

Fractured Truth

Rachel McClellan

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Traditionally feminine ideals of community and cooperation are celebrated here as sources of great power.

Rachel McClellan holds nothing back in the fast-paced, dramatic conclusion to her popular fantasy series. In the final installment of her three-part Fractured cycle, McClellan returns to Lucent Academy, where her intrepid heroine, Llona Reese, stands ready to take on the forces of darkness with all of the forces of light she and her fellow Aurans possess. *Fractured Truth* digs deep into Llona's story, as she sorts out friend from foe, a task that's not easy in a magic-filled realm where things are seldom what they seem.

It can be a bit challenging to embark on Llona's latest adventures without the benefit of reading the two previous books—*Fractured Light* and *Fractured Soul*—but McClellan provides most of the puzzle pieces in her opening chapters. Soon, it's clear that Llona, a peace-loving Aura, has fought a lifelong battle against the Vykens, who killed her parents and left her with some of their warrior blood coursing through her veins. Now she faces the same struggle between light and dark powers on a much larger scale: the Vykens plan to take over the entire world, and it's up to Llona and her light-wielding comrades to save them all.

With that sort of mission at its center, it's no surprise that *Fractured Truth* is full of dramatic twists and turns. Llona can't trust anyone: her best friend, her former love, even her own family members. McClellan's strength is the ability to let questions about each character hang in the balance until the last minute. Combined with suspenseful scenes like Llona's literally breathless underwater tunnel trek, the uncertainty makes the pages fly by in pursuit of the final truth.

Some of McClellan's ideas seem familiar: a mixed-blood wizard avenging her parents' death while living at a school that teaches magic, for instance. Llona also finds herself caught between two potential lovers with potentially explosive dark sides—not a completely original idea.

What's unique here, though, is the focus on the feminine. Not only must Llona harness the energy of pure light to conquer the dark forces of the Vykens and their ultimate weapon, the Shadow, but she also must band together with her Auran sisters. *Fractured Truth* can be read as the final word on the Auran-Vyken battle, but one suspects Llona may have more adventures ahead of her.

SHEILA M. TRASK (Summer 2014)

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