



## The Gods of Men

*Barbara Kloss*

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**The Gods of Men** Barbara Kloss  
*Top 10 Finalist in Mark Lawrence's SPFBO 2018*

**Sable hated the gods. She hated what men did in their name.**

Magic is forbidden throughout the Five Provinces; those born with it are hunted and killed. Sable doesn't know her music holds power over souls—not until, at age nine, she plays her flute before the desert court and accidentally stops her baby sister's heart, killing her. Horrified by what she's done and fearing for her life, she flees north, out of Provincial jurisdiction and into the frigid land of exiles and thieves, known as The Wilds. There, Sable lives in hiding, burdened by guilt, and survives as a healer. But now, ten years later, someone—or *something*—is hunting her.

On the run again, Sable's best chance for survival is Jos, a lethal man from the Five Provinces, who claims to need her skills as a healer to save his dying father, and she needs the large sum of money he's offered. There's something about him Sable doesn't trust, but she doesn't have many options. A spirit of the dead is hunting her, summoned by a mysterious necromancer, and it's getting closer.

Sable soon discovers she's just the start of the necromancer's plan to take over the Five Provinces, and she's the only one with the power to stop it. But harnessing her forbidden power means revealing it to the world, and the dangerous Provincial, Jos, she's beginning to fall for.

*Fans of Brandon Sanderson, Naomi Novik, and Victoria Schwab will love this dark and epic fantasy adventure.*

## The Gods of Men Details

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Author : Barbara Kloss

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## From Reader Review The Gods of Men for online ebook

### **Esmerelda Weatherwax says**

This is The Weatherwax Report's Finalist for SPFBO4 !!!!

Excellent writing.

Developed and distinct characters.

Fast paced and hard to put down.

I'll post a longer review shortly!

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### **Mark Lawrence says**

I haven't read this book yet but it is one of ten finalists chosen from 300 entries to the 4th annual Self-Published Fantasy Blog-Off competition, so the chances are that it is pretty good!

Check out this year's finalists so far:

<https://mark---lawrence.blogspot.com/...>

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### **Emma says**

Maybe even 4.5....

Review to come for SPFBO 4

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### **~Dani~ LazyTurtle's Books says**

*Read this review and more at Book Geeks Uncompromised!*

Another world where magic is seen as evil is a world we don't want to live in. But when you get a well-written plot and characters like you do here, I think we can make an exception.

100 years ago, some magic users known as Liage from the nation of Sol Vallerren attacked, making an attempt to take over the other kingdoms and nearly destroyed the world in the process. Sol Vallerrens and their leader Azir, being the only people able to use magic, were defeated and Azir killed. Due to his immense power, his soul remained which was then locked away, never to be seen again. The Sol Vallerrens left were enslaved and anyone with magic killed on site.

A hundred years later, nine-year old Sable is the daughter of a Noble in Istraa. One day, while playing her flute for a large gathering at her home, she discovered that she has magical abilities that caused everyone to fall asleep. Unfortunately, this spell stopped the heart of her younger sister, killing her. Sable is sent away to hide her from being persecuted for her magic. Our story truly begins ten years later, when a man named Jos shows up to Sable's hut. They start a journey to heal his father and avoid the forces that seek Sable and her power.

The setting of the Five Provinces is one that feels like a lot of love and care went into making it. There are well defined political feelings between the provinces. This one obviously isn't a fan of that one and everyone rags on The Wilds (kind of outsiders area where people go who want to get away from the provinces).

Sable is a well-written character that at times leans heavy on the strong female lead trope. The "I am so strong that I don't need some man to help me" complex. While this is better than the damsel-in-distress trope, the trope can get old when a situation could be easily solved by asking for help, but you won't because you won't accept help from a male character simply because he is a male. Sable does not do this often but that attitude comes across from her many times. The rest of her character development is done so well. She does not trust easily and many times is ready to bolt from Jos thinking it will be easier. The revelation that letting someone know who you are does not always lead to being hurt by them.

While on her own, just listing off her character traits, she sounds like a heroine in fifty other fantasy stories, the difference is that her character relationship with those around her (for better or for worse) are well developed and always feel full. Her relationships with other characters feel just as developed as her character itself.

