FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Young Adult Fiction

Cursed
Jennifer L. Armentrout
Spencer Hill Press
978-1-937053-12-3
(September 18, 2012)

The author of *The Lux* and The Covenant series, Armentrout is already well versed in the fundamental aspects of an appealing paranormal romance. In her latest novel, *Cursed*, she brings these elements together for a new, entertaining offering for fans of the popular genre.

Ember, our main character, was a popular teenager before a car accident two years ago that killed her father and, for a brief time, her. Brought back to life by her young sister Olivia's touch, Ember now has the unfortunate curse of killing anything she touches. After a dramatic episode where Ember accidentally uses her ability on a person, Ember, Olivia, and their almost catatonic mother are whisked away by a group of people who have powers of their own. People who claim they want to help Olivia and accommodate Ember. People who Ember isn't sure she can trust.

The supernatural aspects of the book are definitely interesting, if not wholly unique. Ember's power is obviously a tremendous problem, but Armentrout also explores the burdens of the other characters' abilities. A teen with telepathy can't bear a normal school because of all the voices, while his twin sister becomes overwhelmed by her ability to feel what others are feeling. Hayden, the object of Ember' s affections, has a power that is particularly interesting, not to mention a rather clever way to allow Hayden and Ember to touch.

The romance between Ember and Hayden is filled with the sparks and intensity that have come to characterize this genre. The fact that they can only touch for short amounts of time heightens the tension between the two. While Ember is instantly attracted to Hayden, it does take some time for her to really trust and love him, giving their relationship a little more depth and authenticity.

Ember is generally an empathetic character who some readers will really love. Her struggles to face intense bullying at school as well as the complete care of her younger sister make her sympathetic from the start. Her complete revulsion at her power and ultimately at

herself needs to be overcome in order to control her ability. The mental strides Ember makes are commendable, though it would perhaps be more meaningful and realistic had she gained this inner strength and control a bit more gradually.

Young adult readers will be drawn into the story as the mystery of the car accident unfolds, and there is considerable suspense as Ember reaches for the truth and wonders who she can trust. There are some hints at who the real villain is, and all is revealed in a dramatic climax. Though Armentrout does resolve the major plot elements, there is enough content and potential for a sequel if she chooses to write one.

The writing is fairly simple and straightforward, and makes for a quick, engaging read. Though it doesn't break the mold, *Cursed* is an enticing, entertaining option to add to the paranormal romance lover's bookshelf.

Alicia Sondhi