

Elemental

Emily White

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Blending aspects of science fiction, fantasy, and romance, debut author Emily White's *Elemental* is an incredibly intriguing, if occasionally stunted, start to a series.

The novel's strength mainly comes from its richly creative premise and potential. Ella has just escaped the spaceship that has kept her a prisoner since she was a small child. On the run and in tremendous danger, she quickly realizes she is much more than any escaped prisoner. Ella has the ability—and sometimes a burning hunger—to control the elements. As Ella learns more about her own history, she begins to understand the enormity of her powers. Marked as the prophesied Destructor, Ella's destiny puts her at war with an evil god, one she must summon all her strength and courage to try to defeat.

White brings in a lot of elements into this book. Interplanetary and political tensions, a race of fairy-like humans, and intense, sometimes violent action scenes come together in a unique framework. There are also themes of faith and a romantic connection to explore. With so much going on so quickly, the book sometimes feels overwhelming. Considering how many interesting ideas White's included, the story line and world is a shade underdeveloped, with major questions unanswered. However, the sometimes chaotic feeling actually reflects Ella's view of the world, and with a second book releasing next year, White's intention may be to continue fleshing out her strong base.

Ella's character is sometimes inconsistent. She wavers between helplessness and intense strength. While this makes some sense, given that she's been locked away for most of her life, it can be frustrating to see her make strides and then collapse into hysterics. Her internal thought process and dialogue is also at odds with her background as an almost life-long prisoner. She occasionally changes her mind and motivations a bit too quickly to full understand, but despite her flaws it is ultimately rewarding to see her finally believe in herself and fully take control of her powers in order to succeed.

Elemental will most likely suit thirteen-to sixteen-year-old lovers of fantasy and science fiction, especially those looking for something different. Readers should understand this is a mixture of a fantasy story in a science-fiction world, without a heavy emphasis on either genre.

Offering a genuine change from the stereotypical paranormal fantasies, *Elemental* shows tremendous effort and creativity. Readers will seek out the sequel to find out the rest of Ella's story.

ALICIA SONDHI (August 10, 2012)

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