Jos has probably the most interesting and intriguing arc of this book. In his past, he has killed over twelve hundred Sol Vallerrens. Some were from fighting in his home of Corinth, but some were innocent people whose only crime was being Sol Valeron. Throughout their journey, Jos begins reflecting on his past and the wrongs he has committed. While searching for his redemption, this brings up a great question, should he be forgiven? It is difficult to say when you get to see his regret and nightmares he has over his past.

The Gods of Men has a fantastic plot with pacing that keeps you engaged during the whole ride. The possible uprising in Corinth, the past of both our main characters and evil that for some reason just won't stay dead.

Yet another book amazing self-pub book that I have read solely because of Mark Lawrence's SPFBO competition. The characters all jumped off the page, the pacing was perfect. I can see this book going far in the competition and would not be surprised if it won.

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### **David Zampa says**

I like it. It's a good, enjoyable fantasy tale, and the author is clearly talented. But it's not perfect. There are numerous little gaffs and typos which I found to be forgivable, but also very avoidable, with the right editor. It's traditional fantasy with a dark side, really strong prose, excellent, creative world building, and likable characters. I enjoyed that the female MC, Sable, was clever. That sounds horrible to say, but female characters I read are often either trying too hard to be clever, or just flat and serious the whole book. Sable is a bit of a smartass, but it's not overdone and it stays consistently true to her personality. Jeric, the male ingenue, complements her well. He's talented, competent, likable, and often finds himself refreshingly in need of saving by Sable. The sexual tension between them could be cut with a knife, but it never

overpowered the story with romance as some books do to their detriment. In addition to the little glitches I mentioned above, there are two things I would say editorially that would improve this book. First, the magic system should be better defined at some point. The ending felt anticlimactic because I didn't really understand how the magic worked. It just felt like this moment of "aaaand she used her power to beat the bad guys, that's great". It wasn't enough to ruin my experience of the book, but it was a missed opportunity that could have elevated the experience. Second, for the first 25%-30%, the plot feels terribly stagnant. The pace plodded, nothing moving forward as everything focused on character development. Fortunately it recovered by around 30% and kept moving thereafter, but I felt that first quarter of the book is in desperate need of cutting to make it flow better.

Overall, however, this is a very enjoyable read as it is, and one that with a bit more editing could be truly fantastic. None of these things I've complained about really hurt my enjoyment of the book once the final page was done. I'm happily planning to read *The Temple of Sand* when it comes out.

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### **Lukasz says**

I'm a SPFBO addict. I promised myself to read more traditionally published books this year, but I didn't keep this promise. I find too much fun navigating through unknown spaces of the indie scene.

Here's another worthy pick.

Sable's music holds power over souls. It can enchant, but also kill. Because of a tragic accident, Sable flees her Kingdom into the frigid land of exiles and thieves, known as The Wilds. She lives in hiding, burdened by guilt, and survives as a healer.

Soon, she finds herself on the run again.

The story, told in third-person limited, follows two distinct POVs - Sable and Jeric. Jeric, the second son of a king, spends his life tracking down and killing 'threats' to the country. Sable will have to trust him to survive, even though she despises him at the beginning.

With time, things change, and they develop feelings toward each other. Happily, nothing feels rushed or unnatural. Quite the opposite. Sable and Jeric are flawed individuals who struggle to find their place in a world. When their story arcs meet, things start to gel. Slowly but inevitably leading to striking realisations.

The cast of side characters is nicely mixed and likeable. Good work.

Kloss's clean prose, brisk pacing and clear structure keep the narrative engrossing from beginning to the end. Her novel never becomes confusing or unconvincing.

Flaws? Even though both main characters feel distinct and real, I didn't care much for them. But it's strictly subjective. The plot was interesting enough to make me finish the book and I appreciate final twists and reveals.

I would say this book deserves more attention.

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## Travis says

Early on, it's apparent that this is not Kloss's first rodeo. The story is fast paced, cleanly written, and introduces the world to us only as it becomes relevant to the plot and characters.

