

Protogenesis: Before the Beginning

Alysia Helming

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With her unusual violet hazel eyes hidden behind heavy glasses, American teenager Helene Crawford is the kind of student that always has an answer; yet, she doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. One fateful day, life as she knows it comes to a grinding halt. There was a fire. Her mother is gone. But something is not right...

The Greek Mafia may be involved. Vivid dreams of ancient deities consume her sleep. A maze of clues leads her to believe that her mother is still alive... She must go to Greece. The answers to her perilous quest lie there, as Helene braves into the unknown of a new life, torn between two Greek guys and a new world that literally awaits her.

And who knows, maybe the Greek gods and goddesses are on her side... or maybe not. After all, nothing is as it seems.

Over 500 people in Greece have contributed to the Author's research for the Protogenesis novel, including renowned Greek archeologists, cultural and mythology experts, and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Due to the overwhelming support Alysia has from so many in Greece, Protogenesis has been selected to be featured as part of the United Nations' (UNESCO) 2018 World Book Capital event in Athens. The book features theme song "Forever & Tonight" by Platinum Greek Singer, Kostas Martakis.

Protogenesis: Before the Beginning Details

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From Reader Review Protogenesis: Before the Beginning for online ebook

Jenny says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

1 ??

I had big hopes for this novel. The synopsis made me think of Percy Jackson and the organized crime aspect reminded me of the Arkadien trilogy by Kai Meyer. It could have been amazing, if it didn't focus on unnecessary details every page.

There are many aspects to this overuse of details. There is the US-centric POV that the main character can simply not let go of. We get it, she's American (oops, sorry, *Californian*!) and has never set foot outside the continental US, we don't need to be reminded of it every other page. Within her first day in Greece, she manages to insult the inhabitants ("many local people seem to easily speak English so well" in an airport in Athens, having a hard time pronouncing the other characters' names but being angry when they can't get her own name right), make it all about the US ("the temperature, but it's in Celsius", which is what the entire world uses, apart from her country) and use the not-that-kind-of-girl trope ("not 'that girl' who fawns over guys").

As for that trope, she uses it constantly to explain everything about her that is different. Seriously, I thought we were over this kind of trope? I thought, in 2018, that we had established that bringing down other girls to pull yourself up is anti-feminist. In that same vein, she goes on about how hard it is to take the metro to get to school, how her clothes must have been purchased at Wal-Mart by Hal before she left, "this is not how any girl in her right mind would dress for the first day at a new school", and "who writes in chalk on a blackboard anymore". This book reeks of straight (I'll get to it in a second) white middle-class privilege. And of course, all of this is happening as she is supposed to search for her mother who might or might not be dead. This girl cannot keep her mind on the same subject for more than two seconds. She is like a crow with shiny objects.

Onto the "straight" thing now. I can enjoy a good romance and it's almost inevitable that you will see romance in a novel. But this main character hits on EVERY GUY she meets. The author describes every Greek guy her character meets as a godlike being whom Helen drools on. Also, can Ever NOT be perfect? No person in the history of the world has been a top player in every sport, has played both basketball and volleyball AT THE SAME TIME as the best player, looks like a god, is rich but nice and approachable, etc. You can turn it down a bit and still have an interesting character that your MC could fall for. And, by the way, it would have been a much better story if she didn't fall for both him and Nick within their first 10min of encounter.

I know I went on a rant here, but this book bothered me too much to finish it. I don't usually bother with privilege talk, but the amount of cis/straight white middle-class privilege reeking from this story is so hurtful. I would have understood it from a teenage author 5 or 10 years ago. But not today, not anymore.

Belinda Clemons says

This book was one of my favorite reads this year so entertaining. I couldn't put it down. It is so unique and well written with the world building being just fantastic. all the characters were just great and I'm really excited to read more from this author

A. Reviewer says

Helene Crawford has never really fit in anywhere. Awkward with a fascination with Greek mythology, Helene's closest friend is her mother. But when Helene's mother suddenly vanishes, Helene is whisked off to Greece to live with her godfather she never met. In Greece, Helene is desperate to unlock the secrets of her mother's disappearance. But things are not what they seem. The Greek gods and goddesses from the myths Helene adores might actually be real, and one of them might want her dead.

