

★ **A Darkness at the Door**

Intisar Khanani

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In Intisar Khanani's fantasy novel *A Darkness at the Door*, a lady in waiting is on a dangerous mission to end a child trafficking ring in the kingdom of Menaiya.

Rae, the attendant of Princess Alyrra, is held captive aboard a cargo ship. She is determined to save not just herself, but the kidnapped children who are also onboard. Her fight to escape is full of action, magic, and intrigue, setting up a story that is complex and exciting.

Rae is soon joined by Bren, a young thief whom she has worked with before. She is drawn to Bren, and her instincts tell her that she can trust him, despite his occupation. Their discussions on what is right, and who determines rule and order in society, are thought-provoking—an ethical backdrop to an already involving story.

There are instances of violence throughout, including child kidnappings and attempted and successful murders. Descriptions of other acts of violence are included, too. Though unsettling, these moments are essential to the story. The stakes are high for Rae and Bren, and the sacrifices that they are willing to make to achieve their ends are significant.

Rae is a strong lead. She has a disability, but she learned to overcome her physical limitations, and she found great personal strength and a strong sense of self-worth despite her hostile environment. Though the world does not automatically attribute much worth to her: she knows her value. She is a formidable opponent, too, even against those in the highest positions of power.

Following an admirable heroine as she fights nefarious forces, the diverse fantasy novel *A Darkness at the Door* is full of adventure and fun.

CATHERINE THURESON (July / August 2022)

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