



Banished

Betsy Schow

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While lying in the hospital in a place called Kansas, Princess Dorthea of Emerald struggles to regain her memory of the events that propelled her out of the land of Story—and to remember how to get home.

Meanwhile, in Story, Rexi, with the help of Excalibur, continues to gain confidence in writing her own tale as she fights to save the land from the Wicked Witch. But as is always the case with evil villains, she is not to be underestimated. Can Dorthea and Rexi save their home while protecting the prince they both love from getting caught in the crossfire?

Banished Details

Date : Published February 6th 2018 by Sourcebooks Fire (first published February 1st 2018)

ISBN : 9781492636021

Author : Betsy Schow

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Retellings

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From Reader Review Bannedished for online ebook

Ruthsic says

After that messy sequel Wanted, I was kind of hesitant to read this book. But then I remembered that this is the final book in the trilogy and I might as well finish the series, so I started it, albeit with low expectations. This book again begins without any explanations about the current state of the characters so it is kind of confusing in the start, but soon the two story arcs become clear - Dot is over in Kansas, waking up from a coma and being told that her life before this was all her imagination, while Rexi has been crowned as King Arthur reborn in Camelot and has to find a way to keep it and the Grail out of Blanca's hands. Their storylines obviously intersect considering the villains they are fighting happen to be the same, just their fights are in different dimensions. Yet, they are still connected through their bond (I wonder how that worked since Rexi had supposedly severed it at the end of Wanted) which makes for convenient co-ordination of their plans.

In this book, finally, we get the characterization that was under-utilized in previous books. We see Dot struggling with the thought of whether she really wants to go back, what story she wants for her life, and what she will do to have it. Rexi, meanwhile, is also fighting for her existence, not just to not be Forgotten and avoid being a hero, but also to help out Dot and Kato who sacrificed for her. Thankfully, the Kato and Rexi angle wasn't pursued in this book, because that did not make sense in the last one. We do get clearer storylines and things (and people) not popping out of the blue so often in this book, so I consider it an improvement. The dual perspectives was well-handled and the ending was satisfactory, if not unpredictable.

Overall, a good ending to the series. 3.5 stars.

Received an advance reader copy in exchange for a fair review from Sourcebooks Fire, via Edelweiss.

bookslovereaders Steph says

This was the final book in the trilogy by Betsy Schow and I wasn't disappointed, it had all the usual characters who brought sarcasm, action and a bit of romance to the book.

This book focuses more on Rexi and her saving Camelot and trying to save Dot who was sent to Kansas in the book. You follow the characters on their final battle with Morte, Blanc and Griz.

Do the good guys win in the end?!

I love Betsy's style of writing and I'm excited to see if she creates another fairytale retelling with a bad ass heroine or two.

Denae Christine says

Reader thoughts: I might need more time to process the ending, but I'm mostly sure that I really liked it. (That's rare for me. I usually hate endings, even when they're done well.)

I still like Dorothea much better than Rexi, even if just because she complains a lot less and does stuff out of the goodness of her heart more rather than for selfish reasons. However, I wasn't gagging during Rexi's chapters and was enjoying reading about her in this book.

The romances were ... wrong to me. Two girls and two guys insult each other for an entire book, and then they end deciding that they're all in love. What? Why? How can they listen to insults and interpret that as love from someone? Let alone, how can they decide they're in love with the ones they've been insulting for 300 pages? This shouldn't work for both pairs. Maybe slightly once, but not 2 out of 2 romance couples in the book. Blah.

The magic didn't have as much definition and limitation as I'd wish for. What, exactly, can a storybook writer do? Does the story have to be written down? How much can they influence/change? Why? Who qualifies as a writer in Kansas? Why was Dorothea the only one who could see magic in Kansas? What were the infected people supposed to accomplish, how did they work, and whom did they work for? What really happens when a story character dies, how permanent is it, and under what circumstances can they come back? How does Hydra's head-swapping work? (Okay, I don't need to know that one, but I'd like to know what makes it not work or why she's only in control sometimes and what the rules are for such magic.)

Writer thoughts: Brandon Sanderson has posited the rule for magic systems that the more defined the magic system, the more clever the characters can be (this is my favorite side!). The less defined the magic system, the more an author can awe the reader.

