

Amarok

Angela J. Townsend

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In order to save the one person she loves, a troubled teen must find the strength and courage to break an ancient curse.

A plan to run away becomes infinitely more dangerous when Emma is kidnapped by a mountain recluse. Forced to trek through the Alaskan wilderness, her only comfort comes from the bond she makes with the man's big black wolf. She gives the wolf the name Amarok, not knowing that trapped within its body is the soul of a young man. Imprisoned years ago by an evil shaman, Amarok is determined to protect Emma. However, it is soon his life that hangs in the balance, and only Emma can save him.

The story moves along quickly, and is particularly compelling after the halfway point. As the book progresses, there is a noticeable shift in pace and intensity. Chapters end on cliffhangers and readers will race to find out what happens. After the climax however, the book's resolution feels a little drawn out.

The writing and plot are fairly direct, and in those terms the book would be better suited for young teen or preteen readers rather than young adults. Granted, though, the emotional troubles and physical danger Emma faces could be a little scary for a young audience.

The book alternates between Emma and Amarok's points of view, giving readers insight into both characters. This change in perspective allows readers to see how they view each other, thus giving a much fuller appreciation of their connection. When Amarok shares how Emma's touch makes him reconnect to his human side and Emma finally finds someone she can trust in Amarok, readers begin to understand why they are so devoted to each other.

While Emma certainly has a lot of facets, and readers can sympathize with many of her struggles, the pieces don't quite come together in a plausible, consistent way. Her courage is admirable, though, and readers ultimately want her to succeed and find happiness.

Angela Townsend injects some unique twists and elements into what could be a generic story. The history of the cursed lands, the totems used to control imprisoned souls, and the mythology the author creates are the most engaging aspects of the book.

So while the story could have more depth, overall this is another fast, entertaining read from Spencer Hill Press.

ALICIA SONDHAI (September 24, 2012)

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