Overall, this was an exciting story of a teenage girl's journey to Greece to find her mother while getting caught up in a love triangle. There's Ever, mysterious, alluring, rich and handsome. Then there's Nick, handsome, a tour guide, and a bit of a bad boy. Usually, I find love triangles annoying, but somehow I found myself rooting for both Nick and Ever. I assume that there will be more drama between Nick, Ever and Helene in the books to come. It will be interesting to see how this love triangle will progress.

For those who are not too keen on young adult romance, rest assured, romance is not the only dimension of this book. Behind Helene's mother's disappearance, there is a world where the Greek gods and goddesses are real. I was expecting something along the lines of the Percy Jackson series, but Protogenesis takes a completely different path with parallel universes and secret relics, which I found interesting. There was also a considerable amount of world building that I hadn't expected. Although I know only a basic amount of Greek mythology, it seemed as if the author did her research while writing Protogenesis.

Unfortunately, the plot development is extremely slow paced and it takes a long time for any secret to be revealed. While I do love the mystery aspect of Protogenesis, it was just too slow to keep me fully entertained. Helene spends a lot of her time wandering around aimlessly before she stumbles upon anything substantial to advance the plot. I constantly found myself putting this book down because the story had become slightly stagnant. Although there is a lot of originality, the plotline seems to be imitating a young adult romance novel instead of carving out its own territory. Ever and Nick, Helene's love interests, appear to be only two dimensional characters. They seemed to be only in the story for Helene to fall in love with. Sure, they each have their own backstories and history, but when they are with Helene, they turn into a carbon copy of a potential boyfriend material.

Although I found the book to be a slow paced and hard to get into, I have hope for the rest of the series. There is still something engaging and redeemable within Protogenesis. I await the next book to see how the relationship dynamic will play out between Helene and her two love interests, and also if more secrets will be revealed about the Greek gods and goddesses.

Natalie says

Recieved from Netgalley. As a lover of Greek and Egyptian mythology, I was really excited when I got this book. The beginning is brilliant, building a strong base and a beautiful world blending the Greek gods with the modern world. The plot itself continues to strengthen throughout the story and keeps you guessing. I like the idea and how well everything is co-ordinated.

There were two issues I found with the story, which would've ruined it for me if the plot wasn't so good. The first would be the yelling/screaming that every character seems to be doing when they're standing right next to each other. The second would be the love triangle and how the main character handles her problems. But she is a teenager and it is her first love, so there need to be mistakes etc etc.

My favourite character was Bastet (if I've spelt that wrong my sister will kill me) I liked how she was basically the catalyst for everything. I hope to see more of her in the next book and I'm curious if she has a more human form. In the beginning I really liked Janus and his complete lack of parental skills.

All in all it was a fun read and I will happily read the next one and probably the entire series. Oh and the cover artwork is beautiful.

Veselina says

I was given this book by Netgalley! Thank you!

As a big fan of fantasy books related with mythology - Greek, Egyptian, I was pleased to find this book.

Helene is a normal girl in an American school till the moment her mom has disappeared or she is even dead. Then Helene is sent to her godfather in Athens with risk for her life and no really clue what really is happening.

Fast paced, entertaining and fresh new book is waiting for you. Enjoy

Stacy says

I absolutely loved this book!!!!!! Alysia has created in intricate storyline with complex characters and a suspenseful plot. I couldn't put the book down. I read the whole thing in 3 days. I would have read it faster if I could have. Protogenesis is unlike any other bok I've read. It combines Greek culture with mystery and a hint of romance. I'm Greek, and I learned so much about mythology from it. Everyone should get themselves a copy of this! Alysia will get you to love mythology, just as she did with me. And I can't forget to mention the characters!!!! Helene, the protagonist, was a joy to learn from and watch grow stronger as the story developed. Ever, another main character, is basically the guy of any girl's dreams, myself included. But he's not just pretty, he's complicated too, which I really appreciated. Speaking of Ever, the song at the back of the book by Kostas Martakis is so hauntingly beautiful. Kostas is who Ever is based on. Kostas' extreme talent shines through in the song. The lyrics are so deep and they really hit me, especially when I found them in the story. Please please buy this book and read it! You won't be disappointed! Between the story and the music, its a masterpiece! I'm on my second read through right now. I can't wait until the next book in the series comes out next year.