And that world is a dark one.

The Five Provinces have forbidden magic use, with gifted people being hunted down and killed. Rather than simply providing a bleak setting for the story to unfold in, this becomes one of the central conflicts.

Jeric—the second son of a king and known as the Wolf for his ruthless ability to hunt down his prey—has dedicated his life to tracking down and killing an entire race of people he deems a threat to his country. When Jeric's father falls ill, he's sent on a mission to retrieve Sable for her remarkable healing powers.

Sable discovered her magical powers when she accidentally caused the death of her younger sister. A decade later, she's forged a new life for herself in the frigid Wilds as a healer under a false name. When Jeric offers her a staggering sum of money to heal the dying king, she has no choice but to accept.

Sable and Jeric are polar opposites and are only forced together by necessity. They each represent everything the other despises. And yet, over the course of the story, they slowly develop feelings for each other. The romance is a slow burn over the course of the novel and I thought it was well written. Nothing felt rushed and each step was believable.

*Note: There are no explicit sex scenes in this book. There are also quite a few implied incidents of sexual violence against women, but nothing that takes place “on screen.”*

One thing I love in books is multiple villains. Off the top of my head, there's at least four in Gods of Men. Each has their own motivations and range from fairly likable to evil beyond any hope of redemption. Maniacal necromancers, creepy sorcerers with tongueless henchmen, demonic monsters, and twisted sadists all have a role to play.

While the central plot following Sable and Jeric is one I'd expect to see in a sword and sorcery novel rather than an epic fantasy, there's a broader story at play that's gradually revealed as the book progresses. I never felt like the worldbuilding was dumped all at once and the information that was revealed always left me wanting more.

Overall, this was an excellent read. The sexual violence felt a little gratuitous at times but it was included for a reason rather than tacked on for shock value. The story picks up speed quickly and doesn't relent until the grand finale of an ending. I'm curious to see what happens next in the story and am looking forward to the sequel.

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## Raven\_Blake (dreamy addictions) says

Actual Rating: 4.5 Stars!

Same Review Also Posted On My Blog:Dreamy Addictions

Okay, why aren't people raving about this book? It was f\*\*\*ing good. I mean, really really good. I never read anything by Barbara Kloss so I don't know what to expect from this book, but damn it totally blew my mind away. I absolutely devoured it. It was an amazing read and I didn't know it was actually a YA novel because this book has the mature vibe that you usually find in adult high fantasy books. I loved every aspect in this book. It is a dark fantasy which has some dark themes suitable for mature YA readers. I loved the plot, the world building, the characters, the magical system, and the forbidden romance. This book has everything I've ever wanted in a fantasy novel and it's definitely going into my favorites list. I'm glad it wasn't a stand-alone novel because I want more of this world. And Kudos to the artist who designed that stunning cover cause it totally fits the story.

#### SUMMARY:

In the five provinces, people who're born with a supernatural power Shah are called Liagé. A century ago Azir Mubarék, leader of the Liagé nearly destroyed their world because of his greed for more power. All the five provinces united against him to defeat him. Since then, magic is forbidden everywhere and the remaining Liagé are hunted down and killed because they don't want another Azir to rise again. Somewhere in Istraa, a nine year old girl doesn't know her music holds the power to the souls, and when she accidentally kills her little sister during a court performance, she flees from her homeland Istraa and ends up in Skanden, a land filled with thieves, exiles, and criminals. Ten years later, nineteen Year old Sable works as a healer in the village, and at night she does thievery to help scabs. When a stranger named Jos comes at her doorstep asking for her help to save his dying father, Sable is reluctant to go with him even though he offered a huge sum of money. When Sable is hunted down once again by an unknown entity, she finally agrees to go with Jos. Sable believes that he genuinely needs her help, but she also knows that he's hiding something so she can't completely trust him. During their journey, Sable discovers that she's the key to the necromancer's plan in taking over the world. In order to fight against him, she needs to embrace her forbidden power which means revealing it to the world and also to the powerful provincial Jos who hates Liagé.