Think of it as like the difference between Superman and Spiderman. One can do so much and doesn't have a lot of rules or limitations. When Superman suddenly shows off a new power, the audience is like, "Cool!" instead of feeling cheated that such a move constitutes deus ex machina (unless you're me, who gets disgruntled anyway). Whereas, Spiderman's powers are known and quantified. This gives his powers boundaries to bounce his cleverness off of and lets the audience be impressed by his creativity instead of his strength. No one accuses Superman of being clever.

So, authors get to decide which they'd rather have. This book, Banished, contains less defined magic, although not as undefined as some. There are plenty of books that can do this well. (Even the Harry Potter books don't have well-defined magic systems. Readers don't know every spell and its limitations nor every creature and so forth.)

~Krystral says

This book follows Dot and Rexi. Dot is a story-maker and the princess of Emerald who was banished to Kansas by Rexi in book 2 of the Storymakers series, (I didn't know it was a series until about 1/3 of the way through. So I'll have to go read the first 2 now because the book was quite enjoyable.) and Dot needs to now finish the story and kill Morte and Blanc with the help of rexie from inside the land of Libraria.

I rated this a 4 out of 5 stars overall for the following reasons:

What I like:

I loved the dedication: " *This book is for all of us who do battle with our shadows every day keep fighting.*

There is always a light if you know where to look." Just the pure acknowledgment of the every day struggle of those with mental health issues puts me at top respect level for this author. I like that the setting happens in real places we grew up reading about in fairy tales. I enjoy that there is diversity well represented in this book. I like the use of quotes from different famous people or "magazines" at the beginning of every chapter. The character and world building are amazing. Very strong character voice, great representation of mental health issues. I love the alternate reality angle. I'm so excited about a Wizard of Oz retelling because the entire concept of Oz has always intrigued me. I love this quote *"All the best people have a bit of madness. It's a sign of brilliance. You just have to learn how to take control of it."* I enjoy the amount of sarcastic wit there is in the book. I like how Dorothea is so conscious of how her actions are affecting how others feel and that she tries very hard to make them happy. I enjoy the romance that is brewing between John and Dorothea, as well as how the ending wrapped it up so nicely. I was often left wondering if he really was Kato. I love the plot in the story because it was really intriguing.

What I disliked about this book:

I very much disliked how at the end of most chapters you had to turn 2 pages to get to the next chapter. I also did not like that sometimes getting from point A in the story to point B was confusing and jumbled. The twist with John in the hospital and the reason why he was there was irritating and should have happened when we were first introduced to him. However, all this being said there was not much that I didn't like about the book.

Would I recommend this book:

Yes, I would definitely recommend it to both teens and adults alike.

***** **This was an arc I received by net galley in exchange for my honest review.** *****

Krystal B §Modest reader§ says

This book follows Dot and Rexi. Dot is a story-maker and the princess of Emerald who was banished to Kansas by Rexi in book 2 of the Storymakers series, (I didn't know it was a series until about 1/3 of the way through. So I'll have to go read the first 2 now because the book was quite enjoyable.) and Dot needs to now finish the story and kill Morte and Blanc with the help of rex from inside the land of Libraria.

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Tiffany says

I loved this book! Definitely my favorite in the series. Everything came together and made so much more sense after that second book. I really do enjoy how this author writes and all the quirks she adds....my favorite being her play on words/phrases. Some of my favorites being Hans Christian Louboutin and Jiminey Choo shoes or her curses like Spells Bells, For the Love of Grimm, saying the characters were Pixed. Overall a fun play on fairytales and I would recommend if you enjoy them.

Reads & Reels says

DNF!

My very first DNF! Such a disappointment. I was so excited when I first received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. The blurb sounded amazing and the cover is gorgeous! At first, I was unaware this was the conclusion to a trilogy but honestly that wasn't my issue with it. It was such a confusing jumble of fairy tale and literary references, I couldn't make heads or tails of it.

What was probably an attempt at a creative Wizard of Oz retelling, was actually just a hodge podge of way too many things wrapped in a pretty package.

Paige Green says

Rating: 3/5

Genre: YA Fantasy

Recommended Age: ---

Pages: 336

Author: Betsy Schow

Amazon

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for my honest review thanks to NetGalley. All opinions are my own.

