

Her Name Is Grace: Mahlai, Book 1

Shidorr Myrick-Gayer

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A pregnant woman is murdered. Her child, Grace, survives in the arms of an alien. Grace goes to live on the planet Mahlai, where she is trained from infancy to be an angel, a protector, and a soul with a purpose. This straightforward, deceptively simplistic tale is in fact a substantial exploration of human character and resiliency.

Loaded with Biblical symbolism and ancient myth, *Her Name Is Grace* probes the darkest recesses of the mind while revealing its protagonist's inner light. What begins as the account of a violent tragedy on Earth transforms into a young adult romance. Comparable to a fantastical *Twilight* plotline, this first book of an intended series rivals the best in a highly competitive genre. Written with passion and finesse, the novel presents countless possibilities for development within a popular marketing niche, but also stands apart from already established authors.

While gazing into a mystical, forbidden well—in fact a black hole—Grace falls in love with Sam, a young man on Earth, and determines that he is the key to her happiness. A guarded secret and a tenacious spirit will make her dream come true, but not without a tremendous price. Allowed to leave Mahlai under clandestine circumstances, Grace indulges her infatuation, but with an awareness of its mortality, accepting in advance an impending separation after her allotted five years has passed, the heartbreaking stipulation to her journey to the rugged Montana terrain.

In well-crafted phrases and evocative passages, the story ensnares and captivates: “The moonlight, although extremely dim, passed through the thin, pale-purple curtains in my room ... I could almost smell the orchids that lined the cobblestone pathways. I could almost feel the soft feathers that lined the nest I had once laid in.”

Evoking multiple senses in her writing, Myrick-Gayer conveys immediacy and a presence often lacking in pure genre fiction. Polish and meticulous attention to detail set this work at a higher level than typical commercial endeavors. The author's depiction of a dark angel is particularly memorable: “His folded wings hung down to his feet. His breaths were slow, yet deep. The sound of him breathing gave me chill bumps. His breaths were a mixture of a lion's roar and an asthmatic person trying to breathe.”

Shidorr Myrick-Gayer has made her debut with rare talent and ingenuity. Expect more from this promising newcomer.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (October 30, 2012)

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