Tammy says

The book was a bit longer than it needed to be to tell the story. Helene outbursts of rudeness really bugged me. It seemed to happen a lot in instances it didn't need to happen. Also didn't like the love triangle. She really played both boys and flip flopped too easily. She treated both of them awful most of the time. In the

beginning the ballerina part was played up but then it dropped off after her change, that was a bit confusing. Now the mythology part of the story I loved. Even if Helene would be with Ever alone it would have been better. Nick could have just been a friend. I received an ARC and voluntarily provided an honest review.

Shayla says

I love love love Helene! I can only wish I was that much of a strong woman at that age. She is tough, yet emotional and very feminine in her ways. I love me a good love triangle. And the mysterious bad boy element, love. While those elements are rather cliché as some would say in YA books, I love it and it brings another dynamic to the story. What the author focuses on is who Helene is as a woman, her beliefs, dreams, goals, and desires. I can't wait to read more and am excited for you to read it as well.

Evelyn says

I enjoyed this book so much!

This book is about Helene Crawford who loses her mom in the beginning of the book. Then she learns that there is a possibility that her mom is still alive, and that she has to look for her in Greece, where her godfather lives who she has never heard of before. As soon as she arrives in Athens the adventure begins. She does her best to find her mom, while also going to a new school, meets new friends and potential boyfriends. I loved this story, it was a good mix between Greek mythology and culture, fantasy and romance and mystery!

I won't give the book 5 stars because of some tropes (missing parent, love triangle..)

Thank you to NetGalley for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Natasha du Plessis says

Greek Mythology and anything fantasy related is right up my alley. I really enjoyed this book as well as the characters. Helene must figure out on her own what happened to her mother and a lot of secrets is kept from her. The beginning of the book was a bit slow and not well developed for me but the author quickly found her feet and the book soon had a nice flow to it. I would recommend this book to all YA readers as well as lovers of fantasy. A great debut novel as well as a great start to a new series

Mel (Epic Reading) says

DNF at 21%

Well, I broke my read 30-35% of a book before deciding to DNF. I'm sorry but this is just YA trash (and not the good kind). Now that I've had time to calm down some and sort out my thoughts I think I can write this review without too much ranting. But to sum up Alysia Helming's Protogenesis in short I would say it is painful. The writing, characters, plot, and everything else feel like a YA trope. I almost wondered at one point if she was making fun of the genre it was so cliché.

The List of Ridiculous Things

I'm not sure how else to easily talk about all the issue I had with Protogenesis except to list them out for you:

- **Ever is not a name.** It is a word. It is incredibly awkward to read things like "Ever carried her bag". In fact when our gal first meets him I had to read the paragraph twice to make sure I read correctly that his name is Ever. It's a ridiculous name and (so far as I could tell) added no actual value, except to confuse readers.

- **All teenage boys are gorgeous.** Apparently this is quite the world (even though it appears to be Earth in our time period...) that our gal lives in. Every teenage boy she encounters (and even some male adults) seem to be drop dead gorgeous! This chick is either in hormone overload (which I suppose is possible as she's a teen) or else Helming can't find a way to describe people that isn't with positive adjectives.

- **Coincidences galore.** Our gal spends less than 12 hours in Greece (after flying from the USA), where she knows absolutely no one. She meets two people at the airport or during her travels in the first 12 hours. And somehow those EXACT two people just *happen* to attend the same school she attends? Really?

But then the coincidences get worse... she happens to see a cats eye gem during her first 12 hours in Greece that seems to be important; and the next day at school in her geology class the teacher just so *happens* to talk about this gem? Where do I start with my complaints: geology is the study of rocks and earth not usually gems, what high school has geology class (isn't that just science class?), and what are the chances that she learns about this rare gem on her first day at the new school? I hate coincidences that are painfully obvious. At least try to work the plot points into a cohesive and believable story please.