So this will be a short review because I had to DNF this book. It's not because this book was horrible or anything like that (quite the opposite actually), but I did not realize when I requested this book that it was the third in a series and I've not read the first two. I want to read the first two in this series before I read this one (and I'll purchase it and everything because this was my fault so I should have to pay for it). So, I'm DNF-ing in order to avoid spoilers for myself.

Kat says

Thank you to Netgalley and Sourcebooks Fire for the E-ARC copy of this novel.

The Storyteller Series is back with the final book in trilogy. *Banished* by Betsy Schow gives us Dorothea and Rexi trying to stop the villains of Story once again. First, I loved all the covers of these books. It's what drew me to the first novel in this series. Once, I read it I knew that I had to share it with my customers. Second, I have recommended to anyone who hasn't read this series to start with the first book. Don't jump around it's worth getting them in order. The writing is crisp, funny and the character's all have flaws. I think that is what makes these books so much fun to read. Finally, Betsy Schow wasn't an author whom I was familiar with, so I was extremely surprised that after reading the first novel how polished a writer she was. The writing in these novels is top notch. If you like magic, fun, and action you have to check out this series.

Gaele says

AudioBook Review:

Stars: 4 Narration 4 Story 4

The conclusion of The Storymakers trilogy brings the story to an end, and is best understood if you have read all of the books in order. Here is where Schow shows us her brilliance in the reality/fantasy duality of the story, and the challenges this creates for Dorothea in her life – and her determination to keep moving forward in hopes for better and more.

Dorothea is back in Kansas, slowly recovering from a coma – and is slowly forgetting 'home'. After discovering her parents (book 2) she's desperate to connect to them, but she's also got a series of regrets about her own behavior and choices made along the way, and while she wants to remember 'home' and still keep her connection to Rexi alive, the dual realities provide conflicts and choices – none of which are simple or clear-cut.

Meanwhile, in Fairy-tale land, Rexi is now been crowned King Arthur reborn, and is in a struggle to keep the grail safe – as Camelot has become a series of struggles, battles and enemies. Desperate to NOT be forgotten by Dorothea, the options for Rexi are simple – do anything possible to maintain and keep that connection. For Dorothea, the choices aren't so simple, and she's unsure just how far she would, could or should go to keep them and not forget the life she had come to know....even if none believe it was real. Here Schow utilizes her characters to show choices and consequences – with and without regrets, reframing the world Dorothea now exists in against that alternate reality that all but she believe is a dream. With both Rexi and Dorothea discovering yet another challenge to overcome to survive and save their moments, the story manages to untangle all the threads, add the lovely quirks and mashups in neatly, and providing an entertaining, if not always clearly linear, path to the end.

Narration for this story is provided by Arielle deLisle, who manages to become each character: teenaged angst and often flighty and overemotional girls who are distinctly different, yet surprisingly similar in their determination. Throughout the story, deLisle managed to capture each moment and add clarity and interest, allowing the twists and turns to unfold without over-reaching for emotional impact, and keeping listeners able to distinguish each character with subtle changes in pitch, tone and even pace that felt appropriate to each person, and added interest and variation to the listen.

Best read (or listened to) in order – this is a story that is written for YA audiences, but seems to be clearly presented for the younger YA reader – a bit of immaturity and youth in both conversations and some approaches to challenges keep the feeling of the series decidedly youthful. With plenty of humor, insets from ‘magazine advice’ columns, plenty of references both historic and literary, and a ton of determination to meet challenges and always get up, again and again, the series, and this book, are fun and clever.

I received an Audiobook copy of the title from Tantor Audio for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Andra says

Oh man. Oh man, oh man, oh man. Where do I begin?

Maybe I had higher expectations for this series because I read the first book when I was younger, and absolutely adored it. Maybe I had higher expectations because I began this series when only the first book had been published, so every year I eagerly awaited the release of the next novel.

Or, maybe my expectations weren't very high at all, and this book was just a disappointing companion to the wonderful first book and the adequate second.

Overall, this book was fast-paced in a way that made no event seem particularly significant, and it didn't feel as though it would have a lasting impact on the overall plot. Every action and decision felt whimsical and inconsequential. And when it did happen to be significant, it was written so quickly and apathetically that I didn't feel as though it was really, ACTUALLY important to the plot. The entire book felt like a series of events that were meant to lead up to the inciting incident, but never actually reached the point in the story

where the plot began. Essentially, I felt, throughout the entire book, as though I were waiting for the plot and for the story to begin, and then the book just ended.

