

An Unreliable Magic

Rin Chupeco

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A legendary sword, mysterious portals, and an old foe bring magic and mischief to Avalon in Rin Chupeco's young adult novel, *An Unreliable Magic*.

Picking up where the previous volume left off, the novel recounts important details in an effortless, easy manner before jumping into fresh action: the Nameless Sword has appeared in the courtyard of King Alexei's castle, leaving his fledgling rule vulnerable to spies and saboteurs. Custom dictates that anyone is permitted to attempt to remove the sword from its stone. Alexei calls on his best friend, Tala, for help—no small ask, considering it forces her to confront her father, whom she has not seen since a devastating revelation about his past.

While working to uncover the sword's secrets, Tala is dealt yet another blow: Ryker, her former love interest, returns, his motives as opaque as ever. As if that wasn't enough to worry about, portals are appearing across the kingdom, bringing new horrors and drawing the Snow Queen out of hiding to threaten Alex, Tala, and their friends once more. Interpersonal tensions and unearthed secrets challenge the unity of the Order of the Bandersnatch as they struggle to work together to face fresh perils.

The book's diverse world of modern magic and mashed-up fairy tales is immersive and delightful. Social media crosses with dragons, and ancient curses coexist with shadowy corporations. Parallels to contemporary issues arise, as with the complexities of immigration laws and their enforcement, but the heart of the series remains its ensemble cast. The clashing personalities of the tight-knit Banders keep them distinct as new conflicts and connections arise; many secondary members are promoted to spotlight status in this volume.

A fabulistic alternate history with friendship at its heart, *An Unreliable Magic* is an enthralling fantasy novel.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (May / June 2022)

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