- **I've read this before.** Based on the prologue and the quick dispatch of our gal to a new country, plus the details of the blurb on the back; this is just Percy Jackson for girls. I've already read that book thanks, no need to read a female version of it.

On top of all that the writing is very cliché. It must include every YA trope ever (hey check it out, ever is a word not a name!) in the opening chapters, Helming has written a forced plot and nothing is shown to us, it's all told in a stilted, amateur way. I hate to be so harsh but honestly I could not find a single thing to take away from this book that I liked, or felt like I hadn't read a thousand times before.

For this and more of my reviews please visit my blog at: [Epic Reading](#)

Please note: I received an eARC of this book from the publisher via NetGalley. This is an honest and unbiased review.

Ana Garza says

This book was so wonderful and interesting. I love Greek mythology and this story had my interest from beginning to end. The writing was great and I loved Helene. The Greek mythology and modern day time were interwoven beautifully and I really enjoyed this book.

Thank you to NetGalley for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Charlotte says

This book was a request from Netgalley.

The synopsis for this one sounded really interesting, which is why I wanted to read it. The cover is also beautiful. The book is sort of "Percy Jackson-ish" and I really wanted to like it.

I think this book has great potential. It's just that the chapters were a bit long winded in my opinion. To much Bach story, to much time spent on getting to know Vani. I just got very bored and had to push myself to read on which takes the enjoyment away.

On the the plus side, I like Helene and Ever. The authors world building skills were good.

I really wanted to like this one, it just fell short for me.

Michelle says

I received a copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Wow, I really did not know what I started with this book. It is so different and really refreshing. I loved the hidden rooms and dreams and Greek mythology. While it was a bit slow throughout the book, I liked the plot and I'm really looking forward to the next one in the series.

Post-Apocalyptic says

17 year old Helene Crawford is a California girl struggling to fit in with her peers, she lives with her mother and their hoard of cats. After a day at school like any other, Helen comes home to chaos, her mother is missing presumed dead and in the space of just a few hours, she goes from school girl to running for her life - the only person Helene can go to is a Godfather she has never met or even heard of before.....who lives in Greece. When Helene arrives she is swept up into a world of myths and legends whilst trying to find out what really happened to her mother and balancing that with rebuilding her life in a new Country.

There is a ton to love about Protogenesis and for the most part I didn't want to put it down. It's a fantastic adventure full of mysteries to be solved, hidden rooms, strange portals, Gods and Monsters. There is a seamless science fiction element woven into the mythology which I really enjoyed. Helene is a difficult character to pin down though, at times I really enjoyed her snark and her willingness to boldly jump into all sorts of situations to help her in her quest. But she is also incredibly ditsy and I often struggled to reconcile the fact that she was so easily distracted from her task of finding her mother. Granted, her search is hampered by her Godfathers insistence that she attend school but her all encompassing distraction by the "Greek boys and their eyes" gets a little tiresome and is one of my biggest pet peeves - what I did enjoy however is that the author herself has a little tongue in cheek dig at this, which was refreshing. I enjoyed the school element however, it really drove the plot forward and I liked seeing Helene being able to open herself up in way she never could in her old school, it brought balance to her life and I found this more believable than a 17 year old being allowed to run amok in a strange country on her own.

I sometimes found it difficult to put an appropriate age bracket on this book and I'm mindful that I am not the target audience, in light of that I found it easy to forgive a lot of the angst and bratty elements but there was one paragraph that was filled with really bad language which was really out of tone and felt a bit forced.

The start was shaky but once we got to Greece this book really comes into it's own, it gives you a nice little reminder of Greek mythology and I found the world building nicely paced with just enough information to really have you wanting more for the next book in the series. Keep an eye out for Bestat, she is a bit of a scene stealer! This is a really light and easy read which quickly pulls you in and despite the bits which weren't really for me (it's quite tropetastic in places) I found it actually quite a joy to read and it's a series that

i will want to stick with!
