



Healer

Ellyn E. Hugus

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This third installment of the Peace Keepers series is recommended for those who like reading about how humanity and nature are intertwined.

A young woman from the heartland comes to terms with her recently bestowed powers and some dangerous new family dynamics in Ellyn Hugus's intriguing environmental fantasy novel, *Healer*.

Kaya Contigas recently learned that she is a Peace Keeper, a guardian of the earth, who has lived many lives before. Her friends/housemates/siblings-of-a-sort, Lisbeth and Tom, have this distinction as well. Their individual personal stories were shared in previous installments of this series; at that time, Ashlinn, their older sister, was also introduced. Ashlinn is out for revenge and determined to destroy the world, piece by piece.

A prologue explains most of this backstory, so Kaya's story can stand alone as needed; however, it does feel as though some pieces of the puzzle might be missing as it relates to her fellow Peace Keepers. Within the novel itself, Kaya's particular gift of healing animals is stretched to the max when doctors working with the World Health Organization in Chile desire her help with human victims.

The focus on the environment is a positive and heartwarming touch that permeates the entire novel, although possibly more explanation is warranted about how the ecologically aware "siblings" came to be, and how their ties to their "mother" work. That the families Peace Keepers are born into are mentioned, even missed in lament, but not explored in depth can also be a point of frustration.

The writing is brisk, easy, and delightful. The plot is engaging, although the climax itself is a bit abrupt and disappointing. Related in the first person through Kaya, information and descriptions are presented diligently and very visually, with a great personable sense of who the narrator is. Describing an encounter with Ashlinn, she says: "It was like looking at a living Barbie; that is, if Barbie wore black leather and was physically able to stand upright."

The dialogue is very realistic and authentic to the millennials portrayed and is handled especially well in the developing relationship between Kaya and Dr. Shadeed Qureishi. Their partnership transpires naturally, and care is given with even the smallest of details, down to the kinds of music kept in Shadeed's car, to help in further developing the story. The consistent use of partial sentences, whether as a stylistic choice or in error, is somewhat distracting, though.

This third installment of the Peace Keepers series is recommended for those who enjoy fantasy novels with authentic characters, who like reading about how humanity and nature are intertwined, or who might simply enjoy a good love story.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (June 13, 2016)

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