#### CHARACTERS:

I loved the main characters in this book! They felt very realistic and relatable. You know what makes a dark fantasy novel even more irresistible? it's the flawed characters. Sable and Prince Jeric aka Jos were pretty complex and flawed. Sable is sweet, caring, stubborn, smart, and selfless person. Her helpful nature is one of her best characteristics. She might seem strong on the outside, but inside she has lots of vulnerabilities. I really enjoyed her character development. Prince Jeric is quite an intriguing character. He's not your typical charming prince. He's a broken soul with a horrifying background. For his kingdom, he killed many people including innocents and you don't want to know the count, you'll be horrified. Honestly, You won't like him at the beginning, but eventually he'll warm up to you. The forbidden romance between Sable and Jeric was very well done without overshadowing the story. The romance developed slowly, and thank god there isn't a insta-love between them.

This book has some interesting side characters like Tallyn, Rasmin, Ventus, and Prince Hagan. Tallyn is a nice addition to the plot and I really enjoyed his character. I don't want to say much about him because I don't want to spoil anything for you guys. Rasmin is a mysterious character. He's the head inquisitor of Prince Hagan, but we don't know whose side he's playing. Ventus and his guards called Silents brought dark

and creepy atmosphere to the story. Prince Hagan is quite a loathsome guy. Unlike his younger brother Jeric, he doesn't have a great reputation. He likes being in authority but he's not as smart as Jeric, and he enjoys raping scab slave girls who works in the mines. He's the absolute worst and I hated him.

#### PLOT/WRITING/WORLD BUILDING:

The plot was fantastic and well executed. I was hooked to the story from the start to the end. It's a fast paced read filled with right amount of action, adventure, magic, and light romance. The story was so engaging that I just finished it in just two sittings. There's never a dull moment. The twists in the plot has kept my attention throughout. I loved the beautiful writing style of the author. She described everything in detail with her lyrical writing. The book was told in Sable and Jeric's third person pov. The world building and the magical system was fantastic. They're the best aspects of this book. If I could rate them, I would give them a perfect 5 stars. The author build an epic fantasy world filled dark magic, monsters, and adventure. I really can't wait to explore more of this fascinating world.

#### FINAL VERDICT:

Overall, It was a fantastic read and I absolutely loved it! My only complaint with this book was how Sable easily forgave Jeric at the end after going through that hell. Otherwise, I would've given this a full five star. Nevertheless, It was an amazing start to a new series and I can't wait to know what the author has in store for us in the next book.

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#### Nicole says

Read and judged as part of SPFBO 4, review originally posted at Thoughts Stained With Ink:  
[thoughtsstainedwithink.com/2019/01/11...](http://thoughtsstainedwithink.com/2019/01/11...)

Holy goodness me, fam.

You ever read a book that's so good, you struggle how to properly find words to write the review, because you're just in love with the story so much and want more books to appear in the story instead and read those, rather than writing said review?

That's exactly how I'm feeling with Barbara Kloss's The Gods of Men.

To illustrate, let me direct quote the first note I wrote while reading this book (after reading the prologue):

"Fuck, what a way to start the first chapter. I'm already hooked."

...I mean, SHIT, goodness. This book had everything I want in a quality fantasy novel.

Story wise, I thought it was brilliant. I found myself rooting for Sable and Jos, and the parallelism that develops between their storylines the further we read along is stunning. The worldbuilding was solid, the pace was spot on, the conflict was great and the romance, eegak! That was exactly the kind of romance I was hoping to see in this contest!\*\* I just completely fell in love with this story and, even though I had a set number of pages allocated that I planned to read each day, every day I kept going over until this morning, where I read over 200 pages in one sitting and finished the dang thing a day earlier than planned. I flew

through this novel and I just bloody loved it.

But that's just the story. Looking at the writing and just... Friends, this book was so fantastically written. I was pulled in immediately and absolutely hooked, and half my notes are just gushing about how beautiful the writing is, how much I love Kloss's descriptions, how I truly adored the metaphors she uses (they are just so unique); and honestly? A little bit of writer envy, because I definitely don't write like this and I wish I could (but I'm always here to find new female role models to follow and support, and I've definitely found one in Kloss here). The way she transitions between perspectives is also really spot on and seamless, which only adds to the fluidity of the pace.

