

★ Defy the Night

Brigid Kemmerer

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The first volume of a new fantasy series from bestselling author Brigid Kemmerer, *Defy the Night* pivots around two young adults who are determined to regain control of their destinies.

Kandala was already embroiled in infighting between its sectors. Now, it's ravaged by a mysterious sickness, too. The only cure is the petals of Moonflowers, but their limited supply is hoarded by those in power.

After the assassination of his parents, King Harristan took up the throne, leaving his younger brother, Prince Corrick, in the role of being his brutal right hand. Corrick is responsible for crushing any whisper of rebellion, but he resents the cruelty of his position. He also knows that any sign of weakness could result in disaster—both for Kandala and his brother.

Tessa is an apothecary apprentice who, together with her best friend Wes, steals Moonflower petals to distribute them among those who need them most. To be caught means certain death—a fact Tessa knows all too well after the deaths of her parents. When Wes is captured, Tessa breaks into the palace in a half-cocked plan for revenge. She's intercepted by dreaded Corrick. But with rumors that the Moonflower cure no longer works circulating around the kingdom, Corrick sees potential in an uneasy alliance with her. He invites Tessa into the royal fold, though the castle walls offer little protection against threats circling within.

Within this dark, brooding fantasy atmosphere, the multifaceted cast of characters sparkles. Tessa is compassionate but hot-headed; Corrick is loyal but conflicted; and even King Harristan avoids easy dismissal. Their shifting perspectives add further insight into their inner turmoil—and reveal the cautious beginnings of a romance.

A foreboding twist on the tale of Robin Hood, *Defy the Night* is a promising series debut.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (September / October 2021)

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