However, I can't say this entire book was a flop. There are some things I liked about this book, but I'll get the meat of this review--the dislikes--out of the way first. Here goes:

DISLIKES

- Blanc. Such a chilling, terrifying, formidable villain in the first two books, reduced to a series of rumours as to her whereabouts and characters shaking in their boots when mentioning her eventual arrival in the modern-day world, which is promised to happen regardless of the fact that she never actually shows her face more than twice for more than three pages, and is no apparent threat either time.
- The ending. Short, brusque, and depressing--in an unfulfilling way. This book left me with absolutely no closure. After following this series for essentially three years, the climax happens in three pages, and the general ending in two. (view spoiler)
- Loose ends!!! There were a lot of things left unsaid and unexplained, and while I let many things slide for this series, such as the impossibility that Dot and Kato could fall in love in a manner of days, due to the setting of a fantastical, magical, fairy-tale world, there were just many unexplained facts that felt incomplete not because they were meant to add to the mystery, intrigue, and fantasy of a magical world, but just because they were randomly inserted throughout the book for depth and as plot-drives, and then either forgotten or ignored. (view spoiler)
- The characters. They are completely changed from how they were in previous books. I understand the concept of character development, but it really feels, especially in the last two books, that the characters jumped between personalities and motivations instead of showing a progression. There was a particular scene where Rexi was made to embrace all the darker sides of herself, and it was stressed how impactful this scene was on her character, and how she was so much stronger and more resilient than she had been before this trial, and then, she emerged...exactly the same. In the first and second books, Rexi was prevalently portrayed as selfish and cowardly, and yet this defining characteristic of hers completely vanishes in the last book. Repeatedly, it is mentioned how she is selfish and self-serving, and yet not once in this entire book does she do absolutely anything to suggest that she is such a person. I feel as though she already underwent this character development in book two, and now for some reason we're starting from square one in book three. Except...it's TOLD to us that THIS IS THE MOMENT WHEN REXI CHANGES AND SHE LEARNS TO EMBRACE AND LOVE HERSELF AND SHE LEARNS NOT TO BE SELFISH but then her actions, decisions, and thoughts remain exactly the same as before--exactly the same as at the end of the second book; selfless, resilient, and brave. A story should be showed, displayed, and explained, not stated.
- Inner dialogue. Unfortunately, because of Rexi's development in the second book, her voice was completely indistinguishable from Dot's. In the first two books, Rexi was self-serving, snarky, rude, and inconsiderate, while Dot was also selfish, but in a bratty, pompous, rich-girl way. Their voices were completely distinguishable. They were flawed, but they were strong, and they were entertaining and likable. Now, after developing as people, all personal traits have been erased from their character until only same-humour snark remains. Character development is great and all, but it certainly can be accomplished without complete annihilation of identity. I love flawed characters. I love characters who make me think, make me remember they are human like me and not noble, elevated, untouchable icons. In *Banished*, both Rexi and Dot were courageous, noble, admirable, and utterly selfless (despite the author's ardent attempts to EXPLAIN, through the two protagonists' unjustified and unsubstantiated insecurities, that they were inherently selfish people who desperately needed to improve their character).

There were some other minor hiccups along the way which I was not crazy about, but unfortunately I finished this book a while ago and no longer have a copy on hand. They were mostly small, personal plot, world-building, character, or writing peeves, but I feel the aforementioned points are the ones which would make or break someone's decision to read this book. Now, on to the list of things which did not imbue me with the frustrating desire to throw this pretty book across the room:

LIKES

- In Wanted, there was a snippet from Banished where Dot is in the hospital room, and everything is all creepy and horror-movie-esque, and a black shadow congeals off the wall. I thought this whole chapter, including the scene where the lights flicker off floor by floor, was actually really well-written and investing. (Although, unfortunately, I can't say much else in this scene could actually be explained by the plot, nor could I tell you its actual significance, the reason it happened, and what it was caused by. Regardless, though, it was well-written and intriguing, so there's that.)
- The cover. All of this trilogy's covers have been beautiful and fantastical, and they help draw you directly into the world of Story. The covers were the main reason I was drawn to this series to begin with.
- Mordred. From the beginning, his dynamic with Rexi has been a delight. Condescending, rude, hilarious, and amicable. This was one thing which did not change in book three, thankfully, although--surprise, surprise (not really)--the relationship dynamic not-so-furtively sneaks into the territory of pink pastels and hearts.