I even had to stop and copy down one of my favorite lines (without spoilers):

"There are always two sides, Sable. Don't dismiss mine simply because it complicates yours."

\*chills break out everywhere as she rereads it again\*

So, pair a fantastic story with the absolutely beautiful writing and that ending!? Now you have a reader in me who is desperate for the sequel (but take your time, Barbara, seriously; you just have a new fan in your corner who will definitely be buying the sequel as soon as it hits print).

My complaints, if I really had any, are pretty minor. At times, I thought the use of italics to emphasize words was overdone, so some of the words that were meant to be emphasized lost their oompf (says the woman who uses italics in her reviews like it's her oxygen to breathe). But the only other criticism I had, I can't really share without it being a spoiler, but basically, there was some backstory I would have rather gotten earlier on, to help readers understand a different perspective later on in the story, really helping to give even more meaning to the quote I pulled from above.

This book left my speechless and I am going to go out and buy this one to put on my bookshelf, no question. So thankful to SPFBO for bringing this book to my attention. It's a gem I would have missed out on, otherwise (though, thanks to this contest, I'm definitely going to be paying more attention to the self-published world, because there are just too many good books I risk missing if I don't).

Read on!

\*\*Please keep in mind that I didn't cut any of the books from Phase 1 due to lack of romance, as this is a fantasy book contest, after all. I just have a very personal preference of there being romance in the fantasy books that I read, so books that incorporated it usually helped hit home for me more than some other reviewers, simply because that's my taste (and, as always, all reviews are subjective). But also: the way Kloss writes romantic scenes has me really hoping there are more in the sequels, because damn. \*fans self\*

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## Mark says

An excellent 4 star read, a new classic of a 1st book in a hopefully great series to come. Highly recommended to all fantasy fans.

Can see why it scored high in SOFBO 2018.

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## The Nerd Book Review says

Alright. I'm gonna start this review off by saying that the book is very well written and has an entertaining storyline. It starts incredibly fast and I loved the first 20% or so. The first 2 chapters are as good of a start as any book I've read in a long time. I also hope that the author will do an interview with me. I'm hoping to get all 10 SPFBO finalists on the podcast with me this year.

The reason I didn't love the book had to do with 2 things. 1 was that I just didn't like one of the MC's. Jeric aka The Wolf is a murderous kind of guy who kills men, women, and children as the book begins and as the story continues on his image begins a rehabilitation and he will become the love interest of the POV character who gets the most page time Imari, aka Sable. Sable is a great character who has a forbidden magical ability and has been forced to flee her homeland.

The 2nd issue I had is admittedly kind of a weird one. I felt like there was an odd lack of people at times. The best way I can describe it is to describe it like many of the computer animated kids movies my son likes to watch. There are plenty of MC's but there aren't a lot of background characters. I often felt like the entire population of a country was in the low thousands, not hundreds of thousands or millions even. The Wolf is 2nd in line to the throne and is so intimidating to the other Provinces(which are kingdoms) that they don't attack but as far as I could tell his entire Wolf Pack has like 6-10 members. He is an incredible fighter but he has no magical ability so if the other kingdoms sent a force of even a few hundred he should be able to be overwhelmed. I admit this is a weird thing but it was just something that I kept thinking of. If it was just small tribal villages I would understand the small numbers but it seemed like built up kingdoms with infrastructure. I have that history degree and one I don't mention a lot is I'm a certified social studies teacher and had to take my fair share of cultural geography classes so I've always been a stickler on numbers vs infrastructure so most people won't care one wit about this.

One last detail. I'm guessing that the author is not a drinker because she has a character disinfect a wound at least once, maybe twice. Unless the term ale is really being used for all alcohol and it is hard alcohol that's a fast way to cause a nasty infection since ale is brewed using yeast and has too low of an alcohol content to kill bacteria.

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## Kristen says

Full review is here on my blog!~

Wow, this book, for starters! I finished up one book and decided that I had a little time left on my lunch break to start this one next and before I knew it I was like 35% into it and it was time to go home. So... I mean thanks for that, but also wooooow keeping my interest so hard has been difficult of late, so bravo to Gods of Men. I slammed this thing in a day and a half.

