoying brat.

Now, as for the plot, like I said before...good idea, bad execution. The meat of the book is basically just Emma having random cliche interactions with Alex and mooning/brooding over how much he reminds her of

her dead boyfriend, Daniel. Aside from that nothing really happens. The romance was actually embarrassing to read.

And I quote:

*"It does fracture the illusion." His velvet tenor sends chills racing over my skin.*

*"What illusion?"*

*Alex's grip tightens, hugging me to him, squeezing the air from between us. When I look up, I see his eyes smoldering behind his mask. He leans closer, the ties of his shirt brushing my bare skin when he whispers, "That you're a dream come to life."*

*I giggle. What else can I do after a compliment like that?*

THIS IS AFTER DAYS OF THEM KNOWING EACH OTHER.

*Next, I click on Alex's text: Why can't I get you out of my head? You're my dream, Emma, and I don't ever want to wake up.*

You've got to be fucking kidding me.

There were odd, vague mentionings of Daniel's death a few times that aren't expanded upon until about the last third of the book, but it didn't really build mystery or suspense the way it was written, it just confuses the reader. The "mystery" surrounding Alex was obvious from the first page he entered the story. With lackluster characters and a dull, painfully predictable plot there was just nothing about this book that made me want to keep reading. I stuck with it just in case the ending would somehow wow me but no. The end was overly dramatic and unbelievable. I just think there was so much about this book that could have been good but the writing was just. so. bad.

There's not much else to say. I'm very disappointed as this book was touted as being a "modern spin on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein". Yeah, as someone who knows Frankenstein like the back of their hand, no no no no no it is not. It barely has anything to do with it at all. There are a few half-assed allusions to it and there's the obvious aspect of bringing the dead back to life, but other than that this book is just another poorly written, dull, teen "romance".

*ARC was provided via netgalley*

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## Mitch says

Too bad *Broken* isn't going to be released in time for Halloween, because this is another book that kills it with the creepy atmosphere. A.E. Rought nails the gothic inspired horror, not only with easy stuff like spooky graveyard scenes or genuinely twisted nightmare sequences, but through her suspenseful writing style that sends out all sorts of warning bells. The actual story, though, leaves something to be desired, I don't think I've ever read a book I so desperately wanted to end yet was still disappointed when it was over.

My problem is the cliched and extremely predictable plotting. Read the summary and you have this entire book in a nutshell, everything that happens I can easily predict without reading even a word of the book.

Worse, the first few chapters follow the stereotypical depressed girl falls for new guy all the other girls can't keep their hands off of routine - for a book inspired by *Frankenstein*, it takes a really long time before anything resembling *Frankenstein* actually happens. In the meantime, I'm bored out of my mind knowing exactly what Alex Franks's secret is and yet having to sit through the same old song and dance with Emma falling for Alex while wondering why he reminds her so much of his dead boyfriend Daniel and the other girls, besides supportive best friend Bree, giving her the evil eye. The only unanswered question that kept me reading was how Daniel died and why isn't his body buried in Memorial Gardens Cemetery, which unmercifully is stretched out for way too long in a drip drip of information among various filler as Emma goes about her high school life.

It all gives me the impression that nothing of note really happens during the first half, the real plot starts up between the half and three quarters mark, with the last quarter as a rush job ending. I guess I wanted less depth in the parts of the plot that really didn't matter much to me, introducing Alex as a new student at Emma's school, and more depth in the part of the plot I actually cared about, the repercussions of who Alex is, particularly on Emma. Frankly, while the ending feels fairly final to me, I still have a huge number of questions about Alex and Daniel, and I'm rather disappointed that *Broken* spends so much time on the high school scene and Emma only discovers the truth about everything so late in the game that I just didn't feel there were enough pages left over to explain everything about Alex's connection to Daniel while still doing Dr. Franks and his mad science justice.

But lest I give the impression everything about *Broken* is a retread, there's still a lot to like about this book. Rought's writing, for one, completely surprised me - it's strangely gothic and works quite well with the plot. The story might not be memorable, but a couple of scenes - and nightmares - definitely are, surprisingly good even though I wouldn't classify the book as light horror. And Emma's mourning for and somber memories of Daniel, besides how the flow of information is handled, I don't think I'd care so much about Alex and Daniel if Emma's constant grief wasn't so well written. Plus, I liked how Bree and Emma's parents inserted themselves into the plot and lightened things up, the story certainly isn't completely morbid or depressing.

I guess what it all comes down to is Rought's writing rescues a rather average plot. *Broken* would've been a much better book for me if it didn't take so long getting to where it needed to be.

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### **Zemira (Kylo Ren fangirl) Warner says**

The first this you need to know about *Broken* is that it has an interesting plotline, normal (read not annoying main character) and dashing hero.

The main reason I didn't give 4 or 5 stars is- this book is meant for younger readers (13-16) even though it has some seriously disturbing scenes. After that awesome start the middle part of the book got a little bit repetitive. I really don't need to read about every detail in the MC daily routine. Emma is still grieving the death of her beloved boyfriend but she completely ignored her friend's texts throughout the whole freaking book. She replied maybe 3 or 4 times-tops. Since her friend doesn't mind it's all OK. Boys are all over her but she has eyes only for the new hot guy, who is a dream of every other girl in the school. \*sigh\* If only this book came out 4 years ago. I would adore it...but I've seen this pattern already a thousand times and it's getting pretty old (just like me). I am not sure if the ending was great or over the top. One thing is certain- it was very explosive.

There is no doubt, the author is very talented and she should continue to write this type of books.

**You can read this review and so much more on YA Fanatic**

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**L.M. Preston says**

As a test reader I'd say this will knock your socks off. Can't wait for the release.

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