I really regret that I cannot give this book more stars. I had higher hopes, based on the other two books in the trilogy. However, I haven't completely lost hope. If Betsy Schow writes another book/series in the fantasy/sci-fi/action realm, I'm willing to risk wasting--or hopefully, rather enjoying--time reading whatever else she comes up with.

Overall, I feel like this whole trilogy was a very light, pleasant, humorous read, and I do appreciate that the book did not end on a completely predictable, by-the-book fairy tale ending. I wasn't entirely frustrated with the series overall, and I loved the first book when I read it, so I would recommend reading this series if purely for the first book and a half.

C.C. Hrivnak says

Full Review: <https://charmedbookhavenreviews.wordpress.com/2018/07/17/review-the-storymakers-3-spelled-by-betsy-schow/>

*Disclaimer: I received an ARC copy via NetGalley and Sourcebooks Fire in exchange for a review. This does not effect my review.

This is the third installment in The Storymakers series that follows Princess Dorthea of Emerald on her continuing quest to get back home and right the wrongs she did in the first book, Spelled. Now, she's locked up in the psyche ward, slowly beginning to lose her memories of her home. She discovered her parents in the previous book to find they forgot their home and want Dorthea to "get better".

On the other side of the fairy tale coin, Dorthea's mind is linked to Rexi – making the story flip back and forth between the fictional and the reality. The moment Dorthea goes to sleep, she sees Rexi, taking on the guise of King Arthur, wielding Excalibur while battling the villains of Camelot. With Rexi, she sees the

devastation of Dorthea's treatments in the hospital involving green sludge and constant lies of being incurable. Dorthea later escapes the hospital and goes on a mission, searching for a pair of magic shoes to get her to another realm. Rexi, on the other hand, seeks out to destroy the Wicked Witch.

The quirkiness from the previous novels shows up in droves in this book and the mashup of our favorite fairytale characters makes keeps the fun coming. The single downside I can only come up with is that this wouldn't be for older YA readers. The characters dialogue and actions fall more along the younger YA reader group. But if you are looking for a new fairytale mashup series that'll make you laugh – this could be the next one on your list!

Jessica says

Thanks to Sourcebooks FIRE for the advanced copy from a giveaway win on Instagram!

I've loved the Storymakers series since SPELLED. Princess Dorthea of Emerald is a great lead for this retelling and her feisty sidekick Rexi. This book picks up where WANTED left off - so for those who haven't read the rest of the series I would highly recommend picking up books one and two!

I don't want to go into too much detail and spoil the other books for new readers. If you love the retelling genre then you'd really enjoy this series. It makes fun of the typical fairytale cliches and tropes while keeping it adventurous with some darkness. We have the Wicked Witch, Princess Dorthea of Emerald (Wizard of Oz vibes, anyone?) and we get to meet other familiar characters throughout the series.

Overall, if this is a genre that you enjoy reading and want a new series to start, then I highly recommend starting with SPELLED and working your way to BANISHED. I would love to know more about the Storymakers' universe, so I hope Betsy Schow continues it!

I give this one 4/5 stars!

JoAnna says

I think if I didn't have the audio version of this book I would have given it three stars. The narrator did a fantastic job!!! I wish I would have reread the other books before this one..... but there are other stories to discover. This was a fun ride! On to the next adventure!

Diana says

There's so much to love about this trilogy. Starting with the covers; they're shoes but they're significant and tie-in! You know that moment when the title makes sense? That's what you get with the shoes on the cover. That's another thing to love, that shoes are such an essential part in all three stories. I'm sure Dorthea wouldn't have it any other way.

Not only do we get a dual point of view this time around, but two separate stories in two different realms. I've seen a few comments that mentioned not liking the separation but I really enjoyed the switch up.

Although it is too bad that we don't get to see the two characters together since I loved their banter in the previous books.

Though we do still get banter, Rexi wouldn't be Rexi without it.

Rexi is still my favorite and I loved seeing her continue to grow and get a happy ending. Dorthea's story was just as great because it's a new twist especially after all the fairytale mash ups we've gotten in the past.

This was such a fun trilogy and will definitely be a long time favorite of mine.

I received this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

ORIGINAL POST