This is the story of Sable, who is a healer in the brutal snowy Wilds where thieves and other criminals are exiled. She's originally from the bright and sunny country of Istraa, where she was Imari, the daughter of the ruler. Right up until she accidentally killed her younger sister... and fled right into the Wilds, where nobody would ever look for her, or her flute, whose music can apparently stop the heart of a child if she lets loose with it.

Many years earlier, Corinth, one of the Five Provinces, completely decimated the country of Sol Velor

because some of their people could use magic. Not all, but some. But... the leader of those people was decidedly kind of evil. To this day, an elite team of Corinthians headed by the brutal Wolf still hunts down the Sol Velorians (or Scabs, as they are known), whether magical or not, and either kill them or bring them back to be... questioned. Jeric, who is the Wolf on top of being the second son of the King of Corinth, and two of his pack, Braddock and Gerald, are sent by his brother the heir, to the Wilds to find the mysterious Sable. Their father is dying and they've exhausted all their local ideas, and she is known to be a healer trained by a man from Istraa noted to be one of the best healers in the world. Too bad that Corinth and Istraa don't particularly like one another.

He poses as Jos, a man who is from the Five Provinces, but is definitely not from Corinth (who are known to hate Scabs and Scablickers, a slur given to people from Istraa as they succored the Sol Velorians in their time of need). He tries to convince her with a giant pile of money, but when that doesn't work, he's trying to figure out what will, when a whole bunch of evil stuff shows up and starts hunting her down. So she flees with Jos into the brutal Wilds, chased by shades and evil sorcerers, and other things that go bump in the night.

This one was so well written and edited right out the gate that like I said, I read a huuuuge chunk of it in one sitting, and then another huge chunk of it in the next sitting. It was an incredibly hard book to put down to do normal day to day activities like making dinner and actually sleeping at some point. I highlighted many, many quotes in this one, as generally happens with books I am really enjoying. It was never boring, and I always wanted to make time to read it.

I really liked Sable as a character, and I rooted for her right from the first page. She's accidentally powerful and doesn't want to be, and so flees from those she loves and learns to protect and camouflage herself by living in pretty much the last place one would look for her. She learns to live in a climate that's nearly anathema to what she is used to. I was at first not so sure what I thought about Jeric/Jos and a romance between them, because, well... he is who he is and his skillset is largely in killing people... but I got there. I wasn't expecting to get there but oh, I got there. I can see why some eyes got googly and some hearts thumped in each other's general direction. The last 1/4 of this book gave me all kinds of the feels. My eyes got legitimately misty.

It's got antagonists that you need to see get their comeuppance (one in particular comes to mind, and he's not even the evil necromancer, heh). It's got protagonists that you root for, and just enough romance to give Kristen the Kissy Book Lover something to squee over while not being super graphic about it. However, I will say that to those who find sexual violence uncomfortable in books, this one does imply a lot of it. Nothing graphic here either thankfully, but plenty of instances of these things happening behind the scenes. It didn't bother me overmuch in the grand scheme of things, though I also felt as though there was really more than enough example to make that antagonist an antagonist without pointing out how rapey he is (it's a lot) in nearly every scene in which he is present.

Someone tagged this book as YA on Goodreads, and the me that has no idea what in all the hells makes a novel YA is like... uh... well maybe, I guess? Teenage me would have totally loved this book too. But if we were determining what constitutes YA by what teenage me read, then The Babysitter's Club would be YA... but so would The Stand and Interview with the Vampire, so yeah... we should not do that thing. This one is possibly acceptable for a younger audience, depending on that younger audience. No graphic sexual content or swearing. Alludes to rape quite a lot, and.... well all that murder, more murder, gore, necromancy, muuuuurder, stabstabstabbing, and the genocide/enslavement of an entire race of people and so on... but hey... no swearing or sex, so... uh, I'm sure it's fine? :D

So... yeah, this one was definitely a win for me. I really enjoyed this one and I can't wait to see what happens next. I'm going to be all over the next book in this series. Ermagherd.

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### **Kaitlin says**

\* I read this as it's a finalist for #SPFBO 2018 and I am a judge \*

This book was one I hoped would be good judging from the attention paid to the cover, the premise which sounded exactly like my kind of read, and the blog that nominated it who I frequently agree with. All of those factors led me to having high hopes for this story, and thankfully I wasn't disappointed in the slightest, in fact I really enjoyed this and I definitely want to read what happens next!

This is a story of two main characters, we have Sable who is a young woman exiled from her homeland after a mysterious power within her risks the lives of many around her. Sable is a healer by the time we catch up with her story again and she is hiding out in The Wilds, away from those who may wish to hunt her down. She hasn't touched the power that banished her since the day she left and has instead managed to keep a fairly low profile considering that her Scab status marks her out as different. She's apprenticed to the town healer Tolya and she is doing her best to learn all she can. Sable has a lot to discover still about her true potential and I think her decisions and skills in the book showed her to be a realistic and believable character. The other main character is the Wolf or Jos. He's a Prince and he's also an assassin of Scabs throughout the land. He is known to be a killer and a tracker and he's supposedly dangerous too. However, we meet the 'real' Jos when he is sent to find a healer to help restore his father's health which is deteriorating desperately. Jos is a character who has more to tell than first meets the eye and I enjoyed getting to uncover this.

There is a lot of magic in this story from the Liagé who are a race of powerful beings of the Sol (Sable's race) through to necromancers, ancient beings, and more. We see Shades attacking, evil changelings, and sorcerers too. There is constantly a threat on the horizon to keep things interesting, but there's also a lot to learn about the magic still.

The pacing of this one was thoroughly solid throughout and I found it incredibly easy to get into and to want to keep reading. It kept me up late finishing it, which is always a good sign, and ultimately I thoroughly enjoyed it. I gave it a 4.5\*s in the end which is 9/10 for #SPFBO (the same rating I gave my own nomination and tied for the best score I've given so far for #SPFBO 2018). Highly recommended :)

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### **Barbara says**

I might be biased...

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### **Sky says**

WOW! Okay, I'm speechless. ? This book is for sure my favorite book of the year.. This book deserves hype. This book deserves to be talked about all over booktube.. this book BLEW MY MIND!! I want the next book in my hands already.

Lets see if I can articulate my many thoughts into a review.

The writing is absolutely GORGEOUS. The descriptions are lyrical and jawdropping. The characters dont just talk; their words fall out of lips in whispers, sorrow spills out, they are barbed and like weeds that strangle. Women aren't just described as curvy, they have "a figure so full and voluptuous because it had never wanted". You feel this book so heavily because everything described hits home, everything said feels real. These characters are REAL, they are snarky and sassy, they are greedy and selfish. These people kill without guilt, they steal without caring. Barbara wrote character arcs and growth, she tore them down from pedestals, she ripped the food from their stomachs and caused them pain, she brought light into broken souls.. These people have been hurt and some of them want to die just to end their suffering. These people are real. They aren't built like fairytales who know everything will be alright if they just try a little harder. Its like the author took everything that has ever been criticized about a book, and created a book to show the world those problems could be fixed. There is no insta-love, the female is strong on her own accord, you arent told she's strong..you are SHOWN shes strong with actions. Never once is sable able to magically do something she has never done before and suddenly become an expert at it in one try. The storyline follows more than love and prince charmings with a sprinkle of heartache in the background to keep you enticed to read more. Never once while reading did I feel like the author dumbed down her words to "fit into the young adult category". Actually, there were many words I havent heard in a book in so long that I had to look them up to remind myself what they ment.

This book is amazing and so well written its crazy. I want to know why this book isnt already on the best seller list or being hyped up on booktube. This book and author deserve more love than we could ever possibly give it. ???????/5

\*Possible trigger warning for rape.\*

The book is kept realistic, and it is implied that slaves or certain characters in the background of the novel have been forced into situations against their will.

\*I received an arc copy before the publishing date. By no means does this sway my opinions and thoughts.\*

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